

THE HABITANT
HIS ORIGIN
AND HISTORY

BY
ALFRED D. DECELLES

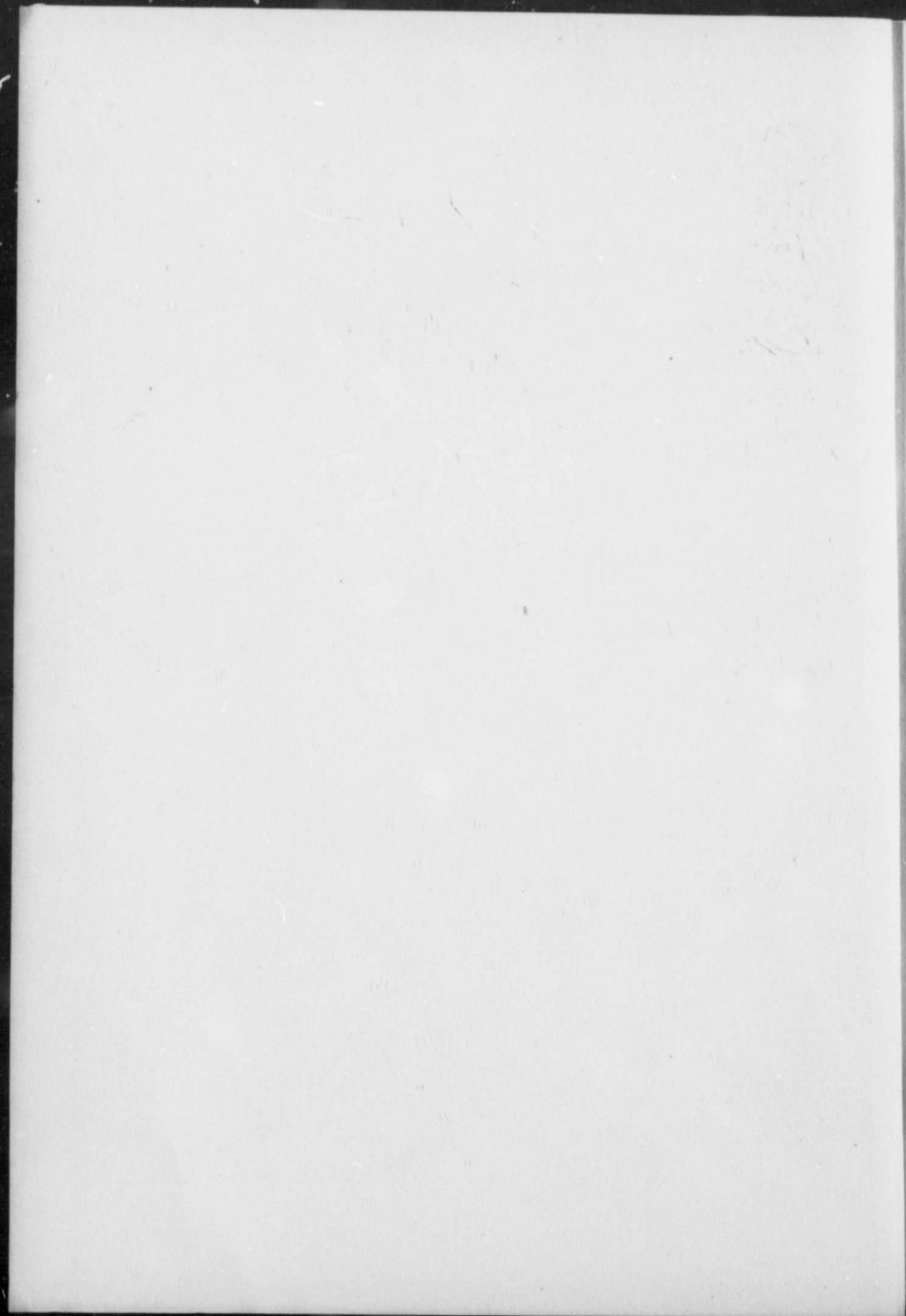
C.M.G., LL.D.



REPRINTED FROM
CANADA AND ITS PROVINCES
A HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN PEOPLE
AND THEIR INSTITUTIONS
BY ONE HUNDRED ASSOCIATES

EDITED BY
ADAM SHORTT AND A. G. DOUGHTY

Cms De Celles, Alfred D.



THE HABITANT
HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY



THE HABITANT
HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

BY

ALFRED D. DECELLES

C.M.G., LL.D.



TORONTO
GLASGOW, BROOK & COMPANY
1914

FC 2911

D43

1914

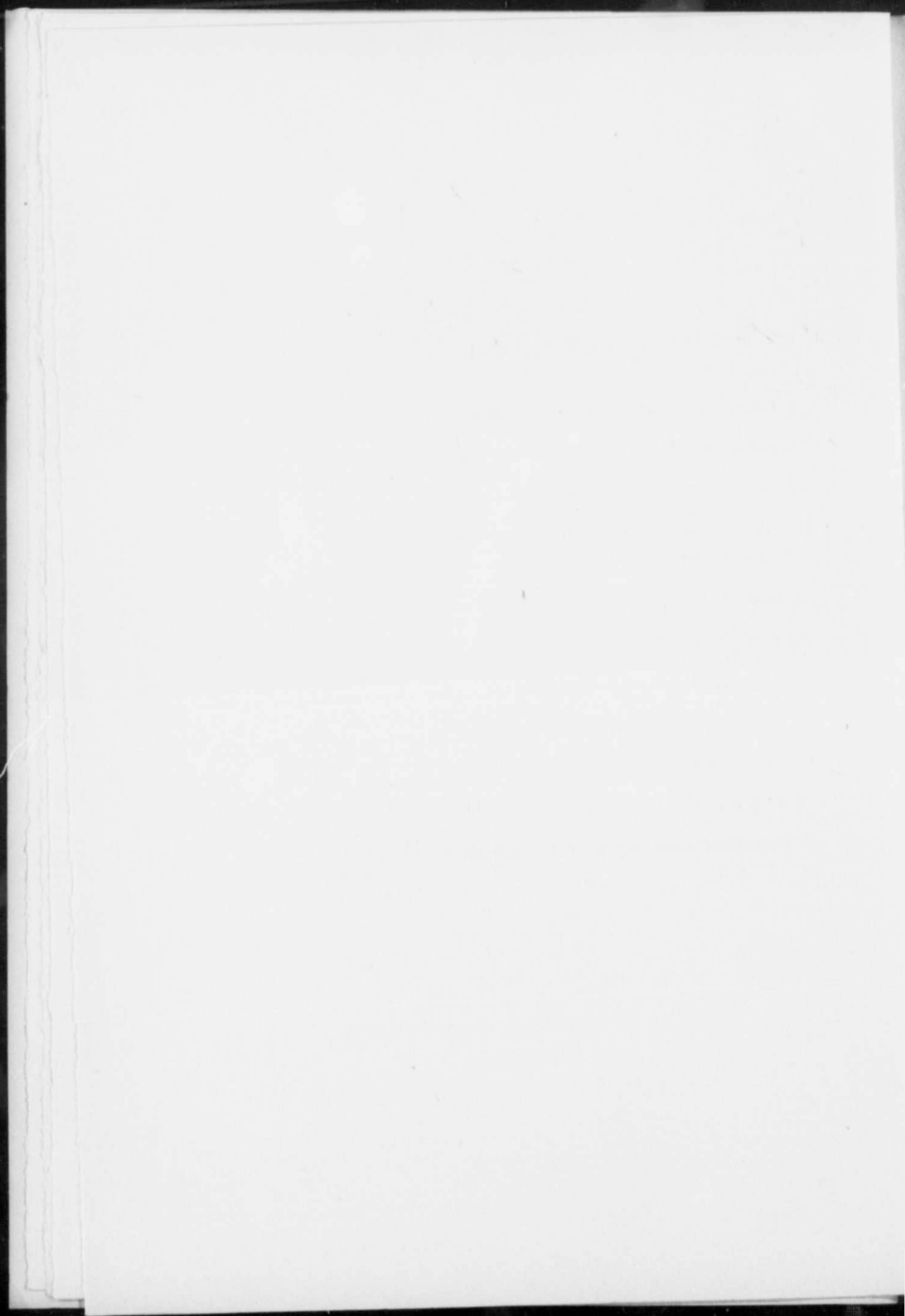
This Volume consists of a Reprint, for private circulation only, of the Ninety-first Signed Contribution contained in CANADA AND ITS PROVINCES, a History of the Canadian People and their Institutions by One Hundred Associates.

Adam Shortt and Arthur G. Doughty,
General Editors



CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. CHAMPLAIN AND FRENCH COLONIZATION . . .	17
II. FIRST PERIOD OF COLONIZATION, 1608-65 . . .	23
III. SECOND PERIOD OF COLONIZATION, 1665-72 . . .	34
IV. THE GROWTH OF THE COLONY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	48
V. ORIGIN OF THE FRENCH CANADIAN	59
VI. THE 'COUREUR DE BOIS'	68
VII. THE HABITANT AS A SOLDIER	79
VIII. THE HABITANT UNDER THE OLD RÉGIME	85
IX. THE HABITANT UNDER BRITISH RULE	93
X. THE HABITANT UNDER THE NEW RÉGIME	98
XI. MANNERS AND CUSTOMS IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC	109



THE HABITANT HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

I

CHAMPLAIN AND FRENCH COLONIZATION

OF all the colonies planted in the New World during the seventeenth century by several European nations, after years of constant effort and at the price of so much blood, not one remains as an oversea dependency in the hands of its original possessors. Mexico, Peru, Chili, Paraguay and Argentina long ago cast off the Spanish yoke. Portugal, once all-powerful in South America, does not hold a foot of ground in that rich continent. War drove France out of North America, and twenty years later England lost her vast colonies. It is, however, the pride and honour of England still to rule over half the continent of North America—the half that she did not originally colonize.

The colony reared for generations by France has, since the Conquest, remained true to the England that lost her own offspring to the south. For the loyalty of French Canada, Great Britain may thank the statesmen who directed her colonial policy, who kept pace with the development of the country, and led the youthful nation step by step through the first stages of political life, and finally crowned it with a full measure of political liberty. The king's French subjects became to all intents and purposes British subjects, and as such entitled to share all rights attached to that status. And was there not a substantial reason for the confidence implied in the grant of enlarged institutions? Did not the French colonists contribute largely to repel from Canada in 1775 and in 1812 Great Britain's own estranged children, and thereby to the maintenance of the supremacy

of the British flag in the country? It must always be remembered that during the first Anglo-American war the English population of Canada amounted only to a few hundred persons, excepting the troops.

To follow the development of the small colony planted in North America by Frenchmen three hundred years ago, to study the transformation of those early settlers into French Canadians—in a word, to examine the history of the habitant,¹ will be our object in the following pages.

The De Monts Company (founded in 1603) did one commendable act. It was instrumental in bringing Champlain to Canada. This great man, the founder of New France, had visited the country in 1603 and knew its possibilities better than any other Frenchman. In 1608 he was sent to lay the foundation of a settlement at Quebec. At the foot of the cliff destined to become famous in history he built his *Abitation* and there spent the winter.

To bring men from France and to have them cultivate the land were his main objects. But his plan of colonization met with obstacles on all sides, and it was only in 1617 that he secured a few real colonists. History remembers the name of Louis Hébert as *le premier colon canadien*. Champlain had met Hébert at Port Royal, and discovering in him a man to his liking granted him a patch of land where the Quebec upper town now stands. On that famous spot the first attempt at tilling the soil was made, and it proved satisfactory.

Among the early emigrants to Quebec we find several Capuchin monks, Récollets, and several daring adventurers, whose vocation required both intelligence and courage. The companies and traders used the adventurers as interpreters in their dealings with the aborigines. To prepare themselves for this special work it was their custom to settle in some Indian village and learn the idiom of the tribe. Most of them, after

¹ The question has often been asked: why are French Canadians called habitants? Under the French régime there were three classes of people—the *habitants*, who came to settle permanently on farms; the *engagés* (indentured servants, as they were called in Virginia), who sold their services for a number of years and often became habitants; and the *hivernants* ("winterers"), who came to trade in Canada during the winter.

years of hard toil and risks of all kinds, became settlers and heads of families. The names of these early comers have come down to their descendants—Marguerie, Jacques Hertel, Marsolet, Brulé, Godefroy and Jean Nicolet. The last of these as an explorer stood head and shoulders above his associates. He discovered Lake Michigan and penetrated west as far as Wisconsin. Guillaume Couillard also arrived early in the colony (1613). Having married a daughter of Louis Hébert, he settled on a farm near Quebec, and is supposed to have been the first to turn the Canadian soil with a plough. Many of Couillard's descendants are still to be found in the Province of Quebec. Father Le Clercq, in his book *L'Établissement de la Foi dans la Nouvelle France* (1687), says that in his day Hébert's posterity had increased so much that it numbered over two hundred and fifty members and that more than nine hundred persons were related to the Couillard-Hébert couple. Couillard, like his father-in-law, became a model colonist, engaged altogether in farm labour.

About the same time Abraham Martin settled not far from the *Abitation*. At a later date he received, from the One Hundred Associates, a grant of land close to Quebec, the famous Plains of Abraham where Wolfe and Montcalm found death and immortality. The land he tilled is now dedicated to memorial purposes under the name of the 'Park of the Battle Fields.'

Many of Champlain's companions were attracted to Canada by the fur trade—the fur trade that was to be the bane of New France—and neglected the true labour of colonization. Not so with Hébert, who devoted all his time to farm work. His industry was greatly appreciated by Champlain, who says: 'He was the first head of a family residing about Quebec who got his living from the ground he cultivated.' Several French Canadians of to-day can prove their claim to relationship with this remarkable colonist, whose example should have been followed by every settler. He had no male issue save one son, who died young, but he was the father of several daughters.

Champlain's associates were nearly all picked men, but their number amounted only to a corporal's guard.

What could the efforts of one individual with such scanty help achieve in the gigantic undertaking of colonizing a new country? His struggle was a desperate one; only dauntless courage enabled him to surmount the obstacles that confronted him in his venture.

Unmindful of their obligations, the Rouen Company, formed by Champlain in 1614, failed to send colonists to Quebec. Champlain had soon found out the reason for this violation of their contract. 'I saw,' he wrote, 'that what they chiefly feared was that if the country were colonized, the power to do everything to their liking would be lessened. They would get furs only through the settlers, and would finally be driven out of New France by the very men established there at great expense by the company.'

Champlain's zeal for colonization greatly irritated the traders from St Malo and Rouen, for it constantly endangered their schemes. It therefore seemed imperative, in the interests of the company, to have him removed from Quebec. With that object in view they suggested to Richelieu that this assiduous guardian of New France should be sent somewhere else on explorations and discoveries.

The suggestion failed, and Champlain's influence at home was such that he persuaded Richelieu to supersede the Rouen Company by a new one, that of Montmorency. Two well-known Huguenot merchants, Guillaume and Emery de Caen, were placed in charge. But time soon proved that this was a change without an improvement. The sole object of the de Caen appeared to be to derive profit for themselves and their friends through the fur trade. Not only were they both indifferent to the settlement of New France, but to favour his own interests Emery even placed obstacles in the way of colonization. Hearing that Father Noyrot was about to sail from France in 1627 with supplies for the colony, he managed, under some pretext, to prevent his departure. This untoward interference cast a gloom on Quebec, where a great scarcity of provisions existed, and Father Lalemant, in a fit of despair, left for France with twenty working-men whom he had just brought over to Canada. There were then fifty Frenchmen in Quebec on the brink of starvation, and

the newcomers, had they remained in Quebec, would have aggravated the situation.

Seeing that matters were going from bad to worse in Canada, Richelieu made up his mind to organize a company strong enough to realize the object he had in view, and composed of men who would keep clear of the mistakes that had wrecked previous colonization societies. In 1627 he gave life to *La Compagnie des Cent Associés* or *La Compagnie de la Nouvelle France*.

The new company was fully organized in 1628, and soon began to carry out the cardinal's desires: an expedition composed of seven ships, commanded by de Roquemont, one of the Associates, with two hundred emigrants on board, sailed for Canada. At last it seemed that Champlain's dream was to become a reality; but again all his hopes were dashed to pieces in such a manner that a less resolute man would have been cast into hopeless despair.

Religious disturbances between Catholics and Huguenots broke out in France simultaneously with a declaration of war between that country and England. De Roquemont's ships were captured by Kirke in the St Lawrence; Quebec fell into the hands of the English in 1629, and Champlain was taken to England. Although peace was signed between France and England in the same year, Quebec was not restored to its former masters till 1632.

In spite of all these adverse circumstances Champlain had never desponded, and continued to hope for better days. While in England he had worked to hasten the return of Quebec to France, and when success had crowned his efforts he went to France to arouse fresh interest in the oversea colony, which had been given up by many as irretrievably lost. It was through his pertinacity and courage that the government and the One Hundred Associates decided to resume their work in North America.¹

In 1633 Champlain returned to Canada with some colonists. He landed at the foot of Cape Diamond only to

¹ The capture of the ships of the One Hundred Associates had left the company almost completely without financial resources. Its capital at the start was only 300,000 livres.

find his *Abitation* and other houses and stores a mass of ruins. Most of the settlers, priests and officers of the company had been deported to France. A few friends of Champlain had, however, remained in Quebec, in spite of the change of régime. They were landowners anxious to secure to themselves the fields brought under cultivation after strenuous efforts. Such were Hébert, Couillard, Martin, Desportes, Pivert, Duchesne (a surgeon), Pont-Gravé, and several interpreters, three of whom, among them Brulé, had decided to cast in their lot with the victors. They begged for forgiveness, and the governor of New France, as kindly inclined as he was great, took them back into his service.

In the fall of 1635 Champlain's health suddenly broke down under the terrible strain to which he had been subjected since his youth. War, many voyages across the ocean,—which in those days meant months of anxiety and sufferings—and explorations far and wide, had worn out his robust constitution, and on December 25, 1635, he passed away in his fifty-eighth year. His simple honesty of purpose and sincerity gained for France the friendship and alliance of many Indian tribes in Canada, and it was Champlain's policy with regard to the aborigines that prevailed during the French régime. Posterity both in North America and in Europe has bowed before his noble figure. It is astonishing, says a French historian, that Voltaire, who professed much admiration for William Penn, has not bestowed a single word of praise on Champlain, a man of vaster mind in every way than the Quaker apostle.

The first attempt to colonize New France had resulted in a discouraging failure, due to events over which Champlain had no control. Shortly after his death the population of New France amounted only to eighty-five souls—twenty-three settlers or habitants, eleven interpreters, fourteen clerks connected with the company, ten priests, seven traders and twenty trappers. Still, Champlain's initial step in colonization constituted a sort of foothold for France in America. But for his perseverance New France would probably have been abandoned. His efforts, though thwarted by men and events, have won for him the title of Father of New France.

II

FIRST PERIOD OF COLONIZATION, 1608-65

COLONIZATION, which has been reduced to a science in modern times, requires three factors to be successful. The people who wish to extend their domain in unsettled countries must have great financial resources, a peaceful native population as co-operators, and settlers endowed with great individuality.

It will be seen hereafter that the One Hundred Associates had not these requirements. The company had been organized before the surrender of Quebec and its prospects were at first very promising. Richelieu displayed all his skill in framing for it a charter that to this day is looked upon as magnificent in its conception. His plan was far-reaching. When engaged in arranging its details, he was not unmindful of the causes of failure under previous organizations. It sometimes happens that men succeed in turning to good account constitutions and charters that are in themselves inadequate. In other instances conceptions are too vast for the abilities of the agents appointed to set them in motion: such was the case with the One Hundred Associates.

Richelieu had carefully selected his partners in this great commercial enterprise, wherein he appears in the foremost rank with another minister. Some hailed from Paris; others from Lyons and Bordeaux; others again from Rouen and St Malo; every province of France was represented in his association. Special attention was bestowed on the importance of having men from the interior, where New France was but a name. As to the provinces bordering on the Channel, fishermen from every one of their seaports knew the route to Canada, but Richelieu did not consider them as the best stock out of which to make colonists. Peasants from Le Perche, Aunis and Saintonge appeared better suited to be the future farmers of New France.

The One Hundred Associates were treated with the utmost generosity. The charter gave them all the territory worth

24 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

occupying in Canada, from Labrador to Florida and from the Atlantic shore to Lake Huron—*la mer douce* (the fresh-water sea of Champlain). This extensive possession was to go to their heirs at law for ever. The charter lavished extraordinary privileges on the Associates, and practically constituted them the sovereign power of Canada, with the full administration of justice and seigniorial rights; it even conferred on them the royal prerogative of creating dukes, earls and barons with suitable estates.

It is interesting to read this charter, bearing as it does the imprint of Richelieu's masterly mind. 'It was Louis XIII's object, and that of his father, Henry IV,' the great minister says, 'to civilize, with the divine assistance, the people, inhabitants of Canada, and to educate them to know the Catholic faith and religion and the true God. To reach this end, it was necessary to settle the country with French Catholics who, by their example, would induce the aborigines to accept the true God and the Catholic faith.' As a conclusion to this worthy design comes a brief note that some commercial benefit might be derived for the king's subjects.

All through the French régime special attention was bestowed on the aborigines. This was in striking contrast to the policy pursued in other colonies. An instance of this Christian, or humanitarian, feeling appears in the charter. If any redskin, for instance, desired to live in France, he was to be considered a Frenchman, without any letter of naturalization, though he must of course have been converted to Catholicism to enjoy this privilege.

Royal power seldom appears without military force, and two men-of-war, armed and manned, were placed at the disposal of the Associates. As a natural sequence to this extraordinary gift, they were given full power to manufacture powder and cannon and to build forts in New France.

The Associates were under the obligation to send four thousand men to Canada within fifteen years. As the newcomers would be helpless at first in the wilds of America, Richelieu made it one of the conditions of the grant that the colonists were to be housed and provided for during three

years at the company's expense, and supplied with all necessaries of life required in a new settlement—*avec toutes les choses généralement quelconques*. With a view to inducing noblemen to join him in his great undertaking, the minister prevailed upon the king to put aside the law that if a count or a marquis of France took part in commercial ventures, he would forfeit his social rank. An exception to this rule was made in favour of noblemen entering the company.

Keeping in view the king's first object in settling a colony in America, Richelieu bound the company to maintain three priests at each post to be established. As the introduction of French Protestants in New France would conflict with the king's intention, the Huguenots were strictly excluded from colonial emigration. This restriction remained an established policy throughout the French régime.

Modern historians have characterized this line of conduct as inspired by bigotry. At any rate, they claim, it proved doubly detrimental to French interests. While it deprived the colony of energetic and intelligent settlers, it benefited New England and Virginia, who found in the French Protestants excluded from Canada men of great ability in every walk of life. This is certainly true; but the other side of the question must also be considered. During the régime of the last Valois—Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX and Henry III—religious wars broke out in France and were waged furiously between Catholics and Protestants. Henry IV established peace for a time by the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598, but, under his successor, Louis XIII, the Huguenots again rose in rebellion in the west and south-west of France, to be crushed at La Rochelle after a memorable siege conducted in person by Richelieu. The cardinal, who had ample occasion to realize the dire results of religious strife, was determined to prevent it by excluding one party from the new colony.

Was Richelieu influenced in this matter by his position as Prince of the Church? It is not unnatural to presume that his faith and surroundings strongly inclined him to stem the tide of what he believed to be heresy. Still, there is little doubt that throughout his career as prime minister the

statesman in him overrode the priest. Did he hesitate for a minute to form an alliance with German Protestants against a Catholic sovereign, the Emperor Ferdinand of Austria? To the greatness of France he gave all his energies. He was a thorough Catholic in his own country because it suited his policy; in external affairs the interests of the state took precedence over all others.

It is most unfair, on the other hand, for modern historians to judge the policy of the past from the standpoint of the present. Prevailing ideas in the seventeenth century, not only in France, but over all Europe, excluded toleration in matters of conscience. It was a political gospel that the state, in order to be strong and to utilize all its elements of strength, should have under its control a people united in the same faith and under one ruler. A very serious consideration must have impressed Richelieu at this moment. When preparing his charter, was he not engaged at La Rochelle in a terrible struggle with his Protestant countrymen, supported by the soldiers of Charles I of England? Later on, could he lose sight of the fact that Kirke and a strong contingent of Huguenots were sailing up the St Lawrence to crush his nascent colony? These events must have strongly influenced the great minister when he was laying down the basis of New France and looking into its future. What absolves Richelieu from the charge of religious prejudice, in any blamable degree, is the fact that with his sanction Huguenot merchants had formed part, in large numbers, of the previous company. Emery and Guillaume de Caen, managers of the Montmorency Company, were French Protestants.

By their charter the One Hundred Associates became practically masters of New France. With their rule began the first period of colonization. Their ownership covered the soil, mines, forests and trade, and they had power to dispose of any part of these enormous resources. Even the government was left in their hands. If they did not actually appoint colonial public officers, their nominees were accepted by the king. How this apparently powerful organization ended in failure after an experience extending over a quarter of a century we shall now see.

It will be remembered that before Champlain surrendered Quebec to Kirke, several ships sent by the One Hundred Associates to Canada, with a number of emigrants, had been captured by the English. When Canada was restored to France, ships were again sent to Quebec. The expenditure entailed by these expeditions almost drained their treasury. As has been said, their capital did not exceed 300,000 livres, a small sum when the magnitude of the undertaking is considered. The company was therefore almost crippled at the very start for want of means to carry out the work of colonization as planned by Richelieu. In this predicament they adopted a plan which went some way towards making up for their failure. They decided to constitute seigniories in favour of certain individuals, who should, in return for this favour, give farms to emigrants desirous of making their home in Canada.

The first grant went to Robert Giffard. His seigniority extended from the River Montmorency to Beauport, with a frontage of four miles on the St Lawrence. Giffard lived up to the condition of his grant. By his invitation fifty men, all hardy peasants from Le Perche, came to Canada to settle permanently. One can only regret that more seigneurs of Giffard's character could not have been found to share with him the task of building up the country.

The next grant went to Cheffaut de la Regnardière, a lawyer, and proved equally beneficial. This concession, known as the seigniority of Beaupré, was as large as a province of France and extended from the River Montmorency to the Rivière du Gouffre. Among the men who took up farms on Cheffaut's domain, history has retained the names of Le Gardeur de Repentigny and Leneuf de la Potherie. With their families they formed a party of forty settlers. Some friends had also arrived with them. Taken altogether, this was by far the largest contingent of settlers yet seen in Canada.

Other emigrants, scions of noble families, were favoured in a like manner. The region of the Rivière Bruyante was granted to Simon le Maistre; the seigniority of Cap Rouge to Juchereau des Chatellets. Bourdon, Jean Godefroy, Castillon and Girard de la Chaussée also received large grants.

Several religious orders had their share in this land distribution, among them the Ursulines and Hospitallers and the Jesuits, all of Quebec. The Sulpicians became seigneurs of the Island of Montreal.

In 1635 hostilities broke out in Europe between France on the one side and Spain and Austria on the other. It had been the policy of Henry IV to prevent the House of Austria from gaining the hegemony of Europe, and this policy Richelieu determined to maintain. This war diverted attention from New France. What was the destiny of Canada in comparison with the paramount importance of France in Europe! Canada's interests suffered in this complicated situation, and they were to be again jeopardized in the future under similar circumstances. But although the struggle in Europe reacted injuriously on Canada, still colonization made some headway. About 1641 three hundred emigrants had settled in various places. But a calamity greater than the inaction of Richelieu befell New France about this time. The Iroquois, who had recently been supplied with firearms by Dutch traders, began to use their new weapons against the French. Then followed a fearful series of encounters between white men and redskins that came to an end only when Tracy, in 1667, marched against the barbarians with some twelve hundred men. Had a substantial force been sent from France about 1641, the colony would have been spared the atrocities of twenty-five years of savage warfare.

With the mother country facing half Europe on many battlefields, colonization in Canada would have remained at a standstill had it not been for the Jesuits. From the time of their arrival at Quebec in June 1625 this order had sent, year after year, reports to their superior relating their work in America. In these papers New France was painted as a privileged country—a sort of promised land—where men desirous of promoting the interests of religion and of avoiding the corruption of the world might take refuge. Printed copies of these reports—called *Relations*—were circulated in France and attracted much attention. Some religiously inclined persons became so much impressed by them that they resolved to take part in the holy undertakings so highly

praised by the Jesuits. Among these was Le Royer de la Dauversière who, with the help of a few friends, organized a company for the purpose of founding a settlement in Canada. No worldly ambitions spurred these latter-day crusaders. In the statutes of the *Société de Montreal*—their company—it is distinctly stated that no profits were expected or were to be derived from the undertaking. They were fortunate enough to find a man endowed with the qualifications necessary for leadership in their undertaking—Paul de Chomedy de Maisonneuve. The promoters never had reason to regret their choice. As a Christian and a pious enthusiast, no one could have surpassed de Maisonneuve in self-denial and devotion to his cause.

Maisonneuve arrived in 1642 at the site of the future city of Montreal, accompanied by a small band of men of deep religious convictions. On his way he had stopped at Quebec, and here the terrible dangers that loomed up before him were depicted in dark colours. 'Remain near Quebec,' he was told, 'and land will be given you. The risks are too great on the Island of Montreal with Iroquois warriors to crush you out of existence.'

But nothing could induce him to accept this enticing offer.¹ He was bent on establishing a new settlement away from Quebec, and trusted in God to help him to perform the task. He therefore proceeded to the Island of Montreal and laid the foundation of a new town on the slope of Mount Royal.²

¹ 'On arriving at Quebec in 1641 the colonists were solicited not to proceed higher up the river. The colony had only two or three hundred persons, and would profit much by this reinforcement. They were offered the Island of Orleans for their establishment, and efforts were made to intimidate them by accounts of the Iroquois, who overran the country and were still about the Island of Montreal. Maisonneuve replied: "I have not come to deliberate, but to execute: if there were as many Iroquois at Montreal as trees, it is my duty and a matter of honour to go there and establish a colony." He went without delay. Jeanne Mance remained to spend the winter in Quebec. Attempts were made to detain her, but she, far from being deterred from going to Montreal, even gained over Madame de la Peltrie, who had a taste for new establishments. Madame de la Peltrie, when at Montreal, proposed to go among the Hurons, but the priest Vimont dissuaded her. Eventually she returned to Quebec, and there passed the rest of her life. She stayed eighteen months at Montreal till the year 1643.'—*Histoire des Ursulines de Québec*, vol. i. p. 76.

² See section I, p. 413.

De Maisonneuve's designs had taken the Iroquois by surprise. They were not aware till 1643 that a new French settlement had been planted on the Island of Montreal. The presence of the French in that part of the country enraged them, as it jeopardized their interests. Would they tolerate the settling of their foe between themselves and their hunting ground in the vicinity of Three Rivers, where the fur-bearing animals were to be found most abundantly? Ville-Marie would stand in the way, and therefore it must be wiped out. Such was the *raison d'être* of their unrelenting attacks on Maisonneuve's colony from 1643 to 1653. The view they took of the situation constitutes a remarkable instance of Iroquois foresight, by far the keenest in the Indian world. Always on the alert, Maisonneuve and his right-hand man, Lambert Closse, had, with their companions, to meet the most insidious of enemies, full of ruses and ever ready to run when hard pressed. They had to rack their brains to find devices to check the Iroquois; and at last they hit upon the ingenious idea of training dogs to detect a foe that crept through bushes, whose noiseless approach, resembling that of the snake in the grass, was so difficult to discover. Indians were known to have remained over two days, motionless, crouched behind a tree waiting for their victim. Thanks to the marvellous scent of the dogs, the presence of the 'scalp-hunter' was more easily detected.¹

In spite of the courage and deeds of valour of the settlers, their position in Montreal threatened to become untenable. Leaving Lambert Closse in charge of Montreal, Maisonneuve sailed for France to impress on the court the absolute necessity of sending soldiers to Canada. He returned to Montreal in 1653 with a hundred men. These were drilled with the colonists already established, and a militia company under the name of *Milice de la Sainte Famille*, a designation well illustrating the character of the colony, was formed. Many years later, when Montreal had grown strong enough to repulse their attacks, the Iroquois rushed madly upon the smaller settlements, and in 1689 contrived to vent their fury, in

¹ On the base of the Maisonneuve monument, Place d'Armes, Montreal, stands the figure of one of these famous dogs, with the effigy of Lambert Closse near by.

horrible scenes of bloodshed, on Lachine and all isolated farms about the Island of Montreal.

At Three Rivers the situation was, if possible, still worse. Founded in 1634, this trading-post did not make much headway. Colonization fared no better here than elsewhere in Canada. After many fights the Iroquois nearly succeeded, in 1653, in annihilating its small band of soldiers headed by Governor Du Plessis-Bochard, who lost his life in the fray.

The Jesuit *Relations* admirably reveal the hardships, perils and courage of the colonists. Young Couture, travelling with Father Jogues, fell into the hands of an Iroquois band. Thanks to his vigour and agility he managed to escape. He was not far away, however, when, suddenly stricken with remorse for having left his companion in bondage, he retraced his steps and charged the enemy. Taken prisoner again, he was tortured with Father Jogues, but was not put to death.

Still more striking is the conduct of François Hertel. He writes to his spiritual adviser from a Mohawk village to beg pardon for having been taken prisoner alive. His reasoning sounds strange to modern ears: 'The reason why I did not fight until I was killed is that I feared I was not in a perfect state of grace.' Then Hertel begs his friend to bless the hand holding the pen, a hand which had one of its fingers burned in a pipe, 'as an atonement to the God I have offended.'

Montreal, the outpost of civilization, was most exposed to the enemy. From Maisonneuve down to the humblest inhabitant, religious fervour transformed all these pioneers of New France into heroes. Scorning death, they charged almost daily against the bands of Indians prowling around their poor stockade. Maisonneuve and Lambert Closse performed marvellous deeds of bravery in every fight. All their companions were cast in the mould of Adam Daulac or Dollard des Ormeaux, who, with sixteen of his comrades and a few friendly Indians at Long Sault on the Ottawa, held off over five hundred Iroquois for five days. He met death with all his companions, but his resistance discouraged the Indians, who, measuring the valour of the Montreal garrison by Dollard's, gave up their intended attack on Ville-Marie.

32 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

According to the *Relations des Jésuites* these first Canadians could be likened to the community of Christians in the early church days. A most fraternal sentiment pervaded all the settlements. Help was gladly given to the sick and to captives, and during the enforced absence or disability of some colonists their farms were taken care of by friendly neighbours.

During the first period of colonial life every colonist was carefully selected. Religious persons investigated the conduct of emigrants before they departed for Quebec, and if a black sheep escaped the moral ordeal, and made his way to Canada, he was sent back to France as soon as his character was discovered.

Boucher¹ states that bad men were too much in the light to escape detection. Colonists had to be virtuous—such was the prevailing idea among the patrons of New France, and from this stern prescription they did not swerve under any circumstances. A nobleman was ordered back to La Rochelle for being too attentive to a squaw. When the time arrived to import girls to Canada to provide the settlers with wives, a most rigid attention was paid to their choice. Two women of bad repute were returned as 'undesirables' almost as soon as they landed at Quebec. One Courville, a *roturier*, was warned to put an end to his attentions to Mademoiselle d'Auteuil, and upon his refusal to comply with this advice was confined in gaol, pending his deportation to France.

Such is the picture of Canadian society drawn by the Jesuits in their letters to their superior at Rome. The material side of life was not overlooked in these *Relations*. Father le Jeune endeavoured in several of them to dispel all the false notions scattered broadcast in France with regard to the colony. Almost every letter from the Jesuits was printed and circulated in the French provinces. The enthusiastic description of Canada given in them attracted many immigrants to Quebec and Montreal, and did more to promote colonization than either the efforts of the government or of the One Hundred Associates.

¹ Governor of Three Rivers and author of *L'Histoire véritable et naturelle des mœurs et productions du pays de la Nouvelle-France*, 1664.

Fifty-five years after the foundation of Quebec, New France was still in its cradle. The population, all numbered, did not amount to more than 2500 souls. Richelieu's well-devised plan had proved abortive in the hands of his favourite company, either through indifference or want of means to comply with the terms of their charter. After thirty years the Associates had failed to bring over the 4000 emigrants they had agreed to transport to Quebec in half that time, and Louis XIV became convinced that they had outlived their usefulness. It was therefore resolved in 1663 to cancel their charter. With the dissolution of the One Hundred Associates ended the first period of colonization.

In what part of Canada were these 2500 colonists established? They had been located in three different groups—near Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal. Quebec at that period appeared to the greatest advantage. Champlain's settlement could boast of a few public buildings on Cape Diamond, with houses and stores on the shore below. Eight hundred Frenchmen had made their home in the town. From Cap Tourmente, twenty-one miles below Quebec, the seigniories of Beaupré, Beauport and Island of Orleans were then pretty well settled with a population of 130, 180 and 450 souls respectively. Ascending the St Lawrence, we find the Three Rivers group subdivided into two sections and separated by the River St Maurice; their combined population numbered about 400. Ninety miles farther west, Ville-Marie, the most recently established settlement, could only count 500 souls. A year after Maisonneuve's arrival there were in Ville-Marie only fifty-nine colonists. A certain number of soldiers, who had been sent later on, helped to increase the population by becoming permanent settlers.

From time to time, as the number of men grew larger, contingents of girls were sent from France to provide wives for the settlers. The courtship did not last long: a few weeks after having set foot on the Canadian soil they found themselves installed in the homes of stalwart husbands. The king of France, the governor and religious authorities favoured early marriages. Young men wedded girls of sixteen, fifteen, and even occasionally of twelve years of age.

34 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

This rule contributed to keep colonial morals at a high standard.

It will not be superfluous to quote Abbé Ferland in full on this point.

In order to strengthen the evidence furnished by contemporaries as to the morals of our ancestors, we shall produce an authorized statement. We mean the records of births and marriages wherein nearly all christenings of the Quebec government were registered, up to 1672. Out of six hundred and sixty-four children who were baptized, between 1621 and 1661 inclusive, only one illegitimate child is mentioned. It is important to observe that, during all that period, nearly all the children were brought to Quebec to be christened. From 1661 to 1690, only one child is noted as being born of unknown parents, so that during the space of sixty-nine years, amidst a population comprising soldiers, mariners, travellers, new colonists, two children only were born out of lawful wedlock.

These figures furnish an eloquent refutation of the slanders of men of the type of La Hontan.

Though the early efforts to colonize Canada gave but poor results as regards the number of settlers, we cannot but look with admiration on those pioneers of New France who, at the risk of their lives, paved the way for the success of future generations. Any man in Quebec coming from that stock of hardy and highly moral pioneers can claim a hero as his ancestor. The first period of colonization may well be called the age of chivalry of New France.

III

SECOND PERIOD OF COLONIZATION, 1665-72

WE have seen in the preceding chapter the hard conditions under which New France was opened to civilization. Before the settlers stretched boundless forests to be cleared, and it was their task to adapt home methods to colonial conditions; and what added to

their misery more than all else was the having to guide the plough in a soil red with the blood of many of their friends.

Everything seemed to conspire against the very existence of New France. The One Hundred Associates had shown themselves incompetent to fulfil the requirements of their undertaking, while France shut its ears to pressing appeals for help coming from Quebec. These appeals should have been heeded, for from 1641 to 1665, and especially under six governors, viz. Montmagny, d'Ailleboust, Lauzon, d'Argenson, d'Avaugour and de Mézy, the Iroquois perpetually harassed the young colony. How could it be expected to thrive when the settler could not venture into his fields without his musket? Iroquois warriors even entered the palisade of Montreal, and crouching within the convent yard awaited darkness to scalp any one happening to leave the building.

Champlain's foundation was threatened on all sides; it seemed but a question of time before it must be swept out of existence. Nothing could redeem Canada save the presence of another such man as Champlain. That man appeared in the person of Jean Talon, who landed at Quebec in 1665, with Lieutenant-General de Tracy and Governor Courcelle. Talon was invested with the extensive power of intendant. Police, justice and finance came under his control. With him began the second and most important period of colonization, lasting from 1665 to 1672. The increase of population under Talon, by far the largest of the French régime, was such that it placed the colony on a sound basis with sufficient means of existence.

Talon extended his untiring activity to every need of the country. It struck him at once, as it did Tracy and Courcelle, that the first condition required to ensure the progress of the country was protection from further inroads by the Iroquois. These three officers therefore resolved to bring the Iroquois to terms. Here Talon was the inspiration of the triumvirate, but the belligerent part of the colonial policy fell into the hands of Tracy and Courcelle, who invaded the Iroquois cantons and compelled them to sue for peace.

By the subsequent treaty peace was secured in Canada for sixteen years.

Talon then directed his attention to the internal affairs of the colony and achieved remarkable success. He had a clear vision of its possibilities if Louis XIV could only be persuaded to send out emigrants. Louis had but lately come to his majority, although some time previously he had taken the helm with a decidedly firm hand, and Talon's telling description of a future great domain in America fascinated him. Colbert shared the king's enthusiasm, and both resolved to follow the advice of the intendant. In 1659 and the following year some emigrants had been dispatched to Canada at Bishop Laval's pressing request, and in 1665 it was resolved to send three hundred settlers each year. Unfortunately, the long journey, lasting as it did over two months, in closely packed ships induced sickness and mortality, and nearly one quarter of these prospective settlers died before they reached New France. Still, within a few years over eight hundred emigrants had arrived in Canada. Talon, however, was not satisfied. To supply, in a measure, the deficiency, he persuaded the king and his minister to allow such soldiers from the Carignan-Salières regiment as were willing to remain in Canada to become settlers. This famous corps had come over with Tracy to fight the Iroquois. Peace had been restored and the regiment ordered back to France; but Talon's scheme found favour, and over a thousand soldiers became heads of flourishing Canadian families.

The policy of Louis XIV, so far as it went, was very advantageous to the colony, for it initiated and assisted the immigration movement. The first four hundred settlers on the farms received each one hundred francs, provisions for a year, clothing and agricultural implements; and later settlers were as liberally treated. Some were even given farms ready for the plough, while other colonists were paid for two years while they cleared their land, and were entitled to seeds for sowing two acres—a gratuity equivalent to forty francs per acre. To turn unbroken forests into farm-land proved very arduous labour. A settler could not clear

more than an acre and a half a year. In a letter to her son, Marie de l'Incarnation describes the problem with which the habitants were at first confronted :

Two or three years elapsed before a settler could derive his sustenance from his farm. Even then he could not yet provide out of his labour clothing, furniture and the many small articles required in a house. These first difficulties being overcome, he began to live comfortably, and if he knew how to lay something aside he became in time as rich as is possible in a new country like this. At the beginnings of colonization, the settlers lived on the grain they raised, with vegetables and game, which was plentiful in winter.

The stringent rules governing the choice of colonists during the first period of colonization of New France were somewhat relaxed under Courcelle and Talon. As subsequent experience has shown, emigrants guilty of petty offences, very often committed under the impulse of poverty, improved their moral character living in a new country under better conditions. Still, the behaviour of emigrants was always more or less watched in New France. Bishop Laval and his immediate successor, Bishop de Saint-Vallier, guarded their flock with untiring care and zeal, and strove to eliminate all evil influences. Even in Quebec official society there is evidence to show that the head of the church tried to rule according to the dictates of his conscience.

Talon wrote to Versailles to caution Colbert against sending any one who was not of good morals and physically qualified to bear the rigour of the Canadian climate. Immigrants were also to be good-looking. In 1667 the West India Company tried to ship old men and children ; and upon a protest from the intendant against this practice, orders were given that no one under sixteen or over forty should be sent as an emigrant to Canada.

About this time Talon put into action a well-devised plan to improve conditions in Canada and open new fields to colonial enterprise. In 1666 he induced some of the colonists to build ships. In 1670 three vessels were placed on

the stocks and completed in the fall of that year. They were intended to establish trade relations between Canada and the French West Indies. Accordingly they sailed to these islands loaded with salmon, eels, fish-oil, timber and flour. After delivering their cargo they were to take sugar on board for France, and to return from La Rochelle to Canada with goods required in the colony. The first vessels built at Quebec averaged thirty-six and fifty tons in carrying capacity; later the tonnage was increased to two hundred and even to five hundred. The foresight of Talon also directed the attention of Canadian settlers to the St Lawrence and Gulf fishing grounds. Progress here was very limited owing to the want of capital and also to the greater attraction of the fur trade.

Tanneries were established at Talon's suggestion in Quebec and Montreal. Until a few years ago two villages close to Quebec, respectively known as Tanneries des Belair and Tanneries des Rolland, bore evidence of the provident genius of the intendant, who was responsible for the opening up of the industry in this quarter. He introduced and encouraged the cultivation of hemp and flax, and this proved very beneficial to farmers. For years after his time, and almost to the present day—that is until more delicate fabrics were demanded—coarse linen goods were manufactured in Canada for home requirements. To provide a substitute for wine, difficult to be obtained in Canada, Talon himself set up a brewery in Quebec, and even undertook to export beer to the West Indies. His ever-busy mind did not leave untouched a single project that could benefit the colony. Backed by Colbert, he played the part almost of a dictator. He went the length of dividing all lands not already granted into seigniories, without even consulting the Sovereign Council or Courcelle, with whom he could not agree. Louis XIV, who placed the utmost confidence in Talon, upheld his high-handed actions, being convinced of his superiority over all other colonial officials. These seigniories were given chiefly to officers of the Carignan-Salières regiment, whose descendants in some cases hold them to this day. To afford the colonists better protection against

further Indian attacks, Talon was instructed by the king to place his settlements within easy reach of each other. Accordingly, three new small groups of farms were planted on the plateau that slopes down from modern Charlesbourg to Quebec. They were called Bourg-Royal, Bourg-la-reine and Bourg-Talon. A few other settlements were planted elsewhere after the same plan.

L'Île Perrot, not far from Montreal, was given to Perrot, governor of Montreal; and La Valterie to an officer bearing that name. Boucher received a large tract of land on the south shore, not far from Montreal. Varennes, Chambly, Jarret de Verchères, Contrecoeur, Saint Ours, Sorel, all officers like La Valterie, became landlords on concessions named after them. Along Lake St Peter, on the left side, Pierre and Jean-Baptiste Legardeur and Pierre Boucher became seigneurs of Maskinonge and Grosbois. On the right shore large estates were cut out at Lassaudière and elsewhere below Quebec. Captain Berthier, Morel de la Durantaye and de la Bouteillerie, also officers, were placed on the list of crown grantees. Talon had his share of the king's liberality, and received the seigniorship of des Îlets.

Through Talon's exertions the large gaps that separated the settlements from one another, from Cap Tourmente to Sault St Louis above Montreal, a space of over two hundred miles on both shores of the St Lawrence, gradually decreased. The Richelieu country, from Sorel to Chambly, formed part of this system. Under Talon's rule New France was no more that God-forsaken country of French fable to whose murderous climate people were sent to starve. Farmers were adapting themselves to new conditions of agriculture, and raised from a fertile soil the cereals, fruits and roots necessary for food.

The isolation of Canadian colonists during eight months of the year struck Talon as fatal to the progress of New France. To obviate this, he suggested to Louis XIV the purchase of Manhattan (New York) from the Dutch. This would have given Canada access to the sea through the Hudson, Lake Champlain and the Richelieu River all the year round.

When New Holland passed under English rule he had to look for another egress. He then suggested that a route following the River Chaudière should be opened ; this would have led to the Kennebec, which would have been followed to French Bay (Bay of Fundy). This plan was not considered after his return to France. Like all men with new and progressive ideas, he met with much opposition. Governor Courcelle constantly thwarted his designs and wrote to Versailles to place obstacles in his way. Bishop Laval—the first prohibitionist in America—opposed his policy with regard to the sale of liquor to the Indians. Talon argued that if the French did not sell *eau-de-vie* to the redskins, the English, as it had been their practice for years, would not scruple to exchange rum for peltries, and injure Canadian trade. Laval represented the superior interests of morals in this controversy, and won his case at Versailles.

Talon sent out men to look for minerals, and their researches resulted in the discovery of mines at different points—iron ore at Three Rivers and Gaspé, and copper mines north of Lake Superior.

France was a large consumer of tar, potash and soft soap, imported from Russia and Spain. It occurred to Talon that, with the ashes produced in large quantities by the burning of trees felled by the habitants when clearing land, these articles could easily be manufactured. The potash industry was established, and the enterprise greatly benefited the settlers.

That Louis XIV had the growth of Canada at heart cannot be questioned, but his enthusiasm was damped by the fear of depopulating France, and the paramount obligation to maintain at home a strong standing army. In order to strengthen his colony without weakening the mother country by emigration, he resolved to encourage marriages all through the settlements. Immigrants landing at Quebec were often single and all the soldier-farmers were bachelors. The king, Colbert and Talon made efforts to provide these bachelors with wives, and girls were sent from the mother country. In 1665 as many as one hundred arrived at Quebec, and were quickly married ; two hundred more came the following

year; contingents of future wives poured in each spring. It is estimated that a thousand young women left France for Canada between 1665 and 1673. At first some errors occurred in the selection of these female emigrants. Complaints came from Canada that girls from the cities were not fit for farm labour. Only daughters of peasants, healthy and accustomed to field-work, would be desirable partners for the settlers, except for the noblemen in the colony—*filles de famille*—chiefly officers; for these suitable wives were desired. Talon writes in 1667: 'They have sent us eighty-four girls from Dieppe, and twenty-five from La Rochelle; among them fifteen to twenty of pretty good birth, some of them really *demoiselles* and tolerably well brought up.' But the less refined were in greater demand. Frontenac wrote in 1672: 'If a hundred and fifty girls and as many servants had been sent out this year, they would all have found husbands or masters within a month.'

These future mothers of French Canada were selected with the utmost care as to their moral character. On their way to Canada respectable elderly ladies accompanied them to protect them from all dangers. In spite of this close watching some black sheep managed to slip on board the ships. Marie de l'Incarnation complains in one of her letters that in 1669 *beaucoup de canaille de l'un et l'autre sexe* had landed at Quebec. But as soon as they were detected these undesirable women were sent back whence they came.

As a rule the wisest precautions governed their choice, as shown by a letter of Colbert to Archbishop Harlay of Rouen. 'As, in the parishes about Rouen, fifty or sixty girls might be found who would be glad to go to Canada to be married, I beg you to employ your credit and authority with the curés of thirty or forty parishes, to try to find in each of them one or two girls to go voluntarily for the sake of a settlement in life.' But the care exercised in the selection of the girls did not save them from La Hontan's caustic and humorous slanders:

After the regiment of Carignan was disbanded, ships were sent out freighted with girls of indifferent virtue, under the direction of a few pious old duennas, who

divided them into three classes. These vestals were, so to speak, piled one on the other in three different halls, where the bridegrooms chose their brides as a butcher chooses his sheep out of the midst of the flock. There was wherewith to content the most fantastical in these three harems ; for here were to be seen the tall and the short, the blonde and the brunette, the plump and the lean ; everybody, in short, found a shoe to fit him. At the end of a fortnight not one was left. I am told that the plumpest were taken first, because it was thought being less active they were more likely to stay at home, and that they could resist the winter cold better. Those who wanted a wife applied to the directresses, to whom they were obliged to make known their possessions and means of livelihood before taking from one of the three classes the girl whom they found most to their liking. The marriage was concluded forthwith, with the help of priest and notary ; and the next day the governor-general caused the couple to be presented with an ox, a cow, a pair of swine, a pair of fowls, two barrels of salted meat, and eleven crowns in money.

Of all the men who have written about Canada, La Hontan is the least reliable. His object in writing was not to give a true description, but rather to present a picturesque and amusing narrative. According to official and reliable accounts, the 'King's Girls,' as they were designated, were kept in certain numbers in separate rooms, with most respectable ladies in charge. Madame Bourdon, widow of Jean Bourdon, attorney-general, and Marguerite Bourgeoys, founder of the Hôtel-Dieu at Ville-Marie, performed these good offices, the former at Quebec and the latter at Montreal. They taught the girls, and assisted the men who applied to select suitable partners.

Stimulated by the king's bounties, the race for husbands progressed apace. Louis XIV's policy met with complete success. 'No sooner,' says Marie de l'Incarnation, 'have the vessels arrived than the young men go to get wives, and by reason of their great numbers they are married by thirties at a time.' Wedlock was the order of the day, and we are told by Dollier de Casson that one widow knelt a second time at the marriage altar even before her first husband was buried.

In 1665 Marie de l'Incarnation, who has shown herself in all her letters from Quebec to her son a very correct and shrewd observer, wrote that all the hundred girls sent out that year had been provided for. In 1667 another contingent had found husbands on landing. The same writer notes the facts as follows: 'Ninety-two girls have arrived from France, and most of them have been married to soldiers and labourers.' These girls received from Talon, as a sort of dowry, fifty livres and some food.

To conciliate the conflicting interests of France and Canada was a difficult problem for the statesmen of the day. An impracticable solution occurred to them. For a while they took up Champlain's dream of turning Indians into Frenchmen. 'Our boys,' said Champlain to some Algonquins, 'will marry your girls, and we shall be but one people.' This dream may well have seemed practicable to the father of New France, who had no previous experiment before him to prove its futility. Louis XIV and Colbert still clung to the idea of making Frenchmen out of Indians, and chiefly out of their offspring brought up under Christian influence. Conversion to Christianity, being the initial step in the transformation, was to be followed by education under French teachers. It took years to eradicate this erroneous notion from official minds; even Frontenac placed some faith in it, despite the woeful experience of his predecessors. He wrote:

I have expressed to the Jesuits my great surprise at the fact that, out of all the Indians under their care at Notre Dame de Foye, not one of them could speak French. I have told them that in their missions they should endeavour, whilst making Indians sons of Christ, to transform them also into subjects of the king. To reach that end, it is necessary to teach French to the children, and give them sedentary habits, and induce them to abandon a life so opposed to the spirit of Christianity, since the best means to make Christians out of these poor creatures should be to persuade them to be men.

In these few lines appear Frontenac's illusions, for which his ignorance of the country and lack of experience are

responsible, as well as his dislike of the Jesuits, who, to his mind, assumed too much authority. In reality the priests had grasped the situation better than the governor. To civilize the Hurons and Algonquins—and the Indians generally—would have required long years of labour, if indeed it could ever have been accomplished.

As far back as 1667 young Indians had, at the king's request, been admitted to school in Quebec with French children. This scheme of educating the sons of the forest and of civilizing them proved a complete failure. The seed of education sowed in the young savage minds fell among stones. On the other hand, the French youth that came into contact with such wild companions often became almost unmanageable. Barbarism overcame civilization. The general tendency of human nature is to go down rather than up the slope. The first generation of French colonists were already too prone towards independence, too ready to discard the old country manners and habits. Liberty had an uncontrolled influence over their nature. Abbé de la Tour wrote in 1667: 'Canadian children, as a rule, have shown great brightness, memory and talent, and learned quickly, but being also light-headed, very fond of freedom, with a great fondness for physical exercises, they lack that application necessary to acquire learning. Satisfied with a certain amount of knowledge to help them in their daily avocations, none of them became highly educated.' This ineptitude of the young colonists might apply to all children placed in similar conditions. It disappeared with the general development of the country.

Marie de l'Incarnation, who, for all her deep mysticism, seems to have possessed very practical common sense, did not expect education to have any considerable influence on Indian character. She has often been represented surrounded by Huron girls, as their instructor. Her experience therefore extended further than that of Talon. 'A Frenchman,' she said, 'is sooner changed into an Indian than an Indian into a Frenchman.' Reference is made to the problem in the history of the Ursuline Convent:

If by 'frenchifying' [*franciser*] one means that Indians have become pious, good, charitable under Christian

influence, we can say that our sisters have frenchified almost all young girls entrusted to their care, but on the other hand, if by this word it is desired to convey the impression that Indians have become reconciled to the sedentary life and customs of civilized people, then it must be confessed that, as a general rule, little progress has been made in that direction.

The dislike of the Indian children to education and civilization was inherited from their fathers. Frontenac was much in error in supposing the Indian open to so radical a change of character. Why should they become Frenchmen? They believed themselves superior to the white strangers who could not shift for themselves in Canada and who depended so much on royal help for their success in life.

The scheme proved a failure. Christianity often succeeded in substituting for their indefinite and confused religious notions the idea of God as a ruler of men and things, but there it generally ended. Customs and modes of living remained inseparable barriers between civilization and barbarism. In order to promote marriages between French colonists and Indian women, a sum of one hundred and fifty francs was offered as a dowry. But nearly all the Indian girls scorned what was considered by Louis XIV as an irresistible inducement—not that they overestimated their red companions in comparison with white men, but because their first thought was for the freedom of forest life. Had this scheme succeeded, it would not have helped New France as the king expected. Wars and sickness had played havoc among his redskin allies. From sixty thousand souls at Champlain's arrival the Hurons had been reduced to only a few thousands. In 1700 smallpox, so fatal to Indians in general, had decimated their tribes, and the terrible Iroquois tomahawk had almost completed their annihilation. The sole hope of augmenting the Canadian population rested on the natural increase and immigration; all plans of converting Hurons and Algonquins into Frenchmen had proved abortive.

It was a sad day for New France when in 1672 Talon gave up his strenuous task. His equal was never seen among his

successors. Intelligent, energetic, and with a clear vision of Canada's possibilities, he made it plain to Louis XIV that a great future was in store for the Canadian colony if only his plan for its enlargement were followed. It was he, it will be remembered, who had conceived an expansion of New France which should cover all North America west of the Alleghanias and north of Mexico.

Within five years, under Talon's direction, agriculture had been improved by the introduction of new methods, commerce extended, the administration reorganized. He drew Colbert's attention to the immense quantity of lumber that could be exported to France. He was the first to build ships at Quebec, and to send them to the West Indies with the produce of Canadian forests.¹

No man ever did more for a country in so short a time as Talon. Canada was, so to speak, revolutionized under his administration. He found a few straggling villages; he left behind him flourishing settlements. Before he departed from Canada he could write with pride to Louis XIV: 'I have this year caused to be manufactured, out of the wool shorn from the sheep sent by Your Majesty, several kinds of cloth [*droguet, étamine* and *serge*]; our tanneries supply one-third of the leather required here, and at present I have Canadian fabrics to dress myself from head to foot, and I hope that within a short time Canada will require from France but few useful articles, if it is well administered.'

To show further how much New France had prospered under Talon, let us quote Father le Mercier, who thus describes the change that had taken place: 'It is a pleasant sight now to see almost all the shore of our river St Lawrence studded with new settlements that extend to eighty leagues on both shores, where new villages appear; they facilitate navigation, make it more agreeable on account of the many

¹ The shipbuilding initiated at Quebec by Talon was continued through the French régime. Gaspard Boucaut, an official under Governor Duquesne, wrote that in 1721 six ships were built at Quebec. For years during the nineteenth century Quebec and Lévis shipyards were flourishing; scores of fine vessels left Quebec for England and other countries. The Quebec shipyards were closed when iron and steel superseded wood in the building of vessels. Quebec could not compete with England in this transformed industry.

houses to be seen, and easier on account of the many places for rest now at hand.' Making allowances for an evident exaggeration (for the good priest gives us the impression of a country teeming with a large population, when it was scarcely over 7000), this description of a chain of small settlements confirms the impression that considerable progress had been made.

Talon is the most conspicuous figure in the Canadian annals of his day. From 1665 to 1672 he continued Champlain's labour and placed New France on the basis of a well-organized colony, and he stands head and shoulders above all as a maker of Canada under the French régime. This eminent apostle of colonization, under whose rule the settlement of New France made the only real advance in its life, had grasped every feature of the conditions of the country. Not only did he show the advantage of an outlet to France all the year round, but he was the first to demonstrate the importance of the St Lawrence and its system from both the economical and geographical points of view. 'This country is so situated that, through the St Lawrence, it is possible to reach any point, either west, north, or south, by way of the lakes, its continuation, and by way of its tributaries.'

It is sad to think that as many as ten thousand Frenchmen fell in one battle at Malplaquet and that not a hundred colonists a year could be spared after 1700 for colonization purposes. Rameau, author of *La France aux Colonies*, remarks that if only 150 colonists had been sent to Canada every year from 1675, its population towards 1750 would have reached 500,000. Taking these figures as a basis for further calculation, and considering the fact that the French population has doubled itself every twenty-eight years during the last century, it may safely be estimated that under these circumstances the French Canadians would to-day number eight millions. Left practically alone—for emigration from France ceased at the close of the seventeenth century—it had in 1759 reached the comparatively high figure of about 65,000 souls. But how insignificant this result as compared with that of the English colonization!

During the Seven Years' War, New England and its sister colonies could muster a number of men for action larger than the whole population of Canada.

The failure of colonization in New France can be accounted for by reference to the fundamental principles underlying the building up of an oversea domain. During the short life of New France nearly every factor required was found to be wanting—a well-organized immigration, the support of a native population, and commercial intercourse. Moreover, the motherland also lacked that sea power without which it is impossible to plant a colony with success. The destiny of France in Canada might have been more glorious if Acadia could have been retained, to give a route along the Chaudière and Kennebec Rivers, as Talon suggested, to a seaport essential to the existence of the colony. Canada, under a king who interfered in all details of administration, was not only a country closed to a constant flow of emigration from France, but also a land to which entrance was barred to all except the French.

South of Canada the system of the open door prevailed, and Dutch, German and French Protestants availed themselves of that liberty to better their condition in new homes.

IV

THE GROWTH OF THE COLONY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

NONE of Talon's successors followed in his track by encouraging colonization. Even Frontenac, who is rightly considered as one of the foremost governors of New France, gave little attention to immigration. All his energy seemed bent in another direction: the conqueror of Phips, the man who, with his expedition against Orange, Haverhill and the border posts, terrorized the English colonists, had not as lofty an ambition for Canada as had Talon. To extend New France westward seemed to be the height of Frontenac's ambition. With this object in view

he greatly favoured La Salle's voyages of discovery towards the Mississippi. He had to be reminded by Louis XIV that 'the increase of the population is almost the only object that you should have in view.'

The industrial movement initiated by Talon also slackened after his departure and almost died out. The cultivation of hemp and linseed that he had developed, even at his own expense, was neglected, to be revived only in 1705, when Madame de Repentigny, after the loss of ships that were bringing goods from France, set to work and manufactured all sorts of homespuns; and necessity compelled the habitants at large to follow her example.

The only considerable increase of population in Canada during the eighteenth century was the natural increase among the French Canadians, reinforced by the settlement of a certain number of immigrants, about sixty a year, English prisoners, exiled Acadians, and contingents of soldiers who preferred remaining in Canada after their term of service. The reason for the inertia of Old France has already been mentioned. Louis XIV and his successor became involved in a succession of wars whose importance overrode Canadian interests.

Five of these wars brought Canada into contact with her neighbours. First, in the time of Louis XIV, came the league of Augsburg—a coalition of England, Holland and Germany against France. During the hostilities, which ended with the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, Frontenac sent out murderous expeditions, composed of habitants and Indians, against the New England settlements and repulsed Phips's attack on Quebec.

When the grandson of Louis XIV ascended the Spanish throne, England and Holland challenged the right of France to extend her influence to Madrid; and this question was only decided after a great war of ten years. Philip remained on the throne, but France lost, by the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), Acadia, Newfoundland and Hudson Bay. In 1734 the dogs of war were again let loose, fighting now over the succession to the throne of Poland, whereon Louis XV of France was endeavouring to replace his father-in-law, Stanislaus Leczynski.

Another quarrel soon brought French armies on one side and English and German on the other into conflict, for Louis xv joined Frederic II in the attempt to prevent Maria Theresa from entering into possession of the hereditary estates of her father, the Emperor Charles VI—the War of the Austrian Succession. Finally, the Seven Years' War, the most disastrous of all for France, ended with the annihilation of French power in North America. Altogether, hostilities in New France covered forty-three of the one hundred and fifty years of French rule in Canada. Including hostilities with the Iroquois, wars in Canada covered a space of sixty-one years. The longest period of peace extended over the thirty years between 1713 and 1743.

A country perpetually in the grip of war cannot expect emigrants to settle on its disturbed domain. Moreover, these international conflicts did not constitute the only obstacle to colonization. After 1700, and even before that year, the increase of population came mainly from the large number of children in the habitant families. Households of twelve sons and daughters could be counted in large numbers in those days. This is not altogether exceptional in Quebec even to-day. Montcalm, when he arrived in Canada, noticed this extraordinary growth of the French-Canadian population. In his journal he wrote that 'a soldier of the Carignan regiment had two hundred and twenty descendants settled in four parishes: La Baie St Paul, Les Eboulements, La Petite Rivière and Isle-aux-Coudres.' This great multiplication must have taken place during eighty-six years, as the soldiers of the Carignan regiment settled in Canada about 1668 and Montcalm arrived at Quebec in 1754. To illustrate this point in a more striking manner, let us place before the reader the following statement of births and deaths taken from three different country places—Boucherville, near Montreal, Cap Santé, almost midway between Quebec and Three Rivers, and Isle-aux-Coudres, on the St Lawrence, sixty miles north-east of Quebec:

	Boucherville		Cap Santé		Isle-aux-Coudres	
	Births	Deaths	Births	Deaths	Births	Deaths
From 1741 to 1745 . . .	17	3	99	42	214	136
From 1745 to 1748 . . .	25	3	126	55	233	121
From 1748 to 1752 . . .	33	13	134	67	216	125
From 1752 to 1754 . . .	16	1	70	32	96	34
	91	20	429	196	759	416

Anxious as he showed himself to colonize New France, Louis XIV had not sent to his colony more than four thousand emigrants during twelve years (from 1659 to 1671), and Canada was left afterwards to its own resources. An edict of Louis XIV shows that Mercier was following an old precedent when, in 1890, he gave one hundred acres to each father of a dozen children. Louis made it known to his Canadian subjects 'that a pension of four hundred livres shall be given to the head of a family of twelve children'; ten children would bring a reward of three hundred livres, but if a girl entered a convent she was not counted in the number of children that entitled a family to the reward. According to Boucaut, an important official in Quebec from 1726 to 1756, Louis XIV's opinion was that there were too many nuns in the convents. The French king went one step further in this matter. 'Preference should always be extended, when a distribution of honours or patronage takes place, to men with large progeny around them.' This was not all; in support of these enticements, and to give them additional force, hunting and trading privileges were denied to bachelors. Louis made it known also that it was his will that certain fines should be collected from fathers who did not marry their sons at twenty years of age and their daughters at sixteen. On the other hand, a premium of twenty livres was paid on their wedding day to young men marrying at or before twenty.

So slow was the tide of emigration that it became a policy with Talon and his successors to prevent the return to

52 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

France of any settlers. This bold attempt to deprive colonists of their natural liberty had to be subtly disguised. Talon writes :

As it would be bad policy to allow colonists in large numbers to return to France, it would still be hard to refuse that permission without damaging the interests of some one. I would suggest that when leave is asked by the head of a family well settled here, it should be granted, because his interests and love for his children will bring him back. As to those who are only tied by a property, care should be taken that their land be sold only when approved of by the governor. If a hired man wishes to leave, he should be made to refund the money paid for his passage to Canada, so that the same amount might be used to bring another man in his place. In this wise, people would not be deterred from coming here by the fear that once in Canada it is impossible to leave it.

It has been ascertained through records of births and marriages that many New England prisoners remained in Canada after the war, during which they had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Most of these captives refused to return home, having become used to the manners and customs of the habitants, who treated their prisoners with great consideration. To cite only two cases, the late Judge Gill of Montreal was a descendant of one of those prisoners, and Bishop Plessis' mother belonged to a Massachusetts family.

Following Talon's example, Frontenac parcelled out large areas of land into seigniories. These were granted chiefly to officers, men of noble birth. But, for want of experience and lack of patience, many of them failed in their venture. To achieve success it was imperative for these noblemen to work in the fields. But few seigneurs could eke out a decent living on their land. To fell trees, clear the land, and put their hand to the plough did not suit men used to playing the part of *beaux sabreurs*. As agriculturists their success was poor; and many *censitaires* lived in comparative ease under the eyes of starving seigneurs. Governor Denonville wrote to France advising his superiors not to send any more noblemen to Canada. Many of them were driven to such poverty that their daughters had been com-

pelled to plough the fields to save the family from starvation. Not a few seigneurs deserted their grants of land to take to the woods and become *coureurs de bois*.

Of all the seigneurs in the second period of colonization, Boucher de la Bouteillerie and de Repentigny appear to posterity as the real promoters of colonization : they derived the greatest benefit from the soil, and settled the largest numbers of emigrants on their lands. Boucher received from Louis XIV letters of nobility. He was the head of the de Boucherville family, a name still familiar in Quebec.

Colonization received a small impulse after 1755, when the Acadians were deported all along the Atlantic coast. Many of them, after outliving all the horrors of exile and the constant prospect of starvation, managed to escape to Canada. These Acadians, akin to French Canadians in customs, manners and origin, found homes in the vicinity of Quebec and Montreal. A village, L'Acadie, near the American frontier, was named after them, and commemorates their settlement to this day.

Unwilling or unable to send emigrants to Canada, a French minister fell back upon a rather crude scheme of colonization. According to Salome, he sent out to Canada a certain number of prisoners. They were not welcomed at Quebec ; bishops as well as governors sent strong protests to Versailles against such immigration. In spite of these protests the Duke of Orleans, regent of France during Louis xv's minority, persisted in shipping prisoners at the rate of about thirty every year. However, these emigrants were guilty of only minor offences : many had been sent to gaol for manufacturing and selling salt contrary to regulations ; others had been arrested for poaching or fishing in forbidden streams. It is asserted that these men, who had trespassed against harsh laws only through pressure of want, turned out good colonists. The new atmosphere in which they were called on to earn their living and the environment of God-fearing citizens helped to reform them. If any of these immigrants misconducted themselves, or refused to work, they were sent back to France. After 1750 no more convicts came to Canada.

54 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

It has been stated above that methods of tilling the soil unknown to French settlers, climatic conditions and Indian inroads deterred Frenchmen from taking up farms in New France. The greater profit to be derived from fur trading was also an important factor in drawing colonists away from the fields, and one that always remained active. The other deterrents should have lost part of their influence with time. Agriculture became a very remunerative business about 1665, and Indian inroads diminished in number. Farming conditions in New France were certainly better than those of the peasants whom La Bruyère sketched in such dark colours—a hard-worked band, hoeing a land not their own, and starving half the time. La Hontan writes (1703) in his book on Canada :

Peasants here are well off, and I wish that our poor ragged nobility could have as good cooking as the country people here. What am I saying? These fellows here would rebel against being called peasants. They are right; they pay no tax on salt, they fish and hunt to their liking. In fact, they are rich. Why should we compare them to our miserable peasants? I know many noblemen who would burn their old parchment in exchange for the Canadian farmers' acres.

Duchesneau, whose testimony is more reliable than La Hontan's, expressed a similar opinion: 'As to the farmers who till the soil with care, they live quite comfortably, and are incomparably happier than those we call well-to-do peasants in France.'

The most flourishing period in the history of New France dawned after the Treaty of Utrecht—a thirty-years' peace during which conditions of life along the St Lawrence and Richelieu Rivers were greatly improved. Between 1713 and 1730 the population rose from 19,000 to 34,000. Between 1720 and 1730 the area of land under cultivation was more than doubled, being increased from 71,000 to 148,000 arpents.

Figures as to the crops are still more striking. In 1719 they yielded 240,000 bushels of wheat and 738,000 in 1734, besides 3400 bushels of barley, 5000 of corn, and 163,000

of oats. About 1754 wheat was exported at the rate of 80,000 bushels annually. Somewhat earlier than this the habitants had taken to raising hemp and flax in large quantities, as they found a good market for these articles in France. In 1743 the annual yield of hemp amounted to 40,000 lb. In 1734 the flax crops yielded 92,000 lb; in 1755 the yield was 120,000 quarters.

Tobacco was also raised, although with much difficulty at first, on account of the climate. That it could be cultivated with success is proved by the fact that in 1744 a merchant exported 40,000 lb of the weed to La Rochelle. Cattle and sheep were to be found in large numbers. Horses multiplied beyond the requirements of the country. Governor Vaudreuil and Intendant Hocquart found fault with their large number because the young habitants used the animals as saddle-horses and thus neglected walking, so necessary to health. The meddling officials suggested that only one horse should be allowed for every four oxen.

For a long time the habitant failed to take advantage of the wealth within his reach in the timber of the forests. But in 1729 four shiploads of lumber were exported to the West Indies, and from that time on a new source of gain was open. Under Talon tar had been manufactured, but after his departure this industry stagnated until 1733, when men were sent from France to teach the habitants how to prepare tar, rosin and pitch, which were disposed of to advantage in France.

After many experimental attempts iron of good quality was produced in the St Maurice forges, north of Three Rivers. As many as one hundred and fifty men were engaged in that important industry. With hemp and wood and iron at hand, the idea of shipbuilding soon presented itself. In 1736 ships from the Quebec dockyards were sold in the West Indies. This naval industry gave such good results that the French government, deciding to work it for the state, built armed vessels in that port. Between 1740 and 1750 a small fleet left Quebec for France, the largest ship being the *Algonquin*, of seventy-two guns.

All through the French régime the fur trade gave large

profits, though not always to the habitant, who was hampered by the commercial companies or the officials. From 1718 to 1758 one or two, sometimes even three, million pounds of furs were exported annually to La Rochelle. Large quantities of beaver skins were smuggled into New England.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, then, the prosperity of Canada compared favourably with that of the richest countries of Europe. The habitant enjoyed the great advantage, unknown to European peasants, of owning his farm. He made a rule, which his descendants have kept up to this day, of using the best that his land produced, and selling the balance to town people or exporting it. In the parishes all farmhouses were substantial stone buildings. This somewhat expensive mode of living drew from Montcalm the remark that 'these villains live like petty noblemen in France.' 'The inheritances,' says Salome, 'were meagre. But what did it matter! The habitants considered that their sons, with land at their disposal, and with courage, would live as they did. This was not improvidence, but vision of the future, and confidence in the intelligence and pluck of the race.'

It is now in order to examine the result of colonization from its inception, and particularly under Talon's administration. As already stated, the first period of settlement of New France really began on Champlain's return to Quebec (1633), after the restoration of that place to its former masters, and ended in 1663 on the withdrawal of the One Hundred Associates. During that period this company had charge of the interests of New France, and when its charter was cancelled the colonial population numbered 2500 souls, according to an estimate considered fairly accurate.

A census of New France—the earliest—was taken in 1666. It set down the French population at the very low figure of 3215, of whom 2034 were men and 1181 women, including 528 married couples. There were 547 persons in Quebec, and the whole population in and about Montreal numbered 625. Three Rivers came next, with 455 souls; Orléans, with 457; Beaupré, with 523; Beauport, with 185.

Such was the poor result sixty years after the foundation of Quebec.

This census was most carefully compiled and is still interesting to consult. In the enumeration of professions we note one bishop, eighteen priests and thirty-five Jesuit fathers. The convents harboured forty-six ladies. There were, besides the 3215 settlers in the colony, about 1000 soldiers and 400 *engagés* (servants).

As compared with other periods, colonization during Talon's administration made great strides owing to his constant appeals to France for more settlers. From 1659 to 1664 there were sent from La Rochelle three hundred emigrants each year, leaving, after the deduction of the number of dead, a total of nine hundred. Under Talon's administration settlers came as follows :

1665	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	429
1666	(year of the war between France and England)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	35
1668	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	286
1669	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	228
1670-71-72	(220 each year)	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	660
1673	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	(girls)	60

Statistics of the settlement of the military element show that 412 soldiers settled in 1668, 100 in 1669, and 250 in 1671. War broke out again in the next year and emigration stopped.

A second census of New France was taken by order of Frontenac in 1673 after Talon's departure, and covered part of his administration. The figures gave 6705 as the number of settlers all over Canada. Placed alongside those of 1666—3215—it shows a remarkable increase, the population having doubled within seven years. Had the growth of settlers gone on at that rate, there would have been in Canada, by the middle of the next century, over half a million of inhabitants, a number large enough to repulse all invaders from England and its colonies. And yet this census has been declared incomplete and a low estimate of the population. Colbert wrote to Frontenac that a considerable number of names had been omitted from the list. Subsequent calcu-

lation proved that Colbert had correctly judged the situation, as the census of 1675 showed the population of Canada to be 7833.

It will be remembered that Colbert had sent instructions to Talon directing him to concentrate all settlements within a limited territory. Expansion constituted a danger, and weakened New France's resources and means of defence in time of war. This wise policy was reversed later on, and habitants were sent west to found Detroit (Fort Pontchartrain) and Louisiana, while many *coureurs de bois* followed d'Iberville to New Orleans. The beautiful southern climate attracted too many of the immigrants brought to Canada at such great cost. Governors de Callières and de Beauharnois protested at Versailles against the encouragement given to this exodus. 'His Majesty desires,' they had written, 'to colonize the Mississippi region and to maintain Canada. Therefore it appears to us that France should undertake alone the settlement of Louisiana and not through Canada, from which no settlers can be removed without serious danger.' They asserted that d'Iberville and those who with him offered other advice were moved in the matter by private interest, and they 'know for a fact that *coureurs de bois* travel to Louisiana to get goods that the Sieur d'Iberville gives them in exchange for furs.' The accusation against d'Iberville was unfair: New France never had a more honourable and straightforward citizen. Nevertheless the advice of de Callières and de Beauharnois should have been heeded. In his old age Louis XIV seemed to have lost sight of the true policy to be followed towards Canada, for in 1713 he instructed Vaudreuil to send fifty men to Governor Crozat, who wanted them to plant a colony on the Wabash. Men were therefore taken from New France, which could so ill spare them, to be sent to Detroit, Louisiana and other places. It was a most unfortunate policy that took so many men from New France, where they were so much needed. It may be urged that the establishment of many western trading-posts such as Cataraqui, Niagara and Detroit was a necessity to secure the Indian fur trade, but this reason could not be urged in the case of New Orleans and many other

places. For a time everything seemed not only to thwart the expansion of New France, but also to tend towards the depopulation of its towns and fields. An inelligent and well-conceived policy, initiated by Colbert, had endeavoured to restrict the settlements to the shores of the St Lawrence, and concentrate within their limits all newcomers. The condition of the country was such that it could not be carried out. *Coureur de bois*, trappers and traders would desert the fields, in spite of all royal orders. Away they went, many of them to the far north and west, in search of the valuable furs that could be turned into money much quicker than the products of the soil.

The French-Canadian habitant may well be exasperated when he looks back and considers what might have been achieved by New France. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries immigrants from the British Isles raised the population of the English colonies to over one million towards 1750, while that of Canada at the same period did not reach 100,000—and this at a time when the population of France amounted to twelve millions against six millions in the United Kingdom. Almost unlimited liberty in colonization built up a nation south of Canada within a century and a half, while political restrictions of all kinds, together with adverse climatic conditions, paralysed the expansion of New France. The intermittent French efforts resulted only in forming a small homogeneous community. Yet those French Canadians, with such limited numbers and opportunities, have left their mark upon the history of the New World.

V

ORIGIN OF THE FRENCH CANADIAN

IT has been for a long time a commonplace dictum among economists that the French are unfitted as a race to build up colonies. The idea has been modified more and more as students have examined the history of colonization in Canada, until at length their researches have brought them

to the opposite conclusion, and it is now generally admitted that, given the proper elements, Frenchmen can obtain as good results in colonial undertakings as their neighbours. How such a false notion could have been entertained so long is inconceivable. The success of the habitant in North America, taking into consideration the obstacles of all kinds with which he had to contend, constitutes an eloquent refutation of the older view. The responsibility of some recent failures may be laid at the doors of officialism. Even to-day the customs tariff framed at Paris for French colonies is such that they are deprived of all commercial liberty in the interest of the parent state.

The credit for the development of the small band of French peasants left on the ruined farms of Canada, at the end of the Seven Years' War, into an important and growing community must be given to the few enlightened and energetic colonists that came to Canada from the northern and western provinces of France, from Picardy and the country east of La Rochelle. Champlain had sailed from Honfleur, but it was La Rochelle that became the connecting and trading link between France and Canada. That port afforded easy access to the sea for the provinces of Aunis, Saintonge, Poitou, and Richelieu, as has been noted earlier in this article, insisted that colonists should be selected from those parts of France where agriculture flourished. In his opinion people living close to the sea were better fitted for fishing than for tilling the soil. He had observed that many Bretons went to Canada to fish, but not to settle there permanently; nor was the wine-growing country considered a favourable field from which to send colonists. On the other hand, the fertile lands along the Seine and the Loire could supply a good class of emigrants.

It was long taken for granted that the statement of Charlevoix that Normandy had sent out by far the largest number of settlers to Canada was indisputable. Garneau and Ferland have dispelled this illusion. The former, after consulting the records of about thirty notaries in Quebec, from the early days of the colony up to 1700, was able to

give the following statistics as to the origin of a large number of French Canadians :

Flandre-française	8	Brie	20
Picardie	76	Berri	17
Normandie	341	Orléanais	35
Bretagne	87	Bourbonnais	6
Poitou	239	Angoumois	56
Beauce	43	Perigord	9
Pays d'Aunis	190	Guienne	21
Saintonge	91	Bourgogne	32
Perche	20	Champagne	32
Anjou	44	From other points	162
Limousin	21	Ile-de-France, nearly all	
Maine	30	of Paris	358
Touraine	34		
			1972

Abbé Ferland has also given a list, though for two brief periods only—from 1615 to 1641, and from 1641 to 1666. It was prepared from the records of births and marriages at Quebec, in which is inscribed the origin of each emigrant. Ferland's list agrees with Garneau's statistics as to the proportion of settlers from the different provinces of France. For example, Normandy here tops the number with 125 emigrants; then comes Perche with 57, Aunis with 37, Poitou with 33. Saintonge and Picardie, which in the second period of colonization are well represented, have in the first a poor showing.

It can be seen from the above statement that Normandy, with the one exception of Ile-de-France,¹ furnished the largest quota, but only a small proportion—about one-sixth—of the whole number of immigrants. Of course, Garneau's statement does not give complete statistics in this matter, for the total number of French emigrants to Canada is set down at about 8000;² but it may be

¹ Paris with Ile-de-France—this name applied to the region around Paris and included the city—sent more colonists than Normandy. These emigrants, however, cannot be classified, for they came from all quarters.

² Rameau (*La France aux Colonies*) places the number of French emigrants at 10,000.

inferred that the rest came to Canada in the same relative proportions.¹

All French-Canadian settlers, therefore, cannot claim Normandy as the land of their origin. But there must have been a great similarity in the manners and customs of Norman peasants with those of Picardie, Maine and Pays d'Aunis. The intercourse between them became frequent, and inter-marriage brought about complete uniformity of manners and customs in the Canadian population.

La Rochelle is situated in the Province of Aunis. To the north we find Poitou (represented by a large contingent, 239) and to the south Saintonge and Angoumois. We have therefore two groups of provinces in connection with emigration to Canada—Normandy and Poitou with provinces of less importance, and Aunis, with the neighbouring province south of the Loire.

It is important in this connection to note the impression produced by the habitants upon Frenchmen visiting Canada. As a rule, their observations lead them to the conclusion that there exists a strong resemblance between the language of French Canadians and that of Norman peasants not speaking a *patois*. From personal experience the author has come

¹ It will perhaps interest readers who have friends in Quebec to find here the names of a certain number of immigrants who arrived in Canada from 1615 to 1641 inclusive, *i.e.* during the first period of colonization: Noel Langlois, Charles Le Moine, Paul de Rainville, Nicolas Bélanger, Gaspar Boucher, Jean Gagnon, Noel Morin, Noel Juchereau des Chastelets, Nicolas Pelletier, Louis Hébert, Jacques Gourdeau, Guillaume Couillard, Abraham Martin, Jean Coté, Jacques Scelle; and from 1641 to 1666: Jean Le Blanc, Pierre Le Mieux, Guillaume Fournier, Gabriel Gosselin, Guillaume Cousture, René de la Voie, Pierre Le Febvre, Louis Fontaine, Étienne de Lessard, Nicolas Forget, Nicolas Godebout, Jean Routier, Sébastien Langelier, Thomas Le Sueur, Mathieu Brunet, Christophe Crevier, Guillaume Lelièvre, Antoine Pepin Lachance, François Fortin, Jean Barrette, George Pelletier, Jacques Asseline, Pierre La Rue, Pierre Boyvin, François Boucher, Robert Le Cavalier, Marin Du Val, Julien Mercier, Pierre Parent, Pierre Tremblay, François Provost, Guillaume Landry, Charles Pouliot, Charles Turgeon, Etienne La Fond, Jean Chesnier Celles, Jacques Archambault, Pierre Aignon La Mothe, Jacques Vézinat, René-Réaume, Isaac Bédard, Pierre Cartier, Jean Chauveau, Jean Normand, Mathurin Chabot, Louis Garnault, René Du Bois, Jean Chapleau, Grégoire De Blois, Mathurin Gouin, Michel Chauvin, Urbain Tessier, René Le Duc, Mathurin Langevin, Michel Le May, Pierre Couc Lafleur, François Dupont, Jacques Picault La Brie, Pierre Charon, Michel des Orcys, Jean Mignaux, Thomas Douaire de Bondy, Vincent Poirier, Nicolas Huot.

to share this opinion. He was particularly struck at Rouen, Caen and Lisieux with the marked similarity of the inhabitants of those cities to French Canadians of the same class. It must be admitted, however, that persons of fair complexion and tall stature are more common in Normandy than in Lower Canada.

Neither Garneau nor Ferland points to any considerable emigration from Brittany. Upon going through the seven volumes of the *Dictionnaire généalogique* of the Abbé Tanguay, we find that many colonists are described as coming from that region, though from their names they appear to have belonged to some neighbouring provinces. It is difficult in this matter to arrive at a correct classification.

It must be inferred from the actual manners and language of the habitants that the spirit of the Norman stock, though represented by but a sixth part of the total number of colonists, has predominated in the blending of the various groups and given its characteristics to the other settlers. This became evident in the earliest days of New France. The Normans showed themselves true to the blood of their energetic ancestors, who, after having compelled Charles the Simple to give them a part of Western France, followed William the Conqueror to England, Robert Guiscard to Sicily and Richard Cœur de Lion to Palestine. As will be seen hereafter, many Canadian settlers retained the nomadic disposition of their Norse forefathers.

As soon as settlers arrived from France they associated with their predecessors, who, looking upon the newcomers as relatives or even brethren, helped them in their venture. By degrees the colonists were assimilated into a homogeneous society with common sentiments and ambitions. Abandoning their special *patois*, they all in time came to speak the same language.

This one language, though modified with time, is still spoken throughout Lower Canada. It is not an uncommon thing to hear foreigners visiting Quebec criticize the popular language as coarse *patois*. It is a most unfair judgment. There are—it is true—some strange words used among French Canadians, but the educated visitor will not fail to

detect here simple archaisms or recognize terms familiar to the contemporaries of Molière, Voltaire, or even Ronsard. These purists, who frown so severely on these antiquated expressions, forget that in no country do the peasants speak like the upper class. There is no *patois* in the Province of Quebec, while as many as ninety dialects exist in France. It is in the cities of Canada alone that the language is open to severe criticism. As a rule, French Canadians in Montreal, Quebec and other trading centres speak both English and French, and in this way many English words have crept into the popular vocabulary.

Out of the French-Canadian idiom has sprung a literature in which historical works take the lead. Fiction has not yet ranked very high, both for want of encouragement, and more especially because it has to face Parisian competition. Still, that this literature has a true French stamp is proved by the fact that several of its best productions have won prizes in Paris by the verdict of the French Academy.

It has often been asked how much the French Canadian differs from, or resembles, his cousin across the Atlantic? An English visitor wrote, in an account of his travels through Lower Canada: 'It has all the shortcomings of a province in France without any of its qualities.' This rather summary appreciation, or rather depreciation, is not unlike the opinion of a traveller who, seeing a red-haired man on his landing at Boulogne, observed in his note-book: 'All Frenchmen have red hair.' The opinion first quoted must have been inspired by contact with a disagreeable and ignorant peasant in some out-of-the-way parish.

The fact of the matter is that there has been a parting of the ways between Frenchmen born in Canada and those of the old country across the sea, and this was noticeable even before their final political separation. Surroundings, climatic conditions, occupations, all affect men in a lesser or greater degree. In every country peasants stand out in strong contrast with city people. Tastes, manners and ideas differ, although the main features of character may remain alike. Man is influenced by the company he keeps; he reflects like a mirror all the colours—dark and light—of his surroundings.

Under harder conditions of life, the French colonist in Canada soon grew more vigorous than his congener of France. Spending his days, during the first period of colonial life, under a constant menace of Iroquois attacks contributed to steel his courage against fear of any kind in temporal matters. When finally peace was made with the Indians, hostilities with New England colonists began and made the habitant more and more wary. Still, the genial temperament of the race remained; cheerfulness, in face of all dangers, enlivened the homes. It was this quality that made the habitant welcome strangers and proffer a lavish hospitality. It is recorded in a visitor's note-book that one could travel from Quebec to Montreal without having to pay a livre or even a sou for food, transportation and lodging.

The difference of manners and ideas of the French habitant certainly engendered conflicts of opinion with soldiers and officials, who looked down on their rough, uneducated brethren, born under a different sky, with an unwarranted superciliousness.

With time, after the Conquest, the estrangement between the French at home and the habitants of Canada widened. In the colony the ideas of early days remained unimpaired, while in France they gradually evolved and advanced. Revolution left its traces all over France, while in Canada the salutary influence that had kept Canadians true and loyal to the king continued to reign unaltered.

The French-Canadian mind of the better class was shaped on the lines of the seventeenth century. Contemporaries of Bossuet and Fénelon would find themselves at home in any French-Canadian parish. Many young men in Lower Canada study Latin and Greek and their own language as their ancestors in Europe did long ago, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century *petits séminaires*. Throughout his studies the lad at college is taught to admire above modern writers Bossuet, Fénelon, Corneille and Racine. He commits to memory passages of their *chefs-d'œuvre*; their writings form part of his daily intellectual nourishment. The works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Hugo are regarded as synonymous with dangerous literature. Of course, when out

66 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

of the seminary, the trained admirers of Bossuet and Racine hasten, as after forbidden fruit, to form an acquaintance with Hugo and other lights of the romantic school; but notwithstanding this partial breaking away from tradition, the French-Canadian mind still keeps in touch with old French ideals in literature and art.

Naturally the clergy, who have contributed so much to maintain intact the national inheritance, look askance at the France of the laity. With the separation of church and state in that country and the secularization of schools, with government in the hands of free-thinkers, French-Canadian priests dread with good reason modern French influences.

This intellectual revolution in the old country has widened the breach between the two Frances. The ultra-Catholic French Canadian will not join hands with the sons of Voltaire. A large majority of Frenchmen never enter the church save to be baptized or married. In Quebec, absence from public religious practice is hardly known, attendance at church on Sundays being a rule everywhere observed.

In some spheres of secular action also French-Canadian and French minds have developed far apart. For example, in business methods the two very seldom agree, and the people of Quebec greatly prefer English ways of trade and commerce. This change has been brought about by the force of habit, commercial intercourse with France having become very limited. It must be borne in mind that for sixty years after the Conquest no direct trade existed between Canada and France.

Wit and humour, so native to France, have lost none of their force in Canada; they have outlived all changes, and shine as much on the shores of the St Lawrence as on those of the Seine. The late Hector Fabre, during a part of his life Canadian commissioner at Paris, often astonished his hearers by his brilliant speeches and sparkling conversation. He had few equals there as a finished after-dinner speaker, and kept his table companions in roars of laughter. Many other French Canadians have possessed a similar gift; they are more prone to enjoy the bright side of life than their

cousins *d'outre mer*. Taine, in his most remarkable work *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, asserts that his contemporaries are not so sprightly as their forefathers of the seventeenth century, and he argues that the change is due to psychological reasons. To be joyful, a man must not have anything preying on his mind : the old-time Frenchman considered his form of government the best and his religion the only true one ; his descendants are in grave doubt as to whether the best political constitution prevails, and unbelief is widespread. This modern state of mind does not induce mirth. During a century France has seen seven radical changes in constitutional régime : she has been ruled in turn by Jacobin tyranny, Napoleonic despotism, revived Bourbon monarchy, Orleanist responsible government, and then by ill-devised republican institutions, the second empire to be superseded in turn by the present republic.

No such uncertainty as to the form of government ever existed in Quebec. The habitant believes the rule under which he lives to be the best, and desires no change. As to his faith and destiny after death, the French Canadian entertains not the least doubt. Finally, prospects of war, with ruin and desolation in its train, unknown in Canada, always loom over France to damp the Frenchman's spirit and sadden his heart.

It has been observed by ethnographers that people of Teutonic origin have a stronger sense of the practical than the Latin races, while the latter have a quicker perception of art and ideals. The success of France has never equalled that of England in trade and commerce, but she has always excelled in fine arts and shown an aptitude for them more general than that of her neighbour across the Channel. The same comparison may be extended to Canada, where, in the race for wealth, the English have distanced their rivals. It must, however, be mentioned that French Canadians have been handicapped for fifty years by the want of capital, which flowed in abundance from London to English-Canadian banks.

In politics French Canadians have shown a steadiness

sadly lacking in France. In forty-five years the Province of Quebec, master of its local affairs since 1867, has witnessed only ten changes of cabinet, while Paris in less time (from 1870) has seen a procession of at least sixty successive administrations, sometimes at the rate of two or three in one year.

A general review of French-Canadian political history shows that wisdom and a deep sense of public duty have characterized its development. La Fontaine, Cartier, Taché, Dorion, Cauchon, Chapleau, Laurier have proved themselves worthy politicians of the English school. It must be confessed, however, that at times the masses have been carried away, like their kinsmen across the sea, by sentimentalism, or influenced by fiery tirades of high-sounding words.

To sum up, it is obvious that surface changes are visible between the French in France and those in Canada, but the blood and the racial characteristics have remained the same. There is dissimilarity, but no fundamental difference.

VI

THE 'COUREUR DE BOIS'

COLBERT'S plan of colonization aimed at making New France an agricultural country. It may be doubted whether the great statesman ever realized the difficulties and obstacles that stood in the way of such an undertaking. For twenty years after the foundation of Quebec the tilling of the soil, save in the vicinity of Quebec, was made impossible by Indian inroads; the colony would have starved in its cradle had not food been imported from France. Even in 1689—the year of the Lachine massacre—it was not safe to wander any distance from the settlements. Still later (1692) Mademoiselle de Verchères had to stand a siege in the small stockade of Varennes against a band of Iroquois.

New methods of cultivation had to be found, for those of France could not be adapted to Canada; and what a discouraging enterprise to the peasants of Normandy and

Central France was that of clearing the land and cutting down forests, with late springs and early frosts that were unknown in the mother country! On the other hand, beyond Quebec and Montreal stood forests teeming with fur-bearing animals. Hunting offered a mode of living more profitable than agriculture, and more attractive. It is no wonder that many settlers took to the woods and became *coureurs de bois*.

This *coureur de bois* plays a peculiar part in the history of New France. Brave to temerity, undaunted by the severest conditions of weather, sleeping in winter under a cover of deep snow, satisfied with very poor fare, he lived the life of an Indian with the cravings of a civilized man. It was his task to trade with various savage tribes on his path and sometimes to hunt on his own account, and it is easy to conceive how vigorous he became under this training. It prepared him for the hardships of a rough Canadian campaign if war broke out between Canada and the English colonies; no soldier could be found so well adapted to partisan warfare and guerilla tactics.

When the beaver became scarce about Montreal, the *coureurs de bois* had to wend their way towards the western regions. The itinerary they followed is well known. Starting from Montreal, they journeyed up the Ottawa, swept down the French River and then crossed Georgian Bay and Lake Huron. Between Lake Huron and Lake Michigan stood a halting station—Michilimackinac, a Jesuit mission. Here was a parting of the ways: some of the traders would now take a south-westerly course through Lake Michigan, while to others the route in a north-westerly direction by Lake Superior seemed preferable. The first route brought them among the Illinois and the Sakis, while the northerly course led to the country of the Assiniboines and other tribes.

The endurance of these *coureurs de bois* must have been extraordinary. The journey from Montreal to the principal stopping-place lasted fifty days. Each canoe laden with goods contained five men. But the water route was not continuous; frequently broken up by rapids, it had to be given up at times, and the traders were obliged to carry their

canoes on their shoulders for miles of portage. Game and fish offered the only food to be had on those wearisome journeys, and failure of these supplies meant starvation, unless the party could manage to subsist on roots until game once more appeared.

Their absence from home would sometimes extend to eighteen months and even to two years. No wonder then, if, on reaching Montreal, after living a life of such hardships, a few of them felt like giving themselves up to relaxation and enjoyment. But the misfortune was that both were carried too far, and, according to La Hontan, the pleasures that Montreal afforded gained the mastery for days of the man who for months had faced dangers, famine and death. When wine and gambling had exhausted his hard-earned money, the *coureur de bois* would again turn westward to get another supply of furs. Married men, and many of those who had suffered in former years from dissipation at such times, did not indulge in these frolics, but took a well-deserved rest in the midst of their families.

Michilimackinac, when Montreal was found to be too far from the hunting grounds, witnessed the scenes that La Hontan has described with his sarcastic pen; and Father Corbeil, in strong terms, railed against the *coureurs de bois* for carrying their celebrations beyond decent limits. The good Jesuit's denunciation should not be taken too literally; in a matter like this there is always a tendency to make sweeping statements and to lay the faults of the few at the door of the many. As a rule the *coureurs de bois*, after a few campaigns *aux pays d'en haut*, returned to Canada, married and settled on farms. But there were still too many who left New France to be permanent hunters or settlers in the West.

Great evils resulted to New France from this adventurous life of many of her strongest children. What might not these vigorous men have done on farms along the St Lawrence! How many flourishing parishes might they not have founded! Even before Frontenac's régime the disastrous consequences of the loss of so much strength to Canada began to be felt, and were pointed out to Louis XIV by Talon, who requested

that a stop should be put to the fur-hunting expeditions that drained the colony of its best blood. Then came from Versailles edict after edict restricting colonists from going into the woods without a permit; later on trespassers were made liable to punishment; but all to no avail. It was soon discovered at Versailles that these edicts would seldom strike the guilty. If the *coureur de bois* found himself open to the rigour of the law, all he had to do to escape punishment was to remain out in the bush; the trespasser had accomplices at Quebec or Montreal interested in his ventures, and on that account bound to protect him against police investigation.

The connivance of men in official positions aggravated the difficulty. Intendant Duchesneau charged Frontenac with being hand in hand with some fur traders, and Frontenac retaliated by laying a similar charge against Duchesneau. Finally, Louis XIV proclaimed a general amnesty to all colonists absent in the bush without leave. To their credit and honour be it said, when summoned in time of emergency by the king to rally round the flag, these adventurers came to the help of their fellow-colonists and showed themselves among the bravest soldiers.

The *coureurs de bois* have often been taken to task by modern writers, but their good points should not be overlooked. Let it not be forgotten that they introduced the first seeds of civilization far and wide, south and west in North America. Should posterity be unmindful of the services they afforded their king, through the great influence they had with the children of the forest? It was their friendship with the savages that caused so many Indian tribes to seek alliance with the Great Onontio.¹ That friendship never faltered as long as the French flag waved over New France. It is difficult to draw the line between discoverers and *coureurs de bois* when the latter included in their ranks men like Jolliet, Dulhut, Tonty, Radisson, des Groseilliers and others.

¹ Name given to the king of France. When de Montmagny was governor of Canada, his name, derived from the Latin, *Mons Magnus*, translated for the benefit of the Indian, became Onontio in the Huron idiom.

In his *Old Régime in Canada* Parkman draws this picture of the *coureur de bois* :

No wonder that a year or two of bush-ranging spoiled them for civilization. Though not a very valuable member of society, and though a thorn in the side of princes and rulers, the *coureur de bois* had his uses, at least from an artistic point of view ; and his strange figure, sometimes brutally savage, but oftener marked with the lines of a dare-devil courage, and a reckless, thoughtless gayety, will always be joined to the memories of that grand world of woods which the nineteenth century is fast civilizing out of existence. At least, he is picturesque, and with his red-skin companion, serves to animate forest scenery.

The *coureur de bois*, for a long time wandering at large through the forests in search of furs, did not disappear with the French régime. This curious and picturesque type, who seems to have inherited the nomadic propensities of old-time Norsemen through his Norman ancestors, has survived to the present day under a different name. The Norsemen gained the title of 'sea-rovers'—the *coureur de bois* appears in the light of an irrepressible land-rover.

Before New France had been formally ceded to England, we find some *coureurs de bois* (1761) hand in hand with an English trader, Alexander Henry. With their help he fitted out an expedition to the North-West, with a view to opening fur-trading operations after French methods. Later on, when the North-West Company was formed (1786), its ranks were filled by the successors of these *coureurs de bois*. Henceforth they became known as *voyageurs des pays d'en haut* or simply *voyageurs*. The daring of the old-time explorer and trapper, his hardihood, his good-humour in all weathers, are reproduced in his sons.

Henry, in the narrative of the expedition, has left us a vivid description of the manners and disposition of the *voyageurs*. When the hour had come to depart on their long journey west, they would rendezvous at Lachine and start in their canoes, to make a first stop at Ste Anne-dubout-de-l'île. Here stood a church whither they would never

fail to repair before bidding adieu to civilization.¹ In this sanctuary earnest prayers were offered for the success of their expeditions. These religious duties being performed, the genial temperament of the men would burst out in a demonstration around a table replenished with simple but plentiful fare, as compensation in advance for fasting and hardships ahead. Henry states that very often the rum intended to serve the voyageurs in case of need during the entire expedition was all drunk at those memorable feasts. Songs and dancing went merrily on to a late hour of the night, and at daybreak, still under the influence of all this rollicking, the voyageurs would launch their canoes and ply their way westward.

In 1810 John Jacob Astor, then head of the now famous multi-millionaire family, founded the Pacific Fur Company for the purpose of diverting to the United States part of the fur trade of North America, then altogether in the hands of the English. To carry out his scheme he organized two expeditions, one to reach the Pacific coast overland and establish a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia River, and the other to sail round Cape Horn to the same point. For both expeditions Astor thought he could not do better to ensure success than engage Canadian voyageurs.

The celebrated American writer, Washington Irving, has penned a graphic narrative of Astor's undertakings, covering the work of both expeditions and the founding of Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia River. The fine qualities of the Canadian voyageurs could not escape Irving's keen observation. His clever pen-and-ink picture of the voyageurs is worth reproducing :

The dress of these people is generally half civilized, half savage. They wear a capot or surcoat, made of a blanket, a striped cotton shirt, cloth trousers, or leathern leggings, moccasins of deer-skin, and a belt of variegated worsted, from which are suspended the knife, tobacco-pouch, and other implements. Their language is of the

¹ This reminds us of Moore's lines :

'Soon as the woods on shore look dim
We'll sing at St Ann's our parting hymn.'

same piebald character, being a French patois, embroidered with Indian and English words and phrases.

The lives of the voyageurs are passed in wild and extensive roving in the service of individuals, but more especially of fur traders. They are generally of French descent, and inherit much of the gaiety and lightness of heart of their ancestors, being full of anecdote and song, and ever ready for the dance. They inherit, too, a fund of civility and complaisance; and, instead of that hardness and grossness which men in laborious life are apt to indulge towards each other, they are mutually obliging and accommodating; interchanging kind offices, yielding each other assistance and comfort in every emergency, using the familiar appellations of 'cousin' and 'brother' when there is in fact no relationship. Their natural good-will is probably heightened by a community of adventure and hardship in their precarious and wandering life.

No men are more submissive to their leaders and employers, more capable of enduring hardship, or more good-humoured under privations. Never are they so happy as when on long and rough expeditions, toiling up rivers or coasting lakes; encamping at night on the borders, gossiping round their fires, and bivouacking in the open air. They are dexterous boatmen, vigorous and adroit with the oar and paddle, and will row from morning till night without a murmur. The steersman often sings an old traditionary French song, with some regular burden in which they all join, keeping time with their oars; if at any time they flag in spirits or relax in exertion, it is but necessary to strike up a song of the kind to put them all in fresh spirits and activity.

Besides describing their general features and character, Irving points out the value of their work on the overland expedition to British Columbia. The dangerous navigation of the Missouri specially brought out the cleverness and strength of the voyageurs. During the tedious progress of the river the boat would be exposed to frequent danger from floating trees and great masses of drift-wood, or of being impaled upon snags and sawyers, that is to say, sunken trees presenting a jagged or pointed end above the surface of the water.

On these occasions it was that the merits of the Canadian voyageurs came into full action. Patient of toil, not to be disheartened by impediments and disappointments, fertile in expedients, and versed in every mode of humouring and conquering the wayward current, they would ply every exertion, sometimes in the boat, sometimes on shore, sometimes in the water, however cold ; always alert, always in good humour ; and, should they at any time flag or grow weary, one of their popular boat songs, chanted by a veteran oarsman, and responded to in chorus, acted as a never-failing restorative.

Parkman has handled the *coureur de bois* unmercifully in his *Old Régime in Canada*. There he judged him on hearsay, but when personally in contact with voyageurs (the successors of the *coureurs de bois* in a new guise) he does not hesitate to record their sterling qualities. During the summer of 1846 Parkman visited Fort Laramie—a trip described in *The Oregon Trail*. He first wended his way to St Louis, where he was to take a guide. The youthful tourist says :

On coming, one afternoon, to the office we found a tall and exceedingly well-dressed gentleman, with a face so open and frank that it attracted our notice at once. We were surprised at being told that it was he who wished to guide us to the mountain. He was born in a little French town near St Louis. . . . His age was about thirty ; he was six feet high and very powerfully and gracefully moulded. The prairies had been his school ; he could neither read nor write, but he had a natural refinement and delicacy of mind such as is rare, even in women. His manly face was a mirror of uprightness, simplicity, and kindness of heart ; he had, moreover, a keen perception of character. . . . Henry had not the restless energy of an Anglo-American. He was content to take things as he found them. . . . He was a proof of what unaided nature will sometimes do. I have never, in the city or in the wilderness, met a better man than my true-hearted friend, Henry Chatillon.¹

With this guide Parkman took another man. 'This was Deslauriers, a Canadian with all the characteristics of Jean Baptiste. Neither fatigue, exposure nor hard labour could

¹ Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, pp. 16-18.

ever impair his cheerfulness and gaiety, or his politeness to his *bourgeois*. When night came, he would sit down by the fire, smoke his pipe, tell stories with the utmost contentment. The prairie was his element.' Parkman gives an amusing description of his journey, with Chatillon and Deslauriers driving his mules, 'wading ankle deep in the mud, alternately puffing his pipe, ejaculating in his prairie patois: *Avance donc, sacré enfant de garce!*'—a profanity which, with due deference to the illustrious historian, is not *patois*, but good French. Throughout the trip Parkman meets French Canadians of the *voyageur* class bearing such names as Dorion, Sorel, Labonté, Raymond, Reynal, Leborgne, Gingras. All this is evidence of the great number of *coureurs de bois* or *voyageurs*, who were the pioneers of the American West, all more or less resembling Henry Chatillon.

Another American writer and politician of great eminence, Colonel Roosevelt, in his *Winning of the West*, also bears evidence to the qualities as well as to the shortcomings of the *voyageurs* settled in the Ohio valley. Barring a few severe and unjust strokes of the pen, his description of the *voyageurs* is not unlike that of Washington Irving. He writes:

The French inhabitants were in very many cases not of pure blood. The early settlements had been made by men only, by soldiers, traders and trappers who took Indian wives. They were not trammelled by the queer pride which makes a man of English stock unwilling to make a red-skinned woman his wife, though anxious enough to make her his concubine. . . . They were not very industrious nor very thrifty husbandmen. Their farming implements were rude, their methods of cultivation simple and primitive, and they themselves very often lazy and improvident.

Under ordinary circumstances he was a good-humoured, kindly man, always polite—his manners offering an agreeable contrast to those of some of our own frontiersmen—with a ready smile and laugh, and ever eager to join in any merrymaking.

These French *voyageurs* ought to be remembered in history. According to an American author, their friendly intercourse with every Indian tribe contributed largely to

settle troubles and difficulties that arose frequently between the Americans and the redskins. It was through their efforts that treaties were concluded leading to acquisitions of immense tracts of land by the American government.

Colonel Roosevelt might have mentioned that many western cities recognize as their founders some of these dare-devil fellows who, in spite of all their faults, opened the way for the Americans into the Far West. In his *Les Canadiens de l'Ouest*, Joseph Tassé has published a very interesting account of the doings of French Canadians in the Western States. According to this writer, two men named Langlade were the first settlers of Wisconsin, at Green Bay. Many other French Canadians joined them. When Salomon Juneau, in 1818, put up a small house on the shore of Milwaukee River, he little dreamt that he was laying the foundation of a large and prosperous city of the future. Dubuque was looked upon as a king by all the Indians about La-Prairie-du-Chien, and Vincennes and Dulhut are remembered in the West to this day. Two counties in Minnesota respectively bear the names of Faribault and Rainville, both pioneers of colonization in that region. Parent, Gervais and Guérin were the first inhabitants of St Paul. It is hardly necessary to mention here that St Louis and Louisville were originally French colonies. Many other French names might be added to those just mentioned as founders of American cities. In 1699 the Jesuits Pinet and Bineteau founded a mission on the present site of Chicago, where, in 1830, Colonel Beaubien established a small village. This now famous spot was first mentioned by La Salle.

In this same class of hardy pioneers of the wilderness can be included the shantymen, who, since the beginning of the last century, have wintered in the lumber camps north of the Ottawa and Timiskaming region. In these voyageurs, as they are still called in Lower Canada, the characteristics of the old *coureur de bois* can easily be traced.

The extraordinary ability of the *coureurs de bois* to contend in the wilderness with difficulties under which Europeans would have succumbed, their ingenuity in finding means to overcome unforeseen difficulties, were well known, not only

to the North-Western *bourgeois*, but also to many people in England. In 1819 Sir John Franklin took advantage of their peculiar qualifications: to carry on his expedition of exploration of the Coppermine and Mackenzie districts (in 1819-20-21-22) he secured the services of several French Canadians. Out of twenty-five men composing his party, including himself and his officers, nineteen were voyageurs.¹

Before starting on his mission to Khartoum to attempt the rescue of Gordon, the late General Wolseley requested the Canadian government to dispatch three hundred voyageurs to help his soldiers in their arduous campaign. He had had occasion to appreciate the qualities of the voyageurs when, in 1869, he commanded the North-West expedition sent to Fort Garry to quell the Riel uprising.

Voyageurs, shantymen, trappers, and western hunters of the nineteenth century were the lineal descendants of the *coureurs de bois*. Colonel Roosevelt estimates that when the United States took possession of the West in 1778 there were about four thousand Frenchmen equally divided between Wabash and Illinois villages, and two thousand in and around Detroit. It is a cause for regret that the nomadic disposition of these people caused them to emigrate in such large numbers to the West. This loss of population was most detrimental to the prosperity of New France.

Men of extraordinary endurance and great courage, the voyageurs have performed useful work in the interests of civilization, if not in their own; they have also contributed to build the fortunes of Hudson's Bay and North-West lords of the forests, and of our wealthy lumbermen. Their great fault was, as Parkman says of Henry Chatillon, that they were satisfied to take things as they found them.

¹ In his book, *A Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, Sir John gives the names of his party. They are as follows: John Franklin, R.N., John Richardson, M.D., George Back, R.N., Robert Hood, R.N., Frederick Wentzel, N.-W. Co., John Hepburn, seaman. French voyageurs: Joseph Peltier, Mathieu Pelonquin, Salomon Bélanger, Joseph Benoit, Joseph Gagné, Pierre Dumas, Joseph Forcier, Ignace Perrault, François Samadre, Gabriel Beuparlant, Vincent Fontaine, Vaillant, Parent, Bélanger, Belleau, Cournoyer, Teroahauté, an Iroquois, Adam, and St Germain. A few more voyageurs were engaged later on.

VII

THE HABITANT AS A SOLDIER

WHETHER farmer or *coureur de bois*, the Canadian colonist could be turned into an efficient soldier.

While his training did not fit him for regular warfare, he stood in the front rank as a skirmisher and ranger. His endurance and bravery never failed under the most trying conditions; and even when the cause for which he fought seemed irretrievably lost, as during the Seven Years' War, he was never seen to falter; for at such times his actions were governed by one thought—his life belonged to the king. There was almost no age limit in the Canadian military service. Garneau speaks of a company in whose ranks appeared seven men of sixty years and over, and some of less than eighteen; every man was considered fit to carry arms; and this accounts for the extraordinary proportion of 15,000 militiamen in a population of about 60,000.

What is now known as 'partisan' warfare best suited the temperament of the habitant; for fighting of this nature involved much endurance, determination and intelligence. The expeditions directed against New England by Frontenac and Vaudreuil, although not especially commendable according to modern standards, involved the greatest amount of patience and courage under adverse circumstances.

Everyday life in New France constituted an excellent training for military duty of this nature; moreover, many of the habitants were disbanded soldiers who had acquired experience on the battlefields of Europe. As Parkman has remarked:

The French system favoured military efficiency. The Canadian population sprang in great part from soldiers, and was to the last systematically reinforced by disbanded soldiers. The Canadian government was essentially military. At its head was a soldier nobleman, often an old and able commander; and those beneath him caught his spirit and emulated his example. In spite of

its political nothingness, in spite of poverty and hardship, and in spite even of trade, the upper stratum of Canadian society was animated by the pride and fire of that gallant noblesse which held war as its only worthy calling, and prized honor more than life. As for the habitant, the forest, lake and river were his true school ; and here, at least, he was an apt scholar. A skilful woodsman, a bold and adroit canoe-man, a willing fighter in time of need, often serving without pay, and receiving from government only his provisions and his canoe, he was more than ready at any time for any hardy enterprise ; and in the forest warfare of skirmish and surprise there were few to match him.

The surnames of many French Canadians of the present generation give evidence that their forefathers belonged to the army. Any English-speaking Canadian with some experience of the people in Quebec must have met a Taillefer or Sans Souci, a Tranchemontagne, a Sans Quartier or Portelance, high-sounding names coined to fit some peculiar qualifications of soldiers.

The reputation of the habitants, and especially of the *coureurs de bois*, crossed the Atlantic. They were often sought by the captains of privateers, who found in them more endurance, more daring and more dash than in the ordinary Breton sailor.¹

A certain Aubert, who visited New France about 1663, wrote as follows about the habitants :

As to their bravery, even if it had not come to them with their French blood, the manner of fighting Iroquois and other savages of this continent, who almost always burn their prisoners alive after inconceivable tortures, has resulted in causing the French to look upon ordinary death in battle as a blessing, compared to the danger of falling alive into the hands of the enemy. This is why they fight with desperation and with the utmost indifference for their lives.

Another writer remarks :

The French of Canada are well-built, robust, smart—with perfect health and well able to stand any amount

¹ Salome, *Colonisation de la Nouvelle France*.

of fatigue, and warlike. For this reason, French generals have, during the late war, given [promised, would be more correct] one-fourth more salary to French Canadians than to Frenchmen. All this bodily strength is derived from the invigorating air in which they are born, from abundance of healthy food, from the liberty enjoyed to indulge, from childhood, in fishing, hunting, and travelling in canoes, all of which require a great amount of exercise.

The severe conditions under which French Canadians were brought up are strongly exemplified by a statement that would hardly be credited, did it come from a less reliable observer than Marie de l'Incarnation :

It is astonishing to see here the large number of children very fine and well formed, without any physical deformity save through accident. A man will be found with eight children and more ; children who during winter go about bareheaded with nothing on their backs but light, short underwear [*petite camisole*], and who live only on eels and bread and still are stout and fat.

Let us now follow these hardy peasants to the field of action. When in 1755 General Braddock met the French forces not far from Fort Duquesne (Pittsburg), the brunt of the battle was borne entirely by French Canadians and their Indian allies, under Beaujeu and Dumas. Regular troops were so badly beaten by the militia that Washington, one of the officers engaged in the affair, wondered how such 'good English troops could have been defeated by a handful of French whose object was only to embarrass our advance. Before the engagement we thought our forces were almost equal to all those of Canada.'

When Montcalm's regular troops ran in utter disorder from the Plains of Abraham towards Quebec, French Canadians, who had been placed on the wings, charged the victors and thus prevented a complete annihilation of their comrades. On the same field in the following year Lévis, who won the last laurels that a French general carried from Canada, owed his victory to the habitant-soldiers, who, divided into two corps, fought as militiamen, and also in the ranks of royal regiments,

for they had to a large extent filled the decimated files of the regulars. The valour of the habitant did not vanish with the change of régime: the annals of 1775-76 and 1812-13 go far to show that, if Canada was saved from American invasion, the result was due in no small measure to the courage and endurance of the fighting habitant.

For several months after his arrival in Canada, Montcalm showed a certain distrust of Canadian militiamen. His mind had been biased against them by unfavourable reports from his subordinates, regular soldiers being at all times prone to belittle the strength of volunteers. Tradition has it that on one occasion Montcalm went so far as to call his habitant militiamen from the capital *Moutons de Québec*. But he altered his opinion after witnessing their work in several actions, and declared that they presented splendid fighting material. 'Within six months,' he once said, 'I would transform them into grenadiers,' and later on, as though he wished to make amends for his first hasty judgment, he often expressed his sympathy *pour le Canadien, le simple habitant*. But it was during the Seven Years' War that their patience, endurance and prowess were submitted to an ordeal such as one is inclined to think no other group of men could have borne. Misfortunes came one upon the other on the French-Canadian colonists. Enraged at their stubborn resistance, the cause of several of his defeats in the field, Wolfe decided to treat them almost as outlaws. He called upon them to stop fighting under the pain of having their properties burned down; also to remain neutral and not interfere in the quarrel between French and English. He issued a proclamation containing the following words:

The formidable sea and land armament, which the people of Canada now behold in the heart of their country, is intended by the King, my master, to check the insolence of France, to revenge the insults offered to the British colonies, and totally to deprive the French of their most valuable settlement in North America. For these purposes is the formidable army under my command intended.

The King of Great Britain wages no war with the industrious peasant, the sacred orders of religion, or the

defenceless women and children; to these, in their distressful circumstances, his Royal clemency offers protection. The people may remain unmolested on their lands, inhabit their houses, and enjoy their religion in security; for these inestimable blessings, I expect the Canadians will take no part in the great contest between the two crowns.

But if, by a vain obstinacy and misguided valour, they presume to appear in arms, they must expect the most fatal consequences; their habitations destroyed, their sacred temples exposed to an exasperated soldiery, their harvest utterly ruined, and the only passage for relief stopped up by a most formidable fleet. In this unhappy situation, and closely attacked by another great army, what can the wretched natives expect from opposition?

What a strange view of the situation! Were not the militiamen French subjects to all intents and purposes, as well as their comrades of the regular army? Had they not fought in former wars to save their country from defeat?

The French Canadians, of course, paid no attention to Wolfe's threats, and these were consequently fiercely carried out. The New England Rangers let loose about Quebec laid the country waste for miles around. Fire did its work so well that no houses or barns were left standing; it swept every village in the Island of Orleans and on both shores of the river to Murray Bay and Rivière Ouelle. In accordance with the practice of Indian warfare, Major Rogers, commander of these fierce marauders, brought back to Wolfe's headquarters the scalps of several French habitants. Fire and sword had played their part to perfection. Fighting for his home and king brought to the French-Canadian colonist desolation and misery.

We find in the *Mercury*, December 31, 1759, an authentic record of the loss inflicted on the habitants: 'We burned and destroyed upwards of fourteen hundred fine farm houses, for we, during the siege, were masters of a great part of their country along shore, and parties were almost continually kept out ravaging the country; so that 'tis tho't it will take them half a century to recover the damage.'¹

¹ *A Journal of the Expedition up the River St Lawrence, etc.*

84 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

In defiance of Wolfe's threats and in spite of the hard treatment meted out by a gang of dishonest officials, the habitants remained true to their king—however undeserving—and to their country. Their answer to those who tried to dishearten them is almost sublime in its heroic simplicity: 'Let the king take all we have, as long as there is a chance to save Canada.'

What of their private interest all through this frightful war? During their absence from home it rested with women, and children under sixteen years of age, to attend to farm work in general from seed-time to harvest. What amount of hardships this absence of the men from their families involved can well be imagined. During the Seven Years' War, out of a population of 60,000 French Canadians, 15,000 were under Montcalm and Lévis' orders, fighting for what was to many of them a lost cause. Heroism and self-sacrifice can hardly reach a higher level.

As the end drew nearer, their lot grew worse. Whilst hundreds of militiamen were at the point of starvation, Bigot and his gang of thieves plunged into a series of orgies, took advantage of the scarcity of provisions to advance the price of the necessaries of life, and actually caused a famine by locking up provisions in the king's stores. In the king's name stock was taken from the farms at an almost nominal price and sold at a high rate. Eighty livres were paid for an ox disposed of afterwards at the rate of twelve hundred livres. To add insult to injury, the habitant-soldiers' pay was handed to them in the form of card money, which had a value of but ten to one for gold. This was not all, for when this card money became redeemable, after 1763, the loss was even greater.

There was nothing to cheer them up in their distress, no silver lining to the cloud of woes around them. How different it would have been if France had shown some sympathy for her poor forlorn offspring! But when the habitant was sinking in the throes of the Seven Years' War, Louis sent to Canada 3400 soldiers, while England, with a population scarcely half that of France, could spare 20,000 men for colonists without any devotion to her cause. Thus was

Canada forsaken ; and it is even more humiliating to find that many people in Paris even felt a sensation of relief when they heard that Canada was lost to France. 'What a silly idea,' wrote Voltaire to Madame du Deffand, 'to settle down in Canada on snow drifts, between beavers and bears.'

It was the same man who in *Candide* scornfully described France and England as 'two nations fighting for a few acres of snow in Canada, and spending in war much more than Canada was worth ;' the same again who says that he went down on his knees begging Chauvelin, one of Louis xv's ministers, to abandon Canada. Voltaire's opinion of Canada was not an exceptional one in France. To many of his contemporaries the country only recalled visions of snow and ice, Indian tribes and wild animals. Snow, above all, depreciated the value of Canada in the eyes of all Europe, even up to a very recent date.

With the capitulation of Quebec and Montreal the final defeat should have come to the habitant as a relief and a blessing. Had he not done more than his duty to an indifferent government that could send thousand after thousand of soldiers to help strangers and in the meantime desert her children beyond the sea? Still, the habitant could not witness without a pang the departure of his companions in danger, in victory and defeat, and above all the lowering of the fleur-de-lys.

Et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos.

VIII

THE HABITANT UNDER THE OLD RÉGIME

ALL through the history of New France, from the days of Champlain to the Battle of the Plains (1608-1759), the civil and social life outside Quebec and Montreal rested on two pillars, the priests and the seigneurs. Of these the first was the more important : clerical influence, wielding every power, had ruled the colony until Talon came and organized the civil authority. This apparent trespass of

religion upon a field foreign to its mission came as a necessity of the times, caused by the indifference of the One Hundred Associates to everything save their own interests, or their inability, as their apologists would have it, to comply with the terms of their charter.

Scattered on both shores of the St Lawrence, from La Malbaie (Murray Bay) on the north and Rivière Ouelle on the south, to Montreal, and along the Richelieu to Chambly, the colonists were out of direct contact with the government at Quebec. Bad roads made the journey by land from Montreal to the capital a matter of from five to ten days; and by the river, with contrary winds, the voyage would take as long. The real authority, the ever-present rule, rested with parish priests and seigneurs. What may be called a modified feudal régime had been introduced into Canada under the charter of the One Hundred Associates, and continued under the royal government or Sovereign Council.

To encourage colonization, Talon and the French government, as already explained, made it a rule to grant large tracts of land *en fief*. These grants remained valueless if the hand of man was not there to clear the ground and cultivate the soil. Landlords were therefore interested in disposing of their property and inducing settlers to take up farms. These came as valuable gifts to the penniless newcomer, who had only to pay to the seigneur a few francs a year or a sou per acre to become a landowner. What a boon for the poor emigrant who in France had never possessed a foot of the soil, and could never hope to acquire any, who did not even own the six feet of land where he was to be buried after a lifetime of toil!

In New France the habitant, farming for his own benefit, was really a proprietor, for the tenure allowed him to sell his farm. This system has existed to the present day, as far as the system of rents is concerned. Considering the circumstances of time and country, it was the best-devised plan to colonize and attract immigration.

In 1835 the seigneurial tenure was violently attacked in Lower Canada. It was argued that it raised a barrier against immigration and kept land locked up. On the other

hand, it was shown before the committee of the legislature that large companies in the Eastern Townships held up from intending settlers immense districts to be disposed of later, when the price of land should have gone up high enough to satisfy the owners, rich men in England. This could not be done under the seigneurial tenure, as it was a condition of the grant that the land should be opened to any settler; the seigneur only held the land in trust to promote colonization. After the French régime, colonization having taken a free and wide scope, the old tenure had outlived its usefulness. Posterity must not, however, be unmindful of its excellent service in the infancy of the colony.

The seigneur's first duty consisted in building a grist-mill where the *centsitaires* could take their grain to be turned into flour and meal. Among his privileges, the right of *basse, moyenne et haute justice* invested him with great power, which, however, was seldom, if ever, exercised. Differences between habitants were settled in a friendly manner, seigneurs playing the part, as the language of French law puts it, of *amicales compositeurs*. In time of war the seigneur was naturally called upon to take command of all his *centsitaires*, who were to be ready for active service.

Wealth did not come with the seigneurial grant. Seigneurs were scarcely better off than the *centsitaires* who paid them a paltry rental for their farms. It was only in more modern times, when all the lands available for agriculture were taken up, that seigniories began to give an appreciable income. Many seigneurs were obliged to cultivate the soil to avoid starvation, and for several of them—noblemen who had come to Canada to better their condition—this effort proved too great. Soldiers by tradition and atavism, they could not turn their swords into ploughshares, and so took to the forests to become *coureurs de bois*.

These grants of land did not convey a title of nobility. They were transferred to merchants, and even to farmers. The seigneur was, however, considered the first man in the parish. Over two hundred grants (227, to be exact) were made under the French régime. They were laid out on both sides of the River St Lawrence, and parcelled off in narrow

strips averaging between one and a half and three acres in width, each of them fronting on the river. Strangers visiting the Province of Quebec often wonder why farms are cut up in such narrow strips, presenting, at a distance, a ribbon-like appearance. The reasons for such a practice are evident to the student of Canadian history: in the early days of colonization the settlers felt the necessity of being as close together as possible, to form at a moment's notice, in time of danger, a nucleus of fighters against Indian marauders. Moreover, a fondness for friendly intercourse with their neighbours, natural to Frenchmen, also induced them so to build their homes that they might conveniently meet their fellow-colonists in the social gatherings that were almost a necessity in their isolation. The roadways along the watercourses, obstructed by ruts and stones, made travelling difficult during both spring and fall. Under these conditions the rivers—*des chemins qui marchent*, as Pascal called them—offered the habitants a far more convenient highway, even in winter, for it was quite easy to journey over the ice.

A still more important factor in the moral and intellectual formation of the French-Canadian settlers appeared in the person of the priest or missionary. Even more than the seigneur he contributed to the shaping of the minds and morals of the habitants through the invigorating influence of religion. He it was who watched over their conduct and directed their attention to objects less ephemeral than earthly concerns. He it was also who cheered the poor settler in his labours to extract from the soil a hard-earned living, under very trying circumstances of climate and dangers from Indian attacks, and ever kept before his eyes a vision of future happiness and reward hereafter.

If an emergency or the necessities of the moment required his action in matters foreign to his calling, no priest would hesitate to give help. Some, like the priest of Rivière Ouelle, led their flocks to battle. One summer day in 1690 Francheville, parish priest of this small village, saw many sails in the distance. It was Sir William Phips's fleet on its way to Quebec. The priest noticed that several boats, full of men,

had left the ships and were heading for the shore. Suspecting an attack on the village, he rang the chapel bell to call his flock together. The apostle who had long been teaching peace and goodwill to all men, now sounded a warlike note, roused the courage of his hearers, and exhorted them to repulse, even at the price of their lives, these enemies of their king and religion. He then directed his flock how to play their part in the coming fray. They were to lie in ambush until all the English had set foot on the beach, then at a given signal fire their guns and scream Indian fashion. These instructions were carried out to the letter. When Phips's men landed their surprise was great, and thrown into confusion by this unexpectedly hot reception they hurriedly retreated to their boats.

This was an exceptional incident in a priest's life. Settlers were wont to admire him in a different light. When the missionary was not engaged ministering to the spiritual wants of white men, he was found among the savage tribes seemingly courting the dangers of martyrdom every day. Let us remember Father Jogues, a Jesuit who, having suffered frightful tortures and having been mutilated by the Iroquois, nevertheless returned to these barbarians to offer a treaty of peace. They answered his overtures by putting him to death.

When following their ordinary calling among settlers, the priests had to put up with so many hardships that their health very often gave way under the strain. As they were not very numerous, it was their task to visit one settlement after another, sometimes paddling their canoe along many streams, sometimes travelling on snow-shoes over deep snow, in all weathers sleeping in the open air.

It was a joyous day among the settlers when God's envoy landed in their midst. They all met in the house selected to celebrate mass, and derived infinite solace through the performance of their religious duty. Happy was considered the settler who had harboured the priest. It was a custom for this privileged habitant to entertain all his friends. After the repast, consisting sometimes of very meagre fare, a conversation would take place during which the missionary was

went to put questions to his flock on various subjects. Then, acting in the capacity of a judge, he would make inquiries to find out if misunderstandings existed among them. If there were any, he would set himself to remove them to the general satisfaction.

Bishop de Saint-Vallier wrote :

Each household represents a small and well-regulated congregation or community where morning and evening prayers are said in common, with private examination of conscience before meals. Fathers and mothers act like priests in their absence, with regard to the conduct of children and servants. They loathe idleness and are always occupied with some work. Private individuals are clever enough to learn several trades. Thus, without having been taught, they can do almost anything.

Until a fairly recent date farmers in Lower Canada kept up this practice : it was a very common part of their work to be blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, while women wove linen and *étouffe du pays* to clothe the members of the family.

New France was reared in a religious atmosphere from its earliest days ; its cradle was a church. The religious tradition has been kept ever since in every Quebec parish. To make colonization a success, the first necessity is a chapel, be it ever so small. To be located out of reach of a church is looked upon, by women especially, as a great misfortune. Every effort is made to attend mass or vespers on Sunday. Those unavoidably kept at home kneel down when the church bell rings at the elevation of the Host. Very little has been changed in the religious conditions of Quebec since the days of Laval and Saint-Vallier.

Under this religious influence the French settlers developed into vigorous men with healthy minds, according to the Latin ideal—*mens sana in corpore sano*. They became well trained for a life of hardships and dangers, seldom relieved by strokes of fortune.

French immigrants, as a rule, belonged to a good stock ; most of them could read and write, as the earliest registers

of births, marriages and deaths bear witness. Many of their descendants were not educated to the same degree. How could schools be maintained in new settlements with a thin population scattered over a large area of country? It is easy also to understand the difficulty of finding teachers. To keep alive was the first object, and this demanded almost superhuman effort. Yet there did exist a few schools, colleges and convents throughout New France.

Parkman in his *Old Régime in Canada* pictures the French colonists as a semi-civilized rabble. But have these much-abused habitants given such examples of savage superstition as the Puritans of his own state who burned women at the stake in Salem? Parkman was too well versed in all the annals of American history to be ignorant of these executions of so-called sorcerers. 'Eight supports of hell,' said pastor Noyes, pointing at the victims of an inconceivable superstition, 'are hanging to the gibbet.' Did Parkman not know, when passing judgment on Canadians of old, that twenty persons were put to death in Salem for an imaginary crime, and that fifty more only escaped death by confessing to this false charge with promise to amend?

Will it be considered unfair in this connection to quote Bancroft, who states that 'the colonization of our country is the history of crimes of Europe'? This was exceptional; we are satisfied and glad to recognize that the English colonists south of Canada were as a rule men of sterling character, high-minded, having sacrificed their homes in England to find religious liberty in America; if they did not in turn extend this liberty to Catholics, it was due to the spirit of the day. At that time religious prejudice was untempered by the spirit of toleration—a word, indeed, not to be found in the vocabularies of those days.

Even Parkman, who in his last works on Canada is not favourably disposed towards the habitants, is fain to confess that during the eighteenth century some improvement is perceptible in the moral state of the population. 'As it became more numerous and more stable, it also became less ignorant, and towards the end of the French rule was

probably better taught, so far as concerned religion, than the mass of French peasants. Yet secular instruction was still extremely meagre, even in the *noblesse*. 'In spite of this defective education,' says the famous navigator Bougainville, who knew the French colony well in its last years, 'the Canadians are naturally intelligent. They do not know how to write, but they speak with ease, and with an accent as good as the Parisian.' He means, of course, the better class. 'Even children of officers and gentlemen,' says another writer, 'scarcely know how to read and write; they are ignorant of the first elements of geography and history'; and evidence like this might be extended.

That the early habitants, in spite of their warlike disposition, distinguished themselves in time of peace by a great kindness of heart and congeniality seldom found among European emigrants to America and Africa cannot be questioned. These qualities contributed largely to win over to France nearly all the Indian tribes. The habitant differed vastly from the distant and haughty English colonist, who was overbearing in his intercourse with the children of the forests, and only able to attract them by sheer interest. This disposition of the colonist to consider the redskin as a brother contributed greatly to the work of winning them over to Christianity and the Catholic Church. French women often took charge of Indian papooses and nursed them like their own babies.

It has been shown that during the first period of colonization (from 1608 to 1663) Canada constituted a sort of religious congregation or theocratic state, with priests ruling every settlement in the absence of civil power. Besides the Jesuits and Franciscans, prominent in every group, there lived in the cities exceptionally high-minded ladies whose influence over the people must have been very beneficial. History has classed among the most heroic women of the world, Mademoiselle Mance, who at the risk of her life followed de Maisonneuve to Montreal, and Madame de la Peltrie, who forsook position and social advantages in France to lay the foundation of a convent at Quebec. Her zeal for the conversion of young Indian girls and devotion to spiritual

interests were only equalled by the virtues of her friend Marie de l'Incarnation, who wrote such remarkable letters on New France and whom Bossuet likened to St Theresa, the celebrated mystic of Spain. Endowed with the same qualities, Marguerite Bourgeoys, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame, is entitled to the veneration of posterity. The life of self-denial, energy and fearless resolution in their strenuous enterprise that these women led set an example that greatly helped to frame the mind of the pioneers of New France.

We have seen that during the first period of colonization the habitant laid the basis of New France under most trying circumstances. His condition improved when Talon, temporarily at least, placed Canada on a sound basis. Still, the necessity of opening up new fields for colonization and the frequent wars with New England and her sister colonies made it needful for the habitants to maintain their great physical vigour. This training, combined with vigilant moral education, contributed to frame that high character and loyalty to the king and faith that characterize the habitant under the French régime.

IX

THE HABITANT UNDER BRITISH RULE

A FEW years after the Treaty of Paris (1763) a French Canadian, de Lery, visited England. He went to London and was presented at court with his wife. George III, on seeing the lady, exclaimed: 'Madame, if all Canadian women resemble you, I have indeed made a fine conquest.'

If George III had been well informed on Canada, he might have generalized his flattering appreciation. In fact, there had been lately added to his subjects an honest and vigorous set of men who were to be as loyal to him as the British-born. Their late experience had been terrible; for six years New France had been turned into a battlefield,

and its inhabitants had suffered from all the hardships of an invaded country. Many had met the fate of unknown heroes; those that remained could be considered as fortunate, if happiness can co-exist with defeat and mourning.

A more healthy race could not be found than these vanquished farmer-soldiers. According to Hocquart, the intendant in 1737, 'the Canadians are as a rule tall, well-built and of strong cast.' Father Charlevoix writes in his *Journal de l'Amérique septentrionale* (1721): 'We cannot find in our kingdom a province where blood is finer, the stature so erect and the body better proportioned than in New France.' Another writer who visited Canada was struck by the large number of strong and erect old men that he had met between Quebec and Montreal.

The Canadians of the French régime were indeed ignorant, but any other intellectual state would have been miraculous. Between the foundation of Montreal (1642)—the real starting-point of New France as a firmly established colony—and its downfall (1759) there elapsed 117 years. During that space of time there was only a short period of peace. Five long wars between France and other European countries involved her colony in hostilities in North America. Before Tracy and Courcelle's second expedition against the Iroquois, New France had been at the mercy of these Indians for over twenty-five years. And even after their defeat the country was not very secure until a general treaty of peace was concluded at Montreal (1701), under de Callières' administration, between France and all Indian tribes, including the Iroquois. Could education have flourished under such conditions?

In colonial undertakings men are always governed by the same laws. Their first imperative duty is to take hold of the land and make its possession peaceful; then comes another necessity—that of finding the means of extracting a living out of the soil. Education is thought of when the sun of prosperity and security has begun to shine over the country. It was a difficult task to attract new settlers to Canada. How could one expect teachers to come to an undeveloped country? And after all, education was not,

so to speak, a drug in the market of Europe in those times. The official documents of sixty years ago disclose an astonishing amount of ignorance among the common people of England and France.

However, there were always in New France groups of men well educated and perfectly qualified to appear in society and to play their part in the small Versailles then existing at Quebec. According to Kalm, a Swedish botanist who travelled in Canada and New England in 1749, Quebec and Montreal could be proud of their leading men, whose company was quite attractive. He even goes the length of saying that he took more delight in Canada than in New England.

According to this Swedish savant, people of note in Canada showed as a rule more taste for natural history and literature than men of the same class in the English colonies, where the only ambition was to get rich quickly and where there was the utmost contempt for science.

Charlevoix remarked that Canadians were possessed of remarkable aptitude in mechanical labour; they excelled in this line without having received any lessons. This observation stands true to this day. In the Ottawa and Hull mills French-Canadian workmen very often show remarkable mechanical talent.

Kalm was particularly struck by the refined manners of Canadian women: 'They are well brought up and virtuous, and show a sort of *laisser-aller* which wins your sympathy by its innocence. They dress very well on Sundays, but with less care on week days; only their hair is always well taken care of.' At the same time he makes a rather harsh observation on Quebec girls: 'Their manners border on too much freedom.' Here he mistook appearances for reality. Montcalm indulged in similar remarks about Quebec women before he had become well acquainted with them. He was deceived by their easy-going ways, but when his experience had extended over several years he altered his opinion. 'Their coquettish smiles do not amount to anything; it comes from their fondness for admiration, but ends there.'

Friction soon arose between Canadian-born inhabitants and Frenchmen lately arrived in Quebec or Montreal. The latter assumed airs of superiority towards the habitants, who in turn got even with these haughty newcomers by charging them with excessive pride and doubtful merit. Men in office in particular did not conceal their poor opinion of Canadians. Intendant Hocquart, whose praise of their physical appearance has just been quoted, goes the length of saying that they were vindictive to a degree, without any love for their parents, who were too fond of them. This is not all; we come to more serious charges. They were untruthful, and were almost as fond of liquor as the Indians. He also blames them for their laziness. Long winters, during which no outdoor work could be done, were largely responsible for this failing. However, their industry in opening up the country on both shores of the St Lawrence to a great extent disproved this charge.

Pouchot, a French officer who commanded at Niagara during the Seven Years' War, depicts Canadian militiamen as impudent braggarts. He had not met, he writes, a single Canadian soldier who did not boast of having killed at least half a dozen Englishmen.

One has sometimes to go away from home to get justice. Looking at the newly conquered subjects, General Murray, who at first seemed prejudiced against them, reported to the colonial office in his capacity of governor-in-chief, that the Canadians were 'good people, frugal, moral, industrious, and the bravest race under the sun.'

Such were the men whose life in Canada had been a constant struggle against adverse circumstances. They stood firmly planted, like trees that send their roots deeper in the soil when shaken by the storm.

At the change of régime they numbered 65,000 souls, a very small population considering that from Champlain to the capitulation of Montreal a period of 150 odd years had elapsed. Yet the French settlers, with scanty means at their disposal, had transformed the country. The fact must not be lost sight of that on Talon's arrival at Quebec (1665) the population of New France was less

than 3000. During the seven years of his administration it increased to 10,000 from natural growth and immigration.

This was the only time at which France assisted her colony. When Louis XIV launched himself into those terrible wars during which he stood alone against almost half of Europe, no immigrants could be spared for Canada. Let us remember that in the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century France ranked first in Europe in point of population, strength and civilization. It was the paramount concern of king and ministers of that time to maintain its prestige. One cannot, however, help deploring the policy that sent so many men to fight all over Europe, and so few to Canada.

Those 65,000 colonists, transferred, by the fortune of war, to another flag, constituted an imposing contingent of population. All of one mind, all of one creed, they presented a uniform front, bearing the stamp of old Normandy with its good points and its bad. Save in the matter of sentiment, they had little to regret in their separation from France. Had not its government almost abandoned them to the tender mercies of the enemy, shutting its ears to all requests for help? 'Why do you not send soldiers to Canada?' had said one of Montcalm's lieutenants to a minister at Versailles. 'When the house is on fire, we cannot look after the stables,' was the reply.

The seigneurs co-operated with the clergy in the work of changing the allegiance of their friends. To the former George III appealed more strongly than Louis XV, who, under Madame de Pompadour's influence, had disgraced the throne of France. The habitants, moreover, had been revolted by the infamous conduct at Quebec of Intendant Bigot and his associates, who, besides robbing the country, had reproduced, on a small scale, the scandals of Versailles.

The first contact of the vanquished with their new masters could not but be painful, and for fifteen years they would have known all the hardships of the *vae victis*, had not fortunate circumstances favoured them. That they should have

become reconciled at once to their fate would have involved a change of mind almost superhuman. But with time it came. It has already been demonstrated that the most powerful influence in New France was that of the clergy, and, be it said to their honour, they endeavoured to smooth over asperities between the government and the king's new subjects. It was the will of God that they should be conquered, and in the name of God the habitant was called upon to submit to his fate. The country people bowed their heads to this order, and, accepting the inevitable, became reconciled to the change.

X

THE HABITANT UNDER THE NEW RÉGIME

THE first years following the downfall of French rule constituted for the new subjects of the English king a period of agony and despair resembling the death-throes of a nation. At a time when they were exhausted by a long series of wars, and ruined by the maladministration and exactions of Bigot and by the loss of their crops, the Canadians had to face masters who bore them little goodwill. From the capitulation of Montreal (1760) until 1774, when the Quebec Act shed upon them the first rays of long-deferred justice, they were governed in violation of the articles of capitulation, of the Treaty of Paris and of the laws of nations.

The royal proclamation of 1764 deprived them of their laws, and the test oath made them aliens in their own country, on the very soil that their fathers had wrenched at the price of their blood from the grasp of barbarism.

This tyranny affected the habitants but little. After the war they returned to their farms, in many places laid waste, especially about Quebec. Everywhere the work of destruction was visible: churches, houses and barns were nearly all burned out. By no means discouraged, the farmer set to work to rebuild his home and bring back a small measure

of comfort. Isolated in the country, with no neighbours but his own kith and kin, he did not feel the change of régime ; if he was conscious of a new order of things, he could, by his peculiar situation, escape all government interference in his daily avocations. During the military rule, from 1760 to 1764, justices of the peace were appointed, but the peasants made their mission a sinecure. If any trouble arose between neighbours, the case would be submitted to the curé for settlement. Peace, without any intrusion of English authority, reigned supreme. It was different in the cities, where the rude official hand was severely felt. There had come from England and the English colonies to settle in Canada men of doubtful character, adventurers who expected and intended to take advantage of Canada as a conquered country. Overbearing with the common people, they offended the educated class by their boorish manners. Had they been free to give rein to their evil natures they would have caused great mischief. But, fortunately for the Canadians, Murray—and later on Carleton—stepped in between these would-be oppressors and their victims. These officials, men of noble mind and high character, had learned to respect the king's new subjects in the field, and after the war were not long in recognizing their value as a peace-loving and moral people.

The habitants, throughout the parishes, formed for themselves a series of small republics, under the eye of the almost powerless officials, whose rule did not seem to extend beyond the cities of Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal. The Treaty of Paris had given the conquered people very cold comfort ; it simply conceded them the right to practise their religion ; it granted nothing as to their laws and language. But the right to speak his own language is a part of every man's personality, and any attempt to abolish it is an attack on the human soul. The peasants therefore continued in the enjoyment of their traditions and of their language. All this was done under the curé's guidance, with the co-operation in some instances of the seigneurs. In each parish of Quebec, beside the curé, two influential men—the family physician, and the notary—

have always been looked to by their fellow-countrymen for advice.

Murray, second governor of Canada (1764-68), who ruled at first with an iron rod, allowed his rigour to relax after a time and ended by recognizing the noble qualities of the Canadians, and claiming for them royal protection and justice. He held that England, if she considered the retention of her new colony as an advantage, would serve her own interests best by treating the habitants with leniency. Combining practice with precept, he allowed the application of French civil laws in the matter of landed property and the right of succession.

Carleton—Murray's successor—took the same view of the situation, and strongly urged his friends in England to conciliate the habitants who had been estranged from the government. It was with this idea in his mind that he wrote to General Gage, governor of Montreal, in 1775: 'As to the Habitants or Peasantry, ever since the civil authority has been introduced into the province, the government has hung loose and retained so little power that they have in a manner emancipated themselves.' And he adds: 'It will require time and discreet management to likewise recall them to their ancient habit of obedience and discipline.'

Events south of Canada now demanded a complete change in the policy pursued towards the habitants. The murmurs of discontent in the neighbouring colonies were growing louder every day and threatening revolution. In this menacing condition of things Carleton pleaded the cause of the habitants at Westminster when the Quebec Act was under discussion in parliament. The line of conduct he suggested appeared imperative: it was therefore resolved to initiate better intercourse with the king's new subjects in order to retain them in the bonds of the Empire, and also to counteract the influence of American emissaries who were preaching rebellion to the habitants.

The measure of justice—considerable for those days—meted out to the people by the Quebec Act of 1774, in the restoration of French law in civil matters, and the granting of free practice of their religion, made them turn a deaf

ear to the alluring entreaties of the rebels. The gentry rushed to the front with as many of their *consiliaires* as they could gather around them. While some remained neutral, a large number of French Canadians helped Carleton to defeat Montgomery under the walls of Quebec.

Still better times came with the Constitutional Act of 1791. The people at large were given a share in the government. Satisfaction began to prevail all over Lower Canada; and of this change of sentiment proof was given in 1812, when from many parts of the province militiamen flocked to the front to repulse the invaders with signal success at Lacolle and Chateauguay.

Events in France had also, long before this, largely contributed to a revulsion of feeling. When the habitants learned that Louis XVI had been beheaded and that priests and nuns were being sent to the scaffold by the score, public opinion turned against revolutionary France. The last ties between that country and her former colony snapped under the impression created by the excesses of the Revolution. Clerical influence largely promoted this sentiment, and France became an object of horror for all Catholic Canada. This was strikingly exemplified after the battle of Aboukir Bay, when a solemn *Te Deum* was sung at Quebec as a thanksgiving for the English victory. Abbé Plessis—later Bishop of Quebec, and the most prominent figure in the Roman Catholic clergy in Canada—preached a sermon in which, after eulogizing the English government, he uttered these famous sentences: 'Let us rejoice at this felicitous event. All that weakens France contributes to separate her more and more from us. All that contributes to that end tends to make more secure our lives, liberty, tranquillity, prosperity and happiness.'¹ Even Napoleon, with all his glorious prestige, was looked upon as the son of the Revolution, and was always designated in Canada as a usurper.

This anti-French, or, to be more correct, anti-revolutionary, sentiment went so far that in 1799 voluntary contributions were made towards the expenses of the war between England and France. A list of ninety-five subscribers was

¹ From a sermon delivered in the Cathedral, Quebec, January 10, 1799.

102 THE HABITANT, HIS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

transmitted in that year by Governor Prescott to the Duke of Portland. A portion of this list is as follows :

Le Séminaire de Montreal .	£500 with £300 annually during the war.				
Major de St Ours	£20	per year during the war.			
Pierre Panet	£25	" " " " "			
M. Duburon, priest	£16	" " " " "			
L. P. Panet	£40	" " " " "			
De Guire, priest	£12, 10s.	" " " " "			
Jacques Panet	£25	" " " " "			
R. F. Cazeaux	£25	" " " " "			
P. R. de St Ours	£20	" " " " "			

These subscriptions, large for the time, and from men by no means rich, expressed the sentiments of leading French Canadians of those days with more force than eloquent words. Priests' names stand in the majority on the list, and they were the true representatives of their flock, whose minds they moulded. It must be remembered that seigneurial influence had diminished with time. Diverging interests had antagonized the seigneur and his *consitaires*, who grumbled at the rent they had to pay yearly, besides the tax (*lods et ventes*) of nine per cent that they had to disburse if they sold their farms.

In 1820 Louis Joseph Papineau, a future rebel, spoke in the strain of Plessis. Referring to George III, shortly after that monarch's demise, he said :

Not many days have elapsed since we assembled on this spot for the same purpose as that which now calls us together, the choice of representatives. The necessity of that choice being caused by the great national calamity, the decease of that beloved Sovereign who has reigned over the inhabitants of this country since the day that they became British subjects, it is impossible not to express feelings of gratitude for the many benefits received from him, and of sorrow for his loss, so deeply felt in this as in every other portion of his extensive dominions. And how could it be otherwise, when each year of his long reign has been marked by new favours bestowed upon this country ? To enumerate these and detail the

history of this colony for so many years would occupy more time than can be spared by those whom I have the honour to address. Suffice it then at a glance to compare our present happy situation with that of our fathers on the eve of the day when George III became their legitimate monarch. Suffice it to point out the fact that under the French government (both internally and externally arbitrary and oppressive) the interests of this colony had been more frequently neglected and maladministered than those of any other part of its dependencies.

In my opinion Canada seems not to have been considered as a country which, from fertility of soil, salubrity of climate and extent of territory, might have been the peaceful abode of a numerous and happy population; but as a military post, where a feeble garrison was condemned to live in a state of perpetual warfare and insecurity, frequently suffering from famine, without trade—or with a trade monopolized by privileged companies—public and private property often pillaged, and personal liberty daily violated, when year after year the handful of inhabitants settled in this province were dragged from their homes and families, to shed their blood and carry murder and havoc from the shores of the Great Lakes, the Mississippi and the Ohio, to those of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Hudson Bay. Such was the situation of our fathers; behold the change.

George III, a sovereign revered for his moral character, attention to his kingly duties and love of his subjects, succeeds to Louis XV, a prince then deservedly despised for his debauchery, his inattention to the wants of people, and his lavish profusion of the public moneys upon favourites and mistresses. From that day the reign of law succeeds to that of violence; from that day the treasure, the navy, and the armies of Great Britain are mustered to afford us an invincible protection against external danger; from that day the better part of her laws becomes ours, while our religion, property, and the laws by which they were governed, remain unaltered; soon after are granted to us the principles of its free constitution—an infallible pledge, when acted upon, of our internal prosperity. Now religious toleration; trial by jury (the wisest of safeguards ever devised for the protection of innocence); security against arbitrary

imprisonment by the privileges attached to the writ of *habeas corpus* ; legal and equal security afforded to all, in their person, honour, and property ; the right to obey no other laws than those of our own making and choice, expressed through our representatives ; all these advantages have become our birthright, and will, I hope, be the lasting inheritance of our posterity.

Papineau altered his views later on when Dalhousie and Aylmer, siding with the legislative council and with what was called by the patriots *l'oligarchie*, thwarted the assembly in its efforts at reform ; and his opposition culminated in extreme measures when Dalhousie attempted in 1822 to foist on Lower Canada a legislative union with Upper Canada.

This explanation will not account, in the eyes of many, for the rebellious uprising of 1837. A recourse to arms had never been intended by Papineau and his followers, though their public declarations, after Lord John Russell had deprived the assembly of its right to vote supplies, smacked of rebellion. If some farmers followed Papineau, it was because his great eloquence lashed them into a sort of blind frenzy. Of what had country people to complain ? Outside Quebec they did not suffer from any oppressive measures ; no tax weighed on their shoulders ; church and school stood with wide-open doors.

It must not be inferred from this that there existed no grievances ; but they were of a nature that affected only educated men. The patriot movement was altogether aristocratic. Men like Papineau, Bédard, La Fontaine and Morin, all highly educated, suffered in their pride at being excluded from any share in the government of their country for the benefit of a few favourites, their inferiors in intellectual merit. They could not bear to be treated by a few conceited and self-styled aristocrats as the descendants of a conquered race. The troubles of 1837 would have been avoided if Dalhousie and Aylmer had not allowed themselves to be misguided by a small clique of officials, who kept all authority in their own hands in order to share in its material advantages. If a man of Gosford's conciliatory disposition had been appointed instead of Dalhousie or Aylmer, the

shortcomings of the constitution could have been remedied. Unfortunately Gosford appeared upon the scene after Papineau had lost control of himself, and had begun to play the part of a firebrand in his speeches to intimidate his opponents. But there was no intention of raising the flag of rebellion. This would have been utter madness, for the patriots lacked the sinews of war—money, arms and soldiers.

How could they have planned an uprising, powerless as they were for action in the field? In the patriots' secret meetings no scheme of violence was ever mentioned or even hinted at. O'Callaghan, member of parliament in 1837, writing in 1852 to Garneau, author of *L'Histoire du Canada*, declares emphatically that never for a moment had he and his friends entertained the mad idea of an uprising. This declaration is corroborated by a statement of Lord Durham in one of his dispatches to London. In this document he declares openly that the party opposed to the French Canadians were prepared to do anything to deprive them of all influence. 'For that purpose, the public revenue was spent against the wishes of the people represented by the Legislative Assembly.' Was not this rank absolutism that no Englishman would bear without doing his utmost to stop it? Still, Papineau and his followers limited their opposition to constitutional means, and Durham could thus explain the cause of the uprising. '*The consequent rebellion*,' he adds, '*although precipitated by the British* from an instinctive sense of danger of allowing the Canadians full time for preparation, could not perhaps have been avoided.' Here Durham goes beyond the legitimate conclusion. From secret documents published in late years, ample evidence is brought forward to prove that the patriots never intended to rise in open rebellion. What did the habitant understand of this complicated question of the powers of the assembly restricted or nullified by the upper house? It was beyond his sphere of comprehension. Contented with his condition as tiller of the soil, with no other ambition than that of a peaceful life, he did not feel the burden of the grievances denounced by Papineau.

It must not be forgotten that the troubles were confined

to the Montreal district. Quebec and Three Rivers took no part in these disturbances. Here again the clergy showed their loyalty: Bishop Lartigue of Montreal commanded his flock to abstain from all unlawful proceedings.

In 1849 a certain number of Montreal merchants, both English and French—some of them very prominent—and well-known politicians raised the annexation cry.¹ Trade in Canada was then at a very low ebb, a crisis having been brought on by the abolition of the Corn Laws. It was argued by these people that if Canada joined her destinies with those of the United States, she would share their prosperity. Again priests stepped in to point out to their flocks the danger to which their faith and language would be exposed if Lower Canada threw itself into the gigantic agglomeration of people to the south. They, moreover, put them on their guard against new-fangled utopias imported from France, after the Revolution of 1848, by some radical French Canadians.

About this time (1849) the minds of leading French Canadians were deeply concerned by the new disposition among their countrymen to leave Canada in order to settle in the New England States. At first no one was impressed by this danger, but with time the emigration increased in an alarming manner, especially from 1865, after the War of Secession, to 1890.

Gradually, important French settlements were established in many manufacturing centres of the New England and Eastern States. In Fall River, Lowell, Willimantic, Manchester, etc., there are thousands of families with complete organizations of their own, French churches and schools. Some of these newcomers have obtained municipal honours, and Rhode Island repeatedly elected as governor, Aram Pothier. Their ambition is, after having become naturalized American citizens, to constitute autonomies exclusively French to keep up their language and customs. So far this ideal has been attained where they have grouped themselves in large numbers, but in smaller communities they have been lost in the general mass. Is it not strange to see

¹ Among them were J. J. C. (afterwards Sir John) Abbott, L. H. Holton and A. A. Dorion.

working together the descendants of Puritans and habitants, who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries never met but to cut each other's throat! All hope of bringing back these voluntary exiles has been given up. They have gone across the line to stay. American mill-owners prize their services very much, as they dislike labour disputes and are steady and reliable workers.

The habitant also long ago invaded Upper Canada. The first French Canadian settlements were established opposite Detroit and then all through Essex County, where the number of French-speaking people is large in proportion to the total population. Later on this emigration penetrated into the counties of Glengarry, Stormont, Carleton, Russell and Prescott, until the French Canadians have become the majority in several of these constituencies. Some years ago, when the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built, many labourers employed in the construction of the line settled in Northern Ontario. Now the new counties of Nipissing and Sturgeon Falls return French-Canadian members to the Ontario legislature.

Many times throughout the last fifty years the urgent question has arisen in Quebec: How shall we stem this tide of emigration? There seemed to be but one course open—colonization within the province. Both government and private organizations put forth every effort to retain in Lower Canada the would-be deserters. They had but little success, and year after year large contingents of French Canadians bade adieu to their native land to swell the numbers of their countrymen already settled in the manufacturing centres of New England, of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and Michigan.

What were the causes of this disastrous emigration? Some people were inclined to attribute the exodus to those influences which have governed old-world displacements of population and which sent masses of population from Northern Europe to Italy, Spain and France. This explanation seems far-fetched. That the habitant is moving away from his native land from purely economic reasons is more probable. During the second half of the last century

agriculture ceased to be profitable in Lower Canada. It became a difficult task for a farmer to make both ends meet. In this predicament a young man, member of a numerous family, having to part with his parents to look for a home, was faced with two alternatives, either to take an ax to clear land and open a farm, or to wend his way to the manufacturing centres south of Canada. The second alternative appeared more attractive, as it did not involve so much effort.

How many French Canadians are there in the United States, in Ontario, and in the prairie provinces? Opinions differ greatly on this point, owing to the absence of reliable statistics. There are not a few who place the total of this emigration at over a million and a half souls, but this is an evident exaggeration.

When England took possession of Canada the French population was set down at 65,000; since that time it has doubled every twenty-eight years. A calculation on the basis of this increase would place the present French population at 2,500,000 if there had been no exodus. According to the last census there are now in the Province of Quebec 1,200,000 French Canadians. But this is not the only item to be taken into account in this calculation. The French population in Ontario and Western Canada can be set down at over 250,000. These figures will go far to show that there cannot be more than one million French Canadians in the United States, but even this number is far too large and constitutes an enormous loss to Canada. For Quebec it is almost a national calamity, involving a considerable decrease of influence in parliament. The upbuilding of the French-Canadian nationality has involved one hundred and fifty years of steady effort. What a misfortune if this magnificent community was to be allowed to diminish in size and strength!

To complete this rapid glance at the evolution of the French race in North America, let us return to the habitants still firmly bound to the land wrested by their ancestors from barbarism. They considered themselves the happiest people on earth in the peaceful enjoyment of full liberty.

At the inception of English rule it was laid down as a principle that the Canadians had no right whatever to the use of their own laws. Such was the starting-point; and when we contrast their unhappy position at that time with that of to-day, we are tempted to conclude that there coursed through the veins of those who secured all the rights of British subjects, for themselves and their posterity, the blood of those Norman barons who, on the field of Runnymede, wrested from the hands of King John the great charter of English liberty.

XI

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS IN THE
PROVINCE OF QUEBEC

IMMEDIATELY after the cession of Canada the French-Canadian farmers once more settled on their farms, free from the numerous vexations and exactions of the old régime. Thanks to their thrift and economy, prosperity returned to every part of Lower Canada. A complete transformation of the country took place, and for the peasants who had survived the calamities of the Seven Years' War dawned an era of peace and happiness. At the beginning and throughout almost the whole course of the nineteenth century no people had better reason to be satisfied with their lot than the habitants on the shores of the St Lawrence and the Richelieu. That time is still referred to as 'the good old time'; the *bon vieux temps* is remembered as the days when the good things of this world were abundant in Lower Canada. Among a people easily contented, endowed with the pleasant manners and the politeness of Old France, and blessed with a most gentle temper, contentment reigned supreme.

If, then, the voice of the French Canadians had no weight in the state council, if political liberty made no progress, at least the course of everyday life offered the most perfect happiness. What peasant in any other country could compare

with the French-Canadian habitant from the standpoint of comfort and content ?

During the first period of the English régime peace came as a blessing of God. The once overburdened and oppressed colony became a new Arcadia. Torn violently from France and thrown under the domination of a foreign power, the farmers, avoiding all contact with their new masters, remained strictly isolated. This isolation caused the different parishes to become a series of small, self-governing, self-sustaining states, held to the powers that were by the thinnest of ties.

Various other causes favoured this sort of independence. They had never known anything but absolute submission to their rulers. What did it matter if British political rights were denied to them ? Of what value were these rights with which they were unfamiliar ? To the majority this new state of affairs, with a maximum of *laissez-faire* and a minimum of government interference, was very tolerable. Stationed in a fortress where their indifference to politics protected them from the intrigues of power, the French Canadians had no ties but those of sentiment to make them regret the bygone days, with their quarrels, taxes and statute labour. Be it said, to the credit of the new government, that it did not unduly interfere with the peace and quiet of the farmers. When the latter had paid seigneurial rents and church dues, all the rest of the produce of their fields belonged to themselves. The government collected duties on foreign goods, but these were very small ; the habitants bought English goods very sparingly, for their industry and the instinct of domestic economy furnished them with the means of supplying their own wants. With the spinning-wheel and crude *métiers* installed in almost every house, the French-Canadian wife was able to weave the linen and homespun necessary for the clothing of the family. The habitant constructed also the carts, sleighs, and most of the implements required for the cultivation of the soil. He depended very little on the industry of the neighbouring village ; perhaps he needed the help of the blacksmith and the saddler ; but very often he repaired the harness and sewed his own boots,

the rough but comfortable moccasin (*soulier de bœuf*). Any coin that once found its way into the habitant's purse (often a strong leather bag) seldom left that secure place ; it might almost be said that he saved all he earned. Shunning lawsuits, he tried to settle his disputes as often as possible through the medium of either the curé of the parish, the notary, or the doctor. How could a man so well protected against life's burdens be anything but happy ? He enjoyed a freedom that he could not have wished more complete, a full measure of the liberties that seemed to him essential ; he was free to practise his religion, to speak his own language, and to follow the customs of his forefathers.

How different was his fate from that of the peasant of the seventeenth century whom La Bruyère described as a mere brute, bent over the soil, drawing a mere pittance from his farm and working like a slave ! No doubt the labour of the habitant was arduous. The short duration of the summer season imposed upon him a continuous strain while it lasted, but his courage helped him to labour during that time from the break of day till dusk—*d'une étoile à l'autre*, as peasants say—from the last star that pales at daybreak to the first one that becomes visible after sunset ; but in August the habitant rested his eyes upon a plentiful harvest, the reward of his labours.

With the month of November labour diminished on the farm, and the threshing of the wheat and oats went slowly on. On market days the farmer would go to town to sell his produce and bring back supplies, and presents for his wife and his children, the companions of his labours, and a six-quart measure of Jamaica rum, which helped to liven up the long winter evenings.

Winter brought to the habitants a series of entertainments and feasts that broke the monotony of this season of loneliness and inaction. It was then that the gaiety of the French temperament revealed itself in numberless outbursts of merriment. It would seem that the first Canadian colonists, deprived by snow and ice of intercourse with France during eight months of the year, had felt the necessity of enlivening that lonely season by every means in their power. Hence

the hospitality, the grace of manners so remarkable in the Canadians of old ; hence their pleasure in meeting friends and in multiplying the occasions of entertaining one another. Winter therefore meant a series of friendly meetings, full of charm and cordiality and *joie de vivre*.

The pleasures of the table were especially attractive. What pantagruelic feasts were suppers in these happy days ! Abundance made up for any deficiencies of cuisine, and, from what we know to-day of the old culinary art, we are bound to believe that there was nothing so appetizing as the golden turkey, fresh pork nicely roasted, pigs' feet and the chicken pies that so appealed to the palates of Quebecers of another day.

Thus the hospitality of olden times displayed itself in a very sumptuous manner ; the housekeeper, called upon to do the honours of the house, covered the table with all sorts of dishes, and the table was hidden under a variety of large and small plates filled with all kinds of delicacies. De Gaspé tells us that the Canadians of old made it a rule that the table should be almost as copiously covered at the end of the meal as when the guests sat down to it.

The writer had occasion in his youth to be present at one of these wondrous feasts—it was a wedding breakfast—where the guests rivalled each other in having a good time. He can still see them with their beaming faces ; all drinking merrily, round a table overloaded with food, and listening to the best singer, whose charm was irresistible when, rising from his chair and turning towards the master of the house, he would ring out, amidst the general hilarity, this refrain :

*Bonhomme, bonhomme,
Tu n'es pas maître dans ta maison
Quand nous y sommes.*

The pleasant life of the good old times ran its course chiefly in the old parishes along the St Lawrence and Richelieu. The valley of the latter, with its beautiful fields and rich soil, could be likened to a vast garden producing in abundance all the necessaries of life. Sir Georges É. Cartier once remarked that his father exported

from the parish of St Antoine five hundred thousand bushels of wheat per year. From St John to Sorel a dozen pretty towns and many comfortable farmhouses studded the roadway. Every six miles or so a church spire could be seen, and around it stood the houses of well-to-do people. During winter the ice of the Richelieu River was the means of procuring an agreeable and easy route throughout that region.

At that time there was found in each village, thanks to the presence of seigneurs, of rich merchants and of professional men, a social circle of people of charming manners. As a result, agreeable intercourse naturally sprang up from one extremity of this district to the other; and during winter visits would be exchanged between the different parishes.

What an enlivening sight they must have been—these stolid, sturdy fellows, well wrapped up in grey homespun overcoats, a sash round the waist, skilfully handling their horses! Away they drove merrily, fearing neither fatigue nor hunger on the way, as they were always certain of meeting with a hearty welcome wherever they went. With their great physical strength, they could well compare with their cousins, the *gars normands*. Having an easier conception of life than their descendants, not subject like ourselves to the influence of new inventions that hurl us onward in the different paths of human activity, they took all the enjoyment possible out of the world, their limited ambition keeping them from worrying in the race for wealth.

Fortunately, the Lenten season came at last to put a stop to these agreeable but rather expensive pastimes, which extended all through the carnival—that is, from Christmas to Ash Wednesday. It was then the accepted rule to abstain from all worldly amusement, to attend all church services, to fast and exclude meat from the table during forty days. After weeks of self-denial, how welcome, at the first sign of spring, were the gatherings in the woods, around the cauldron of boiling maple sap!

With changes in the mode of living and necessities of life growing dearer, these merry festivities have become less

numerous. But on *mardi gras*—Shrove-Tuesday—jollifications are still kept up in the olden-time style.

These old parishes of the Province of Quebec were regions of plenty, and the most cordial and lavish hospitality reigned everywhere. If a stranger happened to enter a Canadian home at meal-time, he was immediately invited to sit at the table, and the attentions of the family were all centred on him. What, then, of the welcome given to friends and relatives! It seemed as if the household could never do enough to amuse them and satisfy all their fancies. The sole object of the host was to make them happy every minute of their visit. It was utterly impossible, in those days, to enter a farmer's house without eating, or at least 'taking refreshments.'

And what sweet recollections are those of the French-Canadian family of days of yore! Strongly impressed with religious principles, they lived in the peace of mind derived from a faith that had not been touched by doubt, with nothing to disturb the harmonious relations of brothers and sisters, who formed a loving and affectionate circle around the parents. The smiling face of the mother was the central figure of these happy homes. What a vigilant and affectionate woman she was, lavishing the tenderness of her heart on all, and still appearing to give it entirely to each one! She was indeed the life and soul of the home, for ever busy with the cares and labours of the house. Occupied by the work involved in the upbringing of a numerous family, she lavished all her love and energy from the early morning hours until evening when she placed her little ones in bed with their good-night kiss. The pious mother never forgot the recommendation, still clear in the memory of those who have heard it, notwithstanding the lengthening shadow of their recollections: *Donne ton cœur au bon Dieu.*

If the French-Canadian farmers lived in an enviable independence, it was not so with those living in the cities. From the very first days of the new régime the difference of language and of religion brought them into conflict with certain unscrupulous immigrants who had crossed the Atlantic to settle in Canada—for them a conquered land.

The bad manners of these newcomers, their open contempt for the Canadians, rendered the position of the old citizens of Quebec and Montreal very painful indeed. From that time began the struggle for supremacy on the one hand and the struggle for rights on the other that were only to terminate eighty years later. Timid at the beginning, opposition to provincial absolutism became stronger day by day as the people, realizing their strength, borrowed from their enemies—*fas est et ab hoste doceri*—the weapons with which after many vicissitudes they were to win the victory. Later on the intelligent men in the parishes joined hands with those of the cities, and when the demands of the people became embodied in Papineau, he became the chief and leading spirit of a strong party, formed of the intellectual *élite* of the country.

It has been asserted that the feudal seigneurs did not give a helping hand to the national cause. This is a slur upon the memory of men who took an active part in the battle. Their conduct upon the inauguration of the English régime gave a certain semblance of truth to the accusation, but this was simply the result of their education and of the intellectual influences of the time. Before the Revolution noblemen in France had a conception of duty to their country different from what prevails to-day. With them it consisted in devotion to the monarch: *vive le Roi!* rather than *vive la France!* The allegiance of the seigneurs, who were imbued with the current ideas in France, was easily transferred from Louis xv to George III; their royalist sentiments became stronger and impelled them towards England when the French Revolution ran counter to their religious as well as their political convictions. With time the arrogance of 'the oligarchy'—the name given to the men in power at Quebec—as well as a natural ambition to take a part in the government of the country, caused the seigneurs to realize the enormity of the injustice then weighing upon the French Canadians. From that day, though maintaining their allegiance to the king, they joined Papineau, Bédard, Bourdages, all determined opponents of the governor and his

friends. When in 1822 Papineau was sent to London to protest against the proposed union of the two Canadas, no one supported his mission more strongly than Debartzch and de St Ours and a few others, some of the most influential men of the country. If later on there was a breach between them and Papineau, it was because the latter, then a fiery annexationist, assumed an attitude that to them seemed dangerous.

It was the *élite* of the population—men of learning and study—who assumed the championship of the popular claims. The mass of the people, happy in their own way, did not realize the importance of the actual and future dangers of the arbitrary colonial régime. All the constitutional agitation, as we have already tried to explain, was centred in an aristocratic movement initiated by the most intelligent of French Canadians.

We have now followed the habitants from their early days to the present time, in their transformation from French settlers brought up under absolutism into British citizens. After the vicissitudes of three centuries they stand before the world a distinct national group, firmly planted in North America.

Will the habitants hold their own in time to come? Will they maintain their influence among their competitors in the friendly race for welfare and wealth? Will the various French-Canadian communities throughout Canada and the United States maintain themselves as separate units, with their own ideals? These are grave questions to answer. Speaking from a French-Canadian point of view, there is reason to fear that outside Quebec the smaller groups will become absorbed by the surrounding population. This has already happened in several centres. Yet there are in the United States many settlements of twenty and even thirty thousand Canadians growing up in industrial centres by themselves. With a strong clannish spirit, intensified perhaps by the action of certain bishops bent on Americanizing them, they cling together in their increasing efforts to keep up the old faith and the old language. These communities may maintain their individuality for a long time, but the

danger lies in the fact that any industrial crisis may break them up. Then these scattered forces would go to swell the American population. On the other hand, Quebec remains unshaken and unshakable in its adherence to its character and traditions.

But whatever fate the future may hold in store, the French Canadians have played in the past such an important, far-reaching part that they will remain in history a great figure. From the time of Champlain to this day they have been the first to tread nearly all accessible points of North America; no rivers, no lakes, no mountains, no fields or forests have remained unknown to the *coureurs de bois*, trappers or explorers. In every expansion of the continent they have shown the way—with La Salle on the Mississippi; d'Iberville and Bienville in Hudson Bay, Newfoundland, and New Orleans; with La Vérendrye in the Rockies; with the fearless missionaries among every Indian tribe north and south of the Great Lakes, and the Ohio valley. Who would wrest from them the glory of having been the pioneers of civilization in so many parts of North America? Verily we may apply to these daring men of the past, in a restricted sense though it be, the words of Virgil:

Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?

A. D. De Celles