

THE CONSTITUTIONAL ACT

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the administration of each province. The British parliament reserved to itself the right of imposing duties for the regulation of navigation and commerce. The free exercise of the Roman Catholic religion was again guaranteed. It was further enacted that the Crown should set apart one-eighth of all the unallotted Crown land in the province for the maintenance of a Protestant clergy, a provision which subsequently entailed the most serious consequences.

The measure was undoubtedly liberal, and at the time of its passage furnished an instrument of government well suited to the requirements of the situation. It was intended to extend to Canada something of the degree of political liberty enjoyed by the people of Great Britain. Its object was declared by Lord Grenville,¹ to be to "assimilate the constitution of Canada to that of Great Britain as nearly as the difference arising from the manners of the people and from the present situation of the province will admit." Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe, speaking to his "parliament" of twenty-three members in the rough frame-house at Niagara where first they met, spoke of the new government as "an image and transcript of the British constitution."² For some years, indeed, after the adoption of the new constitution, the government of the provinces was carried on with reasonable success

¹ Letter to Lord Dorchester, Oct. 20th, 1789.

² Consult D. B. Read, *Life and Times of Governor Simcoe*, Ch. XI. and D. C. Scott, *John Graves Simcoe* (Makers of Canada Series) (1905), Ch. VI.