

they returned members favourable to the majority. Some of the English members who voted with Mr. Papineau, excused themselves to their countrymen by alleging, that they were compelled to do so, in order to get a road or a bridge, which their constituents desired. Whether it be true or false that the abuse was ever carried to such a pitch, it is obviously one, which might have been easily and safely perpetrated by a person possessing Mr. Papineau's influence in the Assembly.

But the most bold and extensive attempt for erecting a system of patronage, wholly independent of the Government, was that which was, for some time, carried into effect by the grants for education made by the Assembly, and regulated by the Act, which the Legislative Council has been most bitterly reproached with refusing to renew. It has been stated, as a proof of the deliberate intention of the Legislative Council to crush every attempt to civilize and elevate the great mass of the people, that it thus stopped at once the working of about 1,000 schools, and deprived of education no less than 40,000 scholars, who were actually profiting by the means of instruction thus placed within their reach. But the reasons which induced, or rather compelled, the Legislative Council to stop this system, are clearly stated in the Report of that body, which contains the most unanswerable justification of the course which it pursued. By that it appears, that the whole superintendence and patronage of these schools had, by the expired law, been vested in the hands of the county Members; and that they had been allowed to manage the funds, without even the semblance of sufficient accountability. The Members of the Assembly had thus a patronage, in this single department, of about 25,000*l.* per annum, an amount equal to half of the whole ordinary civil expenditure of the Province. They were not slow in profiting by the occasion thus placed in their hands; and as there existed in the Province no sufficient supply of competent schoolmasters and mistresses, they nevertheless immediately filled up the appointments with persons who were utterly and obviously incompetent. A great proportion of the teachers could neither read nor write. The gentleman whom I directed to inquire into the state of education in the Province, showed me a petition from certain schoolmasters, which had come into his hands; and the majority of the signatures were those of marksmen. These ignorant teachers could convey no useful instruction to their pupils; the utmost amount which they taught them was to say the Catechism by rote. Even within seven miles of Montreal, there was a schoolmistress thus unqualified. These appointments were, as might have been expected, jobbed by the members among their political partisans; nor were the funds very honestly managed. In many cases the members were suspected, or accused, of misapplying them to their own use; and in the case of Beauharnois, where the seigneur, Mr. Ellice, has, in the same spirit of judicious liberality by which his whole management of that extensive property has been marked, contributed most largely towards the education of his tenants, the school funds were proved to have been misappropriated by the county member. The whole system was a gross political abuse; and however laudable we must hold the exertions of those who really laboured to relieve their country from the reproach of being the least furnished with the means of education of any on the North American continent, the more severely must we condemn those who sacrificed this noble end, and perverted ample means to serve the purposes of party.

Grants for
education.

I know not whether to ascribe the system which was adopted for the relief of the distress periodically occurring in certain districts to the same policy of extending the influence of the Assembly by local grants, or merely to the antiquated prejudices which seem to have pervaded many parts of the Assembly's legislation, which dictated laws against hucksters and the maintenance of foundling hospitals. No general system for the relief of destitution, no poor-law of any kind was established, and the wants of the country hardly demanded it. But when I arrived at Quebec, I received a number of petitions from parishes situated on the lower part of the St. Lawrence, praying for relief, in consequence of the failure of the harvest. I found, on inquiry, that relief had been granted to these districts for several successive years. The cause of the calamity was obvious; it was the unsuitableness of wheat crops under the wretched system of Canadian small farming, to the severe climate of that portion of the Province. By the side of the distressed parishes were large districts, in which a better system of farming, and, above all, the employment of the land for pasture and green crops, had diffused the most general comfort among the agricultural population, and completely obviated the occurrence of failure or distress. There were, in the vicinity of the distressed parishes, large

Grants for relief
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