

## BALDWIN LAFONTAINE HINCKS

inhabitants of French Canada had known nothing of political rights<sup>1</sup> or representative institutions. Only in rare cases had offices, favour, or promotion been bestowed upon native Canadians. Even the Church itself, in spite of its democratic tradition in favour of capacity and zeal, had withheld all superior offices from the children of the humble peasantry of the St. Lawrence. To have instituted among such a people a system of democratic self-government on the morrow of the conquest, could only have ended in chaos and disaster.

The government thus established by royal proclamation was systematized and consolidated by the British parliament through the Quebec Act of 1774.<sup>2</sup> This statute established in Canada a province of magnificent extent. Northward it extended to the Hudson Bay Territory; on the south it bordered New England, New York, Pennsylvania and the Ohio; westward it reached to where all trace of civilization ended with the Mississippi River. The Ohio valley was already dotted here and there in its forests and open meadow lands with the cabins of adventurous settlers. Of the rest of Canada the valley of the St. Lawrence was the only occupied part. Thither had come already, since the conquest, a few British immigrants, for the most part small traders<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kingsford, *History of Canada*, Vol. IX., pp. 190 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> 14 Geo. III., c. 83.

<sup>3</sup> See V. Coffin, *The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution* (1896), Ch. II. pp. 303 *et seq.*