

chose; but if they did not choose to run the risk to go away. Most of them remained, and the result was known. He did not exult in that result; if it were a victory, it arose more from fortuitous circumstances than from generalship on his part, for he had not played at soldiers since he was at school, where he was sometimes a captain, and sometimes a drummer. That would show he never contemplated an attack on Montreal, or on the troops. He made these observations, not to acquire the good feeling of gentlemen on the other side; but to place himself in a fair position before the country. Now, as to the claims made for his property, he had sent in a detailed account of the losses which had occurred, and which amounted to 23,000*l.*, of which 11,000*l.* did not belong to him, but to his creditors. He stated their names, and as far as his memory would serve, that was the amount. To show that nothing was contemplated at the time when the collision took place, he might mention that his establishment was in full operation. He had from 40,000 to 50,000 bushels of grain; 1000 cords of wood, two loads of coals, and 2000*l.* worth of whisky to be sent down to his agent at Quebec, at the closing of the navigation. The troops carried away the grain, the barns were broken in, and the whisky sent into the river. Shortly after fire was set to the distillery, which cost 6000*l.* There was also a fifty-horse power steam-engine, four run of mill-stones, besides boxes, stills, &c., the whole covering 200 feet in width, which was all destroyed, with smith's-shop, cooper's-shop, his private dwelling, four good farm houses, four large barns filled to overflowing with the harvest, and several other buildings. Let him see the man, then, who would say, he was at that time in a state of insolvency. A gentleman, then in the House, could testify that he was in good circumstances. Let it be understood that at that time he had no creditors; but he might mention, that about two months after he returned to Montreal, in a state of destitution, one of the richest citizens, and an "honourable," came to him and demanded 40*l.* which he said he owed him, though it was for property, which he (Dr. Nelson) had not destroyed. It was this circumstance which made him have recourse to the bankrupt laws, and if he claimed this compensation, it was but just on his part towards those to whom his estate was indebted. He wished to offend no hon. gentleman in that house nor to condemn the late ministers, but he must say what he thought of some of their acts. When they came into office they appointed a young gentleman, who had become naturalised to be prothonotary of Montreal, Dr. Masson, on whose head was set a price of 500*l.*, to a situation in the Customs; next, he was himself made a magistrate; then he was named to a very responsible situation on the Emigrant Commission, for which, however, he had no pay; afterwards 4,500*l.* was paid to Mr. Papineau. He approved of all these acts, and the veil was not withdrawn till he heard the very same gentlemen complain of the appointment of Mr. Morrin—a gentleman universally respected by all parties, and recommended by those who were even better judges than the Ministry, viz., the Harbour Commissioners, who were opposed in politics to Mr. Morrin. Up to the time when he was 19 years of age, he was fiercely loyal, in the sense in which hon. gentlemen opposite used that word, and was the leader of the boys who used to light bonfires on the birth day of George the 3rd, the 4th of June. He left his father's

house with all the prejudices of Englishmen believing nothing good of France or Frenchmen ; but he went early among the Canadians, like the hon. member for Two Mountains, and there learned to appreciate that people. On board the man-of-war, he had told Mr. Buller, that he (Mr. Buller) would be surrounded by persons appealing to his prejudices of race and religion. He told them that he was an Englishman and a Protestant, and he asked, if he were likely to join Frenchmen and Catholics to crush Englishmen and Protestants ? Had any man insinuated such a thing, he would trample the wretch into the earth. He wished to leave his children the legacy of good government, and it was that which prompted him to unite with these people. He was told by one of the officers of the ship, that his bold conduct was not disapproved of by Lord Durham, but that his lordship had declared that men who behaved as they had done, could be neither bad men nor bad subjects, and they were treated not as felons, but as gentlemen. The hon. and gallant member for Hamilton had called French Canadians foreigners ; now, he would ask, who but a Frenchman, Jacques Cartier, sailed up the St. Lawrence—who carried the Gospel into the heart of the country, but a Frenchman—or who was the first historian of the country, but another Frenchman, Charlevoix ; but these were the persons who were called miserable Frenchmen, and who were to be crushed. And it was these persons who preserved the Colony to England, in 1812, only two years after some of the best men in the country had been imprisoned, and Canada insulted from end to end. Two or three years ago, he had told an hon. gentleman in that house, who was indiscreet enough to make allusion to his politics, that he had turned out in 1812, while that hon. gentleman was staying at home behind his counter, and making 22 per cent. commission out of the government. He was a worthy man, however, and always ready to give his money to Canadians or Catholics, as much as if he were a Canadian or a Catholic. The hon. member for Hamilton, asserted that the Union was intended to crush the French Canadians ; but that it would swamp the Upper Canadians. Now he knew, from a pretty extensive acquaintance with the population that they did not desire to swamp the Upper Canadians. He made no claim for French or for English ; but he did beg that all would be Canadians. He prayed in the name of common sense—in the name of justice—in the name of posterity—in the name of common humanity,—let these prejudices be dispelled, and let each try how much good could be done to his neighbour and his country.”

This speech, it must be remembered, was delivered in the House of Assembly of the representatives of both sections of the province and no attempt was made to contest the accuracy of any of its particulars. A small party at Montreal, aided by the officials, excited, in 1836, that alarm and exasperation which finally terminated in collision between the troops ; there was no intention on the part of the French Canadians to contest the authority of the Imperial Government, and very little energy and good sense would have prevented the disturbances which occurred in the district of Montreal, and, let it not be forgotten, in the dis-

trict of Montreal *alone*, for in the districts of the Three Rivers and of Quebec, there was no rebellion.

“The opinion that the quarrel in Lower Canada, had from first to last been a French and English quarrel, as it was assumed to be in Lord Durham’s report, is erroneous. In a state of civil war it would naturally (from the relative number of the two races in the country) assume that character, but up to 1835 it certainly had not a national character. The election—the best test of public opinion—turned really on the democratic principle; and there seems no reason to doubt that this will again occur. This, however, can only be determined by experience. The new constitution is now under trial; but if it be not accompanied by justice to the great body of the people, it is idle to suppose it will suppress discontent. Indeed, by creating a firm union of the representative democracy of the two Canadas, it may probably lead to consequences very different from what are anticipated by the framers of the new constitution.” *

Previous to the rebellion the majority of the members of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada were in the proportion of about ten to one against the official party, who despised all opposition and carried on the government as suited their own personal interests; the members of the majority were utterly excluded from office; the funds of the Jesuit estates, part of the property designed for the purposes of public education, were applied to supply “a species of fund for secret services,” (Lord Duncan’s Report), and, from the absence of all responsibility, there was mismanagement in every department and an irritating defiance of public opinion. “When I look,” said Lord Sydenham, “to the state of the Government, and to the departmental administration of the province, instead of being surprised at the condition in which I find it, I am only astonished it has endured so long. I know that, much as I dislike Yankee institutions and rule, I would not have fought against them, which thousands of these poor fellows did whom the ‘compact’ calls rebels, if it were only to keep up such a Government as they got,”—(Life, p. 149.)

Such was the state of things—now uncontested, but at the time most strongly denied—when the rebellion broke out; “a miserable outbreak, put down with the utmost ease by a single regiment.”—(Lord Sydenham). Who is to be blamed for it? Whose weakness and indecision occasioned it? The Canadians had heard of reforms in England; they were told a ministry of reformers were in office, and they expected some attention to be paid to their system of mal-administration. They were deceived in their expectations. The official party were connected with colonial merchants who had the freest access to the Colonial office, and whose advice was acted on until Lord John Russell discovered that it had embarrassed and almost ruined the

* Geography of North America, published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, p. 544.

plans of Lord Sydenham. The colonists themselves could not make the Colonial Office comprehend what the conditions were under which a government must be conducted which is connected with representative institutions. A contest was resolved on, and it caused many important financial and political consequences—for instance, the total expenditure for the army, navy, ordnance, and commissariat in Canada, in the year 1837, was 18⁰,048*l.*; the excess of expenditure above this amount, from 1837 to 1843, was 4,909,017*l.*; the expenditure for the single year 1843 was 806,007*l.*, and the excess, before Lord Melbourne's ministry resigned, was more than two-thirds of the sum of the deficiency of the public revenue of this country which, that ministry could not devise means of supplying, and which chiefly contributed to the defeat of that ministry and to the imposition of the income and property tax. The excess of the expenditure over the income of the British government was, in 1837, 726,460*l.*; 1838, 441,818*l.*; 1839, 1,381,938*l.*; 1840, 1,750,543*l.*; 1841, 2,149,885*l.*; or a total of 6,450,644*l.* The expenses in Canada largely contributed to this result, for, in addition to the sum already mentioned, the secret service fund placed at the disposal of the Governors-General had been very large.

Canada was the Nemesis of colonial bureaucracy. The outbreak which "was put down with the utmost ease by a single regiment" cost this country several millions of money; and the financial embarrassments it occasioned secured the downfall of the Whig ministry. To Canada itself it was a god-send. In addition to the millions spent there out of British taxes, another million was raised for national improvements on the guarantee of the British government. Large and fine houses sprung up at Montreal, Kingston, Hamilton, and Toronto. The profits of the money poured out on the province were to be seen in building speculations, and this which was called the "material prosperity" of the country, the fruit of a very free expenditure of British taxes, was actually claimed by the friends of Lord Sydenham as the result of his administration!

Under Lord Seaton the province was ruled by the military, and under Lord Sydenham by corruption; but neither a government of fear nor of corruption could be continued in America. They are most costly and extravagant affairs, and, in the end, the most unpopular of all systems of government. They find their decay in the disappointment of those who see others gain a larger share in the scramble than themselves, and in the public burdens they impose.

Responsible government had been long talked of, and, by the good sense, moderation, and skill of Sir C. Bagot it was actually

established. The short period of his administration restored confidence to the population. The French Canadians—a grateful, kind, and trusting race—were sincerely attached to him, not from motives which would have proved evanescent, but because they were restored to a condition of security and quiescence.

On the death of Sir Charles Bagot another state of things arose. His successor, Lord Metcalf, was accustomed to rule in his own way. He had no idea of a parcel of colonists acting as his counsel, suggesting or insisting on any administrative policy, or interfering with the bestowal of the public patronage. This was “responsible government” not at all suited to his taste. He was early determined to put an end to it, and at once talked of the difficulties of his position. To the multitude these words were unintelligible, and even the Executive Council did not understand their meaning. At last, when it was proved that offices were bestowed without any consultation with the members of the council, a quarrel between the Council, supported by the Assembly, and the Governor, arose; the members of the Council, with one exception, resigned, and the chief offices of the provincial government became vacant, and remained so for very many months; all the trickery of electioneering agents and of corrupt returning officers was resorted to, and after the elections, which followed a dissolution of the provincial parliament, Lord Metcalf found his followers in a small majority. The men who of all others in the province least deserved the name were called “rebels.” They were defeated out of doors, through the most flagrant official misconduct, and, subsequently, in parliament, by the grossest violation of the law relating to election petitions. Lord Metcalf, nevertheless, failed. He revived the old party cries, he sanctioned allusions which were exceedingly unjust, he excited the expectations of the most desperate and bankrupt political agitators, and he left the province in a state of bitter party commotion. His magnificent expenditure had gratified the vulgar notions of the Montreal shopkeepers, while his kindness and charitable disposition, his munificence, and the dreadful and fatal malady with which he was afflicted, silenced many of the most powerful of his opponents.

On the arrival of Lord Elgin in Canada he found the Executive Council composed of persons utterly unable to carry on the business of parliament. A dissolution of the House of Assembly was inevitable, and the new elections gave an overwhelming majority to the party which Lord Metcalf had displaced.

The above is a brief outline of the changes in Canada caused by successive Governors. Lord Sydenham had it in his power to have determined permanently the character of future political contests. If he had pleased, a high sentiment of honour and mod-