

I should have to take most serious exception to some of the conclusions at which he arrived, especially as they affected my own countrymen, of French origin; but I am speaking to-day only of the general causes, which, in the opinion of Lord Durham, led to rebellion in two of the Provinces, and to general discontent all over the Provinces, and to the remedy which he then suggested. Lord Durham laid down as the cause of that rebellion and discontent the fact that the aspirations of the people for freedom of local government were continually checked by the conduct of the Colonial Office, and he suggested as a remedy that the Provinces should be allowed the most complete legislative independence. He said that legislative independence should be even given to those colonies which, at that time, were in the throes of civil war. His idea was that, if the aspirations of the people for absolute, untrammelled freedom of local government continued to be checked by the Colonial Office, the irritation produced by that course would lead the people to ask not only for local freedom, but for absolute severance from the Empire. Whereas if the wishes of the people for local government were granted, if they had absolute legislative independence in their local affairs, their local interests and their Imperial pride would be at once gratified, and the flag which protected their local liberties, and recalled to them so many glorious associations, would be made all the dearer to their hearts. It was a bold conclusion, so bold, indeed, that the most liberal-minded statesman of the day in England shrank from it, in the same manner that to-day the most liberal-minded men in England shrink from applying the same doctrine to the government of Ireland. Lord John Russell, who was at that time Colonial Secretary, and one of the most liberal-minded men of his day, had to review the report made by Lord Durham. He agreed in almost everything that Lord Durham had said, except in the particular of giving free and independent legislatures to the colonies. Upon that subject he spoke as follows:—

"It does not appear to me that you can subject the Executive Council of Canada to the responsibility which is fairly demanded of the Ministers of the Executive Power in this country.

And after having dilated at length upon this idea, he concluded as follows:—

"I know no reason why the Legislative Assembly, whether of each, separately, or of both Provinces united, should not be listened to with deference; but I am not prepared to lay down a principle, and a new principle, for the future government of the colonies, that we ought to subject the Executive there to the same restrictions which prevail in this country."

Speaking of the impossibility which existed in his mind of granting the same amount of legislative independence to the colonies that existed in the Mother Country, he made these other remarks:

"But the Governor of Canada is acting not in that high and unassailable position in which the Sovereign of this country is placed. He is a governor receiving instructions from the Crown on the responsibility of a Secretary of State. Here, then, at once, is an obvious and complete difference between the Executive of this country and the Executive of a colony. The Governor might ask the Executive Council to propose a certain measure. They might say they could not propose it unless the members of the House of Assembly would adopt it. But the Governor might reply that he had received instructions from home commanding him to propose that measure. How, in that case, is he to proceed? Either one power or the other must be set aside. Either the Government must control the House of Assembly, or else the governor must become a mere cipher in the hands of the Assembly, and not attempt to carry into effect the measures commanded by the Home Government."

So, then, such a liberal-minded man as Lord John Russell could not see his way to adopt the conclusion of Lord Durham, and to grant absolute legislative independence and responsible government to a colony. To him the obstacles seemed to be insurmountable. We are aware that those views of Lord John Russell prevailed for some years. The government of the colonies was attempted to be carried on for some time upon the lines here traced by Lord John Russell, that is to say, upon the old line, not upon the

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lines traced by Lord Durham; not upon the view that responsible government should be granted to the colony. It is a well-known fact that during those years this country had no peace; it is a well-known fact that during all that time an agitation was constantly kept up, and the country led a miserable life and made no progress. But at last a master-mind came to this country in the person of Lord Elgin, and he did not shrink from giving us the absolute legislative independence for which the country had been asking, and which had been recommended to the statesmen of Great Britain, but which they deemed to be inconsistent with the interest of the Empire to grant. Lord Elgin did not hesitate to subject the Ministry of the country to the same responsibilities and the same restrictions that prevailed in England. We know that he did this in spite of all the reports of the Tory party in England, who at that time fought against Canadian freedom with the same bitterness and violence with which they are now fighting against Irish freedom. But notwithstanding all these efforts Lord Elgin's view prevailed. England granted the most complete legislative independence, and responsible government was introduced into the Provinces as absolutely and as completely as it is carried out in England. Did any of the dangers which were expected to follow from this course, arise? Did the Imperial interests suffer from that course? On the contrary, no Imperial interest suffered, and the agitation which had been going on for local freedom, immediately ceased; immediately contentment prevailed where there had been discontent, and loyalty followed where there had been disloyalty before. And to-day, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, in this, the Jubilee year of Her Majesty's reign, there is not in this broad Empire an inch of ground where there is a more dutiful and more loving allegiance than in this very country where fifty years ago rebellion was bitter and deep-rooted. That is the effect of liberty, that is the effect of local freedom granted to Canada. What would be the condition of Canada to-day if this course had not been followed, if the old practice had been followed of keeping the people under subjection, of refusing them those local liberties for which they were clamoring? Our condition to-day would be the condition of Ireland to-day, that of sullen discontent and agitation, a constant praying for reforms which were never granted. Sir, there is no rebellion to-day in Ireland, it is true but is there contentment? Is there cheerfulness of heart in the allegiance which they owe to the Crown of England? Sir, the condition of the Irish people to-day is about the most miserable of any people in Europe. Must this last for ever? Is there no remedy to such a state of things? It has lasted already for seven long years, and shall we be told to-day that there is no remedy for the evil? I say, in view of our own experience, there is a remedy, and that remedy is not coercion, but freedom. Let the English Government treat the Irish people as they have treated the Canadian people. Let them trust the Irish people as they have trusted the Canadian people. Let them appeal to their hearts, to their gratitude, to their nobler sentiments. Let them loosen the grip in which they now hold that unfortunate land, let them give them some measure of local liberty, let them restore the Parliament on College Green, and I venture to say that this long accumulated bitterness caused by ages of oppression will melt away in a very few years; I venture to say that after that, the bond of union between England and Ireland will be stronger than it ever was before. It will not be a bond of union based upon physical force, but it will be a bond of union based upon mutual affection and respect. Sir, we will be told, perhaps, "Oh, but there are demagogues in Ireland who would prevent such a course." There may be demagogues in Ireland; but demagogues in a free and happy country are not dangerous, it is the tyranny of a Government that makes demagogues danger-