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GROWTH OF THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION.

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PRIOR to the British Conquest, Canada cannot rightly be said to have had a Constitutional History, simply because she had not a *Constitution* in our sense of that term. Governed as she was according to the despotic ideas of the French King, her people were guided and controlled by a governor appointed by the King, a bishop, an official called an intendant, and a council also appointed by Kingly authority. It was a very paternal form of government, one in which the most private affairs of life were regulated, and one with which the simple *habitants* were fairly well content. True, the Colony did not prosper greatly and sometimes, especially towards the close of the French Period the inhabitants suffered severely from the greed, rapacity and injustice of the King's officials. The carnival of vice and extravagance of the profligate Bigot is not likely to be forgotten as long as Canadian History is read, or access can be had to the eloquent pages of Parkman. The old historic city of Quebec yet abounds in scenes and stories reminiscent of these ante-British days,

when *Chateau Bigot*, and *Chien D'Or*, were scenes of revel and deeds of violence and injustice.

Nor can we say that our Canadian Constitution begins with the fall of Quebec in 1759, or even with the Peace of Paris in 1763. George III., it is true, issued a proclamation to his new subjects in Canada, in which their religious freedom was recognized, and in which political rights, akin to those enjoyed in the American Colonies, to the south, were promised at no distant day. But, so far as representative government was concerned, Canada had to wait nearly thirty years after the Conquest before the privilege was conceded.

The form of government that followed the surrender of Montreal in 1760, was, until the close of the war in 1763, military. General Murray and two subordinate officers, Gage and Burton, exercised a mild but despotic authority over the French inhabitants. Religious freedom was enjoyed by the people, this, too, at a time when severe penal laws were in force in England and Ireland against Roman Catholics. The change from