

ments of the Catholic Church in Lower Canada, and the existence of all its present laws, until altered by the united legislature, might be secured by stipulations similar to those adopted in the union between England and Scotland. I do not think that the subsequent history of British legislation need incline us to believe that the nation which has the majority in a popular legislature is likely to use its power to tamper very hastily with the laws of the people to which it is united.

Such were the opinions and such the basis of that great scheme of union which Lord DURHAM contemplated, and which he aimed to secure to Upper and Lower Canada. It consisted of two parts: representation based on population in the Legislature; and guarantees that the peculiar institutions of Lower Canada should be protected, and her rights respected. But His Lordship had larger views before him than the union of Upper and Lower Canada. He was anxious that all the British colonies in North America should be consolidated under one government. When His Lordship received his commission from the British Crown, he was strongly in favor of the Federal principle in its application to the then state of Upper and Lower Canada; but a more profound study of the question when in this country, and from consultation with the leading men in the several American Colonies, he arrived at the conclusion that a Legislative would be preferable to a Federal union of those colonies. The change in his opinion is thus stated in the extracts from his report, with which I shall now trouble the House. By a legislative union he means "a complete incorporation of the provinces included in it under one Legislature exercising universal and sole legislative authority over all of them, exactly in the same manner as the Parliament legislates alone for the whole of the British Isles." After a careful review of the whole subject, Lord DURHAM says:—

I had still more strongly impressed upon me the great advantages of a united government; and I was gratified by finding the leading minds of the various colonies strongly and generally inclined to a scheme that would elevate their countries into something like a national existence. I thought that it would be the tendency of a Federation, sanctioned and consolidated by a monarchical government, gradually to become a complete Legislative union; and that thus, while conciliating the French of Lower Canada, by leaving them the government of their own province, and their own internal legislation, I might provide for the protection of British interests by the General Government, and the gradual transition of the provinces into an united and homo-

geneous community. But, [His Lordship adds,] the period of gradual transition is past in Lower Canada, [and therefore he says,] that the only efficacious government would be that formed by a Legislative union.

Having thus dealt with the question in its application to Upper and Lower Canada, he extends the range of his observations to the whole of the British possessions in North America, and remarks:—

But while I convince myself that such desirable ends would be secured by a legislative union of the two provinces, I am inclined to go further and enquire whether all these objects would not be more surely obtained by extending this legislative union over all the British possessions in North America; and whether the advantages which I anticipate for two of them might not, and should not in justice be extended over all. Such an union would at once decisively settle the question of races; it would enable the provinces to co-operate for all common purposes; and, above all, it would form a great and powerful people, possessing the means of securing good and responsible government for itself, and which, under the protection of the British Empire, might in some measure counterbalance the preponderant and increasing influence of the United States on the American continent.

His Lordship had no fears that such an union would lead to separation from the Mother Country. He rather looked upon it as a means of strengthening the bonds which united them, and of its proving an advantage to both. On this point he says:—

I do not anticipate that a colonial legislature thus strong and thus self-governing would desire to abandon the connection with Great Britain. On the contrary, I believe that the practical relief from undue interference which would be the result of such a change would strengthen the present bond of feelings and interests, and that the connection would only become more durable and advantageous by having more of equality, of freedom, and of local independence. But, at any rate, our first duty is to secure the well-being of our colonial countrymen; and if in the hidden decrees of that Wisdom by which this world is ruled, it is written that these countries are not for ever to remain portions of the Empire, we owe it to our honor to take good care that when they separate from us they should not be the only countries on the American continent in which the Anglo-Saxon race shall be found unfit to govern themselves. I am, [says His Lordship,] in truth, so far from believing that the increased power and weight given to these colonies by union would endanger their connection with the Empire, that I look to it as the means of fostering such a national feeling throughout them as would effectually counterbalance whatever tendencies may now exist towards separation.