

LETTERS OF THE HON. JOSEPH HOWE,  
OF NOVA SCOTIA, TO LORD JOHN  
RUSSELL.

Two letters from the Hon. Joseph Howe to Lord John Russell have just made their appearance, and are attracting a good deal of attention. It is not our intention at the present moment to enter into a review of these letters, but we shall take such extracts as we think convey the best idea of their style and tone, referring those who wish to see them in their entire form to the columns of the *Montreal Herald*, where they have been published in full.

The first of the two letters is almost entirely confined to a disquisition into the subject of Responsible Government, and the progress and effects of which Mr. Howe follows out, and which he connects with some remarks on the nature of the duties of a Governor, and the necessity of great care and discrimination in the selection of persons to fill that important office. This single point (the selection of a Governor) says Mr. Howe,—"is perhaps the only one that much concerns us, upon which we can exercise no influence. We must confide altogether in the judgment and good faith of our brethren at home. If they send us a tyrant or a fool, we may control or instruct him—but the process involves a monstrous waste of time, and engenders feelings, which, like fire damp in mines, are insidiously injurious, even when they do not explode. As a general rule, be assured, my Lord, that every bad Governor sent to a Province, makes a certain number of republicans—that every good one reflects his Sovereign's image far down into the Colonial heart. These 'golden links' between Great Britain and her North American Provinces must be alloyed by no base metal: the best material tried, by the severest process of refinement, should be selected, that they may be worn as ornaments, and not regarded as chains." To secure this, Mr. Howe hints at a "Normal school for the education of Colonial Governors." He would have a regular course of promotion, commencing probably with a clerkship in the Colonial Office, and mounting up gradually, as in other branches of the public service, till the final honor of vice-regal rank was obtained. To be Governor of Massachusetts, he observes, the party who obtains the honor must have risen by successive steps, and passed through an ordeal which has rendered him familiar with the wants, and wishes, and interests of his fellow citizens. The struggles by which he ascends through the hustings to the House of Representatives, and thence to the Senate, presiding, it may be, at times, over one branch or the other, give him a training and experience eminently calculated to prepare him for the gubernatorial chair. With British Governors, Mr. Howe intimates that it is too frequently not so, and he draws a very clever sketch (too long, however, for our present space,) of the kind of men to whom vice-regal powers are sometimes delegated.

In his second letter, Mr. Howe proceeds to show by what means, according to his ideas, the firm consolidation of the Colonies with the Mother Country can be best effected. Taking up the view first expressed, we believe, by Lord Durham, he claims that the field of colonial ambition and enterprise shall be extended, so that the dweller on the North side of the line 49 may have nothing to envy in the system and practise of his republican neighbours. To make his arguments the more powerful, he employs illustration, and calls on the English Minister to put himself in the position of the colonist. We shall proceed to copy this portion of the letter:—

To understand the importance of the subject, as it has again and again presented itself to my mind, it will be necessary for your Lordship to fancy yourself a Colonist, looking abroad, on the one side, at the fields of ambition and influence,

presented by the Empire of which he is a member; and, on the other, at the positions achieved by the most humble citizens of the neighbouring United States. The saddening reflection with which he withdraws his eye, to contemplate the narrow range of Provincial ambition—the lowly walks in which he is condemned to tread—the limited circle of influence, beyond which he can never hope to rise, would be felt in its full force by your Lordship, if you were a British American, even though your popular qualities were questionable, and the strength of your wing untried.

Let me illustrate the subject by a few simple contrasts. An Anglo-Saxon youth, born in Massachusetts, may rise through every grade of office till he is governor of his native State. A youth, born in Nova Scotia, may do the same, with the single exception of the highest position, that of Governor: but if he is denied this distinction, he may, de facto, govern his country, as leader of her councils, if he possess the foremost mind of the Provincial Administration. So far there is an equality of condition, which leaves to a colonist little to envy or to desire—but, the highest point once reached, he must check his flight and smother his ambition; whilst the young Republican may continue to soar, with prospects expanding as he ascends, until, long after his contemporary across the border, weary of the dull round of provincial public life, has ceased to hope or improve. In full vigour of manhood, and with a rich maturity of intellect, he reaches that elevated station, to which he has been waited by the suffrages of twenty millions of freemen.

The Boston boy may become President of the United States—the young native of Halifax or Quebec can never be any thing but a member of an Executive Council, with some paltry office, paid by a moderate salary. The contrast is very striking, and well deserves the grave consideration of those who may not regard it as too high a price to pay for the unwavering attachment of British North America, that its youth should be admitted to some participation in the higher employments and distinctions of the empire. I have known men, who, as Loyalists, left the old Colonies, and died in the Provinces, undistinguished and unknown beyond their borders—while their contemporary, scarcely their superiors in intellect, or more successful up to the points where the conflict of principle compelled them to diverge, occupied the foremost rank in the Republic.—There are men now, in North America, who, if these Provinces were States of the Union, would be Generals, Senators, Governors, Secretaries of State, or Foreign ambassadors. I have seen and heard those who figure in the State Legislatures, and in Congress; and, with a few exceptions, formed by the inspiring conflicts and great questions of a vast country, I could have picked their equals from among her Majesty's subjects, on this continent, at any time within the last ten or fifteen years.

The old Loyalists died contented, and their descendants, in these Provinces, are loyal and contented still—but, my Lord, should not a wise Statesman anticipate the time, when these contrasts will sink deep into the provincial mind—when successive groups of eminent and able men will have lived, and drooped, and died—hopeless, aimless, and distinguished beyond the narrow confines of a single province; when genius, with its plumage fluttering against the wires, feeling itself "caged, cribbed, confined," may raise a note of thrilling discord, or maddening ambition, to be caught up and re-echoed by a race, to whom remonstrance and concession may come too late?

For obvious reasons, my Lord, I do not dwell on this topic. A dull man would not understand me, but there is that within your Lordship's own bosom which can tell you, in a throb, what we feel, and what we want. A few simple touches are all that are required, or I am mistaken, to deeply interest you; and, when once your generous nature, and acute understanding are excited to activity, the paths of honorable emulation will be open, and all ground of complaint removed.—I do not disguise from your Lordship that there are difficulties surrounding this subject—it is my purpose to discuss them fairly; because, upon the Colonists should rest, in such a case as this, not only the burden of complaint that a grievance exists, but the task of explaining how it may be removed.

The population of North America cannot be far short of two millions. With a boundless extent

of territory to occupy, and abundance of food, our people will increase, by the close of the present century, even if no general plan of emigration be superinduced on our present system, to twelve millions. To incorporate these twelve millions with the empire—to make them feel and think as Englishmen, it is clear that all the employments of the empire must be open to them, and the highest privileges of British subjects conferred. If this cannot be done, a separate national existence, or an incorporation with the United States, are dangers to be gravely apprehended. Surely, then, it is a point of policy well worthy to be revolved by British statesmen, how these North Americans can be so deeply interested in the honour and unity of the Empire, as to preserve them "in the bonds of peace," and make them attached and loyal subjects of the Crown. By conferring upon them the advantages of self-government, and control over their own internal affairs, a most important advance has been made towards the achievement of this happy consummation. And now is the time, before there is any wide spread discontent, or clamorous demand, to anticipate, and provide for a state of feeling, which must inevitably arise out of the practical exclusion of the population from the official employments and higher honors of the empire.

But it may be asked—are they so excluded? Seats in Parliament—the Army—the Navy—the Diplomatic and Civil Services of the State are open to all—there is no legal barrier—no rule of exclusion. In theory this is true—in practice it is utter fallacy. Look around, my Lord, upon those departments, and while hundreds and thousands of English, Irish, and Scotchmen, throng them all, not twenty North Americans can be found. There are more Englishmen in the Post Office, and Customs Departments of a single Province, than there are Colonists in the whole wide range of Imperial employment. Why is this? It cannot be that our young men are deficient in courage, enterprise, or ambition—it cannot be that the prizes to be won here are more brilliant and attractive. There must be a reason for it, and the reason lies on the surface. Our youth have no patrons—no Parliamentary, or family, or official interest or influence, to push them forward in the race, or to render competition equal. They are not on the spot to seek for commissions that are bestowed for the asking; and they cannot hope to succeed, where other recommendations besides ability and good conduct are required.—The result is that the two millions of North Americans are practically excluded, as the twelve millions will be, by and-by, if no provision be made for their peculiar position and claims.

Suppose a young North American to enter the Army with an Englishman of the same age. In nine cases out of ten, by the possession of more ample means, the latter would rise by purchase over the head of the former, merit being equal. But, if the Englishman were the son of a Peer, or of a member of Parliament—if his family had interest at the Horse Guards, or in a County or Borough which sustained the administration, the young Colonist, if he did not fall in some well fought field, (as most of my countrymen have done, who have tried the experiment,) would be distanced in the race, and retire in old age on a Subaltern's or Captain's half-pay, while his more favoured competitor became a General of Brigade. This, my Lord, whatever may be said of it, is practical exclusion from the Army. In a few solitary instances, higher positions may have been won, but they are exceptions which prove the rule.

In the Navy, merit has, perhaps, a fairer chance—as promotion is not purchased; but still interest and influence are there all-powerful: and a young Colonist, on the deck of a British frigate, does not feel that it is a fair stage where there is no favour. I grant that, in either service, some gallant exploit—some exhibition of rare personal valor or conduct, would attract notice, and confer distinction—but the opportunities do not occur every day: and when they do, and when they are seized, I doubt if the exploits of the young Colonist, friendless and alone in the world, will figure as largely in the Official Despatch, as they would if his uncle were a Lord of the Admiralty, or his father member for Bristol.

But, it may be said, the Colonist, without fortune or interest, stands upon an equality with the Englishman who is no better off. This may be true, but yet does not improve our position, or weaken the argument—it reduces us to a level