

lethargic sleep; in strength, or in weakness; in splendour, or in disgrace; in the highest civilization, or the lowest barbarism; in every form of religion; in every variety of character; in every time and place,—government has been exercised only in four different modes—monarchy—aristocracy—democracy—and that mixed form which is a combination of them all, and which is embodied in the British Constitution. To this the people of Canada have declared their attachment in the most decided manner, and to it our remarks are therefore limited.

Among the changes that have been advocated in these Colonies is this, that the Constitution should be changed in one of its essential parts. It was required that the Legislative Council should either be abolished, or made elective, and thus that Great Britain should establish in her Colonies a Constitution different from her own. That such a demand would be firmly resisted might have been easily foreseen: for, without intermeddling with the abstract question of the intrinsic merits of the British Constitution, while Great Britain continues to rule her Colonies, it is both natural and necessary that she should rule them according to her own model; because, if otherwise, the Government would have no unity of character, purpose and action, but would be a “thing of shreds and patches,” in short, divided against itself, and therefore unable to stand. If the mother country found that a colony could no longer be ruled to any advantage for either party, it might be a question whether or not she should relinquish her rule over that colony; but that, while her rule continued, she should establish there a form of government different from her own, is altogether out of the question. Whether her form of government be the best in the world or not, it is at all events the form which she prefers, and to which she is bound by an attachment of several hundred years standing.—Therefore she could not entertain the idea of erecting in any part of her dominions an alien form of government. She might as well have thought of marching to battle under some other standard than that glorious red-cross flag, which for “a thousand years has braved the battle and the breeze.” She might as well have thought of disowning her name and standing among the nations of the earth, as of disowning that form of government under which that mighty name and exalted station

have been won against a thousand hosts of embattled foes. No; no. The British flag must be the symbol of the British Constitution. British power must defend British institutions. The British lion would tear in pieces any degenerate Briton who might attempt to make him protect institutions hostile to his own.—The British oak would bow its head for shame if it were planted to guard and grace an alien’s home. Come what may, no other form of Government can be allowed in the Colonies than exists in Great Britain itself. They must be ruled by the British Constitution.

We have no design, however, at present, to enter upon that wide field which the consideration of this form of Government opens to our view, and which embraces nothing less than the whole theory and practice of the British Constitution. To traverse this field would require a volume. The only point that we shall notice is this,—the Constitution imposes a check on the popular will, as expressed by the people’s representatives, not only by the veto of the Executive, but also by establishing a distinct and independent branch of the legislature, the Legislative Council sustaining, in its legislative functions, the place of the House of Lords in Great Britain.

We are of course aware that great complaints have heretofore been made respecting the composition and conduct of the Canadian Councils, but we shall not review these bickerings of the past. For, whatever may be thought of the wisdom with which the Councils have acted, there can be but little question as to the necessity of continuing a check on the popular will, if for no other purpose, at least for this, to give it that steadiness and consistency which it would otherwise want. The fluctuations of the popular will prove that it is not always a safe guide. As truth is immutable, a variable will cannot be always true. Every man who is conversant with the history of Upper Canada in particular, knows that the balance of power has been continually vibrating between the two political parties, for about the last twenty years; and consistency has not been the distinguishing mark of any party. Nor is this unsteadiness of purpose peculiar to Canada: on the contrary, it attaches itself to all masses of the people in every time and place. The uncertainty of popular favour to individuals is proverbial; and the changes of popular will on questions of policy is hardly less notorious.—