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SKETCHES FROM CANADIAN HISTORY.

THE QUEBEC ACT 1774.

It would be difficult to point out in the whole history of Canada, a period more replete with interest than the fourteen years from the Capitulation of Montreal, to the passing of the Quebec Act by the British Parliament in 1774. A century has elapsed since then, and various forms of government have been successively tried, until at last, the Dominion itself has been established, and once more the Province of Quebec, under altered circumstances it is true, finds itself ruled as it was of yore by a French-Canadian majority, directed and controlled by a Roman Catholic priesthood. That short period of fourteen years is well worthy of study, if only to trace how during that time the hierarchy, with the skill and perseverance for which it is noted, managed to shake itself free from all subjection to civil authority, and lay solidly and strongly the foundation of their present independence, so boastfully proclaimed by the Provincial Council held at Quebec in 1873:—
"Profitemur Ecclesiam esse societatem perfectam, independentem a potestate civili, eaque superiorem." An absolute freedom from state control, which they declare with joy, is to be found in no other por-

tion of the civilized world. *"Lactentes vero confitemur majorem libertatis gradum Ecclesiam adeptam esse in nostrâ Provinciâ quam forsau in ullo alio orbis terrarum loco."* Not only can the encroachments of the church upon the domain of the civil power, during those short years, be clearly followed, but also the endeavors of the episcopal power to free itself from all the restrictions from time immemorial wisely imposed upon it by the rules and practices of the church; successful efforts which have resulted in producing, in Canada, a priesthood completely dependent upon and subjected to the will and caprice of the bishops,—a body of men held in thralldom vile, who dare neither act, speak nor think for themselves, but must in every thing consult the wishes and desires of their masters and rulers.

This enquiry will also tend to show how completely the attempts of the British portion of the population to secure the constitutional liberty the country has since enjoyed were at first frustrated by the marked preference of the French-Canadians for the state of subjection and despotism to which they were accustomed. The celebrated Edmund Burke, who opposed the bill