

COPY OF A LETTER

FROM THE

BISHOP OF TORONTO TO THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE.

Toronto, Canada, March 19, 1853.

MY LORD DUKE,

(Received April 4, 1853.)

YOUR Grace's Despatch of the 15th January to the Earl of Elgin, Governor General of Canada, on the subject of the Clergy Reserves, was published at Quebec on the 16th February, and reached Toronto about the 20th, and as it announced a total change of policy in dealing with the church property in Canada from that which had been judiciously adopted by Her Majesty's late advisers, we were taken completely by surprise, and before we had time to consider the grounds upon which a change so injurious to the interests of religion in this colony is sought to be supported, or to devise the means of averting a course which will, if pursued, not only destroy the peace of Canada, but in its consequences endanger the Church Establishment of the United Kingdom, we learn from the London Times and other English journals that a bill for placing the Clergy Reserves at the disposal of the Canadian Legislature was brought into the House of Commons on the 18th ultimo, and, after some discussion, passed to a second reading. Hence it would appear that this measure affecting our best and dearest interests is to be hurried through the Legislature with a precipitancy which precludes the possibility of our being heard, a precipitancy of which we have reason bitterly to complain. It certainly presents a strange instance of attention in a Reform Government to the just rights and the feelings of the people, and a novel method of attaching the colonies to the mother country.

It was not surely to be anticipated that a measure dealing as we think unjustly with the religious privileges of the members of the Church of England and Scotland, and ultimately of the Roman Catholics, in Canada, embracing a population (as appears by the census) in 1851 of more than two thirds of the inhabitants of Canada, was to be disposed of like an insignificant railroad or village corporation. Yet such is really the case. A bill is now in progress which will enable the Provincial Legislature to pass measures of the most revolutionary character infringing the rights of 1,244,742 persons out of a population of 1,842,265, without so much as making them previously aware of the intentions of the Imperial Government, or deigning to allow them a voice or even an humble supplication on the subject.

We have been lulled into a false security and led to believe that it was impossible that any measure would be introduced on a matter which so deeply concerns this great colony without being afforded a full and convenient opportunity of pleading our cause. Even now the provisions of the bill before the House of Commons are unknown to us; all that we do for certain know is that a total change in dealing with the Clergy Reserves and church property in Canada has taken place in Her Majesty's Council, and that the three churches of England, Scotland, and Rome are of a sudden in danger of being wholly deprived of their endowments without being allowed to say one word in their defence. All we gather from your Grace's despatch is that Her Majesty's Government accedes to the prayer of the Legislature of Canada for placing the Clergy Reserves at its disposal, and that no sentiments of regret at the disturbance of the present settlement would justify the Government or Parliament in withholding from the Canadian people, through their representatives, the right of dealing as they think fit with matters of strictly domestic interest, and further that the Parliament of Canada, and not the Parliament of the United Kingdom, is the body to which the functions of legislation on this subject must for the public advantage be committed.

Now, my Lord Duke, I most respectfully submit that these opinions or grounds for legislation are much more than neutralized by the proceedings of