

BRITISH NORTH AMERICA.

R E P O R T.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

YOUR MAJESTY, in entrusting me with the Government of the Province of Lower Canada, during the critical period of the suspension of its constitution, was pleased, at the same time, to impose on me a task of equal difficulty, and of far more permanent importance, by appointing me "High Commissioner for the adjustment of certain important questions depending in the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, respecting the form and future Government of the said Provinces." To enable me to discharge this duty with the greater efficiency, I was invested, not only with the title, but with the actual functions of Governor General of all Your Majesty's North American Provinces; and my instructions restricted my authority by none of those limitations that had, in fact, deprived preceding Governors of Lower Canada of all control over the other Provinces, which, nevertheless, it had been the practice to render nominally subordinate to them. It was in addition, therefore, to the exclusive management of the administrative business of an extensive and disturbed Province, to the legislative duties that were accumulated on me during the abeyance of its representative government, and to the constant communications which I was compelled to maintain, not only with the Lieutenant-Governors, but also with individual inhabitants of the other five Provinces, that I had to search into the nature and extent of the questions, of which the adjustment is requisite for the tranquillity of the Canadas; to set on foot various and extensive inquiries into the institutions and administration of those Provinces; and to devise such reforms in the system of their government as might repair the mischief which had already been done, and lay the foundations of order, tranquillity, and improvement.

Duties of the High Commissioner.

The task of providing for the adjustment of questions affecting the very "form and administration of Civil Government," was naturally limited to the two Provinces, in which the settlement of such questions had been rendered matter of urgent necessity, by the events that had in one seriously endangered, and in the other actually suspended, the working of the existing constitution. But though the necessity only reached thus far, the extension of my authority over all the British Provinces in North America, for the declared purpose of enabling me more effectually to adjust the constitutional questions then at issue in two of them, together with the specific instructions contained in Despatches from the Secretary of State, brought under my view the character and influence of the institutions established in all. I found in all these Provinces a form of government so nearly the same—institutions generally so similar, and occasionally so connected—and interests, feelings and habits so much in common, that it was obvious, at the first glance, that my conclusions would be formed without a proper use of the materials at my disposal, unless my inquiries were as extended as my power of making them. How inseparably connected I found the interests of Your Majesty's Provinces in North America, to what degree I met with common disorders, requiring common remedies, is an important topic, which it will be my duty to discuss very fully before closing this Report. My object at present is merely to explain the extent of the task imposed on me, and to point out the fact, that an inquiry originally directed only to two, has necessarily been extended over all Your Majesty's Provinces in North America.

Extension of the Inquiry to all the North American Provinces.