

Ministerial negotiations for the reconstruction of
the Government consequent on the death of
Sir E. P. Taché.

No. 1.—MEMORANDUM MADE 4TH AUGUST, 1865, OF CONVERSATION, HELD
ON THE PRECEDING DAY BETWEEN MESSRS. MACDONALD AND BROWN.

Mr. Macdonald, yesterday, sought an interview with Mr. Brown and informed him that His Excellency the Governor General had sent for him, that morning, and had stated his desire that the Administration, as it was formed in 1864, should continue in office, with as few changes as possible, in order to carry out the policy announced by the Government on its formation—that, with that view His Excellency had expressed the opinion that the most obvious mode of supplying the place, vacated by the death of Sir Etienne Taché, would be for Mr. Macdonald to assume the position of First Minister—as being the Senior Member of the Ministry—and that Mr. Cartier would, on the same principle, become the Leader of the Lower Canadian Section of the Government—and that, for the purpose of carrying those views into effect, he had commissioned Mr. Macdonald to take the post of First Minister—at the same time requesting all the other Ministers to retain their offices. Mr. Macdonald further informed Mr. Brown that he had assented to this proposition of His Excellency, and had seen Mr. Cartier, who, at once, agreed to it. He then invited Mr. Brown to accede to the proposal of His Excellency.

Mr. Brown replied that he was quite prepared to enter into arrangements for the continuance of the Government in the same position it occupied previous to the death of Sir Etienne Taché; but that the proposal now made, involved a grave departure from that position. The Government, heretofore, had been a coalition of three political parties, each represented by an active party leader, but all acting under one chief—who had ceased to be actuated by strong party feelings or personal ambitions, and who was well fitted to give confidence to all the three sections of the coalition that the conditions which united them would be carried out in good faith to the very letter. Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Cartier, and himself (Mr. Brown) were, on the contrary, regarded as party leaders, with party feelings and aspirations; and to place any one of them in an attitude of superiority over the others, with the vast advantage of the Premiership, would, in the public mind, lessen the security for good faith, and seriously endanger the existence of the Coalition. It would be an entire change of the situation. Whichever of the three was so preferred, the act would amount to an abandonment of the coalition basis and a re-construction of the Government on ordinary party principles, under a party leader unacceptable to a large portion of those on whose support the existence of the Ministry depended. Mr. Brown reminded Mr. Macdonald that when the coalition was formed, the Liberal party in opposition, constituted a majority of the House of Assembly:—that, solely for the accomplishment of a great measure of Reform essential to the peace and progress of the country, they had laid aside, for the time, party considerations, and consented to form a coalition with their opponents, on conditions which nothing but the strongest sense of public duty could have induced them to accept. He reminded Mr. Macdonald of the disadvantageous and embarrassing position he (Mr. Brown) and his colleagues, Mr. McDougall and Mr. Howland, had occupied during the past year,—united as they were with nine political opponents, who held all the important Departments of State;—and he asked him to reflect in what light the Liberal party must regard this new proposition to abandon their distinctive position, and place one of their chief opponents in the premiership, though his conservative supporters in Parliament were much inferior, numerically, to the Reform supporters of the coalition.