

## ONTARIO FIFTY YEARS AGO AND NOW :

## A CONTRAST.

## II.

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THE American Revolution brought out two striking pictures of the inconsistency of human nature. The author of the Declaration of Independence lays down at the very first this axiom : ' We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal ; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ; ' and yet this man was, with numbers of others who signed the famous document, a slave-holder, and contributed to perpetuate a system which was a reproach and a stain upon the fair fame of the land, until it was wiped out with the blood of tens of thousands of its sons. The next picture that stands out in open contradiction to the declaration of equality of birth and liberty of action, appears at the end of the war. The very men who had clamoured against oppression, and had fought for their freedom and won it, in turn became the most intolerant oppressors themselves. The men who had differed from them and had adhered to the cause of the mother land, had their property confiscated and were expelled from the country. Revolutions have ever been marked by cruelty. Liberty in France inaugurated the guillotine, and the fathers of the American Revolution cast out their kindred, and they found a refuge in the wilderness of Canada, where they endured for a time the most severe privations and hardships. This was the first illustration or definition of ' liberty and the pursuit of happiness, ' from an American point of view.

The result was not, perhaps, what was anticipated. The ten thousand or more of their expatriated countrymen, were not to be subdued by acts of despotic injustice. Their opinions were quite as dear to them as to those who had succeeded in wrenching away a part of the old Empire under a plea of being oppressed. They claimed only the natural and sacred right of acting upon their honest convictions, and surely no one will pretend to say that their position was not as just and tenable or less honourable than that of those who had rebelled. I am not going to say that there was no cause of complaint on the part of those who threw down the gage of war : that has been conceded long ago. The enactments of the Home Government that brought about the revolt are matters with which we have nothing to do at this time ; but when the war terminated and peace was declared, the attitude of the New Government towards those of their countrymen, who had adhered to the Old Land from a sense of duty, was cruel if not barbarous. It has no parallel in modern history unless it be that of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV. The refugees, however, did not, like the Huguenots, find a home in an old settled country, but in the fastness of a Canadian forest ; and it is wonderful that so many men and women, out of love for a distant land whose subjects they had been and whose cause they had espoused, should have sacrificed everything and passed from comfortable homes and kindred