

can bestow on this young country?" "Our Sovereign" was, of course, an official euphuism for the gentleman transferred by the Colonial Office from wrangling with relieving officers and boards of guardians to the task of governing a State. Taking this view of his duty and position, the new Governor admitted certain leaders of the popular party to the Executive Council, but without removing those already in office. He informed the new councillors that he would only consult them when he thought fit. To borrow his own graphic language from a despatch to his chief in Downing street, "he expected them to give him advice when he wanted it, and not to encumber him with help when he did not require it." By this time, however, the knowledge of responsible government was becoming familiar to public men on all sides, and the entire council including, to the Governor's amazement, the three original members, as well as the three new ones, informed his Excellency that they considered they were, and ought to be, not his clerks, but Ministers responsible to the people of the Province through their Legislature. Sir Francis assured them that such a principle would never be admitted "while the British flag flew over America," whereupon the Council resigned in a body. They were warmly sustained by the popular branch of the Legislature, and a fierce contest began between the popular party and the Governor, who appears to have been persuaded that he was doing battle for the salvation of the empire against open or disguised treason. As Sir Francis specifies about this time, in a despatch to the Colonial Office, "the traitorous objects which the Reformers of this province have in view," we have the advantage of knowing precisely what it was that they persistently demanded, and which he, for his part, was prepared to resist with arms.

The demands were:—

1. An elective Legislative Council.
2. An executive Council responsible to public opinion.
3. The control of the provincial revenue to be lodged in the Provincial Legislature.
4. The British Parliament and the Colonial Office to cease their interference in the internal affairs of Canada.

Sir Francis entered on the contest with great vigour; he appealed to the loyalty of the people, assured them that the proposal to make the Executive Council responsible to them was (of all inconceivable things) "republican," and invited them to rally round "British institutions," meaning a Governor from London free from local control. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the actual fact is directly the reverse of the fact imagined by Sir Francis Head. A chief of the Executive Government, who cannot be removed by the vote of the Legislature and who acts as his own Prime Minister, is the republican system as it exists in the United States, and, with some limitations, in France and Switzerland. An administration that can and must be changed the moment it has lost the confidence of the Legislature is a purely British institution. Connection with the empire or separation from it was the issue which the Governor presented to the constituencies. He warned credulous and illiterate farmers that if they allowed the existing system to be altered or "what may be termed improved, they and their children became instantly liable to find themselves suddenly deprived of their property and of what is better than all property, their freedom and independence." These dire results, which would spring from managing their own affairs, are almost as alarming as the prognostications of Lord Derby and Mr. Goschen on the consequences of granting autonomy to Ireland. The Governor's popular eloquence, his perfect reliance on his own fantastic theories, supplemented (as it was afterwards alleged on the authority of his successor Lord Durham) by undue official pressure, obtained a majority in the ensuing Assembly in favour of his policy. How his labour bore no fruit, and how he got into trouble with the Colonial Office and had to resign, are topics beside my present purpose.

The experiment of Lord Gosford in the French province fared no better. The Assembly received him graciously for a time; but having accidentally discovered that he came out with instructions to refuse an elective Upper Chamber (which fact he had concealed from them), and their most important Bills having session after session been thrown out by the Chamber which he proposed to retain (a hundred and thirty Bills were thrown out in nine sessions), they refused supplies, and declined to meet till measures were initiated to bring the two Chambers into more reasonable accord. But before separating they agreed to an Address to the Crown, where, after recalling the fidelity with which a people differing in race and religion from the bulk of the empire had maintained its allegiance, they specified the measures necessary in their judgment to the good government and tranquillity of the province. The list of these measures shows that the French colonists had, at length, reached a clear and harmonious idea of the British Constitution. They were nearly identical with the concessions already specified, which were insisted upon by the Upper Province. It is no longer necessary to justify these demands; the principles contended for, though they were still stubbornly resisted in Downing Street, are now in full operation in every British colony capable of giving them effect.

But the responsible Ministers in England who had succeeded the irresponsible Sovereign discerned the right road scarcely more clearly than he had done. Lord John Russell invited the House of Commons to declare that it was inadvisable to render the executive in Canada responsible to the local legislators, or to make the Upper House

elective, and the House of Commons, which has never failed to second any attempt to suppress colonial liberty, cheerfully assented. As supplies had been refused, the House of Commons was further moved, and promptly agreed to permit the Colonial Office to take out of the treasury of the Canadian people the local revenue which their own Legislatures had declined to grant. I pray you to note that I am not describing the policy of Lord North, and the dark ages of the first three Georges, but the reign of William the Reformer and Queen Victoria, and the policy of a Whig Minister, whom benevolent critics have quite recently pronounced to be a statesman and, in some exceptionally happy moments, almost an orator.

The design of seizing on their money by the authority of the House of Commons, which had no more right to expend it than to tax the other North American colonies more than half a century earlier, created a ferment. Meetings were held in almost every county, and resolutions adopted to consume no article which contributed to the revenue about to be illegally seized. And as magistrates and militia officers who attended these meetings were dismissed, the people elected pacificators to act in lieu of the magistrates, and enrolled Volunteers, who elected their own officers to replace the militia. The Assembly met, and again refused supplies; they were immediately dissolved by proclamation. Great confusion ensued; the loyal party, as those who supported a corrupt local executive denominated themselves, broke into and demolished the office of a newspaper favouring the Assembly, and some of the popular leaders were immediately arrested. Though it was the era of reform in England, it was still the era of the Stuarts in the colonies, and there seemed no remedy but force. The arrests were resisted, and a partial insurrection broke out, in which the insurgents who had made no preparations for war were promptly defeated. But their blood was no more shed in vain than the blood of John Brown; from that hour speedy and sweeping reform became inevitable.

In the Upper Province the sons of the men who had clung to their allegiance, to the ruin of their fortunes, were also exasperated into a rising in arms. They rose under a democratic Scotch journalist, named Mackenzie, and, though they were suppressed in the first instance, the fire broke out in new places for nearly a year. The smaller colonies neighbouring Canada were also agitated by political ideas. Newfoundland refused supplies until grievances were redressed, and Nova Scotia and Prince Edward's Island demanded an elective council. It was at length plain to most reasonable persons that the British American colonists could no longer be ruled despotically, and that, if they could, the pleasure was scarcely worth the price, as the two Canadian outbreaks had cost the Imperial treasury between four or five millions sterling. There were some, however, to whom it was not even yet plain, among them Lord John Russell. The noble Lord proceeded to vindicate authority, by inducing Parliament to suspend the constitution of Lower Canada, and confer upon a Governor-General and nominee Council absolute power over the colony. The Governor-General, however, was Lord Durham, the leader of the party in England most in harmony with the colonists, a powerful noble who had recently been a Cabinet Minister, and he went out accompanied by several notable friends of colonial rights. In addition to his office of Governor-General, he was appointed High Commissioner, authorised to inquire into and, as far as possible, adjust all questions respecting the form and administration of the civil government, and report the result to the Queen. Causes beyond the range of my present enquiry brought his mission to a premature close, but not before he had reported upon the actual condition of Canada. His report is one of the most remarkable papers connected with colonial history. It was said at the time, in the epigrammatic way that aims at wit rather than truth, that Gibbon Wakefield thought this State Paper, Charles Buller wrote it, and Lord Durham signed it. Whoever was its author, it is only just to remember that Louis Papineau had anticipated it. It said, in official language, indeed, and therefore with more weight and authority, what he had repeatedly said as a leader of the Opposition. It recognized the fundamental principle to which officials had long shut their eyes, that those who are fit to make laws must be entrusted to administer them, and this principle is the basis of colonial liberty. It advised the union of the two Provinces under one Legislature, and recognized the justice of nearly all the claims the Canadians had put forward.

And now the battle of colonial rights it may be supposed was won; but not so. The Colonial Secretary of that era, who is best remembered for having left 1500 unopened letters in his closet in Downing Street, was one of the last men in Europe to recognize the inevitable consequences of these concessions; and the contest was still only in its midway.

The withdrawal of Lord Durham threw into other hands the trial of his experiment. Mr. Poulett Thomson, who, like his predecessor, had been a Cabinet Minister, and was shortly to be raised to the Peerage as Lord Sydenham, was sent out with similar powers, commissioned to effect a union of the Provinces and to originate a limited responsibility in the Executive Council. The instructions which he received from Lord John Russell may be surmised from the triumphant report which he sent home to his chief of his success in executing them.

"I am not a bit afraid," he wrote, "of the Responsible Government cry. I have already done much to put it down in its inadmissible sense—namely, the demand that

the (Executive) Council shall be responsible to the Assembly, and that the Governor shall take their advice and be bound by it. In fact, this demand has been made much more for the people than by them; and I have not met with any one who has not at once admitted the absurdity of claiming to put the Council over the head of the Governor."

Governor Thompson proceeded in this spirit to appoint a Council "which would afford no triumph to either party" (that is to say, a Council which was *not* responsible, for responsibility depends on the triumph of party). He interfered actively in elections, and, in short, began to play the part, not of a Governor, but of a Prime Minister. Bred up in the House of Commons himself, it never seems to have occurred to him that it was precisely the system which was in operation there that he was now called upon to organize in another region. But it is only just to Mr. Thompson and succeeding Governors to bear in mind that they regarded themselves simply as agents of the Colonial Office, and considered precise fidelity to their instructions as the highest fulfilment of their duty. The misgovernment was an imported article manufactured in Downing Street.

The premature death of Lord Sydenham, and a change of Government in England, transferred the control of Colonial policy to Sir Robert Peel. To his practical intellect it was plain that where a Legislature exists you must have the responsibility of the Executive as the necessary complement of it, or, failing this, perpetual war between the Legislature and the Administration. The new Governor, Sir Charles Bagot, was authorized to call to his councils a Cabinet, selected out of the Reform party in Upper Canada and the French-Canadians in Lower Canada, who agreed in policy, and commanded together a complete majority in the Assembly of the United Provinces. The Baldwin-Lafontaine Administration, as it was named, led by an Irish Protestant of remarkable ability and a French Catholic of great personal influence, consisted of men who understood their task and their position. The leaders of it had repeatedly refused office in mongrel councils with imperfect responsibility, and one of them had been denounced in a proclamation as a fugitive rebel; and now, for the first time in any colony, there existed a Government in harmony with itself and with the Assembly. Those who had been driven to the brink of insurrection a few years before came themselves to govern and governed wisely and justly.

The experiment of parliamentary responsibility had for a time fair play; the more so that the failing health of the Governor, who soon became incapable of active attention to business, permitted the constitutional practice of government by Ministers to come into operation without further contest. But he died while his work was but half done. Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had won reputation by ability and devotion in the Civil Service of India, but who was wholly unacquainted with Parliamentary government, was sent out to succeed him. He found the Baldwin-Lafontaine Cabinet in office and in the effectual control of public affairs. To the Indian satrap a scheme of government in which the wishes of the people dictated the policy to be pursued was a complete puzzle; and, as he possessed a strong will and a profound self-respect, he asked himself in some consternation what, under such a system, would become of the Governor. His ideal of a Colonial administration was the old impossible one, of a Council selected from all parties, acting under the direction of a Viceroy. The first critical question that arose was whether his Ministers were to dispose of the public patronage, as the Queen's Ministers disposed of it in England. Sir Charles Metcalfe was of opinion that he would degrade his office and violate his duty if he permitted this to be done; and that, on the contrary, he would maintain his character and perform his duty effectually by disposing of it himself to persons recommended from Downing Street, or who had won his personal confidence during his brief residence in the colony. He was jealous of his constitutional advisers calling themselves the "Ministry," the "Cabinet," or the "Government," lest their pretensions should be in accordance with this nomenclature, for he was determined to be himself the Government. As may be anticipated, he speedily came to a quarrel with his advisers, and they resigned. The last serious contest for the despotic management of colonies now commenced. It is not within the scope of this brief sketch to follow it into detail. But, happily, it was not found an easy task to rule a community which had tasted responsible government, contrary to the will of its Legislature. Sir Charles Metcalfe applied to all political sections in vain. The great offices of State were hawked from one petty faction to another, but no administration could be formed on the principle of subservience to the will of the Governor. Six gentlemen in succession refused the office of Attorney-General for the Lower Province, and the colony was kept half a year without an Executive. The administration of justice suffered from the want of responsible officers to represent the Crown, the commercial credit of the country was endangered, and it was believed that the revenue would decline dangerously; but Sir Charles was persuaded that all things ought to be risked when he was fighting for the authority of the Crown. The question really at issue was whether the colony should be governed by the most experienced and trusted Canadian statesmen, or by an honest and gallant pro-consul from India, who could not help regarding the colonists as a sort of less dusky but more troublesome Hindoos, and their scheme of Colonial government as chimerical and fatal.

He dissolved the Assembly, and with courageous