

them, whether the causes which had produced the strange anomaly of a superabundant agricultural population, environed by a wilderness of Lands, were permanent in their nature or otherwise.

It is with no ordinary satisfaction that your Committee have it in their power to declare, as their opinion, that these causes are not of a permanent nature, and to add that a hope, that their removal may be considered as neither of difficult or distant attainment, may reasonably be indulged.

In the opinion of your Committee, one of the principal causes which have retarded the settlement of the waste Lands of the Crown, in Lower-Canada, has been the abandonment of the ancient mode of granting Lands in Fief or Seigneurie, and the introduction of the tenure of Free and Common Soccage, a tenure novel and unknown to the people of this Country.

The first subject of inquiry of your Committee, has been into the causes which led to the adoption of a measure which did not appear to manifest that regard for the ancient Laws and Institutions of this Province, which so eminently characterized His Majesty's Government generally, and here abundant proof was afforded to your Committee, that a policy so adverse in its spirit to the general policy of His Majesty's Government towards this Colony, arose not from any intermission of that regard, but from extrinsic circumstances, which it was not in the power of your Committee to do more than partially explore.

So early as the year 1775, His Majesty was graciously pleased by his instructions to Guy Carleton, Esquire, Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over the Province of Quebec in America, and of all the Territories dependant thereupon, dated St. James', 3d February, 1775, with other matters relating to the good Government of this Province, to order, as follows:—

38. "By our Commission to you under our Great Seal of Great Britain, you are authorized and empowered, with the advice and consent of our Council, to settle and agree with the inhabitants of our said Province of Quebec, for such Lands, Tenements and Hereditaments, as now are or shall hereafter be in our power to dispose of; it is therefore our will and pleasure, that all lands which now are or hereafter may be subject to our disposal, be granted in Fief or Seigneurie, in like manner as was practised antecedent to the Conquest of the said Province, omitting however, in any grant that shall be passed of such Lands, the reservation of any judicial powers or privileges whatever:—and it is our further will and pleasure, that all grants in Fief or Seigneurie, so to be passed by you as aforesaid, be made subject to our Royal Ratification or disallowance, and a due registry thereof within a limited time, in like manner as was practised in regard to grants and concessions held in Fief and Seigneurie under the French Government."