

Speech at opening of
Session

the question was decided against those, who with groundless slander had assailed their Government, and who being rapidly deserted by their original supporters, were now reduced to a very few individuals.

Finding that against cool argument they could advance nothing, they desperately determined to try an appeal to physical strength, the avowed object of which was to force Her Majesty's Subjects from their allegiance, and to subvert the British Constitution under the pretext of reform.

As soon as this conspiracy became known to me, I determined that for the public good I would allow it to work its own cure, but as I felt convinced that that cure would never be admitted to be perfect if Her Majesty's Troops were required to take any part in the contest, I cheerfully approved of their leaving the Province, in order that the people of Upper Canada, in a state of uncontrolled independence, might be allowed another opportunity of unequivocally demonstrating whether they would support me or desert me in the determination I had evinced, "to maintain for them the British Constitution INVIOLETE."

Besides parting with the troops, I further resolved to place in the hands of the Civil portion of the community all the muskets, (about 4000) which the Government had in store, and I accordingly delivered them over to the custody of the Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty, of the City of Toronto.

Without either soldiers or weapons to enforce my cause, I allowed the leader of the intended insurrection a full opportunity to make his intended experiment—I freely allowed him to *write* what he chose—*say* what he chose, and *do* what he chose—I allowed him to assemble his deluded adherents for the purpose of drill—I even allowed them unopposed to assemble with loaded fire-arms, and in spite of the remonstrances which, from almost every District in the Province, I received from the peaceable portion of the community, I allowed him to make deliberate preparations for revolt; for I freely confess that I did under-rate the degree of audacity and cruelty which these armed insulters of the law were prepared, as events have proved, to exhibit. It did not seem to me credible, that in the bosom of this peaceful country, where every one was enjoying the protection of equal laws, and reaping the fruit of his labour, almost undiminished by taxes, any number of persons could be found willing to assail the lives, plunder the property of their unoffending fellow Subjects, and to attempt the destruction of a Government from which they had received nothing but good.

The ultimate object of the conspiracy was veiled under a mysterious secrecy which I had no desire to penetrate; and relying implicitly on the people, so little did I enquire into it, or impede it, that I was actually in bed and asleep, when I was awakened by a messenger who abruptly informed me that a numerous body of armed rebels had been congregated by their leader—that the murder of a veteran Officer of distinction, a settler in the Province, had already been committed—and that the assailants were within an hour's march of Toronto.

The long-looked for crisis had now evidently arrived; and accordingly, defenceless and unarmed, I called upon the Militia of Upper Canada, to defend their Government, and then confidently awaited the result.

With an enthusiasm which it is impossible for me to describe, they instantly obeyed the summons.

Upwards of 10,000 men immediately marched towards the Capital—and in the depth of a Canadian winter, with no clothes but those in which they stood—without food, and generally speaking without arms—Reformers as well as Constitutionalists—nobly rushed forward to defend the revered Constitution of their ancestors, although the rebel who had dared to attack it was offering to his adherents 300 acres of our land, and the plunder of our Banks!

As soon as the people had organized themselves, I saw it would be necessary to make an attack; however, feeling the greatest possible reluctance at the prospect of a sanguinary conflict with the deluded subjects of Her Majesty who were opposed to me, I despatched to them two of their own party, to tell them, that before any collision should take place I, parentally, called upon them, as their Governor, to avoid the effusion of human blood.

The answer I received from the rebel leader was, that he would only consent that his demands should be settled by a National Convention, and that he would wait till two o'clock for my answer.

Having now, to the best of my ability, performed the religious as well as moral duty which I owed to the Province, I issued a Proclamation calling upon those who had been seduced to join in the unnatural rebellion, to return to their duty, in which case I informed them that they would find the Government of their Queen as indulgent as it was just; and having given them this last opportunity to disperse, I allowed the brave Militia of Upper Canada to advance, and the result of this trial by batel was the public verdict which I had always anticipated.

The rebels dispersed in all directions, surrendered everywhere at discretion; those of their leaders who were not taken prisoners absconded to the United States; and before sunset the whole conspiracy was exploded.

In the London District a similar proof of public opinion was practically evinced. To the Militia, nobly commanded by Colonel MacNab, Speaker of the House of Assembly, upwards of three hundred misguided men laid down their arms—craving pardon for their guilt—asking permission to assist the loyal Militia in capturing the fugitive leaders, who they declared had not only deceived, but deserted them—and the affair being thus concluded, there remained not a rebel throughout the whole Province in arms!—Indeed so complete was their defeat, that General Orders were immediately issued by me, announcing that there was "no further occasion for the resort of Militia to Toronto,"—and that the Militia of the Bathurst, Johnstown, Ottawa, and Eastern Districts might march to Lower Canada, in aid of the Queen's Forces.