

CHAPTER I.

Theocratic Quebec

It has been said that the privileges which the Catholic Church enjoyed in the France of the Old Régime were conferred upon her as a reward for services against the barbarians. The same may be said of the Catholic Church in Quebec, only that the barbarians, in this case, are the English. From the time of the Conquest to the time of Papineau's rebellion competent observers believed that the French-Canadians would lose their nationality. Tocqueville, when he visited America in the early thirties, regarded them as "the wreck of an old people lost in the flood of a new nation."* We are told that Gasparineau, as he "heard the dull booming of the immense rising tide of the Anglo-Saxon race," wondered if his history of Canada was not a funeral oration.† That the prophets have been confounded, that the French-Canadians have remained French and clung to the language which they brought from their Norman and Breton homes, is largely the result of clerical leadership.

That fact receives ample recognition. "Is it by throwing discredit on the French-Canadian clergy," said the Valleyfield *Progrès*,§ "that we will improve the circumstances of our race? Even in the absence of all religious conviction every Frenchman worthy of the name ought to do all in his power for the greatness of our national clergy. They are our only resource against the enemies who surround us."

*De la Démocratie en Amérique, ed. 1835, vol. i., p. 499.

†Laurean, Histoire de la Littérature canadienne (Montreal, 1874), p. 161.

§Quoted in La Verité (Quebec), 26 November, 1892.