

P R E F A C E.

THIS is the third work which I present to the public to fulfil my promised course of Histories of the New World, on the plan announced by me. This project is repeated here, as it should be kept more in view in regard to New France than to the subsequent histories, in order to judge them properly. It should especially be remembered, that it is my design to give, as to each part of the New World, all that I find curious, useful, and interesting ; consequently to omit nothing that can be read with pleasure in the histories, relations, and journals treating on it, after sifting the true from the false.

It may be objected that a general history does not permit details, and that in it many things are deemed minutiae which are tolerated in a relation. To this I reply that there are two distinct kinds of general history. That of a great empire, or celebrated republic, must be written in a style consonant with the majesty of the subject; nothing should enter to divert that attention which should centre entirely on the great events presented; but there are some, not striking in themselves, and which nevertheless contain a series of objects capable of interesting and instructing the reader. We regard with pleasure the "Battles of Alexander," by Le Brun; do we feel less in gazing on a landscape by Poussin? A bold and daring pencil, guided by a brilliant imagination, strikes us in the one; nature in her beauty, simple grace, great variety, and simplicity, a wise distribution, harmony amid all parts, the arrangement and proportions, are the merit of the others. Moreover, it is not always great revolutions and the most surprising events which give the historian the most judicious reflections and most singular characters. Has not comedy, which always draws its plots, and generally its actors, from private life, attained as great perfection, and been as greatly relished, under the pen of a Moliere, as tragedy, admitting only heroic actions and personages, has under the great Corneille and Racine?

There is a conventional taste for literary works, which may not be at first apparent, but to which men sooner or later return. The republic of