

Lower Canada ; and it is not one race, or one party only, that suffers by their existence ; they have hindered the prosperity, and endangered the security of all ; though, unquestionably, the interests which have most materially been retarded by misgovernment, are the English. From the highest to the lowest officers of the executive government, no important department is so organized as to act vigorously and completely, throughout the Province ; and every duty which a government owes to its subjects is imperfectly discharged.

The defective system of administration in Lower Canada, commences at the very source of power ; and the efficiency of the public service is impaired throughout, by the entire want in the Colony of any vigorous administration of the prerogative of the Crown. The fact is, that, according to the present system, there is no real representative of the Crown in the Province ; there is in it, literally, no power which originates and conducts the executive government. The Governor, it is true, is said to represent the Sovereign, and the authority of the Crown is, to a certain extent, delegated to him ; but he is, in fact, a mere subordinate officer, receiving his orders from the Secretary of State, responsible to him for his conduct, and guided by his instructions. Instead of selecting a Governor, with an entire confidence in his ability to use his local knowledge of the real state of affairs in the Colony in the manner which local observation and practical experience best prescribe to him, it has been the policy of the Colonial Department, not only at the outset, to instruct a Governor as to the general policy which he was to carry into effect, but to direct him, from time to time, by instructions, sometimes very precise, as to the course which he was to pursue, in every important particular of his administration. Theoretically irresponsible to the Colonial Legislature, the Governor was, in effect, the only officer in the Colony who was at all responsible ; inasmuch as the Assembly, by centring their attacks on him, and making him appear the sole cause of the difficulties of the Government, could occasion him so much vexation, and represent him in so unfavourable a light at home, that it frequently succeeded in imposing on him the necessity of resigning, or on the Colonial Minister, that of recalling him. In order to shelter himself from this responsibility, it has inevitably, and I must say very justifiably, been the policy of Governors to take care that the double responsibility shall be as light as possible ; to endeavour to throw it, as much as possible, on the home Government, and to do as little as possible without previously consulting the Colonial Minister at home, and receiving his instructions. It has, therefore, been the tendency of the local government to settle every thing by reference to the Colonial Department in Downing-street. Almost every question on which it was possible to avoid, even with great inconvenience, an immediate decision, has been habitually the subject of reference ; and this applies not merely to those questions on which the local executive and legislative bodies happened to differ, wherein the reference might be taken as a kind of appeal, but to questions of a strictly local nature, on which it was next to impossible for the Colonial Office to have any sufficient information. It had become the habit of the Colonial Office to originate these questions, to entertain applications from individuals, to refer these applications to the Governor, and, on his answer, to make a decision. The Governor has been enabled by this system to shift responsibility on the Colonial Office, inasmuch as in every important case he was, in reality, carrying into effect the order of the authority to which he was responsible. But the real vigour of the executive has been essentially impaired ; distance and delay have weakened the force of its decisions ; and the Colony has, in every crisis of danger, and almost every detail of local management, felt the mischief of having its executive authority exercised on the other side of the Atlantic.

Want of vigorous
administration of
Royal Prerogative

Nor has any thing been gained, either in effectual responsibility or sound information, by thus transferring the details of executive government to the Colonial Department at home. The complete and unavoidable ignorance in which the British public, and even the great body of its legislators, are with respect to the real interests of distant communities, so entirely different from their own, produces a general indifference, which nothing but some great colonial crisis ever dispels ; and responsibility to Parliament, or to the public opinion of Great Britain, would, except on these great and rare occasions, be positively mischievous, if it were not impossible. The repeated changes caused by political events at home having no connexion with colonial affairs, have left, to most of the various representatives of the Colonial Department in Parliament, too little time to acquire even an elementary knowledge of the condition of those numerous and heterogeneous

Evils of committing
details of Govern-
ment to Colonial
Department.