

Objects of the French Canadians not really democratic, nor of the English, conservative.

The grounds of quarrel which are commonly alleged, appear, on investigation, to have little to do with its real cause; and the inquirer, who has imagined that the public demonstrations or professions of the parties have put him in possession of their real motives and designs, is surprised to find, upon nearer observation, how much he has been deceived by the false colours under which they have been in the habit of fighting. It is not, indeed, surprising that each party should, in this instance, have practised more than the usual frauds of language, by which factions, in every country, seek to secure the sympathy of other communities. A quarrel based on the mere ground of national animosity, appears so revolting to the notions of good sense and charity prevalent in the civilized world, that the parties who feel such a passion the most strongly, and indulge it the most openly, are at great pains to class themselves under any denominations but those which would correctly designate their objects and feelings. The French Canadians have attempted to shroud their hostility to the influence of English emigration, and the introduction of British institutions, under the guise of warfare against the Government and its supporters, whom they represented to be a small knot of corrupt and insolent dependents; being a majority, they have invoked the principles of popular control and democracy, and appealed with no little effect to the sympathy of liberal politicians in every quarter of the world. The English, finding their opponents in collision with the Government, have raised the cry of loyalty and attachment to British connexion, and denounced the republican designs of the French, whom they designate, or rather used to designate, by the appellation of Radicals. Thus the French have been viewed as a democratic party, contending for reform; and the English as a conservative minority, protecting the menaced connexion with the British Crown, and the supreme authority of the Empire. There is truth in this notion in so far as respects the means by which each party sought to carry its own views of Government into effect. The French majority asserted the most democratic doctrines of the rights of a numerical majority. The English minority availed itself of the protection of the prerogative, and allied itself with all those of the colonial institutions which enabled the few to resist the will of the many. But when we look to the objects of each party, the analogy to our own politics seems to be lost, if not actually reversed; the French appear to have used their democratic arms for conservative purposes, rather than those of liberal and enlightened movement; and the sympathies of the friends of reform are naturally enlisted on the side of sound amelioration which the English minority in vain attempted to introduce into the antiquated laws of the Province.

Yet even on the questions which had been most recently the prominent matters of dispute between the two parties, it is difficult to believe that the hostility of the races was the effect, and not the cause, of the pertinacity with which the desired reforms were pressed or resisted.

Inconsistencies of both parties.

The English complained of the Assembly's refusal to establish Registry Offices, and to commute the feudal tenures; and yet it was among the ablest and most influential leaders of the English that I found some of the opponents of both the proposed reforms. The leaders of the French were anxious to disclaim any hostility to these reforms themselves. Many of them represented the reluctance which the Assembly had exhibited to entertain these questions, as a result of the extraordinary influence which Mr. Papineau exercised over that body; his opposition was accounted for by some peculiar prejudices of education and professional practice, in which he was said to find little concurrence among his countrymen; it was stated that even his influence would not have prevented these questions from being very favourably entertained by the Assembly, had it ever met again; and I received assurances of a friendly disposition towards them, which I must say were very much at variance with the reluctance which the leading men of the party showed to any co-operation with me in the attempts which I subsequently made to carry these very objects into effect. At the same time while the leading men of the French party thus rendered themselves liable to the imputation of a timid or narrow-minded opposition to these improvements, the mass of the French population, who are immediate sufferers by the abuses of the seigniorial system, exhibited, in every possible shape, their hostility to the state of things which their leaders had so obstinately maintained. There is every reason to believe that a great number of the peasants who fought at St. Denis and St. Charles, imagined that the principal result of success would be the overthrow of tithes and feudal burthens; and in the declaration of independence which Dr. Robert Nelson issued,