

Canada. No bar sinister stains their escutcheon. They were men of whom we need not be ashamed. The United Empire Loyalists form an ancestry of which any people might be proud. They had every characteristic which can go to constitute an enduring substratum for a coming nation. They were men, of whom the descendants of contemporary foes now utter disinterested eulogies. Respecting them even prejudice is dead, and the grand-child of the Revolutionist can now speak generously of the political opponents of his ancestors in the land where their honor was tried as in a crucible. They are our Pilgrim Fathers. They are our heroes. They were martyrs to their principles. Believing that a monarchy was better than a republic, and shrinking with abhorrence from a dismemberment of the empire, they were willing, rather than lose the one and endure the other, to bear with a temporary injustice. And their sincerity was put to the test. They took up arms for the king; they passed through all the dangers and horrors of civil war; they bore what was worse than death itself—the hatred of their countrymen; and when the battle went against them, they sought no compromise, but forsaking their most splendid possessions, upreared the banner to which they had sworn fealty, and, following where it led, went forth to seek, on the then inhospitable shores of Ontario, a miserable shelter, in exchange for the home from which they were exiled. Nor did they ever draw back. The Indian, the wolf, the famine, could not alter their iron resolution; and for their allegiance, they endured a thousand deaths. They lost every treasure but their honor, and bore all sufferings but those which spring from self-reproach. It may be said by some, that all men now admit the revolt of the American Colonies to have been a just one. And such we believe it was. But if George the Third played the tyrant, that makes nothing against our loyalist fathers. They were not tyrants, but faithful subjects; and we are bound to believe that they acted conscientiously, for their lives and fortunes were staked on the issue of the contest. As provincials, they had the right to make what choice they pleased. The dispute affected themselves. They might be in error as to the use of the prerogative, but that creed cannot be a tyrannical one, by which we will to manage our own affairs. A man cannot be a tyrant to himself. George the Third acted despotically; but the Loyalist Fathers were of another mind; and in acting upon their convictions in the very face of ruin, we know that they were sincere.

In reality these men need no defence. But as some view the history of that period in another light, and condemn all who, two generations back, did not think with themselves, we deem it not an idle thing to vindicate the Heroes of the Province from the unjust remarks which have often been made about them, and to urge their claims on our filial respect. It will be remembered, too, by all Canadians, that these men's deeds have been narrated by their enemies. But this will not do. The Loyalists are our own men—our forefathers. Their reputation is ours. We must put ourselves, therefore, in their circumstances, defend them where we can, and honor them always. Nor in doing so, is there any need for us to abandon any principle. We have nothing to do with the points in which we differ. It is our business to honor them for those in which we are agreed.

The Americans have set us an example in this direction. Their Puritan Fathers are held in perpetual remembrance. Men make pilgrimages to the place where they landed, and Plymouth Rock is now their monument. And yet the American people do not agree in every iota with these worthies. There are many who see in their principles room for difference, and in their conduct, some things to censure. Precisely similar should be our treatment of our loyalist fathers. There are points in which we differ from the opinions which they held seventy years ago, but we can all agree in admiring their attachment to the Mother Country, and the patient sincerity with which they suffered for their loyalty. Thus we should venerate them. Nor can we believe that the growing intelligence of the Province will fail to produce some one patriotic enough to