

The time has come in which it will no longer do to put off the evil day. The sooner we look our difficulties in the face, the sooner we shall be prepared manfully to meet them. Our debts must be paid, both public and private, and the one depends very much upon the other. Canadians must never *repudiate*. This is not a characteristic of any country under British rule. "Monarchy is honour," and we must not be the first to give the lie to this patriotic sentiment. The reason why several of the United States have refused to pay their public debts is not because they want the means—if it were, there would be some excuse, but it is because their public men in these States are dishonest, and do not tell the people the truth. It is, indeed, sometimes a most disagreeable duty, but he who shrinks from its performance is not fit to be placed in a responsible position. I perform this duty the less reluctantly to-day, standing as I am at this moment in the midst of those amongst whom I was born, and to whom I owe a large debt of gratitude, which, most probably, I shall never have another opportunity of discharging.

In 1815, at the close of the late war with the United States, our debts, both public and private, were, I may say, wiped out; the high prices which we obtained for our produce put us in fact "in funds," so that we are now at the winding-up place of about a period of 34 years. On an average, our commercial debt has increased from £100,000 to £150,000 a year, that is to say, we have *imported* to the amount of that sum more than we have exported—in other words, we have been living £150,000 a year above our means. In addition to the principal of our debt we have a tax to pay, in the shape of interest, equal to about £300,000 a year. Now, notwithstanding there are persons who will maintain that the payment of interest is no drawback upon the prosperity of a country, yet I am so old-fashioned as to think otherwise, and to denounce such doctrine as a most mischievous fallacy.

Upper Canada has been settled little more than sixty years; for the first half of this period we were *not* in debt, and if we look closely into the course we have pursued, we will find reasons for our change in circumstances. The man who finds himself in a labyrinth knows, that unless he can find his back-track—the exact road by which he got entangled, he can never expect to make his escape. So, in order to get rich, we must first find out how we became poor. I must, therefore, ask you to follow me in a short digression in adverting to the early history of the country—I mean the Upper Province.

I am myself one of the eldest born of this country, after its settlement by the loyalists, and well remember the time when, as Bishop Berkely observes, a man might be the owner of ten thousand acres of land in America and want sufficient means to buy himself a breakfast! One-half of the land on the Bay of Quinte, the garden of Canada, could, within my remembrance, have been purchased for £5 a two hundred acre lot, and many a one has been sold for a *half Joe*. All this cannot be matter of wonder, when I tell

you that a great scarcity of provisions prevailed for two or three years consecutively, in consequence of failures in the crops, and what brought on the famine, or "scarce year," (about the year 1790, if I am not mistaken) was the almost entire destruction of the deer by the wolves for two consecutive years. The snow lay upon the ground from December until April, at the depth of four to five feet. In the month of February of the last of these years, a near relative of mine sent all the way to Albany in the State of New York, a distance of more than 200 miles, for four bushels of Indian corn! And this was brought all that distance by two men on snow shoes! It took them about eight weeks to accomplish this journey, and during this time about one-third of the quantity was necessarily consumed by the men; the residue of this precious cargo—pounded up in a mortar made of a maple stump, with the winter-green berry and mucilaginous roots, latterly boiled with a little milk—constituted the principal food for two families, consisting of seven souls, for the space of four or five months! It was remarked, I have heard some of the oldest of the settlers assert, that the usual supply of fish even had failed. The few cattle and horses which the settlers, at great cost and trouble, had collected, were killed for food. The faithful dog was, in several instances, sacrificed to supply that food which he had so often been the means of furnishing to his then kind, but now starving master. The famine this year was general throughout the Bay of Quinte; and such was the distress that, during this winter, several persons died from starvation. In the Hay-Bay settlement, one of the most heart-rending occurrences took place. Some time during the month of April, the husband and father was found buried in the snow, which lay upon the ground at an average depth of five feet, whilst within the shanty was exhibited the awful spectacle of the dying mother pressing to her bosom her dead infant, still in the position of attempting to gain that sustenance which its mother had for some time been unable any longer to afford it!

Here then was a state which one would think might appal the stoutest heart, and might, without subjecting this little band of heroes to the charge of a want of affection for the crown, have driven the remnant of them to seek, at the very earliest opportunity, an asylum from death, even amongst their implacable and cruel enemies. This it was in their power to have done the following year. Did they do so? No! These exiles—these emaciated and worn-out loyalists—preferred death, even though it came in the ghastly form of famine, to the fraternization with rebels to their king. Loyalty, with our forefathers, consisted of something more than a name. They did not stop even to weigh their *lives* with the crime of treason, much less did they calculate upon pecuniary advantages. Whilst the rebels had added robbery and murder to the crime of treason, these faithful and devoted subjects of the crown, although suffering in body, could lie down in their bark-covered shanties and upon their beds of straw and boughs, with a conscience void of