

bonfires, and the firing of guns. This feast was the affair of the *habitant*, who for that day were the guests of the seigneur.

During the early days of the colony the *habitans* had lived chiefly on bread and eels. Throughout the early part of the eighteenth century they lived on salt meat, milk and bread for the greater part of the year; but in winter fresh meat was abundant. Travelling was pleasant, and from Christmas to Ash Wednesday there was a ceaseless round of visits. Half a dozen sleighs would drive up to a *habitant's* cottage. A dozen of his friends would jump out, stable their horses, and flock chattering into the warm kitchen. The housewife at this season was always prepared for guests. She had meats of various kinds roasted and put away cold. All she had to do was to thrust them into the hot oven, and in a few minutes the dinner was ready. At such times bread was despised by everybody, and sweet cakes took its place. When the *habitans*, as on May-day, were feasted by their seigneur, the table was loaded with a profusion of delicacies. Legs of veal and mutton, roasts and cutlets of fresh pork, huge bowls of savory stew, pies of many kinds shaped like a half-moon, large tarts of jam, with doughnuts fried in lard and rolled in maple sugar, were among the favored dishes.

Among the upper classes breakfast was a light meal, with white wine and coffee, usually taken at eight o'clock. Dinner was at midday, and supper at seven. Soup was always served at both these meals. On the great sideboard, filled with silver and china, which usually occupied one end of the dining room and reached to the ceiling, stood cordials to encourage the appetite. In one corner stood a water jar of blue and white porcelain, at which guests might rinse their hands before going to table. The table was served with great abundance of choice fish and game. Each person's place was supplied with napkin, plate, silver goblet, spoon and fork; but every one carried and used his own knife. To keep up the cheer of hearts that aids digestion, all the company sang in turn about the table, the ladies bearing their full share with the men. It was a happy and innocent life which sped in the manor-houses of the St. Lawrence, where the influence of Bigot and his crew was not allowed to reach.

There must have been another side to this picture in the ordinary life of the *habitant*, a life of privation and toil. We are accustomed to think of it with pity, and to contrast it with that of the New England colonist, living in thrifty comfort. But the Canadian *habitant*, though generally poor, was not miserable in his poverty. Between the French and the English as he found them in America, Charlevoix¹ thus draws a comparison :

In New England and the other British colonies, there reigns an opulence

¹As quoted by Parkman in "The Old Regime in Canada."