

ADDRESS

Of the British American League to the Inhabitants of Canada, adopted 21st July 1849, in General Convention at Kingston.

FELLOW COUNTRYMEN:

Events so momentous as those which have given birth to this great Provincial Association have been hitherto unparalleled in the history of this Colony. From the early settlement of the United Empire Loyalists in this Province until a recent period, its people have evinced an attachment to the Parent State unsurpassed by that of any other Colony of ancient or modern times. During a long period, checkered by adversity and prosperity, the people of Canada have in war rallied around the flag of their forefathers, and in peace have endeavored to cement the union with their Fatherland by the strongest ties of amity and interest. In return for this devotion, the British Government long extended to the Colony a commercial preference in her markets.

The harmony which so long existed, interrupted by an abortive Rebellion, was again restored at its close, and the progress of the Colony became almost unexampled under the fostering influence of a wise Imperial legislation. But unhappily for Great Britain—an empire whose Colonies are the strong arm of her power—she has recently opened her ports to foreign nations upon equal terms with her Colonies; thus virtually excluding us from her markets, by throwing us into a ruinous competition with those to whom her ports are more immediately and cheaply accessible.

In her promulgation of Free Trade principles, she has lost sight of the interests of her Colonies, with the view of obtaining from all nations reciprocal Free Trade, and thereby inundating the world with her manufactures.

This new policy of the empire has recently produced in Canada its inevitable results. Unprotected by an adequate Tariff, we have continued to consume a vast amount of British manufactures, whilst our produce, the principal source upon which we rely for their payment, rarely entered the English markets except at a sacrifice. The result has been a monetary pressure, extensive bankruptcy, and general distress.

Coincident with these disastrous circumstances, a storm arose in our political horizon, which has threatened and still threatens to shake the foundations of our social fabric.

The Legislature, ruled by a faction (which for the retention of place and power, has kindled afresh the animosity of rival races), has legalized the principle of Rebellion, and has prepared to increase the Public Debt, at a moment of great financial embarrassment, by provision for the payment of the Traitors of 1837 and 1838. These grievances roused thousands from a state of torpor and inaction. Your fellow-subjects, convinced that a crisis had arrived when it behoved every inhabitant of Canada to exert himself for the regeneration of his country, and to

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