

A LETTER,

&c.

No. 8

A

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. EARL BATHURST, K.G.,

ON

THE POLICY OF UNITING THE BRITISH
NORTH-AMERICAN COLONIES.

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MDCCCXXV.

A LETTER,

&c. &c.

*York, Upper Canada,
December, 26, 1824.*

MY LORD,

A REPORT has been for some time in circulation in this province, that the expediency of giving an united legislature to the Canadas is to be proposed by your Lordship to the consideration of His Majesty's Ministers, during the recess of Parliament, and that the suggestions which have been offered in regard to a general union to a certain extent, and for certain purposes, of all the British North American provinces, are to receive consideration at the same time.

The various papers which have been presented to your Lordship may be thought more than sufficient to call the attention of His Majesty's Government to every view in which the interests and convenience of these colonies, with reference

to the measures which have been agitated, can possibly be placed: and, if I had been without the opportunity of observing with what patient attention your Lordship, in its earlier stages, entertained every consideration affecting the Canadian question, I might well imagine that some apology must atone for venturing to add to the number of these representations.

But though more than enough has already been offered to distract attention, and perplex the judgment, your Lordship, I am well convinced, will neither receive with impatience, nor reject without notice, an attempt to survey, as from a higher ground, the different points in the prospect of colonial policy which is to be opened to the view of His Majesty's Ministers, and to come to that conclusion which a British subject would desire to arrive at, who regards the interests of the empire, rather than the prejudices, the convenience, or even the advantage of the people of the Canadas.

Having reflected much upon the situation of these provinces, with a consciousness that *some* steps must be taken to remedy present perplexities, and guard against increasing evils, I have formed my opinions with that belief of their accuracy which an acquaintance with public affairs in one province, and a general knowledge of local circumstances in both, would naturally encourage—and I am excited to greater

anxiety on the question, as the moment approaches when the doubts which have hitherto hung about the intentions of the government are near receiving their solution. Having no desire to disfigure with any thing like controversy a representation, which I wish should appear with better claims to attention, I am not about to trouble your Lordship with any particular vindication or refutation of the opinions which have been already expressed by myself, or others. My thoughts go beyond the mere question of the Canadas or even of colonial interests, and if what I now venture, with all humility, to submit to your Lordship, be in itself worthy of consideration, it would be equally desirable that it should be presented to notice, whether the union of the Canadas shall be effected or abandoned.

Those two provinces, whose interests at this time particularly engage the attention of His Majesty's Government, embrace an extent of territory, the limits of which are in fact almost undefined.

Lower Canada contains, at present, about 400,000 souls, and though much of the country within its boundaries affords little promise of future cultivation, owing to the severity of its climate, and its sterility of soil, yet those parts of it to which these objections do not apply, and which possess, indeed, peculiar advantages of

situation, are capable of providing for a very numerous population.

Upper Canada, leaving unexplored its measureless extent of territory to the northward and westward, and looking only at its organized districts, all partially settled, contains an area of about 45,000 square miles, lying within the lakes Huron, Ontario, and Erie, and along the shores of Lake Ontario, and the river St. Lawrence, to the eastern boundary of the province, reckoning a mean breadth, throughout the last-mentioned range of country, of not more than seventy miles. The portion of the province embraced within these limits lies between the 42nd and 46th degrees of north latitude, and enjoys a climate in the highest degree favourable to the health of its inhabitants, and admitting of every agricultural production of Great Britain. Its soil is excellent throughout, and the relation of every traveller verifies the well-known fact that there is in Upper Canada a smaller proportion of barren land than is exhibited in any portion of Europe or America of the same extent. When it is considered that, by comparison with other countries, the 45,000 square miles possessing these advantages, may be considered well capable of sustaining seven or eight millions of people, who would have a direct communication with England by sea, shorter in point of distance,

and generally much shorter in point of time, than the West India islands—that some of its exports are of particular value and necessity to the parent state ; and that it is besides so situated as to form the most natural and effective check to the rising power of a jealous and ambitious rival, it will readily be granted, that when the people of Great Britain, sixty years ago, celebrated, with so great exultation, the conquest of Canada, they honoured an achievement of greater value to the empire, and capable of influencing its future fortunes, more than was then imagined, or can even now be fully understood.

In the period which has since elapsed, the native French inhabitants of Lower Canada have increased from 60,000 to 400,000 ; they form at this moment a hardy, frugal, and contented population, and are attached by disposition and habit to monarchical government. Left to the full exercise of their religion, and the enjoyment of their peculiar system of civil jurisprudence, with no other political changes than the extending to them a free constitution, and a code of criminal law, affording better security than their own for their persons and property, they have hitherto had no pretext for dissatisfaction.

Upper Canada, in the thirty-three years during which it has been separated from Lower Canada, and enjoyed a constitution and code of laws in all respects English, has advanced so far

from a state of universal wildness, that it contains at present about 155,000 inhabitants, and furnishes more than two-thirds of the exports which freight annually from 500 to 600 sail of British ships from the port of Quebec.

The events of the late war gave the most certain proof of the attachment to the parent state, which was then growing with the growth of these colonies. Since the peace of 1815 there has been nothing to diminish, but much to strengthen this attachment. The population of Lower Canada has increased very considerably, and whatever accession it has received from emigration, has been of a description to render it more British. Upper Canada, within the same period, has, probably, doubled the number of her inhabitants. Before the late war emigrants from the United States were very freely admitted, and in some sections of the province they formed so considerable a proportion of the people, that the enemy expected much aid, and the province did, in fact, experience some inconvenience from their attachment to the country they had left. To this disposition, however, on the part of the American portion of our population, there were very many honourable exceptions, and in truth, the majority deserved to be differently characterized. But, if even in those times there was, on the whole, more of strength than danger in this portion of the population of Upper Canada, the policy

which has been since pursued, under your Lordship's direction, and the particular state of things which followed the peace, have happily left nothing to be apprehended on the score of predilection for American institutions. The citizens of the United States, although they are now our friends, have been so recently our enemies, that they are by a proper and necessary policy treated as aliens, and they have consequently ceased to migrate to this province—while, on the other hand, the disbanded soldiers of British regiments and British subjects of all classes have been annually coming hither by thousands. The citizens of the United States who, before this change of policy had come into this province, form now so insignificant a class, when compared with the number of loyalists, and their descendants, strengthened by the emigration from the united kingdom; and the feeling which have survived the last contest, are so general among all descriptions of people in Upper Canada, that there is here as little thought of an alliance with America, and as little leaning to her Government, as in any other colony of the British crown.

In this state, my Lord, the first agitation of the Union question found these provinces, and, perhaps, the first, and most natural inquiry, though clearly not the only one, is, --Whether their inhabitants have found any

good reason to desire a changé in their political condition.

In Upper Canada, certainly, with one exception, which I shall notice, the people have neither felt, nor fancied an evil in the system they have enjoyed. Their legislature, according to the limited resources of the province, has been attentive to the wants and welfare of the people. It has afforded reasonable support to the Government, and shewn itself attentive to promote every effort towards internal improvement. The system of laws, wholly English, is approved by all, and, except occasional bickerings in the legislature upon questions of privilege, which are becoming of rarer occurrence as the forms of proceeding are better understood, there has been nothing hitherto to obstruct the measures of the Government, or to check that spirit of enterprise which is so rapidly extending itself.

The differences which had arisen from the recent inattention of Lower Canada to the just claims of this province to a proportionate division of the revenue from imports, are known to your Lordship. These difficulties, it is true, arose from the division of the province of Quebec, and they are of that magnitude, that, if no other remedy could be found than the re-uniting them, the people of Upper Canada would most probably desire an union as earnestly as it can be

depreciated by the French inhabitants of Lower Canada.

Your Lordship, however, is aware, that, as the act of 1791 fully reserved to the British Parliament the power, which must, at all events, have been inherent in it, of regulating these intercolonial interests, so that power has, in fact, been exercised, in affording by the Canada Trade Act of 1822, a remedy for every evil of which this province had complained. This remedy, it has not been denied by Lower Canada, has been justly applied for wrongs acknowledged to have been suffered, and in Upper Canada it has been received with every expression of gratitude as effectual and satisfactory.

It has, indeed, been objected, that the people of Lower Canada will not contentedly acquiesce in the control thus imposed upon them, however justly ; and that increasing inconvenience will be found in every attempt to put in practice the provisions of the Act referred to. But, since the principle has been established, it can scarcely be thought impossible to devise a remedy by suitable modifications for any inconveniences that may present themselves in practice; and, upon the other point, it may be unnecessary to say more than that no dissatisfaction has been hitherto expressed by Lower Canada at the provision made by the British Parliament, and that whenever a disposition shall be shewn to throw obstacles in

the way of a measure intended for the just protection of Upper Canada, it will be time for the people of that province to desire an union as the only other effectual alternative. At present, as there appears no necessity either on this, or on any other account, for a change so important as the abolition of their separate legislature, and so doubtful in its consequences, so it is very certain that the great mass of the people in Upper Canada have never desired it, and do not now expect it.

In Lower Canada, on the other hand, there are many strong inducements to a small but respectable portion of the population, to desire a change in their political condition. The English inhabitants of that province are generally dissatisfied with the present state of things. They have stated their opinions, and their complaints very fully, and these have been ably and strongly pressed upon the consideration of your Lordship. Without examining minutely into the merits of their statements, or the reasonableness of their expectations, I have no doubt it has been perceived by your Lordship, that the comparison between the two provinces is, in some important particulars, so disadvantageous to Lower Canada, and that there is so much reason for desiring to see many things placed on some better footing, if it can be done consistently with the national pledge, and the rules of natural justice, that your Lordship has not been surprised to find the mass of

the English inhabitants of Lower Canada, who take this single view of the subject, standing forward as decided advocates for the union. With the exception of some few, who look at remoter consequences, and anticipate increased embarrassment to the Government, which they would willingly avert, the English inhabitants of that province would, doubtless, receive the union with thankfulness. They would expect it to bring an accession to the legislature of men more awake to the spirit of enterprise, and unshackled at least by religious prejudices; and, although the French Canadians might still have the ascendancy, the English would hope to be gratified and encouraged by seeing what they honestly feel to be the right side better supported. This hope, when it is considered that the experiment could cost them no sacrifice, naturally enough outweighs their concern for the extent to which the interests and convenience of this province might suffer from having its legislature transferred to Lower Canada.

On the other hand, the French Canadian inhabitants have spoken plainly enough their disinclination to the union, and have gone so far in their opposition to it, as to deny, almost, the right of the Imperial Parliament to impose the change upon them. Resistance offered on that ground has probably appeared to your Lordship so unreasonable, that it may very naturally have

had some influence in strengthening the impression of the propriety, and perhaps necessity of an union. But it must be considered, on the other hand, that reason enough has been afforded to the French Canadian by the advocates for the union, to express a very excusable apprehension, that the object of a measure, which, on principle, could not be opposed, is to extinguish the character, the language, the laws, he inherits from his ancestors, and to subject him, while flattered with the possession of a free constitution, to the over-bearing rule of another class of his fellow-subjects. The popular topics, which may be insisted on by those who desire to inflame this apprehension, would, not improbably, be sufficient to produce at first very general irritation and alarm, and to keep up for a long time a feeling of unfriendly jealousy of their English fellow-subjects, and a determination to contest every point to the utmost. It is true, it may be said, that the existence of this feeling could scarcely make matters worse in Lower Canada than they have been for some years past; that an Assembly, in which but three could be found to support the reiterated call of their Sovereign for an adequate constitutional provision for their own Government, could scarcely proceed less harmoniously under the influence of any additional excitement; and, that therefore, if the measure were certainly adviseable in itself, it would seem unwise

to be deterred from it, by a fear that it would occasion opposition in a quarter from whence little but opposition has, for sometime, been experienced.

On the whole, an attempt to take a general view of the disposition of the people of both provinces towards the union, and the weight it may be entitled to, has led me to the conclusion, that the *English inhabitants* of Lower Canada very generally and anxiously desire it; while the *French Canadians* would, at first, receive it with mortification and alarm, which would become more universal among them in the early period of the change, than it now is, but which would, in time, subside or increase as they found their long-cherished usages and habits respected or threatened by their new associates. And that the people of Upper Canada, who have long ceased to think of the union as a measure seriously intended, and who never were generally excited to any strong feeling respecting it, either on one side or on the other, would receive it without any very lively sensation, if the terms of the Act were in all material points equitable, according to their apprehension,—that they would begin to doubt more generally, as the time for the actual experiment approached, and that, having expressed no wish for the change, they would, with little reserve, complain of whatever inconvenience or injury they felt from the new system, regarding it as a sacrifice of their welfare

to the hope of ameliorating the condition of Lower Canada.

If this view be correct, as I believe it is, there is, in the present disposition of the inhabitants of both provinces scarcely any other inducement to the measure, than is afforded by the urgent intercession of the English population in Lower Canada; and if, indeed, in the upper province a more general and decided feeling had been excited in its favour, I beg to offer to your Lordship's consideration some reasons for supposing that consequences must follow from it, which would be more likely to diminish than increase the number of its advocates.

Upper Canada has already incurred a necessary public expenditure, which has so much more than absorbed all her revenue, that the province is at this moment nearly 30,000*l.* in debt, while its income, from every source, scarcely yields a surplus above the ordinary annual estimate for necessary charges. While this is the case, all public improvements requiring aid from the provincial treasury are suspended, and until a very considerable additional revenue can be provided, there is no prospect of being able to meet the demand of the public creditor. The duties on imports by sea, which form by far the most considerable source of revenue, are received at Quebec. At present, one fifth part of these duties is allowed to this province, and that pro-

portion was not obtained without the interference of the British Parliament. The population of Upper Canada is fully equal to one-third of that of Lower Canada, and the conviction is universal in the former province that she ought, in justice, to obtain a larger proportion of revenue.

On the other hand, the Legislature and the people of Lower Canada, reluctant to yield up any thing, maintain, on various grounds, that we receive too much. This difference of opinion is not of great consequence, so long as the means exist under the present British Act of Parliament of determining the point by a perfectly equitable arbitration, but it is part of the proposed plan of an union, that this act shall be repealed, and the matter left to be regulated solely by the joint Legislature.

Judging from all recent experience of the manner in which these claims of Upper Canada have been received in the Lower Province, there is scarcely a hope that the just expectations of the former will be fulfilled. If they are not, absolute embarrassment will be felt in Upper Canada, and general discontent will be excited, which will prompt renewed appeals to the mother country. No other anticipation can be reasonably encouraged, than that endless and bitter contention will be excited by these conflicting claims; and the inconvenience of such a result will be matter of satisfaction, rather than of regret, in

Lower Canada, if it shall appear to be the obvious consequence of a measure deprecated by the great mass of the people.

I have no wish to weary your Lordship's attention by an examination of any of those arguments which have been already urged by the advocates and opponents of the Bill respectively. They have, doubtless, received your Lordship's consideration. Among them, the danger of placing the Protestant religion in the minority in both provinces has been represented with much truth and earnestness. The apprehension of such a consequence is rather derided, than the ground for it denied, by the petitioners for the union; but the present state of Lower Canada, no less than observation of what passes in other countries, would, I must persuade myself, deter your Lordship from regarding it lightly. And, in truth, if it could be certainly foreseen that in the event the Roman Catholic interest would not *entirely* predominate, I would still earnestly entreat your Lordship to consider whether an evil of much less magnitude would present itself in the prospect of a joint Assembly in which the numbers of the Protestants and Catholics would be nearly equal. Such a state of things would seem sufficient, of itself, to check all hope of unanimity, and to introduce into these provinces acrimonious contests, in consequence of religious dissensions, to which they have happily hitherto

been strangers. If, to this time, the distinction of Catholic and Protestant has, contrary to the experience of many other countries, produced in the Canadas little animosity, it has most probably been owing to a state of things which would cease at the union. It has been because, in Lower Canada, the Catholic religion has had, in the popular branch of the Legislature, the same undisputed ascendancy which the Protestant religion has in Upper Canada. The nature of things has discouraged all contest in either, but I cannot persuade myself, my Lord, that an union upon the terms proposed, or indeed on any terms that would be tolerable on the one side and prudent on the other, would not engender a rivalry of that kind which, in all ages and countries, has proved the most destructive of human happiness.

It is the fear of perpetual strife, from the unavoidable inconvenience of having the parties of French and English, Catholic and Protestant, so nearly balanced, that disposes me most to doubt the policy of uniting the provinces of Canada at this period. To create an Assembly in which the French interest should not be decidedly subordinate, could remedy no evil existing in the one province, and would be uselessly subjecting the other to disadvantages at present unknown in it. And yet, evident as this is, it is on the other hand so evident that the enactments which

alone could insure this ascendancy, would appear to violate so openly the principles of justice, and would create such alarm and discontent in the whole French population, that neither the proposed bill, nor the arguments in support of it, go by any means the necessary length. On the contrary, when the details are examined which follow the flattering train of general reasoning on the union, we find that the French and English parties would be nearly equal in number, if every member should attend in his place, but inasmuch as the representatives of that portion of the population who would alone fancy it necessary to stand on the defensive would be resident near the place of holding the Assembly, and the others principally at a very inconvenient distance from it, it cannot be doubted that, in reality, the former would constitute generally, if not uniformly, the majority.

These objections, it appears to me, are the most important, and, in comparison with them, I consider but secondary other arguments drawn principally from inconvenience, which I shall not trouble your Lordship with repeating; because, if it could be ascertained that the union intended would on the whole be beneficial, rather than injurious, to the interests of both provinces, it would be unfortunate that too much regard should be paid to considerations of that nature. Among the inconveniences anticipated, however,

there are some which call for examination, because, if they shall be found in practice to exist to the extent apprehended, they will produce a state of things not likely to be borne without murmuring, and reiterated solicitations for redress. The two evils I have ventured to insist upon are of that nature, that I should conceive either the danger of their occurring must appear to your Lordship to be slight indeed, or the reasons for an union must be more powerful than are furnished by those who petition for it.

It seems to have suggested itself too readily, as an argument against the probability of any mischievous consequences to Upper Canada, that similar forebodings preceded the union of Scotland and of Ireland with England, but that the event has, in both instances, done equal discredit to the sagacity of those who entertained them. I need not call to your Lordship's attention how totally different are the circumstances, and how little assurance can be derived that an union shall in this instance be fortunate, because it has been fortunate in those.

When Scotland was united to England, she was united to a country whose constitution, whose laws, whose enterprise, science, and civilization, had been long the admiration of the world; and therefore, though in consequence of her inferiority in population, wealth, and political importance, she was united upon terms that

placed her altogether at the disposal of England, (except in those cases which were guarded by specific stipulation,) she could run no risk of injury, because every change that England could impose upon her, however distasteful to the prejudices of her people, was sure to be an improvement, and must produce good in spite of evil prophecy.

Here circumstances are exactly reversed. The people who are, from their number, naturally entitled to look for the preponderance in the united legislature, are the people *against* whose policy, disposition, habits, and institutions, it is thought necessary to guard. The natural assimilation of the less to the greater would in this case add to every inconvenience that now exists. The assimilation of the greater to the less is either not to be looked for, or to be looked for only from stronger measures than it is proposed to take. It would be a more parallel case, to imagine that it had been proposed, thirty years ago, as a remedy for the troubled state of Ireland, to unite Scotland with it for all purposes of legislation—to admit the Catholics as well as the Protestants of Ireland to every privilege of subjects,—to give to Scotland a number of representatives, not quite equal to those of Ireland,—and to appoint the place for the legislative session in the latter kingdom.

It may be a question, how far the peace and prosperity of Ireland would be likely to have

been improved by such a measure of policy, but I imagine, few would be found to assert that the people of Scotland would have been wise in desiring the experiment. The difference of the cases is but too obvious. The Union, both in the instances of Ireland and Scotland, was the incorporating, as it were, the worse with the better. England was secured by her incontestible ascendancy from injurious innovation, or embarrassing contests. The union here proposed is to unite the better to the worse, on inferior terms.

That the whole internal economy cherished in Lower Canada, and the genius and disposition of the French Canadians, are adverse to improvement, seems but too clearly proved by the actual state of the province under circumstances highly favourable.

As it cannot be but that the being governed by a peculiar system of laws must very materially tend to prevent their readily amalgamating with their English fellow-subjects, it is certainly to be lamented, that the civil as well as the criminal code of England had not been prescribed to them after the conquest, but, at the same time, there is nothing so extraordinary in the forbearance which suffered them to retain their ancient system of jurisprudence, that it would appear to them to justify the adoption of measures more than ordinarily rigorous at this late period, because it is believed that with respect to domi-

nions more recently acquired by the British crown, it has by no means always followed that the vanquished have been compelled to adopt the laws of their conquerors. But, as the petitioners for the union expressly disclaim the idea that the effect of the measure will be to lead to the adoption of the English law in Lower Canada, I am at a loss to find in the prospect of any change less effectual, a sufficient inducement to your Lordship, to hazard the inconveniences to Upper Canada which have been pointed out; and therefore cannot bring myself to be satisfied that the petitioners for the union state grounds sufficient to warrant the adoption of their opinions.

I am not, indeed, ignorant that other reasons than those which I have noticed are assigned, as being the principal motives to His Majesty's Government to determine on so important a change in the political condition of the Canadas. The various addresses, indeed, and the comments upon them hint more or less plainly at these motives, and common conversation throughout the colonies, however idle, and frequently wide of the truth, assumes them, and reasons upon them with less reserve.

Your Lordship, I trust, will not think it a liberty, wantonly and unwarrantably indulged in, if I venture to remark on these possible motives, and to examine them with as much freedom as is necessary to arrive at a just conclusion. My si-

tuation in the colony, and the relation in which it places me to the government will, I hope, be a sufficient assurance to your Lordship that nothing can be meant that is not most respectful, and that no desire can actuate me, but the desire to be useful.

It is known too well, that for several years past the legislative sessions of Lower Canada have produced little but vexation to the government, and increasing jealousy and disagreement between the assembly and the legislative council. That this want of harmony must be prejudicial, without reference to any particular effect of it, is most certain, but, before it can be determined what remedy to apply, the cause must be clearly ascertained. The cause, the English inhabitants of Lower Canada affirm, lies wholly in the prevalence of French influence. That there is no necessity, on general grounds, for supposing this, may be inferred from the conduct more unreasonable, and more violent of other colonial legislatures, not composed of such materials. The character of the mass of the French population is not such as should lead us to acquiesce, at once, in imputing to them the origin of every evil. They are the descendants of persons, who came from a part of France not remarkable for political convulsions, and in an age when impatience of constituted authority was, in that kingdom, by no means the temper of the

times. Cut off from all intercourse with France, during the period of her change, they have altered in their general habits, demeanour, and degree of intelligence, as little, perhaps, from the parent stock, as could be anticipated under any circumstances. Nothing, indeed, was calculated so much to make of them a different people, as giving them a popular form of government, which they did not comprehend, and have never properly appreciated. It was not, however, to be feared in the nature of things, that their error would be the leaning too strongly against lawful control; and I believe it would be very difficult to shew that such a disposition can be attributed to them, more than to those persons descended from other nations, who have sat with them in the same assembly. On the contrary, I believe that some, who have governed in Lower Canada within the last thirty years, would inform your Lordship that, when the Canadian members were first found wanting to their duty, it was principally because their ignorance, and their little regard for the privileges they were exercising, made them too passive instruments in the hands of others, who better understood what inconvenient obstacles to the most beneficial measures of the executive might be interposed by the wilful and persevering opposition of a popular assembly.

With no prejudice that should lead me to judge too favourably of the French Canadians, I can-

not but avow my conviction that, when they are not alarmed on the score of their religion, or their ancient laws, and usages, they will be found as a people less liable to look with suspicion on the measures of their rulers, than their fellow subjects of the same, or of other colonies, —less likely, when suspicion has by any means been excited, to persevere to dangerous lengths, and, at least, as easily compelled to return to the path of duty, whenever, under the influence of a temporary delusion, they may have been led to depart from it.

The causes and progress of public dissensions in Lower Canada can be more accurately traced by those more conversant than myself in the affairs of that province. Their history, as I have always understood, will shew that the English members were by no means distinguished by an uniform opposition to this imputed evil of French ascendancy; and if I may venture so far, I would add that a review of that period would exhibit such diametrically opposite systems of policy adopted by Sir James Craig, and his immediate successors, as were not happily calculated to inculcate steadiness of conduct, or to preserve in the minds of the Canadians their inherent and submissive deference to the measures of their rulers.

When the civil list was assumed by Lower Canada, and surrendered by the mother country,

it was perhaps not unreasonable to expect that the assembly would consider themselves precluded from questioning the propriety of charges for the public service which had been long established, and defrayed by the British government, and which the province had not merely consented but requested to discharge. But that any security, short of an act of Parliament at the time of the surrender, would have been sufficient to place things on this fair and desirable footing, could hardly have been hoped for, since it would have been little consistent with what passes in other countries, or, at least, in other colonies, if future assemblies had held themselves bound by a constructive honourable obligation upon their predecessors to forbear debating about the expenditure of public monies which they had the *power* to control.

The mischief and the injustice of the late proceedings of the Assembly of Lower Canada, for which an opening was thus unhappily afforded, must be painful to every right-thinking person in that province, and the embarrassment they occasion to the government is degrading and intolerable. But I believe it will be found that although undoubtedly the French Canadians must, as the majority, be responsible for every act of the Assembly, they have not stood alone in the constant warfare about salaries and

fees which has taken the place of almost every useful deliberation for some years past. The continuance of this pernicious system having doubtless been strongly represented to His Majesty's Government, a call was made upon the legislature to make a provision somewhat more permanent for the civil service of the province. The call was unattended to. It was repeated, and expressly in the name of the sovereign, but the renewed application was equally ineffectual.

It may perhaps appear to your Lordship, and to His Majesty's Government, that resistance to a requisition so directly and repeatedly made, cannot be suffered without at least attempting a remedy, and the difficulty is undeniable of carrying on the government in conjunction with an assembly which has twice refused to comply with the call of their sovereign, without evincing a very earnest desire to make their refusal appear reasonable or respectful. But your Lordship, I trust, will permit me to remark, that so far as I can form an opinion, the same application to an assembly chosen for the two provinces would have met with no more favourable result. The representatives of the people, where the right of suffrage is almost universal, will generally speak the popular sense, and will be found always ready to vindicate every privilege, and exercise every power, for which they can find authority or precedent. Though they may be perfectly loyal, and cherish no

unfriendly feeling towards their government, they will exhibit a constant and jealous desire to sacrifice nothing to generosity or courtesy in their intercourse with it. In the nature of things, the Assembly could hardly be expected to part with the source of all their power, their control over the public expenditure, to such a degree as would render the government independent of their support, for every necessary supply. And, I confess, I have always lamented that the governor-general had not rather been instructed to require a permanent provision only for such charges as are uniform in amount, and must be necessary under any circumstances, depending on no contingency. The salaries of the governor, and the members of the council, of the judges and other officers employed in the ordinary duties of the government, and in the administration of justice, might, without reasonable objection, be expected to be placed on a permanent footing, because it is plain such appointments must be continued, and the salaries attached to them having been long established, and having been assumed, and ordinarily paid by the legislature, they ought certainly not to be made the subject of annual discussions carried on in a spirit wholly inconsistent with the dignity of the government, and destructive of the proper independence and respectability of the public officer.

Beyond this, I submit with great deference,

the call need not have been made. The contingencies of the different public departments necessarily vary in amount, as circumstances vary, and might, I conceive, have been left subject to a control in which the Assembly should have participated, without violation of principle, or the hazard of any material inconvenience to the public service.

Had the demand been thus confined, there would have been less reason in rejecting it, and therefore less chance of its being rejected; and I have also thought, that if it were found necessary to make an application to the legislature, in terms which might place them so directly at issue with the government, it was much to be wished that the Assembly had been made clearly to understand that what *they* were required to do, was nothing more than the assembly of *other* colonies had done. It was an obvious question for the Assembly of Lower Canada to ask whether in Jamaica, and in other colonies, where time had been given to bring affairs into their proper train, the civil expenditure was provided for during the life of the sovereign, and not by annual estimate. If it were not, it would necessarily occur to them to inquire why they should be desired to create an exception to general colonial usage. If it were, I cannot but think that to have placed the fact before them would have made a refusal more difficult, and consequently

more doubtful. And if, on the other hand, the fact be, that in other colonies the civil expenditure is *not* provided for at the commencement of each reign, I would submit to your Lordship whether the attempt to make such a system general would not have offered less prospect of difficulty, than the endeavour to compel its adoption by one colony, in opposition to the practice admitted in others.

If the placing matters on this desired footing in Lower Canada be so important in your Lordship's judgment, that the failure of the attempt has principally, or in some measure, led to the project of an union, it is scarcely probable that your Lordship would forbear to urge it upon the joint assembly. It is material, in that case, to reflect that there is positively no ground on which to rest the expectation that the issue of such a call would be, by any means, more favourable than it has been with the Assembly of Lower Canada. If it is again resisted, two provinces become at once involved in the same unprofitable contests, which are aggravated year after year, producing an irritation which spreads itself into the mass of the people, and produces an effect hurtful to the political, and even to the moral, feeling of the country. A contest of this nature once begun, is scarcely likely to be terminated in any other manner than by the government receding from their demand, or compelling an ac-

quiescence in it. The former course in a remote colony would at least be a precedent of bad promise: the latter, it need scarcely be said, would be both safer and more practicable with one province than with two. And, if it might be hoped to find a middle course, in the Assembly yielding ultimately to the force of argument, or to the desire to conciliate, I cannot but think such an expectation could with greater reason be indulged in regard to an assembly composed of *fifty* than one of *one hundred and twenty* members.

Having ventured so far on this point, I will add that the observation of every year confirms me in the conviction that until the salaries of the necessary public officers are made to rest on a better security than the annual vote of an assembly frequently changing, generally unable to appreciate the service for which they would measure the reward, and frequently actuated by the excitement of the moment, rather than influenced by the exigency of the government, there will be but little stability in the conduct of public affairs, little harmony among the several branches of the legislature, and very often nothing of that cordial desire to co-operate for the public welfare, which, but for these occasions of jealousy and complaint, would most probably be found.

Every endeavour to procure a voluntary concession of a point so indispensable should, of

course, be tried, before less agreeable measures are looked to ; but, if it became necessary, I believe that a firm but temperate resolution deliberately taken, openly expressed, and rigorously observed, to assent to no bill appropriating any portion of the provincial revenue for any purpose until the public service was properly provided for, and equally to reject any bill that should diminish the public revenue, during the suspension of such appropriations, would very soon produce the necessary understanding.

I am aware that such a course has already suggested itself to the government, because I have seen it partially acted upon ; but it was not adopted to the whole extent, nor was it by any means persevered in, and under such circumstances the avowal of the intention was certain to be injurious rather than beneficial.

The rising importance of the provinces of Canada, the prospect of their soon containing a very great population, and the peculiar delicacy of their situation from their contiguity to the United States, are all reasons for desiring the present obstacles to their tranquillity to be speedily removed. In smaller colonies, and colonies of less promise, the inconvenience produced by so certain a cause of disagreement can be better borne, not only because it is at the moment of less consequence, but because there is less reason to apprehend any formidable difficulty if the attempt

to remedy it shall be deferred. But the necessity of removing the evil I speak of seems to me so great, with respect to these two provinces, that, if the introduction of an amended system in that respect into all the colonies should seem a necessary previous measure, I venture to submit to your Lordship that the object would be found to justify it.

There is another source of disagreement between the legislature and the government of the Canadas, in the appropriation of the duties levied under the authority of the British statute, 14 Geo. III., ch. 88.

In Lower Canada this has been more than once complained of as a grievance by the Assembly, who affect to regard it as incompatible with the statute of the 18 Geo. III., ch. 12; and by whatever shew of reason their arguments may be supported, there can be no doubt that, as the effect of the present mode of appropriating the duties imposed by the 14 Geo. III. (which is strictly authorized by that statute), tends directly to make the government, in some measure, independent of their annual vote, the Assembly will never willingly renounce the hope of compelling the government by perseverance to abandon to their control this resource also.

I will not here trespass on your Lordship by an attempt to discuss the question which has been raised upon that statute. It is most fortunate for

the Canadas themselves that it has survived the period, when concessions, almost without limit, were made, in the vain hope of recalling colonies to their allegiance which had revolted, not really so much in resentment of any imagined grievance, as from the desire of attaining their independence, a desire which, when it had once been excited and cherished, was not likely to yield to any other impulse than despair of success.

The 18 Geo. III., in truth, produced nothing of that return to duty which was expected from it, and as it could not have been less effectual, so it is probable it would not have appeared less reasonable, if, instead of renouncing every means which could enable the government to place their officers above the reach of colonial dissensions annually renewed, it had gone merely so far as to declare that beyond the necessary provision for the permanent support of the civil service, the British government would appropriate no duties raised in the colonies.

The revenue raised in Canada under the 14 Geo. III., and appropriated by the crown without the control of the legislature, becomes annually more considerable. In Lower Canada the Assembly have repeatedly claimed a right to a voice in disposing of it,—a right which, perhaps, might be justly conceded to them, if they would make provision for the support of the civil government in the same constitutional manner as is done

in England, but which it would be most unwise to extend, so long as they insist on retaining the government in a state of the most degrading dependence. The contest upon this point remains still open, and year after year it will doubtless be renewed with increased earnestness in proportion to the growing importance of the object.

So far from an union of the two legislatures contributing to set this matter at rest, I must declare to your Lordship that if, upon other grounds, such an union were thought advisable, I should consider it effected under most inauspicious circumstances if this ground of dissension with the government, as well as the present unconstitutional system of providing for the civil list, were not finally arranged before the legislatures were united. The reason is but too obvious. These are debateable points common to both provinces, and no expectation can safely be founded on the most acknowledged loyalty of feeling in the people, that their representatives would be thence inclined to relinquish a power which they *can* exercise over the public expenditure.

I would then entreat your Lordship to consider whether the substituting for an assembly of *fifty* members, one which shall contain perhaps *one hundred and twenty*, all equally returned by elections strictly popular, the chance of opposition to the government, on these points, will be dimi-

nished, or whether opposition under such circumstances will not rather be greatly more formidable, both in character and degree, and more injurious, because more extensive, in its effects.

It is very true that in Upper Canada no particular inconvenience has been experienced from contests with the legislature on either of the points which have produced so much in the Lower Province. But it would be most incorrect to infer from thence that the representatives sent from Upper Canada to the United Assembly would effectually counteract the prevailing course of conduct there, because, in the first place, as to the duties raised and appropriated under the 14 Geo. III., it would have been to little purpose to call in question the right of the government to appropriate them in Upper Canada, so long as a sum of much greater amount was annually contributed by the British government to the civil service of the colony, which could be withdrawn at pleasure if an unreasonable spirit were manifested in return. And, in the next place, it is to be borne in mind that, if the measures of the Assembly in Upper Canada have, in general, satisfied the just expectations of the government, these were but the measures of a *majority* very fluctuating in its proportion, and that this probable *majority* only, and not the *whole* Assembly of Upper Canada, is to be reckoned upon as the

accession to the very few members who may be found to answer to the call of their sovereign in the other province.

This *majority*, it should be remembered, though decisive in the separate Assembly, might be by no means sufficient to turn the scale in the united legislature, and there are many obvious considerations that would lead to the expectation of its being diminished rather than increased by the change of circumstances.

I fear all I have hitherto said, if it shall appear to your Lordship worthy of any attention, will seem but to lead to the unsatisfactory conclusion that there are great evils at present existing in Lower Canada, which, it is acknowledged, are more likely to increase than to disappear under the present system; and that the proposed measure of uniting their legislatures affords no reasonable assurance of the desired remedy, while it will certainly occasion other mischiefs that are now not felt.

I confess to your Lordship such is the impression I entertain, but if I saw no other possible escape from those evils which I admit to exist in their full extent, I certainly should have felt no disposition to communicate that impression to your Lordship, but would rather have seen the experiment made of a change, which appears to some to promise a hope of good, and which, if found injurious, might perhaps be reversed.

My conviction is, that there is a remedy more certain to be effectual, and every way more expedient; and it is from the wish to place more clearly before your Lordship the superior advantages of *the other* great measure of colonial policy which has been submitted to consideration, that I have ventured to examine so much at length that which appears to receive, at present, the more particular attention of His Majesty's Government.

I know not in what light the design of a *general union of the British North American Colonies* may have appeared to His Majesty's Government, if it has been submitted to consideration, as I learn it was to have been, at the same time with the other papers respecting the Canadas. It is, I trust, scarcely probable that your Lordship's attention has been diverted from it, in any degree, by an idea which I see the anxious petitioners for the partial union have been most studious to inculcate, that it is thrown out merely to withdraw your Lordship's attention from the other measure, and without any serious expectation that it would be adopted. The best answer to such a surmise is, that Mr. Sewell's paper, which first brought the scheme under the particular notice of His Majesty's Government, was offered for consideration, in its present shape, some years before any intention had been expressed of uniting the Provinces of Canada; and

that the paper on the same subject which was submitted by myself, and is printed with Mr. Sewell's, was not otherwise offered than in compliance with the desire of Mr. Wilmot Horton, that I would consider Mr. Sewell's project, and reduce to writing, for his perusal, whatever occurred to me respecting it.

Mr. Sewell's paper appears to have been written without any design of attempting to embrace the necessary details. The other having been offered at a more recent period, when the necessity of some change, and the dangers of a more partial one, were actually under consideration, goes more fully into the subject, in order to examine minutely the practicability of a plan, which it was supposed was likely, from present circumstances, to receive immediate consideration.

I wrote it with too ardent a hope that its statements might attract attention, and with too earnest a conviction of their truth, not to be desirous that it should again meet your Lordship's perusal, while circumstances concur to call your Lordship's attention so particularly to the political condition of these colonies. Being offered in immediate obedience to Mr. Wilmot Horton's request, it was not by any means the result of that long and laborious attention which such a measure deserves, and it is altogether incomplete for any practical purpose; but it would be idle to bestow further consideration on its details, unless there should appear some ground for supposing that His

Majesty's Government entertains a general conviction of the expediency of the proposed plan, and desires to act upon it.

The observations, therefore, which I shall venture now to offer, shall regard rather the general views of policy connected with the measure, than any of the proposed details. So far from looking on this plan with any of the prejudices or wishes of a friend or an enemy to the union of the Canadas, it is not as a Canadian that I am impressed with a conviction of its importance, and entreat for it the attention of His Majesty's Government. It is as a British subject that I feel an interest and an anxiety that may appear to approach too nearly to enthusiasm, when I anticipate its probable effects.

Objections have been taken to some of its details, and inconveniences in practice have been urged as reasons against its adoption. These I have noticed in a communication which I have taken the liberty of addressing to Mr. Wilmot Horton, and shall not weary your Lordship's attention by adverting to them here. I believe the only remark applying to the principle of giving to these colonies an united legislature, and a general government, is, that it is but a revival, with some modifications, of a plan framed by Dr. Franklin, so long ago as the year 1754, for uniting the different provinces in America.

Except that of any two schemes for uniting several colonies, under similar circumstances of

constitution and government, the one must, in many important points, resemble the other, it would have been singular if the plan submitted by me had borne any particular resemblance to the one mentioned in this remark, for it was certainly suggested without the slightest consideration of any other scheme than Mr. Sewell's, which was before me, and without any other than a general historical recollection of a plan of so old a date, and conceived under such different circumstances, that it was scarcely likely to present itself, in these times, as a model for adoption, though it might afford some valuable hints. A comparison of the two suggestions will sufficiently show that it did not occur to me to consult it.

The objection, however (if it was meant as an objection), gives rise to one or two considerations which I cannot forbear to state. The plan of 1754 did not originate with Dr. Franklin, though it was commented upon by him. It was drawn up and offered to the consideration of the King's Ministers by Governor Hutchinson, a gentleman whose preference of British to colonial interests was unfortunately somewhat too incautiously displayed on all occasions, and whose zeal for the integrity of the empire was not likely to have suffered him to be the proposer of a measure which would tend to dissolve the connexion between the mother country and her colonies. It is obvi-

ous that the very allusion to this plan of Mr. Hutchinson's suggests the strongest of all arguments in support of a general union for the remaining provinces. It is true that a plan *was* pressed upon the British Government in the year 1754, for uniting the colonies in America; and equally true that (whether it was the plan of Mr. Hutchinson or Dr. Franklin) it was not adopted. What was then speculation has become matter of history, and the event may offer no useless lesson. Remaining separate governments, with separate legislatures—with no legitimate bond of union, involving an acknowledged responsibility—with no occasional constitutional interchange of opinion—no common medium of communication with the parent state—and with no direct representation in the councils of the empire, these colonies rebelled, and after an obstinate struggle, which added more than one hundred millions to the national debt, they were lost to the empire. It were, perhaps, an unprofitable speculation to conjecture what might have happened if some such plan as that proposed in 1754 had been adopted; but it is at least plain, that, as the consequences could not have been more unfortunate, the rejection of Mr. Hutchinson's plan can afford no possible ground for congratulation, and that the events of the American revolution furnish unluckily no pretence for looking with suspicion on the adoption of any other line of

policy than that which was in fact adhered to, and proved so disastrous.

The history of the old American colonies has always confirmed me in the belief that a system such as is now proposed with regard to those which remain, would at least have preserved them much longer as portions of the empire.

Had such an union been effected in auspicious times, before an unfriendly feeling towards the parent state, generated by the most sordid and selfish views in one province, had by degrees been imparted to the rest, those designs, which, while they were actually entertained in one colony, would have been regarded with abhorrence in the others, could not have been suffered to proceed in secret, till they had brought on a contest of which the consequences were artfully made to produce that general indignation, and create that sympathy, which the causes that led to it had been appealed to in vain to excite.

It is not very probable that discontents on the subject of taxes and commercial restrictions could, under such a state of things, have been attended with consequences so fatal. The manner in which these would have been received, would have been known before they were imposed; the degree and danger of resistance could have been earlier, and more surely estimated; and if, unfortunately, disturbances had followed, there

would, at least, have been some course of learning the collective sense of the colonies in regard to proposed concessions, before it became necessary to delegate commissioners to treat with the commander of a rebel army.

Had the importance of these great colonies in the West happily induced the mother country to change her ordinary system of colonial policy, by allowing some millions of British subjects to have a voice, though it were but one voice, in the great assembly of the nation, I am persuaded it would have been left to generations that succeed us, to behold their dismemberment from the empire.

Under such a system *real* grievances, where any existed would have been sooner exposed and more speedily redressed, and those which were imaginary would not have been long, and (it may be almost said of some of them) *secretly* cherished in the colonies, as excuses for criminal enterprises, of which the motives and extent were never timely or generally known, and could not be publicly counteracted before they had been too generally begun to admit of a tolerable retreat.

It is only necessary to fancy a restless and ambitious politician, like Hancock, Adams, or Franklin, unburdening the complaints of his countrymen in the House of Commons, instead of poisoning the suspicious part of the British

public by partial statements, and deluding the world, as he had inflamed his countrymen, by exaggerated accounts of fancied oppressions.

It can scarcely be assuming too much to believe that when thus brought openly and fairly into discussion, these causes of dissension would have, at least, been better understood, and their importance more duly appreciated, both in Great Britain and the colonies; and that the result would have been, on both sides, a line of conduct more just and prudent. On the one hand, the reflection that their case was secure of a full disclosure, and most free discussion, in an Assembly where they were themselves represented, must have prevented resistance from following the first impulse of discontent. And, on the other hand, measures would have been at once foreborne by the mother country, on a conviction of their impolicy, which were ruinously persevered in, because having been, perhaps, unwisely commenced, they had been unreasonably and intemperately opposed as violations of right.

After all, perhaps, nothing certain can be learned from the history of the old American provinces, but that among colonies not before united for the purpose of good government, by any constitutional provision, and as separate in their councils, as if they formed not all a part of the same great empire, a bond of union for far other objects may easily be formed by the artful

and desperate contrivers of political revolutions. While it remains a problem how much longer a connexion might have endured which there must have been less temptation to the ill-disposed to break, and which being much more intimate and perfect, and (if the expression may be used not absurdly) more respectable, the loyal would have clung to with more reliance, and forfeited with greater regret.

But, my Lord, I wish to keep in view the colonies which now compose the United States of America, for other purposes. Embracing, as these colonies do, an extent of territory equal to many kingdoms, enjoying a climate and soil highly favourable to population, and situated so as to admit of an increase of naval power, and commercial intercourse commensurate with their growth, it has, I know, been thought, that if, in their subjection to the mother country, or in their connexion with it on the most flattering terms, there had remained any thing that was in idea degrading, or that was injurious or inconvenient in effect, the progress of natural causes must inevitably have led to their separation. However this may be, it is, perhaps, not to be lamented that they form no longer a disproportionate appendage to the British Crown, on any other account than the loss of honour, and the expenditure of blood and treasure which followed their revolt.

But though the consequences of their separation have, it is believed, been beneficial rather than injurious to the trade and manufactures of Great Britain, it ought at the same time to be borne in mind, that as an independent nation, the United States of America have hitherto justified no expectation of a kindlier feeling towards our country than may be looked for from other foreign powers. On the contrary, at a moment when the best interests of the civilized world depended on the unequal contest in which Great Britain was engaged, the United States joined the number of her enemies, in the confident assurance that she must sink under the pressure; and if the principles which governed their conduct were not sufficiently proved by their tame submission to greater wrongs from the ruler of France than they could allege against Great Britain, *one* motive at least to their hostility was plainly enough seen in their immediate and persevering attempts to possess themselves of these provinces.

Happily these efforts failed; and there appears no reason, in the present state of things, to apprehend their being soon renewed. On the contrary, the most amicable relations seem to be maintained with equal sincerity by the Governments of both countries. It has certainly been, for many years, the disposition of Great Britain to avoid all cause of dissension with the United

States of America ; and the candour and liberality which peculiarly characterize her councils, are not likely to afford just cause of exception to the most jealous government. If, indeed, an alliance so natural could be firmly and lastingly cemented, it would be happy for the interests of mankind ;—it would create a power which, while it would be competent to repress the designs of destructive ambition, would itself threaten no ill to the repose or the freedom of the world ; and which might secure a happy progress to the cause of civilization, science, and rational religion.

But although there is not in the laws, the political institutions, or the religion of the two countries, any opposition that should create repugnance to the closest union, it is evident that there are many considerations which forbid the indulgence of such a hope. With a disposition peculiarly adapted to the enterprises of commerce, and enjoying advantages most favourable to the extension of their trade into all quarters of the globe, it is impossible but that the people of the United States must feel or fancy some interference in their pursuit of interest from such a nation as Great Britain ; and, if they are conscious of their ability to remove any check they experience, there is not, either in their past history, or in their general temper, any assurance that they will forbear the attempt.

In anticipating the rapid increase of their nation in power and opulence, the sanguine calculations of Americans have deservedly attracted ridicule; and some desponding politicians in Europe have, in almost as unmeasured terms, predicted the speedy transfer of security, glory, and science, from the old to the new world: but, however hopes and fears may have influenced these prophecies, it is, perhaps, not too much to say, that the doubt is rather in regard to the *time* than to the *probability* of their fulfilment; and that there are too solid reasons for believing that, in the natural progress of events, a people which, in less than two centuries, have risen in the proportion of millions to hundreds, and who possess a country that scarcely prescribes limits to population, must inevitably rise above the power of control by any single state in Europe. If this shall appear inevitable, though the era may be distant; and if the seat of empire *is* to be transferred to the fertile regions of the west, it would seem a glorious purpose to provide for the continuance in the new world of those unequalled institutions which now command the admiration of the old, and to secure a scene in which the British character may maintain its existence, and manifest its excellence to the latest posterity.

Very ample means of rearing such a kingdom exist in the possession of the remaining colonies in America; and I would submit, my Lord, that

the time for laying its foundation could not be more happily chosen. I need not dwell on the reasons for this opinion, which are afforded in the present most auspicious state of the British empire. I am rather desirous to impress my conviction, that in the actual state of these provinces there are strong concurring inducements to select the present time for commencing the great system of policy to which I could wish some voice of greater influence were raised to call your Lordship's attention. The number of inhabitants in these colonies united is not so insignificant as to render the design ridiculous, and their increase is certain to be rapid. It will not be long before they will begin to pride themselves on the possession of a national character; it could not be formed under happier circumstances. Industry and peace prevail in all the colonies, and loyalty to their parent state, and reverence for her institutions, can never be expected to be stronger, than at a moment when they enjoy, under her protection, the most fearless security, and behold her first in glory, in wealth, in power, and in science, among the nations of the earth.

I am but too sensible how readily it suggests itself to many persons in England as an objection to the promise of lasting advantages from the possession of the Canadas, in particular, that they must, in time, like the United States, outgrow their subjection to Great Britain, and that

any acceleration of their improvement by the aid of the mother country is but hastening, at her expense, the arrival of that period, when, like former colonies, they will present themselves as a new enemy to the power that had fostered and protected them.

An erroneous idea of the extent and capability of Canada, and a disregard of its geographical situation can alone have occasioned such an impression. The parts of Upper Canada within the great waters are those only which, in any view of her resources, are to be considered as composing the colony. The rest is incapable of cultivation, and contains no white inhabitants but the few occupied in the fur trade with the Indians. Upper Canada, so confined, is of very nearly the same extent as the single state of New York, and not widely different in area from the kingdom of England. After the lapse of centuries, and under circumstances the most favourable, it could but contain a population sufficiently large, with the aid of Great Britain, to defy the invasion of its powerful neighbours, and too respectable to consent to be received as an accession to their republic, but not a population that could ever outgrow the control of the parent state, or be independent of her naval power for that security to their commerce which no increase indeed of their own

strength and resources alone can ever confer upon them.

Provinces, however extensive, which are kept in check on one side by a foreign nation, that must ever exceed them in power, and which can communicate with other countries only by one narrow channel, which is closed by ice for nearly half the year, can have no imaginable temptation to cast themselves loose from an empire which supplies the security they want, while it imposes no restrictions of which they can complain, and has, in truth, no very urgent necessity for imposing any. I must also, my Lord, entreat attention to the circumstance, that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which it is proposed to unite to Canada, for the purposes of legislation, at least, are most happily so situated, in every respect, that their union may check the growth of evil, but cannot produce it. These colonies are capable but of a limited population, which must always depend chiefly on commerce for support; and exposed in all their coasts to the navies of Great Britain, they can never rise to sufficient power or importance to admit of their aspiring to be independent states. Their interest could never prompt even a wish of that nature, since they enjoy, in their connexion with Great Britain, security and advantages unattainable under any other circumstances.

There is as little ground to imagine that they would ever desire to become subject to the Government of the United States. The disposition of their people is at present most decidedly adverse to the American republic, and they have too near means of observing the inconveniences to which their immediate neighbours, the people of the eastern states, are subjected by the policy of the General Government, and their impatience under those inconveniences, to feel any desire to change their own political situation.

The proposed union of these British colonies would have the happy effect of uniting in all acts of legislation with the representatives of Canada an equal number of persons delegated by the people of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, who could have no imaginable inducement to separate from the empire, and who could not, in any scheme for that purpose, co-operate with the people of Canada.

A view of the map of America will shew, that a junction of physical force for any bad purpose is out of the question, and the union would, therefore, confer the security of a legislature, composed of persons of different tempers and politics, without bringing with it the risk of any combination hostile to the empire. It is possible that some one of these colonies, singly, might find or imagine an inducement to change

its political relations, but such measures would receive their most effectual check from the union of that colony with others, whose interests must forbid their making common cause.

By the establishment of an university on a very respectable footing, and with particular privileges, much might be done towards producing a common feeling in favour of the general government, and of the mother country, in the minds of the young men of the principal families, whose characters would afterwards influence the measures of the respective colonial-legislatures, as well as of the general government. And greater and more successful efforts might be made, under such a system, for establishing the Church of England, than are possible at present. An inhabitant of Upper Canada, who has marked the progress of sectarian ascendancy, and its political effects in that province, might be excused for insisting more strongly on this point, for it is certain that, unless some measures are speedily taken, its influence on public affairs will produce embarrassment from which it will not be easy to find relief.

The extension of commercial intercourse among the colonies, which would follow such a system, is too obvious to require to be enlarged upon, but its certain effect in increasing that particular and important branch of trade, the fisheries in

the Gulf of St. Lawrence, is a national object, so worthy of attention, that I cannot forbear to recal to your Lordship's observation, the paper among those printed, in which that consequence is very clearly pointed out, and its effect in adding to the naval power of the empire, very satisfactorily shewn. I am sure when these considerations shall have met your Lordship's attention, nothing need be said to enforce them. They concern in the most direct manner the first interests of the nation. The means of contributing to public wealth and power, to an incalculable extent, certainly exists in the possible increase of the fisheries in the Gulf, and on the coast of America: the object is comparatively lost sight of, but the system of policy proposed would at once bring its importance into view, and attract the united attention, the resources and the industry of several colonies to its advancement. As it gradually increased, the materials of a naval power would be formed, which might protect the harbours and commerce of the colonies from aggression, and constitute a powerful check to the rising ambition of the United States. Generations must elapse before the United States can take that station as a naval power, which can threaten any vital interest of the British empire, but the time is undoubtedly approaching in the contemplation of

the people of one country, and, perhaps, of both, when the resources of Great Britain must be exerted to the utmost in a contest for naval superiority with the United States of America. It must then be admitted to be an object of the very greatest importance to the nation, to improve to the utmost advantages which are possessed, under the dominion of the British crown, in the same quarter of the globe with this new and most formidable rival, for building up a navy which may assist in maintaining her naval superiority in this portion of her dominions.

If these objects are of such value to the colonies, and to the general interests of the empire, as to appear to your Lordship to call decidedly for that line of policy, which will best ensure their attainment, and their permanence, I should not doubt the adoption of another measure necessary to complete the system; the giving a representation in the imperial parliament to the numerous subjects and important interests of those extensive colonies. Placed on such a footing, the subjects of the western kingdom would have no more reason to revolt, than any portion of the present united kingdoms. Possessing the same constitution and the same laws, and enjoying a community of rights and privileges, they would fully participate in all the feelings, and all the glories of British subjects; and I am convinced,

by every opportunity of observation on both sides of the St. Lawrence, that the reverence for monarchical government, so far from being weakened, would become stronger by the opportunity of contrast with the neighbouring republic.

That a kingdom so situated would, in time, form a most powerful check to the United States of America cannot be doubted. On the one hand, the most effectual means of annoying their commerce on their coasts, and on the other of creating a powerful diversion in that quarter of their territory which is inaccessible to the British fleets, would be produced by the increase of seamen and shipping, which the extensive fisheries of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Lower Canada would supply, and by the very formidable land force which, in a few years, the interior of Canada could furnish and support.

These measures may perhaps be thought by your Lordship to be so much more national than colonial, that it must look like presumption in the inhabitant of a distant colony to bespeak attention to them, and especially in connexion with matters of purely local importance. I admit that the measures and considerations which I have last ventured to submit to your Lordship are, indeed, of that general nature that, if they are thought to merit attention, they might be properly entertained at any time, and therefore

it may seem, at first, that they are somewhat inconsiderately pressed at a moment when the particular situation of Lower Canada calls for a larger portion of your Lordship's attention than can well be devoted to the interests of a single colony. Your Lordship, however, will not fail to perceive how strong the motive is with one who sincerely believes in the expediency of the system recommended, to desire that its immediate adoption should take place of a very questionable and much less effectual measure of policy.

That some means must be found either to reduce the Assembly of Lower Canada to reason, or to make the tranquillity and very existence of the government depend less absolutely upon their deliberations, is sufficiently clear. A change of *some* kind is required; the subject is therefore unavoidably forced upon attention, and the question for decision regards only the choice of remedies. I venture to foretel that an effectual remedy will *not* be found in the attempt to govern these two colonies by one Legislature and two Governments; and that the great extent of territory composing the two Canadas would render intolerably inconvenient the alternative, much less exceptionable in principle, of abolishing *all* distinction, by re-uniting the provinces in every respect, and giving them one

Executive Government, of which the seat should be central. On the other hand, the plan of a general union would preserve the convenience of a separate legislature for the wants and local interests of each province, while it would leave every concern of general importance, not merely in the Canadas, but in the other British provinces, to be submitted to the deliberations of a popular assembly, composed of not more than half the number of members intended to be convened in the limited assembly of the Canadas. There is also every reasonable assurance that these members would be generally men of greater consideration for their property, intelligence, and standing in society, and would come to their duty with a more just sense of what the constitution demanded, and more free from that jealous suspicion of the Government which prevails most with the least informed, and which is naturally increased by the petty and local discontents which a few malicious demagogues may excite in their immediate neighbourhood.

It may, perhaps, present itself as an objection, that the general government which is to superintend this confederacy, would occasion additional expense. It would, without doubt, but the charge could not be great, and the means to meet it would probably be found in the resources of the colonies themselves. If they could not

be, your Lordship will, I hope, pardon the observation that an expenditure of twenty, or thirty, or even fifty thousand pounds, would be well employed in increasing the internal strength, promoting the tranquillity, and ensuring the good government of colonies of which the military defences, in time of peace, cost, perhaps, little less than a million sterling to the empire. And the reflection may not appear out of place, nor introduced in an improper spirit, that an annual ten or fifteen thousand pounds paid a few years longer, towards the support of the civil government of Lower Canada, until the Legislature had assumed it in a proper manner, would have saved, most probably, all the embarrassment that has been for years felt in that colony, which the British nation has been content to maintain by a military expenditure of several hundred thousand pounds.

Before I leave this subject, I will remark, that if the provinces of Canada only shall be united as it is proposed, the preponderance of one over the other, in the joint legislature unjustly made use of, might possibly occasion so strong a dissatisfaction as to suggest an union with the neighbouring states, as an escape from a greater evil. I am not one of those who accede readily to any argument of this nature, because I do not admit the probability of such a result under any circum-

stances ; but when it is so constantly urged by those who are desirous of an union of the Canadas, that their *remaining separate* may be attended with that consequence, it is not going out of the way to remark, that there would be more reason for such an apprehension under circumstances which might very possibly follow the union upon the plan contemplated.

I fear I shall appear to your Lordship to have trespassed by this paper upon your Lordship's attention to an extent which the most zealous belief of the importance of the subject can scarcely excuse. If, indeed, I were not very deeply impressed with the thoughts which I have endeavoured to put intelligibly on paper, I might have been deterred from recurring to the subject by insinuations which I have noticed in several communications addressed to your Lordship, that the great scheme in question is not thought of, and would not be approved by the people of these colonies, and has been suggested only by a few interested individuals, in the hope of diverting attention from the other measure.

With respect to the people of these colonies, it is true that they have expressed no opinion on the subject, because it has in no shape been offered to their consideration, nor in any manner discussed or hinted at in the provinces ; but it is the most reasonable expectation, that a system so evidently tending to increase their respectability,

and attended with no sacrifice of local advantage or convenience, would, if offered to their consideration, be most favourably regarded.

With respect to the imputation of *private interests*, by which it has been attempted to create prejudice against the suggestions of a general union, your Lordship, I am sure, will feel that the character of the individual to whom it is intended such an observation should apply can alone determine its justice. With regard to men not governed by principles of integrity and honour, it is not necessary to go far to imagine probable motives; the smallest interest will be sufficient to turn them from the path of duty, but His Majesty's Government will scarcely fail to reflect that with those servants of the crown, whose sentiments of honour and of duty are worthy of the stations they may have been called to fill, the danger is rather that apprehension of the suspicions which may be harboured in illiberal minds will restrain them from giving utterance to their opinions, than that they will be tempted to deal disingenuously with His Majesty's Government by feelings which can actuate only the sordid and the selfish.

For myself I have no other apprehension than that I may appear to your Lordship to have delivered my opinion with too little reserve on questions of much delicacy, but I must hope for

your Lordship's conviction of the goodness of my motives, and of the sincerity and profound respect with which, I am,

Your Lordship's

Most faithful,

Humble Servant,

JNO. B. ROBINSON.

*The Right Honourable
the Earl Bathurst,
&c. &c. &c.*

THE END.

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