

## BRITISH AMERICAN LEAGUE.

The following is a copy of the Address to the people of Canada, adopted by the Convention.

## ADDRESS

Of the "British American League" to the inhabitants of Canada—adopted 31st 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, chequered by adversity and prosperity, the people of this colony 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 has long extended to the colonies 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, has 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 a 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 rescue it from commercial and political thralldom, met, and by combined action established the "BRITISH AMERICAN LEAGUE." This body extended its ramifications throughout every part of the Province. It established a system of representation by which delegates were to be sent to a general convention at Kingston. That convention assembled by the free election of the Leaguers, according to its established constitution, after this exposition of its origin, now appeals to you to co-operate with the League in the great objects it has in view for the welfare of our country.

## INHABITANTS OF CANADA:

You are nominally enjoying the privileges of a free constitution—you are in reality chained down by circumstances which wrest from you the exercise of these privileges. You are told that you are fostered by a liberal and prudent government—in reality your efforts for the encouragement of home industry have been checked in too many instances by hasty and inconsiderate legislation.

The true elements of your country's wealth—the certain indices of her prosperity—can only be developed by the adoption of measures which will fill her cities with the busy hum of industry—make her streams the outlets of that wealth which will be poured forth from the loom and the foundry, the teeming harvests of her soil, and the produce of her primeval forests.

For the attainment of these results it is essential that a Tariff carefully and considerably adopted should be so proportioned and levied as to afford just and adequate protection to every industrial class—the agriculturist, the manufacturer, the mechanic—so as to build up the prosperity of the farmer and artisan side by side with the growing wealth of the manufacturer—so as to create a Home Market for Home Industry, and enrich together the consumer and producer. The present tariff is utterly inadequate to produce results so manifestly essential to the interests of our country. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS PLEDGED TO FREE TRADE PRINCIPLES.

The public expenditure is conducted with a reckless disregard of economy. The excessive salaries of public officers, now increased in number, together with the lavish expenditure of the Legislature, are entirely disproportioned to the financial resources of a young and overburdened country, and unnecessary to the efficiency of the public service.

The authorized publications of this convention, when laid before you, will disclose the facts on which we found this assertion.

The fostering protection of a good government, to which you all have an inalienable right—which should be the guardian of the public peace, the bulwark of social order—has been daringly exchanged for the dominion of race and faction, introducing the elements of discord.

A law has been by the present ministry so monstrous in principle that it has excited strong abhorrence and disgust in the minds of the loyal people of this colony. That measure, in its naked deformity, has met with no approval. It has been carried merely because the British members of the government dared not to oppose the determined will of the French leader. By sanctioning that measure his Excellency the Earl of Elgin has brought the royal authority into contempt—has disturbed public tranquility, and it is our firm opinion that his continuance in his high position cannot conduce to public peace or prosperity.

An insidious attempt made by the present ministers to increase the French Canadian representation in Parliament, by so arranging the electoral Districts of Lower Canada, as to distribute the British inhabitants in small numbers among overwhelming bodies of the French, we regard with the most profound apprehension, as calculated to perpetuate that civil discord which has tended so much to the ruin of this great Province.

A gross violation of constitutional usages has been perpetrated, and a precedent sought to be established which, if it be made a precedent, will have forever destroyed the independence and utility of the Legislative Council. That body, according to true constitutional law, has distinct legislative functions. It is not intended as the mere register of the decrees of the Legislative Assembly. But the government now in power, in order to carry a particular measure, and in open violation of this principle, suddenly elevated to that House a number of persons of doubtful merit, and previously unknown in public life. By our constitutional law, her most gracious Majesty is alone invested with the authority to make appointments to the Legislative Council—a law which, if carried out, would effect a salutary check over the unscrupulous use of power in the colony—notwithstanding which, her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Colonies transmitted to the Colonial government blank writs of mandamus, thereby surrendering up into improper hands his Sovereign's high prerogative.

The present ministry have also attempted to force upon the country a measure by which numbers of influential men would be deprived of the elective franchise, while that same franchise in Lower Canada was by law extended to a particular class, to whom in the western province the like privilege was denied.

## INHABITANTS OF CANADA:

Fearlessly asserting the truth of our statements, and appealing to heaven for the justice of our cause, we lay before you these statements on

subjects which have engaged our attention. For the most part new to the discussion of public affairs, and not invested with legislative powers, this assembly can only deliberate upon such things as seem to be for your welfare. The attainment of that welfare must be confided to the individual energies, exertions and enthusiasm of every man among you who would rather behold his country flourish under paternal than droop under the withering influence of factious legislation.

Before recommending to you the great questions you should adopt as your watchwords, we earnestly exhort you to shake off now and forever that apathy and indifference which at several momentous crises in public affairs have paralyzed your energies, and which it would seem that moments like these, when all minds are unsettled, can alone arouse to exertion. Perfect in every part of the country a complete and permanent organization. Let every Branch Society of this League become a deliberate body, so as to prepare its future delegates for the deliberations of this Convention. Endeavor to soften down political asperities and sectional animosities, and to unite all men for the welfare of this our common country.

Three subjects among those which have engaged our deliberations stand prominently forth—demanding your earnest attention.

By the first of these—a union of all the British American provinces—it has been proposed in this Convention to lay the foundations for making this country a great nation upon a solid and enduring basis.

Impressed with the weight of such a proposal but uncertain as to the sentiments of the sister colonies, this Convention has proposed a conference with those provinces by a delegation of some of its members; meantime it recommends this great question to your mature deliberation.

The second great movement in which we invite your co-operation is that for retrenchment and economy in the public expenditure.

The third is that still more great and violent movement we are prepared to make in favor of protection to home industry.

Inscribe these glorious rallying cries upon your banners—glorious because they will elevate your country from failure to success, from ruin to prosperity. They will unite with you all honest men—all men of reason and true patriotism. Keep them before you in your assemblies—procure for them the assent and advocacy of your neighbors. Support no man at the hustings who will not pledge himself to wise and salutary retrenchment—who will not agree to raise his voice in favor of protection. So shall you elevate this your country into a great nation of freemen, fostered by and in amity and connection with Great Britain, preserving her time-hallowed institutions, adopting her old trade principles, under which she has flourished for centuries and her people have grown the richest on the face of the globe—those great trade principles which in the neighboring union have also been adopted, and have established that mighty and prosperous nation. Forsake these principles, neglect this advice—then prepare to behold your country, notwithstanding the great advantages which God has given you,—her boundless forests, a source of exhaustless wealth for ages, her noble lakes, her splendid rivers, the natural highways of a mighty nations commerce—notwithstanding her innumerable water powers, her extensive tracts of rich arable land, her immense mineral resources, her industrious and intelligent population—prepare, we say, to behold your country reduced to a state of misery, degradation, discord and poverty.

To endeavour to avert such calamities is the duty of every freeman—of every lover of his country; and it should also be his highest privilege. Rouse yourselves, then, to action; organize—agitate these questions—and revoke your country from present and impending evils.

G. MORFAT,  
Chairman.

Wm. GORDON MACK,  
W. BROOK,

Joint Secretaries.  
Kingston, 31st July, 1849.