

*18th December, 1848.*

FIRST SESSION, FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 12TH VICTORIA.

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The Address.

beg leave to offer to Your Excellency our humble thanks for the gracious Speech with which Your Excellency has been pleased to open the present Session of the Legislature.

We shall give our early attention to the subject of the Colonial Revenue Act shortly about to expire; and will also be prepared to give due consideration to the recent Act of the Imperial Parliament, by which the Colonial Legislatures are invested with complete fiscal authority, with a view to the adoption of such enactments as may secure for this Island the full benefit and advantage of the Act of Parliament in question.

We are fully sensible of the greatly distressed condition of the Trade of this Town, and of the Island generally, resulting from the train of disasters with which the Colony was visited in the year 1846, and that the consequent unprecedented privations and sufferings to all classes, aggravated as they were by the failure in the following year of the fisheries and potato crop, were such as necessarily to impose upon the Executive embarrassments and obligations of the gravest character.

While the state of the Colony at the approach of the last winter was not only a source of the deepest solicitude to all classes, and more especially to your Excellency, but was such as to demand the application of the whole of the resources at the disposal of the Government, for the preservation of the existence of a large portion of the population, it is most gratifying to learn that under such distressing circumstances, loss of life from destitution was effectually prevented; and we beg respectfully to take this opportunity of expressing the sense we entertain of the firmness and judgment displayed by Your Excellency in emergencies of a nature so trying and painful.

We fully concur in opinion with Your Excellency, as to the vast importance to the future well being of the Colony, of the extension and encouragement of Agriculture, not merely as a powerful Auxiliary to our Staple Trade, but as the most obvious means of providing for the subsistence of our rapidly increasing population, for whose support the fisheries alone are becoming manifestly inadequate.

The great utility and advantage to the Colony to be derived from the improvement of our internal communications, and more especially of the Main Lines of Road adverted to by Your Excellency, are duly appreciated by us, and the suggestion made by Your Excellency as to the employment by the Executive, in this branch of the public service, of persons unsuccessful in the fishery, in order to enable them to make some provision for their families during the approaching Winter, is deserving of our earnest consideration.

We shall not fail to give our best attention to Your Excellency's recommendation of the adoption of a more improved system for the administration of the funds.