

STRUGGLES FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Reform colleagues to accept office, so that his government might be brought into harmony with, and command the support of, a majority of the people's representatives. His Excellency's offer was finally accepted, and the first Lafontaine-Baldwin administration was installed in power amidst many signs of popular gratification.

This was the position of affairs when Sir Charles Metcalfe arrived from Jamaica to assume the governor-generalship in March, 1843. He had been trained in the arbitrary rule of India, knew little of parliamentary government, and, secretly prompted, it is believed, by Downing Street reactionaries, whose stupidity and blundering had long been proverbial, His Excellency arrogantly began to exercise the prerogatives of the Crown, not only without the consent of his constitutional advisers, but without even consulting them. This action of Sir Charles, whether inspired by Lord Stanley, then Colonial Secretary, or by his own arbitrary ideas, involved the subversion of Responsible Government, and the country was immediately plunged again into violent political excitement over the old question whether popular government should be upheld or subverted.

It was a dangerous crisis, but Messrs. Baldwin and Lafontaine, the Reform leaders, rose equal to the occasion. True to the people and their principles, when they found their advice no longer accepted by the representative of the Crown, they patriotically resigned their offices in the Government, a course whose constitutionality and dignity has been univer-