

In all the civil contests which History has been compelled to record, I conceive that there has never been a question more fairly submitted to the judgment of a free people than that which, in Upper Canada, has just ended in the total defeat, moral as well as physical, of the opponents of the British Constitution.

Speech at opening of Session.

The triumph has been that of reason over force—of good laws over anarchy—of bravery, fidelity, and generosity on the part of the Militia, over murder, arson, and robbery, by the rebels.

Tranquillity had returned to the land—angry passions had subsided—the political atmosphere of the Province was becoming healthy after the storm which had passed over it, when, I regret to inform you, that the peace of the Province was suddenly invaded from a quarter from which Her Majesty's subjects in this Province had certainly never calculated upon receiving an attack.

I need not on this Continent declare that the Americans are a people with whom the British Empire for many years has assiduously cultivated the most friendly connexion. Our Government has looked upon them as its allies—our people have intimately connected themselves with their commerce—our capital has irrigated their land—unlimited credit has been fraternally extended to them, with that unsuspecting confidence which in the civilized world is reposed in men of character and truth—we have rejoiced in their success, and we have done all that a generous Nation could do, to save them from the expense and misery of war. It is true, we were once opponents, but the hatchet of war has long been buried, and I must own I had hoped that the spirits of our mutual ancestors were sacredly guarding its tomb!!

Such are the feelings of the British people towards the Americans, and yet I regret to inform you, that in a moment of profound peace and of professed friendship, a considerable number of Americans, regardless of the crimes committed, as well as of the degraded character of the man, have sympathized with the principal rebel, who has lately absconded as a criminal from our land, I regret to inform you, that American Citizens of influence and great wealth have come forward to coerce the brave and independent people of Upper Canada, to change laws and institutions which they have lately, by open and almost universal suffrage, publicly declared that they prefer.

The American Press has, to my astonishment, in many instances advocated this flagrant act of injustice; and such has been the popular excitement, that not only has a body of Americans, headed by American leaders, within a few days, taken possession of Navy Island, (which belongs to the British Empire) but a proclamation has just been issued from this spot, declaring that the standard of liberty is planted in Canada—that a Provisional Government is established there—that a reward of five hundred pounds is offered for my apprehension—that three hundred acres of Her Majesty's lands will be freely bestowed by this Provisional Government upon any volunteer who shall personally assist in invading our freedom; and it is added, that "ten millions of these lands, fair and fertile, will speedily be at their disposal, with the other vast resources of a country more extensive and rich in natural treasures than the United Kingdom, or old France."

I am informed that Americans from various quarters are hastening from the interior to join this standard of avowed plunder and revolt—that cannon and arms are publicly proceeding there,—and, under these circumstances, it becomes my painful duty to inform you, that without having offered to the United States the smallest provocation—without having entertained the slightest previous doubt of the sincerity of American alliance, the inhabitants of this Province may in a few days be called upon by me to defend their lives, their properties, and their liberties from an attack by American citizens, which, with no desire to offend, I must pronounce to be unparalleled in the history of the world.

Upon the courage and resolution of the Canadian people I place the firmest reliance; and, if this unwarrantable invasion should proceed, I know I shall not in vain require every British Subject coolly to perform that duty to his country which his own pride, spirit, and feelings will spontaneously suggest.

The interference of foreigners in the domestic policy of a free country is an aggression which no nation of character can ever submit to endure, (especially where a band of people, violating their own laws, our laws, as well as the sacred obligations of national amity, intrude themselves upon peaceable inhabitants, lawlessly to advocate by force of arms the practical blessings and advantages of Republican institutions, which, by their own showing, have at least ended with them in anarchy and plunder;) and as every country is a natural fortress to its inhabitants—as every village is a strong military position—and as every bridge and ravine can be advantageously defended—I must own that, deeply as I should lament a conflict of this nature, I entertain no feeling of anxiety for the result. The peaceful inhabitants of Upper Canada will not be left to defend their country alone, for they belong to an Empire which does not suffer its Subjects to be injured with impunity; and if a national war, which it rests with the American Government to avert, should be the unhappy consequence of an intolerant invasion of our freedom, the civilized world, while it sympathises with our just cause, will view, with feelings of astonishment and abhorrence, this attempt of a body of American citizens treacherously to attack and plunder, in a moment of profound peace, their oldest—their most intimate—and their most natural ally.

A few days will, I trust, demonstrate that the American Government wants neither the will nor the power to control its people. If otherwise, the defensive course which the inhabitants of Upper Canada must be called upon to adopt, is plain and clear.

In the meanwhile, however, it is but justice to the American Nation to allow them, notwithstanding our territory has been already invaded by their citizens, the opportunity of nobly vindicating, as I firmly believe they will, the integrity of their Government and Institutions; and I have to inform you that, with this peaceful object in view, I have communicated with the