

THE EXAMINER.

SATURDAY, MARCH 4th, 1848.

RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT.

"DERBY. Biddy will ye marry me?
BIDDY. Yes, Derby, and thank ye too!"
[MARRIAGE MADE EASY.]

The practicability of the Responsible Government System, in every British Colony to which has been granted Constitutional Parliamentary Representation, is now no longer to be treated as a theoretical question, or the possession and enjoyment of it to be regarded as a speculative right: for it has now been declared, we feel ourselves fully authorized to say, by the Imperial Government, that in every such Colony, should immediately be adopted that system of Parliamentary Government which has long prevailed in the Mother Country, and which seems to be a necessary part of Representative Institutions in a certain stage of their progress. At that stage has the Parliamentary Institution of Prince Edward Island arrived; and, if her present House of Assembly be true to their trust, before the usual period of prorogation shall have arrived, Responsible Government will be as fairly established in this Colony, as it is in the neighbouring Province of Nova Scotia. Earl Grey has effectually said to the people of Prince Edward Island, *Will you accept Responsible Government?* Let them, through their representatives, in imitation of the willing and delighted Biddy, promptly and positively reply, *Yes, my Lord, and thank you too;* and, forthwith, the bargain will be struck, and the question for ever settled.

The following extracts from Earl Grey's *Responsible Government* Despatch—which, as we said in our number of the 19th ult., we think fully elucidate the great principles of that system of Colonial Government which it recommends, and authorizes—we now lay before our readers, accompanied by a few observations of our own, intended to point out the real changes which will be effected by the introduction of the Responsible System in this Colony.

"Now, there is scarcely any part of the system of Government in this country, which I consider of greater value than that which, though not enforced by any written law, but deriving its authority from usage and public opinion, makes the tenure of the great majority of offices in the public service to depend upon good behaviour."

"The exception is in the case of those high public servants, whom it is necessary to invest with such discretion as really to leave in their hands the whole direction of the policy of the Empire in all its various departments. Such power must, with a Representative Government, be subject to constant control by Parliament, and is, therefore, administered only by such persons, as from time to time, enjoy the confidence of Parliament as well as of the Crown. These Heads of Departments, or Ministers, together with their immediate subordinates, who are required to represent or support them in Parliament, are almost invariably Members, of one or other House, and hold their offices only as long as they enjoy the confidence of Parliament."

"Though it is not without some inconveniences, I regard this system as possessing, upon the whole, very great advantages."

"In order to keep the Executive Government in harmony with the Legislature, it is doubtless necessary that the direction of the internal policy of the Colony should be entrusted to those who enjoy the confidence of the Provincial Parliament; but it is of great moment not to carry the practice of changing Public Officers further than is absolutely necessary for the attainment of that end, lest the administration of public affairs should be deranged by increasing the bitterness of party spirit, and subjecting the whole machinery of Government to perpetual change and uncertainty."

"Of the present Members of your Council, the Attorney General and Provincial Secretary, to whom the Solicitor General should perhaps be added, appear to me sufficient to constitute the responsible advisers of the Governor. The holders of these offices should henceforth regard them as held on a political tenure; and, with a view to that end, the Provincial Secretary should be prepared, in the event of any change, to disconnect from his office that of the Clerkship of the Council, which seems to be one that should, on every account, be held on a more permanent tenure."

"It is possible that, in the event of any change being rendered necessary by the course of events in the Provincial Parliament, the party succeeding to power might insist on increasing the number of political offices by adding to the list of those to be so regarded. In case such a question should arise, I must leave it to your discretion, on a view of various local and temporary circumstances, which I am at present unable to appreciate, to form your own decision with respect to any such demand."

"You will observe that in the preceding observations, I have assumed that those only of the public servants who are to be regarded as removable on losing the confidence of the Legislature, are to be Members of the Executive Council."

"These public servants who hold their offices permanently, must, upon that very ground, be regarded as subordinate, and ought not to be Members of either House of the Legislature, by which they would necessarily be more or less mixed up, in party struggles; and

on the other hand, those who are to have the general direction of affairs exercise that function by virtue of their responsibility to the Legislature, which implies their being removable from office, and also that they should be Members either of the Assembly or the Legislative Council."

In the first place, then,—to commence with the Executive—the Government or Executive Council must be formed of persons agreeing in principle with the majority of the House of Assembly—the *People's Representatives*—and, at the same time, enjoying the confidence of Her Majesty's Representative; and, moreover, some of the *leaders* of the Government—besides being men, in whose principles and character, the majority of the Assembly are disposed to confide,—*must themselves have seats in the Assembly*; that therein they may propound, and defend their own measures. Earl Grey, in one paragraph of this Despatch, states it to be his opinion that the Attorney General and Provincial Secretary, with, perhaps, the Solicitor General, would be sufficient to constitute the responsible advisers of the Governor. But, as the Executive "are a body, upon whom the Government must be able to call at any or at all times for advice;" and as it is impossible to expect that men of superior capacity will devote themselves to the public service, unless assured of an adequate reward; the noble Secretary has observed, that "if only two or three of the principal offices are to be regarded as political, it may, very probably, be advisable to assign salaries to two or three of the Executive Councillors, as such;" or, as he hints, in another paragraph of the same Despatch, the number of political offices might be a little increased, "should the expense of doing so be found to be not more than the Colonial Revenue would conveniently bear."—We have said, that some of the *leaders* of the Government must, under the working of the Responsible System, have seats in the Assembly; and this—although Earl Grey says that the men who are to have the general direction of affairs must be members, either of the Assembly or of the Legislative Council—we maintain is absolutely necessary, because they must be men "taking a leading part in political life, and, above all, exercising influence over the Assembly;" because it is, certainly, "one of the first duties of Government"—although the fact, in this and the other British North American Colonies, has long been overlooked "to suggest improvements where they are wanted;" and because the Administration should possess sufficient energy to be able to occupy the attention of the country upon real improvements, and to lead the Legislature in the preparation and adoption of measures for the benefit of the Colony. If, then, the leading men, amongst those who are to have the general direction of affairs, are to be men above all exercising influence over the Assembly; if they are to be men able to lead the Legislature in the preparation and adoption of measures for the benefit of the Colony—as we presume, it will not be denied they ought to be; will it not also be admitted that the leading men of the Government ought, chiefly, to have seats in the Representative Branch, because therein must, of necessity, originate all measures for the general improvement of the country and the opening up of its resources, which—embodied in what are termed *Money Bills*—would affect the pockets of the people. According, then, to the leading principle of Responsible Government, thus developed, and the admissions which must necessarily follow; we think it quite clear that the Attorney General and the Colonial Secretary, at least, as the chief responsible advisers of the Governor, should have seats in the Assembly; but that, in the Legislative Council, the Cabinet ought to be represented by any other, or others of the Executive Council, who, either as holding public offices, or as salaried Executive Councillors, are to be regarded as removable on losing the confidence of the Legislature.

Having so far contemplated the change which would be effected in the composition of the Executive Council and the Assembly,—as respects the political character of some of their members—under the Responsible System; let us—bearing fully in mind these important facts, that Responsible Government is not only "the well-understood wish of the people, as expressed by their representatives," but that with freely-extended hand, it is held out to us, for our acceptance, not as a boon but as a right by the Imperial Government—fully bearing, we say, these facts in mind, let us enquire why this Colony should be doomed any longer to sicken with hope deferred, and why it should not immediately be put into a condition to enjoy all the advantages which the possession of a truly British—a truly Responsible Government—would undoubtedly confer upon it, and with the prospect of which it is now only tantalized and deceived.

The first obstacle to the introduction of the Responsible System in this Colony, we all know, to be the want of a Colonial Legislative provision for the payment of our Civil List; for the Imperial Government have given us to understand that, without such a legislative provision on our part, they will not consent that the Government Officers, now deriving their Salaries from the Imperial Exchequer, should be dependent upon the popular voice in the Colony, for the tenure of their offices. This obstacle, we think, is very far from being insuperable; and, were the present majority in the Assembly—loudly professing, as they have lately done, to desire the immediate introduction of Responsible or Parliamentary Government into the Colony—earnestly, as a proof of their sincerity, to set about the removal of this primary obstacle, assisted as they would be—*head, heart and hand*—by the minority; they would, we are certain, find

it after all—much as it has been boggled at—no herculean task, but one which they might accomplish, both with due regard to justice, and even liberality, on the one hand, and a full consideration of the present limited but increasing resources of the Colony on the other.—This primary obstacle then once happily removed—as, if the majority of the Assembly in reality desire it should, it speedily will be—what then will remain for them to do? Why nothing but to clear the decks, and make ready—not for battle, but for the full practical recognition of the principles of Responsible or Parliamentary Government, by recommending to His Excellency an immediate DISSOLUTION OF THE PRESENT ASSEMBLY, and THE CALLING OF A NEW HOUSE without the least unnecessary delay.

Thus a fair opportunity would be afforded to those gentlemen, who, at present, fill those offices which ought to be regarded as political, and the holders of which ought to have seats in the Assembly, to offer themselves as candidates for the representation of some of our constituencies; and, if chosen as their representatives, and found to entertain the same political sentiments as the majority of the NEW HOUSE, they might, with perfect propriety, retain their official appointments and act as the responsible advisers of His Excellency, both in the Cabinet and the Assembly; care, at the same time, being taken, by His Excellency, that the members of the Cabinet, having seats in the Legislative Council, shall be gentlemen also enjoying the confidence of the majority of the Assembly.

And thus would, at once, be completely established and confirmed that system of Responsible, Parliamentary, or Self-Government, which has so long been the political desideratum of the people; inasmuch as the affairs of the Colony would then be responsibly administered, by men "enjoying the confidence of the Legislature, and, more especially, of that Branch of the Legislature, which directly represents the people."

We have admitted that the first great difficulty—at least in the opinion of the Imperial Government—which is to be overcome, with a view to the establishment of Responsible Government in this Colony; presents itself in the shape of a demand, on the part of the Mother Country, that we should provide for the payment of our own Civil List: and we have stated it to be our opinion, that this obstacle should not be allowed to frustrate our endeavours and annihilate our hopes, even should there be discovered no other method of overcoming it, than what may be found in a compliance with the demand of the Home Government. But we must not allow this our individual opinion,—implying a belief that by a provident distribution of the fortunately increasing revenues of the Colony, we might be able to provide for the payment of our Civil List—to go forth to our readers without annexing to it our protest against the retention of the Crown Lands by the Imperial Government, in the event of our taking upon us the burthen of our own Civil List. Let the Imperial Government, we say on behalf of the people, restore to us what ought to be a portion of our legitimate means for the payment of our Civil List, and we will cheerfully provide for it. The Imperial Government, whilst withholding from us a part of these means, can have no right to call upon us for an act, for our performance of which, it would be nothing more than reasonable in them to conclude, we should require all the power which can be derived from our native resources of every kind. The perpetration of an original wrong can never be admitted as a valid plea for the subsequent withholding of an undeniable or admitted right. Nay, we go still further, and say, that, as, at the very commencement of British rule in this Island, the British Government, by its most impolitic wholesale grants of immense tracts of lands therein, to a few individuals, inflicted, upon its future British Colonists, an almost irreparable evil, by perpetuating, so long as these grants are to be considered irrevocable, a most irritating and grievous impediment to the progress of general improvement in the Colony; it would amount to no more than a gracious acknowledgment of the error into which the British Government originally fell with respect to this Island,—and could scarcely deserve to be considered as any thing further than an act of imperfect and tardy justice, were the present Imperial Government to engage for the payment of our Civil List by the Mother Country—even after the establishment in the Colony of Responsible Government—if not in perpetuity, at least until we shall have so far progressed in the highway towards wealth and prosperity, that there can no longer remain any reason for considering our ultimate attainment and permanent possession of these grand objects of a people's ambition, at all problematical.

THE MAILS.

On Monday last we were furnished by the arrival of the Mail with files of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Canada, Bermuda, and United States Papers. The news which they supply is neither very important nor interesting.—In Nova Scotia, the new Liberal Administration has been completely formed: Messrs. Howe and Uniacke have addressed the Electors of the County and Township of Halifax, desiring to be re-elected to their places in the Assembly which they had vacated by accepting offices of emolument under the Crown.—In the Legislature of New Brunswick, which is now in Session, the Responsible Government Despatch of Earl Grey was read, and a motion made to have its principles carried out in that Province.—From Newfoundland the Newspapers report the can-