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STATE OF FEELING IN QUEBEC AND NOVA SCOTIA DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION.

BEFORE the utterances of the Hon. Honore Mercier, Premier of Quebec, at the recent Catholic Conference in Baltimore, have been forgotten, it might be worth while to notice briefly the state of feeling in those colonies now forming the Canadian Confederacy at the time of the American Revolution, and the reasons that prevented them from joining with the thirteen revolting colonies. The learned Premier's remark if read by the light of the Quebec candle alone—and the opinion of a provincial politician is too often formed solely from the standpoint of his own province—was singularly inaccurate if we may judge of the future or present by the past and trust the lessons of history. I propose in this article to point out the real attitude of Quebec and Nova Scotia,—the remaining provinces did not then exist as such*—to the United States during their quarrel with the mother country; in the doing of which I think it will be abundantly apparent that Quebec at least declined to consummate a marriage with them for good and sufficient cause, Mr. Mercier to the contrary notwithstanding. Simple reflection and regard for the publicly expressed sentiments of the leaders of thought in Quebec lead one irresistibly to the conclusion that to-day that Province would as steadily set her face against annexation to, or union with, the United States, as she did in the period embraced between the years 1774-83.

For a term of years after the Treaty of Paris, the government of Quebec was in a chaotic state.

* Prince Edward Island was indeed separated from Nova Scotia in 1769, but there were only 150 families residing upon it. I have therefore omitted any reference to it.

"It was," said Solicitor General Wedderburne, afterwards Lord Chancellor Loughborough, "neither military nor civil; it evidently was not meant to endure." The home authorities were naturally unwilling to concede to a people of different language, religion, and race, with whom they had lately been at war, the privilege of retaining their own laws; even tho' it were a principle of English law as old as the Great Charter itself that the inhabitants of a conquered or ceded country, if civilized, should not be forced to undergo a change of their system of jurisprudence with each change of masters. For eleven years, they seemed to follow as a means of creating a spirit of loyalty the advice given to Rehoboth by the young men. If under French sway the habitants had been laden with a heavy yoke, they proposed to increase its weight. The counsel of the old men eventually prevailed, and after repeated memorials from the oppressed people, and reports from the law officers of the Crown, the Quebec Act of 1774 was passed. By its provisions the boundaries of the Province of Quebec were extended; the Catholic colonists were confirmed in the rights given to them by the terms of the capitulations, and relieved from the operation of the English Test Act; the French civil law and procedure, except only as to succession to property, were to be adopted in the Courts; and an executive council with limited powers numbering both Catholics and Protestants among its members was provided for the purposes of government. This Act, long waited and hoped for by the burdened French Canadians, at once reconciled them to their conquerors.

Meantime the relations between the purely English colonies and the mother country were