

## LETTER I.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE SPECTATOR.]

HAMILTON, NOV. 2, 1859.

SIR,—Circumstanced as I am, I do not feel at liberty to take measures to have delegates sent to the coming Convention, which as member of this city I have been called upon to do. As a mere preliminary meeting or opportunity for discussion, there is, of course, less objection to this gathering, but a Convention with the view of proposing constitutional changes should certainly be a Convention of the whole people of the Province through their delegates. The Hon. Wm. Hamilton Merritt takes even a more serious view of it, having given notice of the following motion in Parliament:

"That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty may be pleased to authorize His Excellency the Governor General to take immediate steps for the election, by the Parliamentary electors of the Province, of twenty-four delegates (twelve from each section of the Province), to a general Convention, charged with the preparation of a Constitution for the future Government of Canada, and for the submission of the same, when prepared, for the approval or rejection of the people of the Province, and subsequently of the Imperial Government."

In the meantime there seems to me, at least, some danger that, to get quit of long protracted exertion and trouble, a general Federation of all the American colonies may be precipitated, for which we are not yet prepared. I desire, therefore, to reproduce for public consideration my view of a compromise to which a trial should be given, before entirely abandoning (as such a step could never be retraced) the hope of our still being able to work the British system of Government in a shape modified to suit the peculiar circumstances of Canada.

Though one of the first (when Colonel Tache called us Pharisaical Brawlers) to resent the then apparent intention of trampling on the feelings and interests of Upper Canada; I have since become satisfied that the Lower Canadians have in truth no desire to dominate over Upper Canada, and that the possibility of their doing so has flowed from so many Upper Canadians having supported the principle of the single majority in the hope eventually of getting the Lower Canadians under their feet in the continued operation of this principle. Nor have I now any doubt that the simple declaration by us that the present Legislative union of the Canadas

is Federative, and therefore that the principle of the double majority must hereafter be acted upon, would be found sufficient guarantee against *French domination*. I now also see that with a little good management and forbearance, we may avoid organic changes for the present at least. The evils we complain of arise in our circumstances.—I doubt very much whether even in England, Responsible Government, as practised here, can in every feature be perpetuated, but at all events, we, in Canada, evidently have not a *class* of men so independent in their circumstances and minds as it demands. I think, therefore, that we should restrict the responsibility of our Canadian Ministers to Executive acts, or the carrying out of the laws and the details of the Government, leaving to the people's representatives the whole responsibility of making the Laws.—Under our present system, two great practical evils have no doubt sprung up, and whether these have arisen from the system itself, or from the circumstances of this Province, they must be cured immediately. The first of these evils which we experienced was that Ministers, being obliged to sustain their majorities in every vote, have to ask too much of their conscientious supporters, and have to yield too much to their unscrupulous ones. This I think may very simply be cured by the members of Government appearing in the House, simply as members of Parliament, taking no particular responsibility of particular Legislative measures more than any other members.\* The second evil has been, that a Ministry may attempt to retain possession of the patronage of the Province, without having a majority from both sections. And this also, I think is susceptible of cure, especially if we adopt the first reform proposed above, leaving the people's representatives the entire responsibility of making the laws. Under such arrangement the Ministry would go out of office only on a vote of want of confidence being carried against them (for which a call of the house might be made necessary) and to cure the second evil, all that would be required in addition would be that a re-organization of the Government should always be made whenever the Ministry was found to have against them a majority of the whole members from either section of the Province, absent as well as present.

\* The other present functions, or peculiar duties of a Government, such as originating money Bills, would, of course, still remain with Ministers.