

But we shall soon see that the fear of impending danger was alone effective to obtain for us political liberty, for at that time the French element alone could sustain the English power in America :—

The English partisans assembled at Quebec in October, 1773, to prepare an address with the view of obtaining a House of Assembly.

And this was the reply made to them by the Imperial Government through one of the Ministry :—

As to an Assembly of Protestants only, I see no objection to the establishment of one ; but the danger of disobliging the Catholics of the Province, who are so much superior in number. * *

This was the sole consideration which was effective to prevent the carrying out of the proposition of 1773, to establish a Canadian House of Assembly composed of Protestants only, and yet out of a population of 80,000 souls, 500 families only were at the time English and Protestants. What greater injustice could be done us ? But the English element made yet other propositions to the Imperial Government :—

Six different suggestions were made in relation to the new forms of government which it was wished to introduce : 1st—The establishment of a House of Assembly composed exclusively of Protestants, as the English understood the proclamation of the month of October, 1873, to provide, was asked for. 2nd—An Assembly composed of equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants. 3rd—An Assembly composed almost entirely of Protestants, with a limited number of Catholics. 4th—To delegate to the Governor and his council sufficient power to control the province by increasing the number of the members who should be all Protestants ; or, 5th—Protestants and Catholics. 6th—Or again, Protestants with a restricted and limited number of Catholics.

Thus, from the very first attempt made to give to French Canada a political organization, we find the most shameless exclusiveness forming the basis of the propositions suggested. There were hardly 3,000 English colonists against 75,000 French, and already we were denied any representation in the Governor's Council, there to set forth the requirements of the country and to watch over the defence of our rights.—

The Cursitor Baron (MASERES) prepared a bill by which he suggested the raising of the number of the members of the Council to thirty-one ; that the latter should be independent of the governor, instead of being subject to suspension ; that the quorum should be fixed at seventeen ; and further that it should not have the power of imposing

taxes ; that it should be appointed for seven years, and should be composed of Protestants ; provisions which were calculated to exclude from the management of affairs and from office the French and Catholic element.

Always exclusion of Catholics, and consequently of the French element. But what resulted ? Did the French remain unmoved in view of the danger which was impending over them ? No ! On the receipt of the news they signed petitions, and obtained from England the justice which was refused to them here :—

Our unfortunate ancestors, however, did not remain idle under the threats and injustice of their adversaries—the colonies were possessed of men capable of judging and of foreseeing events. Petitions were prepared and signed, in the month of December, 1773, of which the tenor was as follows : “ In the year 1764 Your Majesty was pleased to terminate the military government in this colony and to introduce civil government into it, and from the date of those changes we began to be aware of the inconveniences resulting from the British laws, which up to that time had been unknown to us. Our old citizens who had, without cost, settled our difficulties, were thanked ; that militia, which considered it glorious to bear that great name, was suppressed. We were, indeed, allowed the right of being jurors, but at the same time we were shewn that there were obstacles to our holding office. The introduction of the laws of England was talked of—laws which are infinitely wise and useful for the Mother Country, but which could not be made to coincide with our customs without overturning our fortunes and entirely destroying our possessions. * * * Deign, illustrious and gracious Sovereign, to remove these fears by granting us our ancient laws, privileges and customs, with the limits of Canada such as they used to be. * * * Deign to distribute equally your benefits to all your subjects, without distinction. * * * And to grant us in common with the rest, the rights and privileges of English citizens : then * * * we shall be always ready to sacrifice them for the glory of our prince and the well-being of our country.”

And such has always been the sentiment of the French population in America ; it has always been loyal to authority, from the moment of obtaining that protection to which it was entitled. In view of the difficult position in which England was placed, the requests of the Canadians having been favorably received, constituted the basis of the Act of 1774. Circumstances were indeed difficult. The policy of the Mother Country had alienated her subjects in New England. The idea of taxing the colonies to provide