

their legislatures in aid of local improvements ; though the main efforts of those States have been directed to those vast undertakings which are the common concern and the common glory of their citizens. In the southern States, where municipal institutions are less complete, the legislatures are in the habit of taking part more constantly and extensively in works which are properly of mere local interest ; and great complaints are made of consequent corruption and mismanagement. But in the British Colonies, in none of which is there any effectual system of municipal government, the evil has been carried to the greatest height, and exercises the most noxious influence. The great business of the assemblies is, literally, parish business ; the making parish roads and parish bridges. There are in none of these Provinces any local bodies possessing authority to impose local assessments, for the management of local affairs. To do these things is the business of the Assembly ; and to induce the Assembly to attend to the particular interests of each county, is the especial business of its county member. The surplus revenue of the Province is swelled to as large an amount as possible, by cutting down the payment of public services to as low a scale as possible ; and the real duties of government are, sometimes, insufficiently provided for, in order that more may be left to be divided among the constituent bodies. "When we want a bridge, we take a judge to build it," was the quaint and forcible way in which a member of a provincial legislature described the tendency to retrench, in the most necessary departments of the public service, in order to satisfy the demands for local works. This fund is voted by the Assembly on the motion of its members ; the necessity of obtaining the previous consent of the Crown to money votes never having been adopted by the Colonial Legislatures from the practice of the British House of Commons. There is a perfect scramble among the whole body to get as much as possible of this fund for their respective constituents ; cabals are formed, by which the different members mutually play into each other's hands ; general politics are made to bear on private business, and private business on general politics ; and at the close of the parliament, the member who has succeeded in securing the largest portion of the prize for his constituents, renders an easy account of his stewardship, with confident assurance of re-election.

Funds dispensed by
Commissioners
named by the
Legislature.

The Provincial Assemblies being, as I have previously stated, in a state of permanent collision with the Government, have never been in the habit of entrusting the executive with any control over these funds ; and they have been wholly dispensed by commissioners named by the legislature. The Assemblies do not appear to have been at all insensible to the possibility of turning this patronage to their own account. An electioneering handbill, which was circulated by the friends of Government at the last dissolution in Upper Canada, exhibited, in a very strong light, the expense of the commissioners of the Assembly, contrasted with those of the officers of the executive government ; but the Province of Nova Scotia has carried this abuse to an extent which appears almost inconceivable. According to a report presented to me by Major Head, an assistant commissioner of inquiry whom I sent to that Colony, a sum of 10,000*l.* was, during the last session, appropriated to local improvements ; this sum was divided into 830 portions, and as many commissioners were appointed to expend it, giving, on an average, a commissioner for rather more than every 12*l.*, with a salary of 5*s.* a day, and a further remuneration of two and a half per cent. on the money expended, to be deducted out of each share.

Abuse of this
patronage.

Not only did the leaders of the Lower Canadian Assembly avail themselves of the patronage thus afforded, by the large surplus revenue of the Province, but they turned this system to much greater account, by using it to obtain influence over the constituencies. In a furious political struggle, like that which subsisted in Lower Canada, it was natural that a body, wielding, with hardly any responsibility, this direct power of promoting the immediate interests of each constituency, should show some favour to that which concurred in its political views, and should exhibit its displeasure towards that which obstinately resisted the majority. But the majority of the Assembly of Lower Canada is accused by its opponents of having, in the most systematic and persevering manner, employed this means of corrupting the electoral bodies. The adherents of Mr. Papineau are said to have been lavish in their promises of the benefits which they could obtain from the Assembly for the county whose suffrages they solicited. By such representations, the return of members of opposition politics is asserted, in many instances, to have been secured ; and obstinate counties are alleged to have been sometimes starved into submission, by an entire withdrawal of grants, until they