

## TO THE INHABITANTS OF BRITISH AMERICA.

### FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

WHEN an industrious population, after years of suffering, are aroused to a sense of danger, by renewed attacks upon their rights and liberties, an appeal to those of kindred blood, animated by the same spirit, and allied by a communion of interests, can excite no surprise, and requires no justification.

Long and patiently have the population of British and Irish descent in Lower Canada, endured evils of no ordinary description, relying on the interposition of the Imperial Government for relief; deceived in their fondly cherished trust, they are impelled to seek, from their own energies, that protection which has been withheld by the power on whose justice they reposed.

For half a century they have been subjected to the domination of a party, whose policy has been, to retain the distinguishing attributes of a foreign race, and to crush in others that spirit of enterprise, which they are unable or unwilling to emulate. During that period, a population descended from the same stock with ourselves, have covered a continent with the smiling monuments of their agricultural industry; Upper Canada and the United States bear ample testimony of the flood tide of prosperity, the result of unrestricted enterprise, and of equitable laws, which has rewarded their efforts. Lower Canada, where another race predominates, presents a solitary exception to this general march of improvement. There, surrounded by forests inviting the industry of man, and offering a rich reward to his labour, an illiterate people, opposed to improvements, have compressed their growing numbers almost within the boundaries of the original settlements, and present in their laws, their mode of agriculture, and peculiar customs, a not unfaithful picture of France in the seventeenth century. There, also, may be witnessed the humiliating spectacle of a rural population not unfrequently necessitated to implore eleemosynary relief from the Legislature of the country.

It were incredible to suppose that a minority, constituting nearly one-third of the entire population, imbued with the same ardour for improvements that honorably distinguishes their race throughout the North American continent, and possessing the undisputed control of all the great interests of the colony, would resign themselves to the benumbing sway of a majority, differing from them so essentially on all important points, whilst any mode of deliverance was open to their choice. Nor would supineness or indifference on their part, produce a corresponding change in their opponents, or mitigate the relentless persecution with which they have been visited. The deep rooted hostility excited by the French leaders against those of different origin, which has led to the perpetration of outrages on persons and property, and destroyed confidence in juries who have been taught to regard us as their foes, has extended its pernicious influence beyond the limits of Lower Canada. Upper Canada, repulsed in her endeavours to open a direct channel of communication to the sea, has been driven to cultivate commercial relations with the United States, whose policy is more congenial with her own.—Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, will learn with indignant surprise, that the destruction of their most important interest is countenanced and supported by the Assembly of this Province.

A French majority in one Province has caused these accumulated evils—a British majority in the United Provinces will compel their removal.

If it be the desire of the French Canadians to isolate themselves from the other subjects of the Empire, by cherishing the language and manners of a country which stands to them in the relation of a foreign power, the effects of such a prejudice will chiefly be felt by themselves, and may be left for correction to the hand of time; but, when national feeling is exhibited in an active opposition to the general interests of the British American Provinces, when immigration is checked, the settlement of the country retarded, and the interests of commerce sacrificed, to the visionary scheme of establishing a French power; it becomes the solemn duty of the entire British population to resist proceedings so pregnant with evil. Let it not be said that a million of freemen permitted their rights to be invaded, and their onward course impeded, by a faction which already recoils in alarm from the contest it has rashly provoked.

Connected as are the Provinces of British America by a chain of Rivers and Lakes, affording the means of creating an uninterrupted water communication between their extremities, at a comparatively small expense; possessing within themselves the elements of an extensive trade by the interchange of those products which are peculiar to each, and forming parts of the same Empire, they have the undoubted right to require that these advantages shall not be sacrificed by the inertness or the mistaken policy of any one State; more especially when, as in the case of Lower Canada, that State, from geographical position, exercises a preponderating influence on the prosperity of all.

The facts which have been made public in two addresses, emanating from this Association, conclusively establish, the want of education among the French population, their subserviency to their political leaders, and the hostility of those leaders to the population of British and Irish descent. Many additional illustrations of their hostile policy might be adduced.

At a time when men of all political parties in the Sister Provinces are united in opposing the contemplated change in the Timber Duties, the Assembly of this Province, far from lending their assistance, have countenanced the attack, by recognizing as their Agent in England, an individual who is distinguished by his advocacy of the Baltic interests, and his active opposition to the Colonial trade. To aid in the prosecution of this design, they have not scrupled to appropriate a part of the Provincial funds, (obtained under the pretext of defraying their contingent expenses,) to reward their Agent, and to circulate through the British press statements that are calculated to mislead the public mind; thus gratifying their national animosity, by lending a willing aid to ruin the Shipping and Mercantile interests of the British American Provinces, and to prevent the influx of immigrants from the British Isles, who are brought to the Colonies, at a trifling cost, by the vessels engaged in the Timber Trade.

Upper Canada is honorably distinguished for works completed and in progress, remarkable for their magnitude and for the extensiveness of their destined utility. The St. Lawrence Canal, at this moment in active progress, will complete an uninterrupted navigation for vessels of considerable burthen from the upper Lakes to the line dividing that Province from Lower Canada; but, at that point, the spirit of British enterprise encounters the influence of French domination; the vast design of rendering the remotest of the inland seas accessible to vessels from the ocean, is there frustrated by the anti-commercial policy of the French leaders. We look in vain to their proceedings for any manifestation of a desire to co-operate in the great work of public improvement, which animates, as with one spirit, the entire North American population of British descent; nor is their adverse disposition less visible in their opposition to other important designs; they either refuse to grant charters to carry into effect works of acknowledged public utility, or, when after repeated and earnest applications, charters are obtained, they are clogged with restrictions of an unusual character, in the hope of rendering them inoperative.

In all new countries the deficiency of capital proves a serious impediment to the exertions of the enterprising and industrious, and it would be among the first duties of a wise Legislature to invite the introduction of foreign capital, by the adoption of an equitable system of law, that would inspire confidence in personal and in landed securities. In Lower Canada, from the absence of Offices for the Registration of real estate, and from the system of secret and general mortgages, not only is foreign capital excluded, but the Colony is impoverished by the withdrawal of funds for profitable and secure investment in other countries. In tracing the motive of resistance to a measure that more than any other would advance the public welfare, we again encounter the pernicious influence of French exclusiveness. A general distrust of the titles and securities of landed estate is suffered to exist, in order to prevent the acquisition of real property by immigrants from the British Isles.

This spirit of exclusiveness, which betrays itself in all the proceedings of the Assembly, disfigures even those measures, which, it might reasonably be expected, would inspire sentiments of a more lofty and generous nature. Although the British Act of the 14 Geo. III. which confirmed the right of the French Clergy to tythes, declared, most probably for that very reason, that the religious communities should not hold estates, they continue in the undisturbed possession of tracts of land, exceeding fifteen hundred square miles in extent, besides possessing property of great value in Quebec, Montreal, and elsewhere. In addition to the revenues derived from these possessions, the Assembly annually appropriates large sums of money out of the Provincial revenues for the support of those communities, and for the establishment of institutions rigidly and exclusively French, whilst to other institutions on a liberal foundation, affording relief to all, without distinction of origin or creed, a fair participation of Legislative aid has been refused.

It is, to "the great body of the people" thus characterized, that His Excellency the Earl of Gosford, the Representative of a British King and the head of the Commission deputed to enquire into our complaints, has declared that all future appointments to office shall be made acceptable.

A Legislative Council constituted on such a principle, would be but a counterpart of the Assembly; it might, and no doubt would, relieve the Executive from the odium of sanctioning the illegal appropriation of a part of the Provincial revenues, by the mere vote of the Assembly; but it would not prevent the same misapplication of the public funds being effected by Bill, which is now accomplished by an address to the head of the Administration.

A Government thus conducted, would forfeit all title to our confidence, would be regarded but as an instrument to secure the domination of a party, and the brief period of its duration would be marked by scenes of outrage, and by difficulties of no ordinary description.

The French leaders, if we are to credit their reiterated assertions, entertain an attachment so deep, so absorbing, for elective institutions, that they would at once confer that important privilege, to its fullest extent, without reference to previous habits, education, or political dissensions. How much of this ardor may have been called forth by a desire to establish French ascendancy, and to depress British interests, may fairly be deduced from a review of their past proceedings. Without discussing the question of elective institutions, which, it is obvious, cannot be introduced to the extent demanded by the Assembly, under the existing political relations of the Colony, which relations we are resolute to maintain, we distinctly aver, that we are not influenced by idle apprehensions of a Government of the people, and for the people; but it must be emphatically a Government of "the people," truly represented, and not that of a French faction; the Government of an educated and independent race, attached to the principles of civil and religious liberty; and not that of an uninformed population, striving for domination, and seeking to perpetuate in America, the institutions of feudal Europe.

To the people of the Sister Colonies we appeal, earnestly recommending the adoption of measures for assembling at some central point, a Congress of Deputies from all the Provinces of British North America. A British American Congress, possessing strength from union, and wisdom from counsel, by the irresistible weight of its moral influence, would supersede those other remedial measures which are the last resource of an insulted and oppressed community. On it, would devolve the solemn duty, calmly to deliberate on all matters affecting the common weal, and firmly to resist all attempts to invade the rights, or impair the interests of the United Provinces.

In submitting a brief recapitulation of the objects of the Constitutional Association, it may not be misplaced to offer a few observations explanatory of the position of parties in Lower Canada, and of the sentiments of the British population towards their fellow-subjects of French origin.

The moral guilt of exciting national hostility undoubtedly rests with the French leaders, who alone benefit by the distracted state of the country ; but the facility with which the French peasantry have received these impressions, and the unanimity with which they support the aggressive policy of their leaders, render them, although less culpable, yet equally the determined opponents of our rights and our liberties. Unhappily, their want of education prevents a direct appeal being made, through the press, to their judgment ; but those of their countrymen who are not blinded by the infatuation of party, who possess education to comprehend, and opportunity to make known, the sentiments of the British population, may be led to reflect upon the consequences that must result from their present delusion.—Should the admonition be disregarded, on them let the responsibility rest.

The Province of Lower Canada, whether regarded as a part of the British Empire, or of the great North American family, is evidently destined to receive the impress of national character from those States by which she is surrounded. An obstinate rejection of all measures, having for their aim the gradual removal of those peculiarities which distinguish the population of French origin, may retard, for a time, an inevitable event, but will certainly hasten the introduction of changes of a more abrupt and decisive character.

A dispassionate examination of the changes required by the British population, will satisfy all unprejudiced men, that they are adapted to the general interests of society, are liberal and comprehensive in their character, and unconnected with party objects.

To relieve landed estate from the servitudes and exactions of feudal law :

To introduce Registry Offices, and put an end to the iniquitous frauds that grow out of the present system :

To promote works of public improvement :

To encourage agriculture, and protect commerce :

To recognize an equality of rights among all classes :

To resist the domination of sect or party, and to establish a general system of education divested of sectarian tests :—These are our objects and our demands ; they are based on truth, are essential to national prosperity and to individual security ; they admit of no compromise, and from them, we will not recede.

The threatening aspect of the times demands action ; neutrality, the usual resource of ordinary minds, will not be attended by an immunity from danger ; it must remain with the population of French origin to decide, whether, by continuing to support the leaders they have hitherto selected, they are to be regarded as hostile to our just claims, or, by uniting with their fellow-subjects of British origin, they will compel the introduction of salutary reforms, consign to their native insignificance the few individuals who alone profit by the present system of misrule, and by repudiating ancient prejudices, and exclusive pretensions, place themselves in accordance with the spirit of the age.

To us, it is in one respect, a matter of indifference what their decision may be. The principles we espouse, are identified with the happiness of the human race ; they have taken root with our language in all quarters of the globe ; and wherever that language is spoken, there, shall we meet encouragement, and thence, shall we derive force.

Although Lower Canada presents the strange spectacle of a British Government, bestowing its confidence on men who have openly avowed their hostility to England, and their desire to effect a separation from the Empire ; although by the connivance of that Government, the Provincial funds have been illegally applied to reward French agitators, to support French journals, and to pay French agents ; yet do we feel the proud conviction, that the energies of Britons will rise superior to the emergency, and that, despite an unnatural coalition, the banners of our country will continue to wave over a British Province.

The voice of supplication has been unheeded amidst the insolent clamours of faction. United British America, assuming an attitude, alike removed from menace or from fear, will proclaim her wrongs, assert her rights, and claim from the Imperial Parliament, that interposition, which shall remove existing grounds of complaint, and carry with it a sufficient guarantee against future aggressions.

By order of the Executive Committee of the Montreal Constitutional Association,

WILLIAM ROBERTSON,

*Chairman.*

J. GUTHRIE SCOTT, *Secretary.*

MONTREAL, January, 1836.

