

TO THE ELECTORS

OF THE

FOURTH RIDING OF THE COUNTY OF YORK.

GENTLEMEN.—

PARLIAMENT has been dissolved, and you will be immediately called upon to pronounce at the hustings your constitutional verdict on the conduct of public affairs during the last three years.

At a crisis like the present it may be expected that I should take occasion of communicating with you, somewhat more at length than a mere election address would afford me the opportunity of doing. Hence the letter which I now address to you.

The Province has passed through a long and arduous struggle for the establishment of a system of government founded on the broad basis of British Constitutional principles. Your favour, and the confidence of a large portion of the people of my country, placed me in a position in which I was called upon to perform no unimportant part in the great battle of the constitution. That battle has been fought. The victory has been achieved. And it now rests with the people themselves whether they will permit the enemies of those great principles to raise the standard which they have heretofore endeavoured to prostrate, and under its shelter re-erect practically the old system under a new name, or whether, by one more great and united effort, the people will insure the fruits of past struggles to themselves in a government adapted to their wants and wishes. Such a Government in my opinion, and I believe in that of many men, we have not had during the last four years. Neither the course by which her Majesty's present Provincial Ministers obtained power, the political materials of which their Cabinet has been composed, nor the manner in which they have conducted the business of the country have, in my opinion, evinced them to be public confidence. I have, therefore, as your Representative, felt bound as far as it rested with me, to withhold that confidence from them.

As respects the first. They obtained power under false pretences. They pretended the Royal Prerogative to be endangered because the late administration had claimed the constitutional right of being consulted by the Representative of the Sovereign respecting appointments to office, and that such consultation should precede any offer or promise of such appointments to any one. And they affected to be greatly alarmed lest such a practice should lead to the patronage of the Crown being made use of for party purposes. But having by the aid of these cries possessed themselves of place, they not only have avowedly insisted on the very practice which they had condemned, but have notoriously gone far beyond their predecessors in making use of patronage for the advancement of party interest. So that if they were right in their objection to the use of Government patronage for party influence, their practice has condemned them. If their practice in any respect right, their reproach against us, has all the falsehood and inaccuracy with which we charged it, for this was the very cry, which, under the sanction of the Governor-General, they raised against us—and in either case they are unworthy of public confidence.

The following is the language of their great leader on this subject in taking leave of the House, on his elevation to the Bench. Speaking of the offer of the Adjutant-Generalship to Sir Allan McNab, Mr. Draper said, "I felt that I would not be doing my duty, if I allowed so important an office to be conferred without my advice. I could not allow it. If it had been so conferred I must have resigned." And a reference to the journals of the last session will show that for the purpose of strengthening themselves with their party they constrained the late Governor-General, after he had authorized the offer of the Deputy-Adjutant-Generalship, and that offer had been made to the party to which through his Secretary "that circumstances beyond his control had occasioned the departure from his first intention." I have referred to this, not only to enable you to compare the real regard for the Prerogative of the Crown, and true deference towards the Representative of the Sovereign, which both the principles and practice of the late Ministry displayed with the conduct of their successors; but to call your attention to the fact, that the issue which the present Ministers and their partisans, aided by the most unscrupulous use of the name and authority of the Queen's Representative, contrived to place before the people of the country at the last General Election, was in truth a false one.

Then, secondly, what were the materials of which their ever shifting Cabinet has been composed. Let them be tested by their action on some of the great questions with which they have had to deal. For instance the question whether the Clergy Reserves should be invested in the different Ecclesiastical Corporations, and in their hands afford the means of creating an extensive tenantry to swell the influence of these bodies, or whether they should be sold at a reasonable price to the people, and thus add to the numbers and the influence of the independent Farmers of the country. This solely was not a question of minor interest but one of the most vital importance to the peace and prosperity of the Province. One in which every man in the country, either directly or indirectly was interested, and on which a Government was bound to choose its side, and upon that side to use all its power and legitimate influence.

And yet this of all others was a question upon which these Ministers claiming to be true representatives of the public opinion of the Province, and fit expositors of that

public opinion to the Representative of their Sovereign, had, as an Administration, no opinion at all. Their four Law Officers dividing two and two for and against the investment, and their Inspector-General, Provincial Secretary, Commissioner of Works and Commissioner of Crown Lands, following suit in corresponding couples two for and two against it. And that too on a division of 37 to 14, in a house that gave them, as a Ministry, its general support. What system or plan of government can you infer from this to be the one of the present Ministers, but that on great public questions the administration which should represent embodied public opinion, may, in the face of the public, avow that as a Government they have no opinion at all.

And let not those who may be inclined to beguile themselves with the hope that all danger as respects this question has wholly passed away, in consequence of our successful opposition to the scheme of investment on that occasion, forget the persevering energy of those whose object it is to procure such investment, and let them bear in mind moreover that the chosen champion of that measure is the present first Law officer of the Crown for Upper Canada, a gentleman by some considered the head of the Administration. Of then, as respects the University question. That has been the subject of no less than three abortive attempts at legislation on the part of ministers, displaying such vacillation and want of unanimity among themselves, as shows them to have no fixed, well defined views with relation to it; although, by their own admission, a question of the highest importance.

In my opinion, when an adviser of the Crown, on a great public question, avows a scheme which his colleagues dare not approve, public safety, and public morals require that they should separate. But in the present ministers you have to deal with men who can publicly denounce, and oppose each others' policy and yet have the hardihood to claim for the ministry, as a body, public confidence. Of what avail is it to you, if your representative thinks rightly for himself? If he lends his aid to preserve in power, those whose judgment and acts are wrong? The conduct of the present ministers upon these great questions of the Clergy Reserves, and the University, are but some of the many in which their acts show that the principles and opinions of their colleagues were a matter of perfect indifference to each, so long as they were agreed upon their only essential point, namely, the tenure and emoluments of office.

And if on the great questions of social interest, to which I have referred, they were thus found wanting, how has it been as respects the agricultural and commercial interests of the Country? In what manner did they show themselves equal to the position which they occupy, on the occasion of the great change forced upon us by the altered policy of the parent state? A change which all saw coming with sure and steady pace, except the very ministers whose duty it was to have prepared the country for the event. Let the uncertainty in which they kept the Province, by the slow and vacillating steps with which they moved in these matters—let the manner in which they left an important provision, respecting the duty on live stock imported from the United States, to be explained to the Home Government through the Military authorities, without one word for months together from the Provincial Government explanatory of the reasons for the retention of such duty. Let the neglect of the Post Office, and their present ill considered Tariff of Duties be the tests by which their sufficiency be tried. In all these the ministry have shown an ineptitude and incapacity for public affairs, which has made their incapacity of office little more than a series of blunders, and exposed them session after session to the reproach of their friends, and the derision and almost pity of their opponents.

I have already necessarily had to speak of many matters which equally claim attention in considering how far the manner in which the business of the country has been conducted by ministers entitles them to public confidence. It is not, therefore, necessary that I should recur to those points; but I will touch upon some few others. There is the Common School Law—has their Legislation on that subject given satisfaction? What have they done to remedy the acknowledged injustice of the present Assessment Law? What to reform the Court of Chancery? What to improve the Court of Appeals? All matters of the greatest importance, and most of them calling loudly for prompt legislative interference. It is true they passed a Jurisdiction Bill, and after in one Session making the office of Judge of that Court independent of the Crown, they, the next, supported and passed a Bill to make those Judges dependent. Then there was the attempt to deprive the women of the country of their Dower. This measure was introduced by the Solicitor General, who by some is considered the real head of the Administration. This point of leadership, like almost every other of importance, being considered by these gentlemen an open question, if it be not one of antagonism between the two learned Law Officers for Upper Canada. Be that as it may, however, the measure was supported by four Cabinet Ministers, on a division of 14 to 39. They have passed, to be sure, some acts for the amendment of the law, such as the Fines and Recoveries' Act; the Prescription Act, and some others, which whatever place they may fill on the Statute Book of the Province, consist of mere reprints of late Acts of the Imperial Parliament upon these subjects. But where is there any great original