

ciple was not embodied in any statute; for, as Lord John Russell truly said in a despatch to Lord Sydenham, 'It was impossible to reduce into the form of a positive enactment a constitutional principle of this nature.' Consequently we can trace its history only in the despatches and instructions issued from time to time to Governors-General, more particularly to Lord Elgin, who had the gratification of establishing the principle most firmly before he retired from the administration of Canadian affairs. The effect of the larger sphere of political action opened up to the public men of Canada by the Act of 1840, and its logical sequence, responsible government, was the conciliation of all the rebellious elements that had existed previously. The Liberals of the Western section were content now that it was no longer possible to rule the country through an official clique, and an irresponsible Executive. The French Canadians, day by day, saw their influence increased by a union which it had been actually expected by Lord Durham and other English statesmen would have had the very opposite effect. The grievances which had so long irritated them disappeared one after the other, and the very measure they had so frequently urged in vain on the Imperial Government previous to the troubles of 1837-8,—an Elective Legislative Council,—was actually conceded to the Legislature of the United Provinces under the influence of the new and wise policy adopted by the Imperial authorities. In ten years from the commencement of the union and the concession of self-government, it would have been impossible to suppose that this was the same country where Lord Durham frankly confessed in 1839, there were many people inclined to Annexation with the United States, when they compared its free government and prosperous condition with the poverty and illiberal institutions of their own country.

The Act of 1840 remained in force for just a quarter of a century, and was repealed by the new constitution of 1867, which brought all the principal provinces of British North America into a federal union. The public men of Canada, after so many years of self-government, recognized the necessity of bringing a number of provinces, long politically and commercially isolated from each other, into a union which would enable them