

CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL.

The Annual General Meeting of this Association was held at the old Circus on Monday, the 31st December, 1838, the Hon. P. McGill, Chairman of the Executive Committee presiding, and J. Guthrie Scott, Esq., Secretary.

The Chairman having opened the meeting with a few introductory remarks, the Secretary read the following

"REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

"GENTLEMEN,—The usual period for the annual general meeting of this Association has been passed over on account of recent disturbances, but a temporary return to tranquillity at this time offers an opportunity of calling you together, which your Committee gladly seize, to report to you their proceedings during the year which is about to terminate.

It is unnecessary to lay before you an elaborate exposition of the dominant causes of a repetition of those political outbreaks, which so lamentably characterized the close of the last year, suffice it to state, that the original motives for disaffection against British connection prevailing generally among the provincial inhabitants of French origin, which madly precipitated them into the horrors of civil war of that time, have declared themselves more openly during the latter portion of the present year, and unequivocally established the fact, which has been frequently urged upon your serious attention, that prejudices originating in distinctiveness of national origin, not impetuous under oppression have given occasion to rebellions, which have swept the fairest portions of this province with misery and ruin.

The experience of recent events has abundantly confirmed the opinion recorded by this association at its last annual general meeting, that a continuance of the same national distinctiveness among the numerical majority of the provincial population will be attended by the most fatal results, and will be visibly exhibited in the desolation of Lower Canada, and the violent severance of this important and valuable colony from the British Empire.

It is gratifying to your Committee to be enabled to report that the appeal of this Association to the inhabitants of the sister colonies has been answered by satisfactory assurances, that a kindred feeling exists between them and the inhabitants of British origin in this province, that they coincide with this Association in opinion, regarding the origin and continuance of the provincial difficulties, and that they have urged upon Her Majesty's Government, the necessity of adopting prompt and vigorous measures, for destroying a nationality baneful in its character and ruinous to British interests in this Province:

The utter confusion produced by the premeditated attempts of the late House of Assembly to excite anarchy and rebellion, the insane abdication of its high and important functions, and the disturbances with which the rebellion of the last year was preceded and accompanied, all concurred in imperatively directing attention to the Legislative union of the Canadas, as the only means for establishing an efficient provincial Legislature, and for affording a remedy for the political evils of Lower Canada.

To secure the assent of Upper Canada, to a measure involving considerations of extreme importance to her political welfare became a paramount duty; communications were at once opened with influential persons in that province, and petitions to the several branches of the Legislature then in session, were prepared and transmitted without delay, earnestly pressing the necessity and expediency of the measure, as well for the relief of their brethren of British origin in this province as for securing the prosperity of both provinces, and preserving their permanent connection with the Empire at large.

The best thanks of the Association are due to Thomas McKay, Esquire, M.P.P. of Upper Canada, for his unremitting exertions and valuable services, in supporting the petitions to the Legislature of that province, as well as for the important information communicated by him at various times to your Committee.

In addition to these proceedings which were of a local character, the critical posture of provincial affairs presented a favourable occasion to your committee, for successfully submitting to the serious attention of the Government, the accumulated evils

which the inhabitants of British origin in this Province had so long and so patiently endured, and for deputed to England a special delegation on their behalf, with instructions chiefly to urge the immediate adoption by Her Majesty's Government of the Legislative union of the Canadas, as the only comprehensive measure commensurate with the extent of the evils operating in this Province, and capable as well of effecting their entire removal as of preventing their recurrence, petitions to the Queen's Majesty and to both branches of the Imperial Parliament, expressing the sentiments and views of the association, were approved by the general committee and transmitted to England for presentation. The Honorable George Moffatt, Esquire, then in London, and William Badgley Esquire, of Montreal, were charged with this important mission, and Robert Gillespie, Esquire, of London, was deputed to act in the place of the former gentleman in the event of his permanent absence from England.

In all these measures as well as in the nomination of the Delegates, the several branch Constitutional Associations throughout the District signified, their entire and hearty concurrence, and the Constitutional Association of Quebec, entertaining similar views upon the subject of the Union of the Canadas, nominated Andrew Stuart, Esquire, as their delegate, to urge similar measures upon the attention of the Imperial Government.

Previous to these proceedings of the Association reaching England, the passage through Parliament of the act for the suspension of the provincial Constitution, and the appointment of the Earl of Durham, as High Commissioner to enquire into the most proper means for the adjustment of the provincial difficulties, and as Governor General, with extraordinary powers of Government, Legislative and Executive, together with the delay in ascertaining the sentiments of Upper Canada upon the vital object of the Mission, and the absence of a Delegation from that Province, to support those sentiments, rendered the exertions of this delegation in reference to the union measure altogether ineffectual. Notwithstanding this unexpected result, the great importance of that measure was pressed by this delegation upon the attention of the Government and of His Excellency the Governor General, at frequent interviews and by written communications, in the hope that its adoption might be only delayed, until personal observation in the provinces might induce His Excellency to recommend its being carried into effect. Various grievances, as they appeared to affect the interests of the Province in general and of its inhabitants of British origin in particular, together with some local grievances, affecting especially the inhabitants of this City and Island, were forcibly and frequently brought by the Delegation under the notice of the Government and of His Excellency, and various documents in connection therewith, were prepared and submitted. It is scarcely necessary to add, that every information in the power of the delegation to afford, was at all times cheerfully communicated, upon the situation and prospects of Lower Canada, the composition of the provincial Legislature, and the conflicting interests, wants and wishes of the provincial population, with the specific remedies suggested for each, in order to enable His Excellency, in some degree, to estimate the evils affecting this province and the measures of relief co-extensive with those evils.

The appointment to the Bench of Justice at Quebec, of an individual who was a conspicuous member of the late House of Assembly, and an acknowledged political leader of the factious majority of the provincial population, appeared to your Committee to be fraught with so much danger, to the upright and impartial administration of justice, as to require to be brought prominently under the notice of Her Majesty with a prayer for his immediate removal from office. Resolutions to that effect were prepared and transmitted to the delegation, and by them submitted to the Government as well as other Resolutions, adopted by your Committee, having reference to omissions and delays by the proper provincial authorities, in seizing the private papers of the known leading agitators of Lower Canada, antecedent to the rebellious outbreak of the last year, whereby it was conceived that the Government may have been deprived of much important evidence, against those agitators

as well as against individuals in Upper Canada and Great Britain, with whom they were notoriously in close and constant correspondence; and further, having reference to the delay in the issue of warrants for the apprehension of persons charged with treason and sedition, whereby their escape from this province was permitted, and they were thus enabled to prosecute their treasonable designs beyond its limits. These representations were accompanied by a prayer to Her Majesty's Government, that an inquiry might be instituted into the causes of such omissions or delays, and so to clear from suspicion, such of Her servants as were innocent and to bring to punishment such of them as were guilty.

A general statement of objections to a projected federation of the British North American Colonies, which was contemplated and appeared to be received with some favor in England, was prepared by the delegates from both Associations, and laid before the Government.

The state of education in this province in reference to that portion of the provincial population deriving its origin from the Mother Country, and the extreme necessity for establishing a general system of instruction upon an efficient and permanent basis, in the elementary as well as in the higher branches of learning and science for the youth using the English language, were also brought by the Delegation under the notice of the Government, for the purpose of obtaining the fulfillment of the Royal intentions in that particular, and the employment of the means at the disposal of the Government, for carrying those beneficent intentions into effect. The lively solicitude evinced by the Right Reverend the Bishop of Exeter upon this interesting subject, and the powerful and prompt assistance offered by His Lordship, justify the sincere acknowledgments of the Associations, and of the inhabitants of British origin in general throughout Lower Canada. At a later period, and subsequent to Mr. Moffatt's departure from England, Messrs. Badgley and Stuart compiled and published, at the joint expense of the two Associations, a pamphlet containing a narrative of the endowments for Education, and of the Legislative and other public acts in the Province, for its encouragement and advancement, from the cessation of the country down to that time.

The documents laid before your Committee by the Hon. G. Moffatt and W. Badgley, Esq., and which will be found among the records of the Association, amply testify the highly satisfactory manner in which their duties were discharged, and the assiduity and zeal with which the various objects of the mission were enforced and supported.

Your Committee have now reported to you as succinctly as the several matters of detail would permit, the objects of their labours during the past year: they cannot however resign the office, with which they have been honored, without briefly advertent to the peculiar circumstances of these Provinces, and recommending for your consideration, the means of relief which appear to be the best fitted for re-establishing tranquillity in this distracted Province, and advancing the general interests of the Canadas.

Your Committee in common with the loyal population of these Provinces, hailed the arrival of His Excellency, the Earl of Durham, as an epoch from which their steady and progressive improvement was to be dated: they were disposed to place entire confidence in the rectitude of his Intentions, and anticipated from his personal investigations and inquiries those legislative measures of public utility, which had been so long withheld from Lower Canada, as well as the completion of some comprehensive plan of Provincial Government. The premature termination of His Excellency's official connection with the Canadas has abruptly destroyed the expectations of your Committee, but they entertain the hope that His Excellency's presence in England, and his local knowledge respecting these Provinces acquired during his brief residence here, may contribute to the early adoption of measures, competent to secure the prosperity of these important dependencies, and to maintain their connection with the Empire.

The experience of the last two years, if preceding events had been wanting, has proved that the interests of a provincial population composed of two distinct national races, cannot be identified by