

a council named by the secretary of state for the colonies; and a governor representing the crown.

Even in those days of constitution-mongering, nothing could be more practically rash, or theoretically absurd, than this celebrated act of 1791. Instead of merging the feudal French Canadians into the surrounding free Anglo-Saxon race, a line of imaginary demarcation was drawn, that the less civilized and foreign race might possess the finest portion of the land along the great river St. Lawrence, the central city of Montreal, the strong fortress of Quebec, and the valuable fisheries and sea-coast frontier of the gulf and shores of the St. Lawrence; while the active and free British race were driven to the back woods and swampy borders of the great lakes and inland waters—actually cut off from any outlet to the sea. How such an unjust measure could have been tolerated is really inexplicable; we must only suppose that it was intended to keep up a Gallic race in Lower Canada, as a barrier to the aggressions of the adjoining republicans, or perhaps as a safeguard, should the British settlers and United-States refugees in the upper province incline to the example of their New York neighbours.

But the second error was still worse than the first, which had some Machiavelian ideas in extenuation. To an ignorant, feudal, and hitherto despotically governed people, a franchise nearly equal to universal suffrage was granted; twenty-one counties were marked out, and fifty representatives authorized to be returned for the formation of a commons' house of parliament. No steps were taken to neutralize this preponderance of democratic power. Mr. Pitt's idea of constituting the seigneurs as an hereditary chamber, with additions from time to time, as in the British House of Lords, was scouted by Mr. Fox and his party. No sufficient control was held by the crown or its representative over the public purse; no municipal institutions founded; no measures adopted for gradually breaking in on the feudal tenures; no steps taken to educate a Roman Catholic population, addicted to every kind of superstition, and incapable of reading or writing—the sole idea seemed to be the creation of a democratic assembly—in fact, to give to the vessel of the state the greatest possible quantity of sail, and the least possible quantity of ballast, and then commit it to the mercy of the winds and waves, without rudder, compass, or pilot.

This evilly-constructed constitution (of 1791) consisted of fifty popular representatives, in a *house of assembly*; of fifteen members in a *legislative council*, appointed by mandamus from the crown; of an *executive council* of eleven members, appointed by the crown; and of a governor, (generally a soldier,) with the supposed authority of the