

to reserve a bill brought in and carried as a Ministerial measure. But it did not specify the obnoxious appointments nor the reservation of the bill as the cause of the resignation, as acts that they could not on principle defend, and which therefore forced them to leave office. They were cited as the evidence of the mischievous tendency of certain alleged personal opinions about Responsible Government. To prove that he entertained the opinions ascribed to him, expressions made use of by him in the course of the long discussion which the subject underwent in Council were freely paraphrased; with what degree of fairness in his opinion, his reply clearly shows. Public rumour, even, was dragged in to complete the chain of proof on the two points. It was upon them, in short, that the resignation is distinctly declared to have taken place. Mr. Lafontaine and his resigning colleagues, says the letter, "have recently understood that his Excellency took a widely different view of the position, duties, and responsibilities of the Executive Council, from that under which they accepted office, and through which they have been enabled to conduct the Parliamentary business of the Government, sustained by a large majority of the popular branch of the Legislature." This difference of opinion had led to appointments to office against and without their advice, and to the reservation of the Secret Societies Bill. His Excellency, when they remonstrated against these acts, frankly told them there was "an antagonism between him and them on the subject." The public had even become aware of the fact, and magnified it to their cost. To be sure, the Governor said he did not mean to change the system he found established, but "he did not disguise his opinion" that another system would work better. As a mere matter of theory they might not have cared much about this opinion; "but when on Saturday last they discovered that it was the real ground of all their differences with his Excellency, and of the want of confidence and cordiality between his Excellency and the Council since his arrival, they felt it impossible to continue to serve her Majesty as Executive Councillors," &c., "If his Excellency should see fit to act upon his opinion of their functions and responsibilities". Now, in the whole course of British history from the Revolution to the present day, was there ever an explanation like this offered to an English House of Commons? Did ever ex-Ministers of the Crown of Great Britain propose in their place in Parliament to attempt to prove the personal opinions of the Sovereign unconstitutional, and the Sovereign himself, by necessary inference, unfit to reign; assert that these opinions were the cause of a want of cordiality between him and them; and tell Parliament they had resigned because they felt they could not consistently remain in office if he should see fit to act upon such opinions? Yet this is what our ex-Ministers have just been doing, with reference to the high functionary whom they profess to clothe with every

Regal attribute. And they of all men to affect surprise and indignation, that he should have defended himself against a charge thus monstrosly unprecedented and unconstitutional, in what they are pleased (facetiously, one might suspect, were they not grave public men) to call an unprecedented and unconstitutional manner!

What was the Governor General to have done, when Mr. Lafontaine's note apprised him of the course which these sticklers for British observances were about to take? Was he to have pre-emptorily refused them permission to explain? In England, unquestionably, were it possible a minister could there be supposed to intend such a course, permission would be withheld. While there withheld, the lips of an ex-Minister are sealed. His friends may defend him, but his own voice is unheard, no matter what the temptation, till such time as the permission shall be accorded; and whatever the limitations imposed when the permission may be given, the inexorable common law of Parliament compels him to observe them. But the system is here new. Mr. Viger's keen sense of right, and intimate familiarity with constitutional usage, did indeed lead him to remonstrate strongly against the offering of explanations without full and express permission, and to ask Mr. Baldwin whether or not he had that permission from His Excellency, with reference to the statements he was then making. And what was the ex-Minister's reply? "I have; and if I had been refused it, I would have come down to this House, would have stated at once the fact, and would have fearlessly called upon the House to believe of myself and my colleagues every thing good and nothing evil." British precedent again!

To my judgment the Governor's letter ought to have been read by those to whom it was addressed, as a *conditional refusal* of the permission to explain. It ends with an energetic and formal "protest" against the explanation they were about to make. That it embodied a counter explanation is nothing to the point. Of course I have no idea but that it was intended it should be read in the House by Mr. Daly, in case the explanation it protested against should nevertheless be made. It is quite evident that the Governor General thought it would be necessary, if the ex-Ministers grounded their resignation on what they asserted to be his personal opinions, to meet that assertion with his own personal denial. But how ought they to have acted with this written protest in their hands? In England, the permission to explain is asked in writing; and the answer to the request, of course also in writing, is made by a responsible minister. In the case of the explanations of 1839 already quoted, Sir Robert Peel took the precaution of reading in his place Lord Melbourne's note to him, to the effect that his Lordship had taken the Queen's pleasure upon the subject and was authorised to signify to him "Her Majesty's full permission to ex-