

respected him, as well as on account of his being the Representative of his Sovereign. He (the Chairman) was himself an old soldier, having served throughout the last war, and having been in every engagement on the frontier.

4th. **THE PEOPLE**—the only true source of legitimate power.

The Chairman had now to propose **THE** : OAST of the evening : Our Guest, the Hon. FRANCIS HINCKS, whose presence among us after a long absence, was most cordially welcome. (Great applause.) When, said the Chairman, it became known that Mr. HINCKS was in Upper Canada, the Council of the District happening to be in session, the Reform members thereof determined upon inviting him to accept a public dinner at Woodstock. The time for preparation was necessarily very short, and it was impossible to communicate with many parts of the District. Unfortunately, too, the weather had proved unfavourable. The rain, which had fallen incessantly during the last night and the whole of the present day, had rendered the cross roads almost impassable. From his township (Norwich) from 15 to 20 of his immediate neighbours had intended to be present, but had been unable to reach town. From Burford, a large party was expected. He (the Chairman) and gentlemen present expressed their public opinion. Norwich he could say, there was no chance. The people there were of the mind, and would be prepared to do their duty on every occasion. He (the Chairman) was a Reformer of thirty years standing (great cheering) and had been a close observer of passing events, and he could say that the experience of his life had only confirmed him in his opinions. Nothing would do for Canada but Responsible Government honestly administered. (Great applause.) As an able advocate of that great principle, and of every measure calculated to extend the liberties of the people, and as a faithful representative of this county, he would now propose the toast which he had read.

5th. **OUR GUEST, THE HON. FRANCIS HINCKS**—we only wait an opportunity to return him triumphantly to Parliament. (Loud and long continued cheering for several minutes, after which Mr. HINCKS spoke to the following effect :)

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—I have to acknowledge with the deepest gratitude another mark of esteem and confidence from the Reformers of the County of Oxford in addition to the many which I have received during the last six years. I can only hope to repay you, gentlemen, by my zeal in advocating what we all believe to be, the best interests of our common country—that country which I trust is equally dear to those of us who have adopted it as our own, as to those on whom it has perhaps a stronger claim, as the country of their birth. Much as I am gratified by the compliment paid to myself on the present occasion, I should be sorry indeed if this demonstration were not calculated to produce more important results than mere personal gratification. I hope and believe that it will be the means, in some degree at least, of promoting the success of the great cause to which we are devoted, and which I cannot better describe than as **THE CAUSE OF CANADA**. We desire that our principles and objects should be well understood, and we wish, if possible, to convince former opponents that they have either misunderstood our principles and objects, or that their own are erroneous. We wish to correct those misstatements which are from time to time circulated in order to mislead the public. I shall endeavour as briefly as the nature of the subject will permit to touch upon the principal political topics of the day.—You have been told, gentlemen, that the great question of "Responsible Government," which has so long agitated the country, is finally settled. I would wish to believe that this is the case. I am aware that our political opponents, both in and out of Parliament, profess to adopt theoretically those views on that question for which we have so long struggled. But has their practice been in accordance with their professions? I only ask you to review the history

of a belief that its working is impracticable. The remedy is with the people alone. They alone are responsible for the present state of affairs, and they will do well instead of expecting relief from a change of Governors, to exert themselves to secure a better representation. To do that we must convince the public that our objects are such as ought to entitle us to their support. The present is a most favourable opportunity for doing so. Party spirit has in a great degree subsided and the public at large are enquiring calmly as to the views of public men. It is singular enough that at this crisis the most prominent question before the public is one calculated to unite in its advocacy many who have formerly been opposed to each other, but whose interests with respect to this measure are identically the same. I mean the question of **FREE TRADE**. On this subject there have been the grossest misrepresentations. Attempts have been made to persuade the farmers of this country that their interests are at variance with Free Trade. So far from this being true, gentlemen, the Farmers are more interested than any other class in promoting a free trade policy. The protection which they formerly enjoyed in the English markets for their great staple has been abolished, and the question now is whether the Imperial duties affecting the consumers shall also be abolished. On this subject the interests of the people of all parties are the same, and yet when the question was under the consideration of Parliament, the Ministers backed by their Upper Canada majority, not satisfied with the protective duties imposed by the Imperial act, actually voted to place higher Provincial duties on goods imported by inland carriage than on those brought by the St. Lawrence. The effect of this was to impose an indirect tax upon the people of Upper Canada, and which was effected by the votes of her own Representatives (cries of shame shame.) Connected with this subject is the repeal of the Navigation Laws. Our produce has to compete with that of other countries in the English markets and it is essentially necessary that we should be enabled to transport it on the lowest possible terms. I would now offer a few remarks on the subject of the Common School Act of last Session. It will be in the recollection of many of those whom I have the honour of addressing, that a great cry had been got up against me in Zorra before the last election, on account of the taxes imposed by the old act. But I would ask whether that principle has been interfered with in the new act? Assuredly not. The great principle of the former Act has been retained and some alterations or improvements as they were said to be, made in the details. I do not believe that these are improvements. One of the most important changes was the abolition of township superintendants, and notwithstanding all that has been said on this subject, I am of opinion that it will be found absolutely necessary to restore those officers. The substitution of unpaid township visitors will never answer. (Hear, hear.) Another alteration was the requirement to keep the schools open six months instead of three. Of course all will admit that the longer the school is kept open, the better; but it is cruel in the extreme to tell people who are taxed for the support of Schools, and who are too poor to maintain one longer than three months, that they should have no share of the public money. (Loud cheers.) I firmly believe that there are many school districts in the province which are not able to support a school longer than three months, and the late Act would inflict a great injustice on them by compelling them to contribute out of their poverty, towards the support of the schools of the richer districts, whilst they themselves are not allowed to receive the slightest benefit from the expenditure of their own money. (Loud cheers.) The whole principle of the new School Act is to increase the power of the superintendent. No one could doubt that the framers of that Act would have given us the Prussian system if he had dared so to outrage public opinion. He went as far in depriving the people of power as he deemed prudent. The spirit of the new Act is to centralize power in the hands of the superintendent—that of the old, to leave it with the people. (Great and prolonged cheering.) The

caused by the influence of the Catholic clergy against education. I, connected as I was with a press which was the organ of Catholics as well as Protestants, felt it my duty to correct what I believe to be a misstatement. It was not a fact that the Catholic Clergy had opposed education; on the contrary, the educational institutions of Lower Canada are a richly creditable to those who have established them. At their colleges an excellent classical education, with board, is provided for less than £30 a year. I will not pursue the subject, but will just read an extract or two from papers which all will admit to be good authority. The first, strange to say, is from the *Banner*. That print, on a recent occasion, said: "the Church of Rome, which was wont to dread education, and the Church of England, which habitually neglected it, are now disposed to work in the opposite direction." This, I contend, embodies all that I have ever said on the subject. The next extract I will read is from the *Montreal Witness*. The Hon. Gentleman here read an extract on the subject of the schools of the *Preses*, at Montreal, showing that about 1800 pupils received gratuitous education through the influence of the Catholic Clergy. I feel that I have said enough on this subject. I am satisfied that I have no occasion to vindicate myself to any of my friends now present; but I know that a cry has been got up against the Scotch of Zorra. I am sorry for it. I did hope that the Scotch had become convinced that they were, in a great measure, deluded at the last election. The cries which were then raised had no reference to the general politics of the country. My opinions respecting Mr. Burns, or Lower Canadian education, are not of the slightest importance as far as Provincial politics are concerned. These cries have been got up by interested parties, for the express purpose of deceiving the public.—If I were disposed to get up a cry against my opponent I have opportunities in abundance. When I came to Woodstock the other day I was surprised at the alteration in the toll gates, and on asking the cause I found that it was generally ascribed to the influence of the County Representative. One gate was removed away from the town;—the effect of this was to enable certain aristocratic Gentlemen to reach it without passing the gate, while at the western end the gate had been placed in such a position that those who never use the road especially the Zorra farmers, are obliged to pay toll. Nothing could be more unjust. Then there was the subject of the Clergy Reserves valuations. When I was in office I had an opportunity of recommending District valuers for these lands. The principle upon which the appointments were made was that persons of each party should be selected, so that none would have a right to complain of partiality. I recommended Mr. Van Norman of Dereham, well known as an upright, honourable man of great experience, and Mr. Henry Carroll, who certainly had no claims on the ground of his family connections to recommend him to me. But I looked on Mr. Carroll as one who would do justice to his neighbours and hence my selection of him. These gentlemen were engaged in the discharge of the duties assigned them when news arrived that all proceedings were to be suspended. It turned out that Mr. Riddell and a Mr. Spragge, of whom probably a majority of you have never heard, had given evidence before the Crown Land Commission that the Brock District lands were undervalued? I do not charge Mr. Riddell with giving an opinion contrary to his conscientious belief; but every one knows that the bias of a man's mind is to think well of property which he is personally interested—it is well known that Mr. Riddell is a large land holder in Zorra. (Cheers.) And who is Mr. Spragge? A gentleman who has obtained a large tract of land in Blenheim from which he has dispossessed the actual settlers, and who is, of course, a most disinterested witness. On such testimony were the sales of the reserves suspended; and this notwithstanding the opinions expressed by several Conservative members of Parliament as to the correctness of the valuations in their districts; and although Mr. Riddell and Mr. Spragge thought the reserves undervalued, the Brock District Council, having had the whole

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