

us they were going to give us? The institutions of Republican America? No. The despotism of France? No. They said that they intended giving us Responsible Government, the British system of government, so that the people of this country might be governed in precisely the same manner that the people of the British Islands are governed. Who are the best interpreters of the British system? When gentlemen raise an issue upon constitutional practice, they should sustain their course by reference to the authorities of that country from which we take our system. Now this whole question was put fully before the statesmen and people of England by a gentleman second in ability to none in this country—who is one of those who can almost make the worse appear the better reason—who can put his views before the public in the most conclusive manner that it is possible to place them. Now when this gentleman had exhausted months in enunciating his views, before the statesmen of the mother country, what did Lord Carnarvon say after full consideration of the whole question? Lord Carnarvon said:—

“Then the noble lord has founded an argument on the franchise of Nova Scotia, but really if this House is to go into all the intricacies and details of colonial government there can be no end to the matter. Such a course would have the effect of raising questions on every clause of the bill. The House has simply to ascertain who are the constituted authorities of Nova Scotia, whom we are bound to listen to and whose opinion we are bound to accept. Now, what have they said? In 1831 the then Parliament of Nova Scotia passed a resolution in favour of confederation in general terms. In 1863 that Parliament was dissolved and a fresh Parliament was elected and is in existence at the present moment. Well, it was only in April last that that Parliament came to a distinct resolution in favour of confederation—a resolution as distinct as words could express it. That resolution empowered certain gentlemen to proceed on their behalf to England to negotiate with her Majesty's Government. These accredited envoys were accordingly sent and the terms have been negotiated and embodied in this measure. It appears to me that it is not competent for us to look behind that vote of the Nova Scotia Parliament, and to inquire what other parties may be in the colony and under what circumstances the colonial local authorities and legislatures were elected. If responsible government means anything, it means this—that you not only give to a colony free institutions and enable the inhabitants to elect their own Parliament, but you also undertake, in matters of colonial policy, to deal only with that colony through the legally constituted authorities. Any other view of the case would lead us to endless difficulty.”

This is the opinion of a gentleman to whom the whole press, irrespective of party, has awarded unqualified praise for the able and perspicuous manner in which he dealt with this question. In fact, we have the opinion of the statesmen and press of all parties in England in support of the principle—that our Legislature has the authority of legislating on all matters touching the constitution for this country save where it conflicts with Imperial interests. I confess I feel mortified when we enjoyed the great principles of responsible government—when these principles had been worked out so as to reflect the highest credit upon all parties—when Nova Scotia had advanced to that position of intelligence that she could be entrusted with the ma-

nagement of her own affairs; I felt mortified, I say, to see the very men who had laid claims to having given us this constitutional system, going to the foot of the Throne and attempting to prove, as far as all the evidence they could gather would prove, that this province was unfit for the government she enjoys—that we were in that condition of corruption and ignorance that the Parliament of the country could not be trusted to discharge those legislative duties which had been entrusted to them under our constitutional system. If these petitions had any effect—if the British Government had accepted such statements as true, they would have been greatly misled, and would have estimated the character, education, and intelligence of this country at a very low standard indeed. We can point with pride to evidence that under the institutions we have enjoyed the people have chosen the best men they have as their representatives, whose acts may challenge the closest scrutiny of the mother country and of the world. If it had been shown that the action of the Legislature had been unworthy of the confidence of Parliament and Government of England, then we would have occupied a position that would indeed be most humiliating to us all. But we have another construction of this resolution besides Lord Carnarvon's. Here is the declaration not of the late Colonial Secretary only but the Queen's Speech, in which the United Cabinet of England give expression to their sentiments:—“Resolutions in favor of a more intimate union of the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have been passed by their several Legislatures, and delegates duly authorized and representing all classes of colonial party and opinion have concurred in the conditions upon which such a union may be effected in accordance with their wishes. A bill will be submitted to you which by the consolidation of colonial interests and resources will give strength to the sovereign Provinces as members of the same empire, and animated by feelings of loyalty to the same sovereign.” I have given you the authority of the leading men of this country—of the Colonial Minister, of the British Ministry—and in addition you have the authority of the Houses of Peers and Commons of Great Britain. Let detraction assail that parliament as it may, the hon. member may endeavour to throw odium upon it, but there is not a freeman through the length and breadth of the British Empire who can fail to admire and respect the body which, amid the convulsions that have shaken nations from centre to circumference, has maintained the proud pre-eminence of England. It does not become a colonial public man, at a time when the Parliament of Great Britain is attracting the admiration of the civilized world—when it is the great object of other nations to assimilate their institutions as nearly as possible to those of the mother country, to attempt to cast obloquy upon such a body. But they require no defence at my hands; the proud position that they occupy—the eminent character of