

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 18

Translation of the foregoing Petition of divers of the French Inhabitants of the Province of Quebec to the King's Majesty, which was signed about the Month of December, 1773, and presented to the King about February, 1774.

'SIR,

'Your most obedient and faithful new subjects in the province of
'Canada take the liberty to prostrate themselves at the foot of your throne,
'in order to lay before you the sentiments of respect, affection, and obedi-
'ence towards your august person, with which their hearts overflow, and to
'return to your majesty their most humble thanks for your paternal care
'of their welfare.

'Our gratitude obliges us to acknowledge, that the frightful appearance
'of conquest by your majesty's victorious arms did not long continue to
'excite our lamentations and tears. They grew every day less and less as
'we gradually became more acquainted with the happiness of living under
'the wise regulations of the British empire. And even in the very moment
'of the conquest, we were far from feeling the melancholy effects of restraint
'and captivity. For the wise and virtuous general who conquered us,
'being a worthy representative of the glorious sovereign who entrusted him
'with the command of his armies, left us in possession of our laws and
'customs the free exercise of our religion was preserved to us, and after-
'wards was confirmed by the treaty of peace; and our own former country-
'men were appointed judges of our disputes concerning civil matters.
'This excess of kindness towards us we shall never forget. These generous
'proofs of the clemency of our benign conqueror will be carefully preserved
'in the annals of our history and we shall transmit them from generation
'to generation to our remotest posterity. These, Sir, are the pleasing ties
'by which, in the beginning of our subjection to your majesty's government,
'our hearts were so strongly bound to your majesty ties which can never
'be dissolved, but which time will only strengthen and draw closer.

'In the year 1764, your Majesty thought fit to put an end to the
'military government of this province, and to establish a civil government
'in its stead. And from the instant of this change we began to feel the
'inconveniencies which resulted from the introduction of the laws of England,
'which till then we had been wholly unacquainted with. Our former
'countrymen, who till that time had been permitted to settle our civil
'disputes without any expence to us, were thanked for their services, and
'dismissed; and the militia of the province, which had till then been proud
'of bearing that honourable name under your majesty's command, was laid
'aside. It is true indeed we were admitted to serve on juries but at the
'same time we were given to understand, that there were certain obstacles
'that prevented our holding places under your majesty's government.
'We were also told that the laws of England were to take place in the pro-
'vince, which, though we presume them to be wisely suited to the regulation
'of the mother-country for which they were made could not be blended

‘and applied to our customs without totally overturning our fortunes and
‘destroying our possessions. Such have been ever since the aera of that
‘change in the government, and such are still at this time, our just causes
‘of uneasiness and apprehension which however we acknowledge to be
‘rendered less alarming to us by the mildness with which your majesty’s
‘government has been administered.

‘Vouchsafe, most illustrious and generous sovereign, to dissipate these
‘fears and this uneasiness, by restoring to us our ancient laws, privileges, and
‘customs, and to extend our province to its former boundaries. Vouchsafe
‘to bestow your favours equally upon all your subjects in the province,
‘without any distinction! Preserve the glorious title of sovereign of a
‘free people: a title which surely would suffer some diminution, if more than
‘an hundred thousand new subjects of your majesty in this province, who
‘had submitted to your government, were to be excluded from your ser-
‘vice, and deprived of the inestimable advantages which are enjoyed by
‘your majesty’s antient subjects. May heaven, propitious to our wishes
‘and our prayers, bestow upon your majesty a long and happy reign!
‘May the august family of Hanover, to which we have taken the most
‘solemn oaths of fidelity, continue to reign over us to the end of time!

‘We conclude by intreating your majesty to grant us, in common with
‘your other subjects, the rights and privileges of citizens of England. Then
‘our fears will be removed, and we shall pass our lives in tranquillity and
‘happiness, and shall be always ready to sacrifice them for the glory of our
‘prince and the good of our country.

‘We are, with the most profound submission,

‘Your majesty’s most obedient, most loyal, and most faithful subjects,

‘Fr Simonnet, &c. &c.’