



961749 THE QUESTION ANSWERED:

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“Did the Ministry intend to pay Rebels?”

IN A LETTER TO

THE RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF ELGIN AND KINCARDINE.

[THIRD EDITION.]

*To His Excellency the Right Honourable the
EARL OF ELGIN AND KINCARDINE,
K. T., &c. &c. &c.*

MY LORD,

It is by no means surprising that earnest endeavours should now be made, by some of the members of Your Lordship's Provincial Ministry, to induce the belief that, in the framing of the Rebellion Losses Bill, introduced by Mr. Attorney-General LaFontaine into the House of Assembly, and recently sanctioned by you in Her Majesty's name, the indemnification of parties actually in arms against Her Majesty during the Rebellion of 1837 and 1838, was never contemplated.

That such assertions should meet with ready credence from many of those who had previously given their political support to Your Lordship's present Ministry, and who either have had no opportunity of detecting the fallacy of such statements, or were determined to act on the principle of “Our party, right or wrong!”—was to have been expected. But it is with much surprise and regret that I have found a similar belief publicly announced by a statesman of Your Lordship's experience, who could scarcely be supposed either so far destitute of discernment as to be the dupe of designing men, or so far forgetful of the dignity and impartiality of your high office, as to adopt without examination the opinions of a *party*.

The Official Gazette of the 19th May, con-

tained an Address of Condolence to Your Lordship from certain inhabitants of the County of Hastings, to which was appended a Reply, in the following terms:—

GENTLEMEN,—I heartily thank you for the noble tribute which you bear in your numerous signed Address to the justice and impartiality which have characterised my administration of the Government. These qualities are, I firmly believe, the real cause of the hostility which has been directed against me. I came to the Province with the determination to allow to the Constitution, which has been guaranteed to you by the faith of the Imperial Parliament, its full action, and to recognise in the inhabitants of all classes faithful subjects of the Queen, entitled to the equal enjoyment of the rights and privileges of free Britons. I can endure without repining whatever reproach I may be subjected to in such a cause. But the people of Canada have much at stake in the solution of the question which the *foes of their liberties* have attempted to raise, and the unanimity with which they are coming forward in the support of the Government, shews that they are conscious of its importance and real character.

Even if the measure of Indemnity to which you refer had been more objectionable than it is, it would still have been the duty and interest of all lovers of true freedom and of order, which is amongst its most valuable fruits, to protest against the outrageous assaults on the fundamental principles of Constitutional Government, for which it has been made the pretext. *But I am bound to say, in justice to the large majority of your Representatives, by whom this Bill was sanctioned, that it is my firm belief that they did not intend, in passing it, to countenance Rebellion, or to compensate the losses of persons guilty of the heinous crime of treason; but that their purpose was to make provision for the payment of the wanton and unnecessary destruction of property, which is the cruel, though, perhaps, inevitable accompaniment of civil warfare, claims which had been already recognized by the deliberate acts of preceding Parliaments and Governments.* Under this conviction I assented to the Bill, and in this spirit only could I ever consent, as the head of the Executive Government, to effect it.

ELGIN & KINCARDINE.

The passages which I have italicised in the above reply, have given rise to the im-