

CHAPTER VII

THE TWILIGHT OF FEUDALISM

WHEN the fleurs-de-lis of the Bourbons fluttered down from the ramparts of Quebec on September 18, 1759, a new era in the history of Canadian feudalism began. The new British government promptly allayed the fears of the conquered people by promising that all vested rights should be respected and that 'the lords of manors' should continue in possession of all their ancient privileges. This meant that they intended to recognize and retain the entire fabric of seigneurial tenure.

Now this step has been commonly regarded as a cardinal error on the part of the new suzerains, and on the whole the critics of British policy have had the testimony of succeeding events on their side. By 1760 the seigneurial system had fully performed for the colony all the good service it was ever likely to perform. It could easily have been abolished then and there. Had that action