

PREFACE.

"THE physiognomy of a government," says De Tocqueville, "can best be judged in its colonies, for there its characteristic traits usually appear larger and more distinct. When I wish to judge of the spirit and the faults of the administration of Louis XIV., I must go to Canada. Its deformity is there seen as through a microscope."

The monarchical administration of France, at the height of its power and at the moment of its supreme triumph, stretched an arm across the Atlantic and grasped the North American continent. This volume attempts to show by what methods it strove to make good its hold, why it achieved a certain kind of success, and why it failed at last. The political system which has fallen, and the antagonistic system which has prevailed, seem, at first sight, to offer nothing but contrasts; yet out of the tomb of Canadian absolutism come voices not without suggestion even to us. Extremes meet, and Autocracy and Democracy often touch hands, at least in their vices.