

# ADDRESS OF THE SONS OF LIBERTY,"

Of Montreal, to the YOUNG MEN of the North American Colonies.

Others :-

When urgent circumstances in the affairs of a country make it necessary for men to form themselves into Parties, or Associations, a proper respect for the opinions of society, demands from them an explicit Declaration of the causes which have induced them to combine, and of the principles which they intend to advance, by the power of their organization.

We consider that, next to the privilege of acting for himself, man possesses, from the very foundation of society, that of uniting his energies with those of his fellow-citizens for all purposes of mutual interest, or defence; and that, therefore, the right of association is as sacred and inalienable, as the right of personal liberty. We hold that governments are instituted for the benefit, and can only exist justly by the consent of, the governed, and whatever may be the artificial changes in human affairs, that a government of choice is an inherent right of the people. It cannot be alienated, and consequently may always be asserted and exercised. All governments being instituted for the benefit of a whole people, & not for the honor or profit of any individual, all pretensions of Divine or absolute authority to rule, claimed by, or for, any men or set of men, are blasphemous and absurd, alike monstrous when inculcated, and degrading when admitted. The authority of a parent state over a colony can exist only during the pleasure of the Colonists; for the country being established and settled by them, belongs to them of right, and may be separate from all foreign connection, whenever the inconveniences resulting from an Executive power residing abroad, ceasing to harmonise with a local Legislature, makes such a step necessary to the inhabitants for the protection of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness.

The Young Men's Association of Montreal adopting the title of "THE SONS OF LIBERTY" is not intended to be a private cabal, or secret junto, but an active Democratic body comprising all young men in the city patriotically alive to the interests of their country, whatever may be their creed, country, or the nation of their ancestors.

The causes which demand, at the present juncture, from all, but more especially from Young Men, coming forward into active life, a heroic devotion to their country's cause, are manifold and imposing.

At the cession of this Province in 1763, with a view to consolidate British power on the banks of the St. Lawrence, certain rights of property, religion and government, were guaranteed to the Canadians, and afterwards more fully confirmed in 1774, when the approaching noble revolt of the American States rendered concessions to the new subjects of the empire extremely politic. The brilliant success of those States, and the overwhelming movement of revolution in France, having made England tremble for the safety of her remaining American possessions, she passed, in 1791, the Act called the "Constitutional Act," which divided Upper from Lower Canada, and established a Representative Assembly in each. In 1812, conciliation was again rendered necessary, by the declaration of war with the United States. These times of danger have been the seasons of seeming justice to Canada, while the intervening and succeeding periods furnish but one long histo-

ry of repeated injuries, atrocities, usurpations and wrongs. Thus we have seen British rulers, with a cowardice and a perfidy unworthy of the Representatives of a powerful nation, continuing to allure the people of Canada, by deceptive promises, in times of pressing necessity, and, when the emergency had passed, resorting to every unwarrantable expedient to defer, or avoid the fulfilment of, their solemn engagements.

After seventy-seven years of British rule, we behold our country miserable, compared with the prosperous Republics who wisely threw off the yoke of Monarchy. We feel that our population is equal in capacity to theirs. We see Emigrants from beyond seas, of the same class, wretched if they remain here, happy if they join the great Democratic family, and we have daily evidence that our ill fortunes are attributable to the desolating action of a Colonial government. A pretended protection has withered our energies. It has preserved all that was bad in our ancient institutions, or unfitted to the present state of society, thwarted the free operation of all that was good, and trammelled by restraints every measure of reform or amelioration.

Whilst every township throughout the immense territory of our neighbours is happily governed by its own free Democracy, which is thereby trained, from its youth upwards, to political knowledge, self-reliance and energetic action, we are cramped and controlled by a Government in which the people have no voice, whose influence tends to the corruption of public virtue, the depression of enterprise, and the annihilation of every generous impulse or exalted aspiration for the advancement of the country's greatness.

Hosts of officers, appointed without consent of the People, to whom they are too frequently obnoxious and never responsible, and holding commissions during the pleasure of an irresponsible Executive, are placed in authority over us, with salaries enormously disproportioned both to our means and to their services, whereby office is made a means of family or personal aggrandizement, instead of being suited to the resources and wants of the people.

The trial by Jury, which we have been taught to look upon as the palladium of our liberties, is made a vain illusion, or instrument of despotism, inasmuch as Sheriffs, creatures of the Executive, upon which they depend daily for a continuance in an office to which vast emoluments are attached, can select and summon such Jurors as they please, and thereby become themselves the arbiters in state prosecutions instituted against the people by their oppressors.

Immense funds, bestowed by a provident government, or by generous individuals, on the late order of the Jesuits, for purposes of education, have been diverted from this commendable object, and made an instrument of corruption for the reward of useless or reprehensible officials, while the children of the Province, deprived of the funds provided for their instruction, have grown up without the benefit of school education, to be now taunted with want of learning.

Our public lands, defended during two wars by the bravery of the inhabitants of the country, and rendered valuable by the toil that has opened roads, and extended settlements back to the wilderness, have been sold or bestowed, in contempt of

our remonstrances, to a Company of speculators living beyond the sea, or partitioned out among official parasites, who have, from motives of interest, combined as a faction, to support a corrupt government, inimical to the rights and opposed to the wishes of the people, whilst our fathers, our relations and our brother colonists, are refused, or unable to procure, wild land on which to settle.

Laws, affecting the tenure of lands, inapplicable to the condition of the country, and injurious in their operation, have been forced upon us by a foreign Parliament, which in order to favor private and sinister interests, has usurped a power of internal legislation that appertains alone to the Legislature of this Province.

Regulations for the trade of the country, adopted by a foreign Parliament, are enforced without our consent. We are thus confined to certain markets, and are deprived of the power of extending our commerce to all parts of the world when the markets of Britain are unfavorable to our produce, whereby our commercial enterprise is crippled and paralyzed.

The Representation of the country has been made a solemn mockery. A corrupt Executive has constantly sought to render our House of Assembly an instrument to decide unalterably the slavery of its constituents, and failing in this wicked design, has rendered its action nugatory by frequent prorogations and dissolutions, and by refusing an assent to laws useful to the people, and passed unanimously by their Representatives.

A Legislative Council, the members of which are nominated by authorities ignorant of the country, residing 3000 miles off, composed mostly of persons who do not sympathize with the country, still exists as an impotent screen between the Governor and the governed, and nullifies all attempts at useful legislation. An Executive Council nominated in the same manner, whose influence has poisoned the mind of each succeeding Governor, remains unchanged, to protect the cumulation of office and abuses that are connected with every public department. A Governor, alike ignorant with his predecessors; and who has become, like each of them, an official partisan, conducts the government for the benefit of the few, either unmindful of, or determinedly opposed to, the prosperity of the many.

Our grievances have been faithfully and repeatedly urged upon the King and Parliament of the United Kingdom, by the resolutions of primary assemblies, by our Representatives in Parliament assembled, and by the humble petitions of the whole people. We have remonstrated, with all the power of argument, and all the moral force of truth. No remedies have been extended, and at last, when the tyranny of those intrusted with power in the Province has increased insufferably from continued impunity, advantage is taken by an ungenerous European State, of a time of general peace, to coerce us into a connivance or approval of our own debasement, by a threat to seize upon our public Revenues with a hand of force, in defiance of natural right, and of every principle of law, policy or justice.

The present degraded position of our country, being the result of three-quarters of a century of warm devotion to British connexion, and of mistaken reliance upon British honor, it would be slavish and criminal to confine

our resistance hereafter to simple remonstrances. The wicked designs of British authorities have severed all ties of sympathy for an unfeeling mother country. A separation has commenced between parties, which will never be cemented, but which will go on increasing, until one of those sudden, those unforeseen events, that attend the march of time, affords us a fit opportunity for assuming our rank among the Independent Sovereignities of America. Two splendid opportunities have been lost. Let us not be unprepared for the third.

A glorious destiny awaits the Young Men of these Colonies. Our fathers have passed a long life of vexation, in daily struggle against every degree of despotism. As they pass from the world, they leave an inheritance improved by their patriotic sacrifices. To us they commit the noble duty of carrying onward their proud designs, which in our day must disfranchise our beloved country from all human authority except that of the bold Democracy residing within its bosom.

With such an invigorating prospect spreading before us: with such a high responsibility resting upon us, it becomes our imperative duty, laying aside the gay frivolities of youth to betake ourselves to the serious consideration of our country's politics, her wants and her resources; to increase her wealth by encouraging her manufactures and her produce; and to preserve her strength by discontinuing the consumption of articles brought from beyond sea—but, above all, to accustom ourselves to constant sacrifices, and so to curtail our personal expenses, by avoiding excess or superfluity, that we may treasure means for supporting each other in the struggle for life and liberty in which we must sooner or later be engaged, when the day of glory arrives that will see us emerge from a long dark bondage to the splendour of light and freedom.

WHEREFORE, we the Officers and Managing Committee of the Association of the "SONS OF LIBERTY" in Montreal, in our own names, and on behalf of those whom we represent, pledge ourselves to our abused country, and to each other, that we will devote all our energies, and be prepared to act as circumstances may demand, in order to procure for this Province a reformed system of government, based upon the Elective principle; a responsible Executive; the control by the Representative branch of the Legislature, of all public revenues, from whatever source derived; the repeal of all Laws and Charters passed by foreign authority, encroaching upon the rights of the people and their Representatives, especially those relating to the propriety and tenures of land, whether belonging to the public or to individuals; an improved system of selling public lands, whereby those who wish to become actual settlers thereon may be able to do so at a small expense; the abolition of pluralities and irresponsibility of office, and an equality, before the law, for all classes, without distinction of ORIGIN, LANGUAGE or RELIGION; and depending on God, and strong in our right, we hereby invite the YOUNG MEN of these Provinces to form Associations in their several localities, for the attainment of good, cheap, responsible Government, and for the security, defence and extension of our common liberties.

**ANDRE OUMET, President.**

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**Montreal, Oct. 4, 1837.**

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