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# **The Conquest of Canada (Vol. 1 of 2)**

George Warburton

# Imprint

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CONQUEST OF CANADA.  
BY  
THE AUTHOR OF "HOCHELAGA."

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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## INTRODUCTION.

England and France started in a fair race for the magnificent prize of supremacy in America. The advantages and difficulties of each were much alike, but the systems by which they improved those advantages and met those difficulties were essentially different. New France was colonized by a government, New England by a people. In Canada the men of intellect, influence, and wealth were only the agents of the mother country; they fulfilled, it is true, their colonial duties with zeal and ability, but they ever looked to France for honor and approbation, and longed for a return to her shores as their best reward. They were in the colony, but not of it. They strove vigorously to repel invasion, to improve agriculture, and to encourage commerce, for the sake of France, but not for Canada.

The mass of the population of New France were descended from settlers sent out within a short time after the first occupation of the country, and who were not selected for any peculiar qualifications. They were not led to emigrate from the spirit of adventure, disappointed ambition, or political discontent; by far the larger proportion left their native country under the pressure of extreme want or in blind obedience to the will of their superiors. They were then established in points best suited to the interests of France, not those best suited to their own. The physical condition of the humbler emigrant, however, became better than that of his countrymen in the Old World; the fertile soil repaid his labor with competence; independence fostered self-reliance, and the unchecked range of forest and prairie inspired him with thoughts of freedom. But all these elevating tendencies were fatally counteracted by the blighting influence of feudal organization. Restrictions, humiliating as well as injurious, pressed upon the person and property of the Canadian. Every avenue to wealth and influence was closed to him and thrown open to the children of Old France. He saw whole tracts of the magnificent country lavished upon the favorites and military followers of the court, and, through corrupt or capricious influences, the privilege of exclusive trade granted for the aggrandizement of strangers at his expense.

France founded a state in Canada. She established a feudal and ecclesiastical frame-work for the young nation, and into that Procrustean bed the growth of population and the proportions of society were forced. The state fixed governments at Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec; there towns arose. She divided the rich banks of the St. Lawrence and of the Richelieu into seigneuries; there population spread. She placed posts on the lakes and rivers of the Far West; there the fur-traders congregated. She divided the land into dioceses and parishes, and appointed bishops and curates; a portion of all produce of the soil was exacted for their support. She sent out the people at her own cost, and acknowledged no shadow of popular rights. She organized the inhabitants by an unsparing conscription, and placed over them officers either from the Old Country or from the favored class of seigneurs. She grasped a monopoly of every valuable production of the country, and yet forced upon it her own manufactures to the exclusion of all others. She squandered her resources and treasures on the colony, but violated all principles of justice in a vain endeavor to make that colony a source of wealth. She sent out the ablest and best of her officers to govern on the falsest and worst of systems. Her energy absorbed all individual energy; her perpetual and minute interference aspired to shape and direct all will and motive of her subjects. The state was every thing, the people nothing. Finally, when the power of the state was broken by a foreign foe, there remained no power of the people to supply its place. On the day that the French armies ceased to resist, Canada was a peaceful province of British America.

A few years after the French crown had founded a state in Canada, a handful of Puritan refugees founded a people in New England. They bore with them from the mother country little beside a bitter hatred of the existing government, and a stern resolve to perish or be free. One small vessel—the *Mayflower*—held them, their wives, their children, and their scanty stores. So ignorant were they of the country of their adoption, that they sought its shores in the depth of winter, when nothing but a snowy desert met their sight. Dire hardships assailed them; many sickened and died, but those who lived still strove bravely. And bitter was their trial; the scowling sky above their heads, the frozen earth under their feet, and



sorest of all, deep in their strong hearts the unacknowledged love of that venerable land which they had abandoned forever.

But brighter times soon came; the snowy desert changed into a fair scene of life and vegetation. The woods rang with the cheerful sound of the ax; the fields were tilled hopefully, the harvest gathered gratefully. Other vessels arrived bearing more settlers, men, for the most part, like those who had first landed. Their numbers swelled to hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands. They formed themselves into a community; they decreed laws, stern and quaint, but suited to their condition. They had neither rich nor poor; they admitted of no superiority save in their own gloomy estimate of merit; they persecuted all forms of faith different from that which they themselves held, and yet they would have died rather than suffer the religious interference of others. Far from seeking or accepting aid from the government of England, they patiently tolerated their nominal dependence only because they were virtually independent. For protection against the savage; for relief in pestilence or famine; for help to plenty and prosperity, they trusted alone to God in heaven, and to their own right hand on earth.

Such, in the main, were the ancestors of the men of New England, and, in spite of all subsequent admixture, such, in the main, were they themselves. In the other British colonies also, hampered though they were by charters, and proprietary rights, and alloyed by a Babel congregation of French Huguenots, Dutch, Swedes, Quakers, Nobles, Roundheads, Canadians, rogues, zealots, infidels, enthusiasts, and felons, a general prosperity had created individual self-reliance, and self-reliance had engendered the desire of self-government. Each colony contained a separate vitality within itself. They commenced under a variety of systems; more or less practicable, more or less liberal, and more or less dependent on the parent state. But the spirit of adventure, the disaffection, and the disappointed ambition which had so rapidly recruited their population, gave a general bias to their political feelings which no arbitrary authority could restrain, and no institutions counteract. They were less intolerant and morose, but at the same time, also, less industrious and moral than their Puritan neighbors. Like them, however, they resented all interference from England as far as they dared,

and constantly strove for the acquisition or retention of popular rights.

The British colonists, left at first, in a great measure, to themselves, settled on the most fertile lands, built their towns upon the most convenient harbors, directed their industry to the most profitable commerce, raised the most valuable productions. The trading spirit of the mother country became almost a passion when transferred to the New World. Enterprise and industry were stimulated to incredible activity by brilliant success and ample reward. As wealth and the means of subsistence increased, so multiplied the population. Early marriages were universal; a numerous family was the riches of the parent. Thousands of immigrants, also, from year to year swelled the living flood that poured over the wilderness. In a century and a half the inhabitants of British America exceeded nearly twenty-fold the people of New France. The relative superiority of the first over the last was even greater in wealth and resources than in population. The merchant navy of the English colonies was already larger than that of many European nations, and known in almost every port in the world where men bought and sold. New France had none.

The French colonies were founded and fostered by the state, with the real object of extending the dominion, increasing the power, and illustrating the glory of France. The ostensible object of settlement, at least that holding the most prominent place in all Acts and Charters, was to extend the true religion, and to minister to the glory of God. From the earliest time the ecclesiastical establishments of Canada were formed on a scale suited to these professed views. Not only was ample provision made for the spiritual wants of the European population, but the labors of many earnest and devoted men were directed to the enlightenment of the heathen Indians. At first the Church and the civil government leaned upon each other for mutual support and assistance, but after a time, when neither of these powers found themselves troubled with popular opposition, their union grew less intimate; their interests differed, jealousies ensued, and finally they became antagonistic orders in the community. The mass of the people, more devout than intelligent, sympathized with the priesthood; this sympathy did not, however, interfere with unqualified submission to the government.

The Canadians were trained to implicit obedience to their rulers, spiritual and temporal: these rulers ventured not to imperil their absolute authority by educating their vassals. It is true there were a few seminaries and schools under the zealous administration of the Jesuits; but even that instruction was unattainable by the general population; those who walked in the moonlight which such reflected rays afforded, were not likely to become troublesome as sectarians or politicians. Much credit for sincerity can not be given to those who professed to promote the education of the people, when no printing-press was ever permitted in Canada during the government of France.

Canada, unprovoked by Dissent, was altogether free from the stain of religious persecution: hopelessly fettered in the chains of metropolitan power, she was also undisturbed by political agitation. But this calm was more the stillness of stagnation than the tranquillity of content. Without a press, without any semblance of popular representation, there hardly remained other alternatives than tame submission or open mutiny. By hereditary habit and superstition the Canadians were trained to the first, and by weakness and want of energy they were incapacitated for the last.

Although the original charter of New England asserted the king's supremacy in matters of religion, a full understanding existed that on this head ample latitude should be allowed; ample latitude was accordingly taken. She set up a system of faith of her own, and enforced conformity. But the same spirit that had excited the colonists to dissent from the Church of England, and to sacrifice home and friends in the cause, soon raised up among them a host of dissenters from their own stern and peculiar creed. Their clergy had sacrificed much for conscience' sake, and were generally "faithful, watchful, painful, serving their flock daily with prayers and tears," some among them, also, men of high European repute. They had often, however, the mortification of seeing their congregations crowding to hear the ravings of any knave or enthusiast who broached a new doctrine. Most of these mischievous fanatics were given the advantage of that interest and sympathy which a cruel and unnecessary persecution invariably excites. All this time freedom of individual judgment was the watch-word of the persecutors. There is no doubt that strong measures were necessary to curb the furious and

profane absurdities of many of the seceders, who were the very outcasts of religion. On considering the criminal laws of the time, it would also appear that not a few of the outcasts of society, also, had found their way to New England. The code of Massachusetts contained the description of the most extraordinary collection of crimes that ever defaced a statute-book, and the various punishments allotted to each.

In one grand point the pre-eminent merit of the Puritans must be acknowledged: they strove earnestly and conscientiously for what they held to be the truth. For this they endured with unshaken constancy, and persecuted with unremitting zeal.

The suicidal policy of the Stuarts had, for a time, driven all the upholders of civil liberty into the ranks of sectarianism. The advocates of the extremes of religious and political opinion flocked to America, the furthest point from kings and prelates that they could conveniently reach. Ingrafted on the stubborn temper of the Englishman, and planted in the genial soil of the West, the love of this civil and religious liberty grew up with a vigor that time only served to strengthen; that the might of armies vainly strove to overcome. Thus, ultimately, the persecution under the Stuarts was the most powerful cause ever yet employed toward the liberation of man in his path through earth to heaven.

For many years England generally refrained from interference with her American colonies in matters of local government or in religion. They taxed themselves, made their own laws, and enjoyed religious freedom in their own way. In one state only, in Virginia, was the Church of England established, and even there it was accorded very little help by the temporal authority: in a short time it ceased to receive the support of a majority of the settlers, and rapidly decayed. On one point, however, the mother country claimed and exacted the obedience of the colonists to the imperial law. In her commercial code she would not permit the slightest relaxation in their favor, whatever the peculiar circumstances of their condition might be. This short-sighted and unjust restriction was borne, partly because it could not be resisted, and partly because at that early time the practical evil was but lightly felt. Although the principle of representation was seldom specified in the earlier charters, the col-

onists in all cases assumed it as a matter of right: they held that their privileges as Englishmen accompanied them wherever they went, and this was generally admitted as a principle of colonial policy.

In the seventeenth century England adopted the system of transportation to the American colonies. The felons were, however, too limited in numbers to make any serious inroad upon the morals or tranquillity of the settlers. Many of the convicts were men sentenced for political crimes, but free from any social taint; the laboring population, therefore, did not regard them with contempt, nor shrink from their society. It may be held, therefore, that this partial and peculiar system of transportation introduced no distinct element into the constitution of the American nation.

The British colonization in the New World differed essentially from any before attempted by the nations of modern Europe, and has led to results of immeasurable importance to mankind. Even the magnificent empire of India sinks into insignificance, in its bearings upon the general interests of the world, by comparison with the Anglo-Saxon empire in America. The success of each, however, is unexampled in history.

In the great military and mercantile colony of the East an enormous native population is ruled by a dominant race, whose number amounts to less than a four-thousandth part of its own, but whose superiority in war and civil government is at present so decided as to reduce any efforts of opposition to the mere outbursts of hopeless petulance. In that golden land, however, even the Anglo-Saxon race can not increase and multiply; the children of English parents degenerate or perish under its fatal sun. No permanent settlement or infusion of blood takes place. Neither have we effected any serious change in the manners or customs of the East Indians; on the other hand, we have rather assimilated ours to theirs. We tolerate their various religions, and we learn their language; but in neither faith nor speech have they approached one tittle toward us. We have raised there no gigantic monument of power either in pride or for utility; no temples, canals, or roads remain to remind posterity of our conquest and dominion. Were the English rule over India suddenly cast off, in a single generation the tradition of our Eastern

empire would appear a splendid but baseless dream, that of our administration an allegory, of our victories a romance.

In the great social colonies of the West, the very essence of vitality is their close resemblance to the parent state. Many of the coarser inherited elements of strength have been increased. Industry and adventure have been stimulated to an unexampled extent by the natural advantages of the country, and free institutions have been developed almost to license by general prosperity and the absence of external danger. Their stability, in some one form or another, is undoubted: it rests on the broadest possible basis—on the universal will of the nation. Our vast empire in India rests only on the narrow basis of the superiority of a handful of Englishmen: should any untoward fate shake the Atlas strength that bears the burden, the superincumbent mass must fall in ruins to the earth. With far better cause may England glory in the land of her revolted children than in that of her patient slaves: the prosperous cities and busy sea-ports of America are prouder memorials of her race than the servile splendor of Calcutta or the ruined ramparts of Seringapatam. In the earlier periods the British colonies were only the reflection of Britain; in later days their light has served to illumine the political darkness of the European Continent. The attractive example of American democracy proved the most important cause that has acted upon European society since the Reformation.

Toward the close of George II.'s reign England had reached the lowest point of national degradation recorded in her history. The disasters of her fleets and armies abroad were the natural fruits of almost universal corruption at home. The admirals and generals, chosen by a German king and a subservient ministry, proved worthy of the mode of their selection. An obsequious Parliament served but to give the apparent sanction of the people to the selfish and despotic measures of the crown. Many of the best blood and of the highest chivalry of the land still held loyal devotion to the exiled Stuarts, while the mass of the nation, disgusted by the sordid and unpatriotic acts of the existing dynasty, regarded it with sentiments of dislike but little removed from positive hostility. A sullen discontent paralyzed the vigor of England, obstructed her councils, and blunted her sword. In the cabinets of Europe, among the colonists of America, and the millions of the East alike, her once glorious name

had sunk almost to a by-word of reproach. But "the darkest hour is just before the dawn:" a new disaster, more humiliating, and more inexcusable than any which had preceded, at length goaded the passive indignation of the British people into irresistible action. The spirit that animated the men who spoke at Runnymede, and those who fought on Marston Moor, was not dead, but sleeping. The free institutions which wisdom had devised, time hallowed, and blood sealed, were evaded, but not overthrown. The nation arose as one man, and with a peaceful but stern determination, demanded that these things should cease. Then, for "the hour," the hand of the All Wise supplied "the man." The light of Pitt's genius, the fire of his patriotism, like the dawn of an unclouded morning, soon chased away the chilly night which had so long darkened over the fortunes of his country.

But not even the genius of the great minister, aided as it was by the awakened spirit of the British people, would have sufficed to rend Canada from France without the concurrent action of many and various causes: the principal of these was, doubtless, the extraordinary growth of our American settlements. When the first French colonists founded their military and ecclesiastical establishments at Quebec, upheld by the favor and strengthened by the arms of the mother country, they regarded with little uneasiness the unaided efforts of their English rivals in the South. But these dangerous neighbors rose with wonderful rapidity from few to many, from weak to powerful. The cloud, which had appeared no greater than "a man's hand" on the political horizon, spread rapidly wider and wider, above and below, till at length from out its threatening gloom the storm burst forth which swept away the flag of France.

As a military event, the conquest of Canada was a matter of little or no permanent importance: it can only rank as one among the numerous scenes of blood that give an intense but morbid interest to our national annals. The surrender of Niagara and Quebec were but the acknowledgment or final symbol of the victory of English over French colonization. For three years the admirable skill of Montcalm and the valor of his troops deferred the inevitable catastrophe of the colony: then the destiny was accomplished. France had for that time played out her part in the history of the New World; during one hundred and fifty years her threatening power

had served to retain the English colonies in interested loyalty to protecting England. Notwithstanding the immense material superiority of the British Americans, the fleets and armies of the mother country were indispensable to break the barrier raised up against them by the union, skill, and courage of the French.

Montcalm's far-sighted wisdom suggested consolation even in his defeat and death. In a remarkable and almost prophetic letter, which he addressed to M. de Berryer during the siege of Quebec, he foretells that the British power in America shall be broken by success, and that when the dread of France ceases to exist, the colonists will no longer submit to European control. One generation had not passed away when his prediction was fully accomplished. England, by the conquest of Canada, breathed the breath of life into the huge Frankenstein of the American republic.

The rough schooling of French hostility was necessary for the development of those qualities among the British colonists which enabled them finally to break the bonds of pupilage and stand alone. Some degree of united action had been effected among the several and widely-different states; the local governments had learned how to raise and support armies, and to consider military movements. On many occasions the provincial militia had borne themselves with distinguished bravery in the field; several of their officers had gained honorable repute; already the name of Washington called a flush of pride upon each American cheek. The stirring events of the contest with Canada had brought men of ability and patriotism into the strong light of active life, and the eyes of their countrymen sought their guidance in trusting confidence. Through the instrumentality of such men as these the American Revolution was shaped into the dignity of a national movement, and preserved from the threatening evils of an insane democracy.

The consequences of the Canadian war furnished the cause of the quarrel which led to the separation of the great colonies from the mother country. England had incurred enormous debt in the contest; her people groaned under taxation, and the wealthy Americans had contributed in but a very small proportion to the cost of victories by which they were the principal gainers. The British Parliament devised an unhappy expedient to remedy this evil: it assumed



the right of taxing the unrepresented colonies, and taxed them accordingly. Vain was the prophetic eloquence of Lord Chatham; vain were the just and earnest remonstrances of the best and wisest among the colonists: the time was come. Then followed years of stubborn and unyielding strife; the blood of the same race gave sterner determination to the quarrel. The balance of success hung equally. Once again France appeared upon the stage in the Western world, and La Fayette revenged the fall of Montcalm.

However we may regret the cause and conduct of the Revolutionary war, we can hardly regret its result. The catastrophe was inevitable: the folly or wisdom of British statesmen could only have accelerated or deferred it. The child had outlived the years of pupilage; the interests of the old and the young required a separate household. But we must ever mourn the mode of separation: a bitterness was left that three quarters of a century has hardly yet removed; and a dark page remains in our annals, that tells of a contest begun in injustice, conducted with mingled weakness and severity, and ended in defeat. The cause of human freedom, perhaps for ages, depended upon the issue of the quarrel. Even the patriot minister merged the apparent interests of England in the interests of mankind. By the light of Lord Chatham's wisdom we may read the disastrous history of that fatal war, with a resigned and tempered sorrow for the glorious inheritance rent away from us forever.

The reaction of the New World upon the Old may be distinctly traced through the past and the present, but human wisdom may not estimate its influence on the future. The lessons of freedom learned by the French army while aiding the revolted colonies against England were not forgotten. On their return to their native country, they spread abroad tidings that the new people of America had gained a treasure richer a thousand-fold than those which had gilded the triumphs of Cortes or Pizarro—the inestimable prize of liberty. Then the down-trampled millions of France arose, and with avaricious haste strove for a like treasure. They won a specious imitation, so soiled and stained, however, that many of the wisest among them could not at once detect its nature. They played with the coarse bawble for a time, then lost it in a sea of blood.

Doubtless the tempest that broke upon France had long been gathering. The rays that emanated from such false suns as Voltaire and Rousseau had already drawn up a moral miasma from the swamps of sensual ignorance: under the shade of a worthless government these noxious mists collected into the clouds from whence the desolating storm of the Revolution burst. It was, however, the example of popular success in the New World, and the republican training of a portion of the French army during the American contest, that finally accelerated the course of events. A generation before the "Declaration of Independence" the struggle between the rival systems of Canada and New England had been watched by thinking men in Europe with deep interest, and the importance to mankind of its issue was fully felt. While France mourned the defeat of her armies and the loss of her magnificent colony, the keensighted philosopher of Ferney gave a banquet to celebrate the British triumph at Quebec, not as the triumph of England over France, but as that of freedom over despotism. [1]

The overthrow of French by British power in America was not the effect of mere military superiority. The balance of general success and glory in the field is no more than shared with the conquered people. The morbid national vanity, which finds no delight but in the triumphs of the sword, will shrink from the study of this checkered story. The narrative of disastrous defeat and doubtful advantage must be endured before we arrive at that of the brilliant victory which crowned our arms with final success. We read with painful surprise of the rout and ruin of regular British regiments by a crowd of Indian savages, and of the bloody repulse of the most numerous army that had yet assembled round our standards in America before a few weak French battalions and an unfinished parapet.

For the first few years our prosecution of the Canadian war was marked by a weakness little short of imbecility. The conduct of the troops was indifferent, the tactics of the generals bad, and the schemes of the minister worse. The coarse but powerful wit of Smollett and Fielding, and the keen sarcasms of "Chrysal," convey to us no very exalted idea of the composition of the British army in those days. The service had sunk into contempt. The withering influence of a corrupt patronage had demoralized the officers; succes-

sive defeats, incurred through the inefficiency of courtly generals, had depressed the spirit of the soldiery, and, were it not for the proof shown upon the bloody fields of La Feldt and Fontenoy, we might almost suppose that English manhood had become an empty name.

Many of the battalions shipped off to take part in the American contest were hasty levies without organization or discipline: the colonel, a man of influence, with or without other qualifications, as the case might be; the officers, his neighbors and dependents. These armed mobs found themselves suddenly landed in a country, the natural difficulty of which would of itself have proved a formidable obstacle, even though unenhanced by the presence of an active and vigilant enemy. At the same time, there devolved upon them the duties and the responsibilities of regular troops. A due consideration of these circumstances tends to diminish the surprise which a comparison of their achievements with those recorded in our later military annals might create.

Very different were the ranks of the American army from the magnificent regiments whose banners now bear the crowded records of Peninsular and Indian victory; who, within the recollection of living men, have stood as conquerors upon every hostile land, yet never once permitted a stranger to tread on England's sacred soil but as a prisoner, fugitive, or friend. In Cairo and Copenhagen; in Lisbon, Madrid, and Paris; in the ancient metropolis of China; in the capital of the young American republic, the British flag has been hailed as the symbol of a triumphant power or of a generous deliverance. Well may we cherish an honest pride in the prowess and military virtue of our soldiers, loyal alike to the crown and to the people; facing in battle, with unshaken courage, the deadly shot and sweeping charge, and, with a still loftier valor, enduring, in times of domestic troubles, the gibes and injuries of their misguided countrymen.

In the stirring interest excited by the progress and rivalry of our kindred races in America, the sad and solemn subject of the Indian people is almost forgotten. The mysterious decree of Providence which has swept them away may not be judged by human wisdom. Their existence will soon be of the past. They have left no perma-

nent impression on the constitution of the great nation which now spreads over their country. No trace of their blood, language, or manners may be found among their haughty successors. As certainly as their magnificent forests fell before the advancing tide of civilization, they fell also. Neither the kindness nor the cruelty of the white man arrested or hastened their inevitable fate. They withered alike under the Upas-shade of European protection and before the deadly storm of European hostility. As the snow in spring they melted away, stained, tainted, trampled down.

The closing scene of French dominion in Canada was marked by circumstances of deep and peculiar interest. The pages of romance can furnish no more striking episode than the battle of Quebec. The skill and daring of the plan which brought on the combat, and the success and fortune of its execution, are unparalleled. There a broad, open plain, offering no advantages to either party, was the field of fight. The contending armies were nearly equal in military strength, if not in numbers. The chiefs of each were men already of honorable fame. France trusted firmly in the wise and chivalrous Montcalm; England trusted hopefully in the young and heroic Wolfe. The magnificent stronghold which was staked upon the issue of the strife stood close at hand. For miles and miles around, the prospect extended over as fair a land as ever rejoiced the sight of man; mountain and valley, forest and waters, city and solitude, grouped together in forms of almost ideal beauty.

The strife was brief, but deadly. The September sun rose upon two gallant armies arrayed in unbroken pride, and noon of the same day saw the ground where they had stood strewn with the dying and the dead. Hundreds of the veterans of France had fallen in the ranks, from which they disdained to fly; the scene of his ruin faded fast from Montcalm's darkening sight, but the proud consciousness of having done his duty deprived defeat and death of their severest sting. Not more than a musket-shot away lay Wolfe; the heart that but an hour before had throbbed with great and generous impulse, now still forever. On the face of the dead there rested a triumphant smile, which the last agony had not overcast; a light of unflinching hope, that the shadows of the grave could not darken.