

**ANNEXATION, PREFERENTIAL
TRADE, AND RECIPROCITY**

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AN OUTLINE OF THE CANADIAN ANNEXATION
MOVEMENT OF 1849-50, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO THE QUESTIONS OF PREFERENTIAL TRADE AND
RECIPROCITY.

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PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the United States has exercised a most important influence on the course of Canadian history, but little attention has been paid by historians and political scientists to the mutual relations of the two countries. The question of the incorporation of the British American colonies in the American union has been a recurrent subject for political consideration since the War of Independence. In Canada, from time to time, it has become a vital political issue. But almost all the discussions of the question have been marked by the most bitter partisan feelings. The simple facts of history have sometimes been suppressed, and oftentimes misrepresented, or gravely distorted for political purposes. Even the biographers and historians, in some cases, have been tempted to accept their facts, and their judgments in respect to the same, from the opinions of interested politicians or the views of a partisan press.

In this monograph, the writers have attempted to deal with one phase, and that perhaps the most important one, of the annexation movement in Canada. They have endeavoured to discover the origin of the political and economic discontent of 1849, to trace out

the development of the agitation, to show the extent of its ramifications and its effect upon political parties, and to explain, in part at least, the divers reasons for the failure of the movement. A few paragraphs have been added in regard to the condition of affairs in the maritime provinces, and as to the state of public opinion in England and the United States. In order that the reader may better appreciate the spirit of the movement, the authors have thought it best to allow, as far as possible, the chief participants in these stirring events to tell their own contradictory stories, rather than themselves to set forth an independent interpretation of the historical facts. A study of the facts presented, it is believed, will serve to remove any preconception as to the superior quality of Canadian fealty, or as to the immunity of any political party from the insidious virus of disloyalty during protracted periods of economic distress and social and political unrest; but, at the same time, it will bear the most convincing testimony to the self-sacrificing loyalty of the great body of the Canadian people under the most trying circumstances, and to their firm attachment to the polity and free institutions of the motherland.

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THE long and apparently fruitless struggle of the Upper Canada Reformers against the exclusive political privileges of the Family Compact drove the extreme wing of the party under Mackenzie into an alliance with Papineau, the fiery leader of the French Canadian Radicals, who, under the guise of a constitutional agitation for popular elective institutions, was marshalling the simple habitants into battle array against the racial ascendancy of the English minority. Out of this alliance of the ultra-democratic parties in the two provinces developed the revolt of 1837. The constitutional outcome of the rebellion was a complete reorganization of the government of the Colonies under the Act of Union, 1840. The political results were equally far-reaching and important; the re-establishment of the personal

authority of the Governors, the rehabilitation of the Tory Party—the stalwart defenders of British institutions—and the temporary demoralization of the Reformers. Torn by internal dissensions and discredited by the rebellion, the Reform Party scarcely dared for a time to oppose the haughty supremacy of the Government.¹

Fortunately for colonial Liberalism, a gradual change was taking place in the views of English statesmen in respect to colonial policy. The leaders of the Whig Party began to realize that the Liberal principles of the British Constitution could no longer be restricted to the motherland, but must be extended to the colonies as well. The several Colonial Secretaries were not averse to satisfying the demands of colonial Liberals for a wider measure of local autonomy; but, for a time, they each and all were firmly possessed of the idea that the exclusive political responsibility of the Governor to the Colonial Office was essential to the permanence of the imperial connection. To surrender the control of the Colonial Executives to the Colonial Legislatures would necessarily involve, in their opinion, the grant of independence. This fundamental postulate of colonial policy was admirably stated by Lord John Russell, one of the most liberal and sympathetic of British statesmen, in a speech in the House of Commons in 1837. "Responsible government in the Colonies," he declared, "was incompatible with the relations which ought to exist between the mother country and the colony. Those relations required that Her Majesty should be represented in the colony, not by ministers, but by a Governor sent out by the Sovereign and responsible to the Parliament of Great Britain. Otherwise Great Britain would have in the Canadas all the inconveniences of colonies without any of their advantages."

The rebellion of 1837 opened the eyes of the English

¹ It should be added, however, that the first shortlived ministry after the Union was a coalition one, of which Baldwin was a member.

Government to the gravity of the situation in Canada, and to the necessity of introducing some constitutional reforms. The special mission of Lord Durham produced the celebrated report which is justly regarded as the most important constitutional document in the history of Canada. In this report his lordship recommended that "the responsibility to the united legislatures of all officers of the Government, except the Governor and his Secretary, should be secured by every means known to the British Constitution." But Her Majesty's advisers were scarcely prepared as yet to grant such an extension of responsible government as was contemplated by Lord Durham. However, an important step was taken in that direction in a despatch of Lord John Russell, in 1839, in respect to the tenure of office of colonial officials. An even more important concession was made in the instructions which were given to Lord Sydenham for his guidance in the conduct of the local administration.

In addressing the first Parliament of the united provinces in 1841, his lordship declared: "The Governor-General has received Her Majesty's commands to administer the government of the provinces in accordance with the well-understood wishes and interests of the people, and to pay to their feelings, as expressed through their representatives, the deference that is justly due to them." But the fair promise of a more liberal administration was cut short by the death of the popular Governor, and the nomination two years later of a successor of altogether different type and principles. Sir Charles Melcalfe quickly quarrelled with his Liberal constitutional advisers over the question of the appointment of officials, forced their resignations, and threw himself on the side of the Tories in the ensuing elections. Thanks to the strenuous efforts of the Governor, who fought the campaign on the old loyalty cry, the Tory Party was restored to power with a very small majority. As a result of the victory, Sir Charles was enabled to

re-establish the former régime of the personal ascendancy of the Governor. He was in fact his own Prime Minister. Fortunately for the Governor, a Tory Government was in power in England, and he was able to count upon the whole-hearted support of the Colonial Office throughout his administration.

The restoration of the Whigs to office promised brighter things for colonial Liberalism. Several of the leaders of the Whig Party together with their Radical supporters were inoculated with the liberal principles of the Manchester School. The appointment of Lord Elgin as Governor-General in 1847 practically committed the Whig Ministry in advance to the application of British constitutional principles in Canada. At the provincial general elections the following year Lord Elgin assumed a strictly impartial attitude; and, as a result of the withdrawal of the accustomed influence of the Governor, the Tory Ministry went down to a crushing defeat. His Excellency at once called upon the Reformers to form a government. A union of the French and English sections of the party resulted in the formation of a strong Coalition Ministry under the joint leadership of Lafontaine and Baldwin. The goal of the Reformers was at last attained. To their own chosen leaders was entrusted by a sympathetic Governor the responsibility of directing the affairs of the colony according to the Liberal principles of the British Constitution.

Their defeat at the general election was a bitter pill for the Tory Party. They had been so long accustomed to regard themselves as the only loyal party, and as such entitled to enjoy the exclusive favour of the Governor, that they could not readily become reconciled to seeing their unpatriotic opponents in office.¹ To make matters worse, with the loss of power they had also lost the political patronage with which the leaders of the party had fostered their own loyalty and rewarded that of their supporters. Their defeat

¹ *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 71.

appeared to them in the light of a dangerous revolution, as an overthrow in fact of a natural and established order of things. It was necessary to find some explanation for their undoing, some vent for their righteous indignation. Unfortunately for the history of Canada, a simple explanation was at hand, namely, French domination. At the general election in 1848, the Tories had failed to carry a single French-Canadian seat. Back of the Lafontaine-Baldwin ministry was marshalled the almost united strength of the French members and population. As a natural consequence, a strong feeling of resentment against the alien race spread throughout the ranks of the Tory Party in Upper Canada.

The rumoured intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to compensate those who had suffered losses in the recent rebellion fanned this resentment into a flame. The introduction of the Bill shortly after set the whole heather afire with anger and indignation. The entire Tory press attacked the proposition in the most reckless inflammatory manner. Mingled with violent denunciations of the Government and tirades against French ascendancy were heard some low mutterings of annexation sentiment. The prophecy of Lord Durham had indeed come true; some of the English minority of Quebec were prepared, if necessary, to sacrifice their allegiance in the hope of retaining their nationality. In Montreal, the bitterness of the English Tories exceeded all bounds. Several of the leading papers openly preached disloyalty, and some of them even resorted to threats of violence. *The Montreal Courier*, one of the leading Tory papers, rashly exclaimed: "A civil war is an evil, but it is not the worst of evils, and we say without hesitation that it would be better for the British people of Canada to have a twelve months' fighting, if it would take so long, and lose five thousand lives, than submit for ten years longer to the misgovernment induced by French domination."

¹ *Montreal Courier*, quoted from *The Examiner*, April 4, 1849.

An equally dangerous and seditious utterance of one of the Montreal papers was regarded by Lord Elgin as sufficiently important and symptomatic of the attitude of the Tory extremists to warrant the serious attention of the Colonial Secretary. "The obvious intent of the majority, composed of Frenchmen aided by treacherous British Canadians, is," it declared, "to force French institutions still further upon the British minority in Lower Canada. The intention is obvious, as we have said, and we are glad that it is openly shown. We trust that the party of the Government will succeed in every one of their obnoxious measures. When French tyranny becomes insufferable, we shall find our Cromwell, Sheffield in the olden times used to be famous for its keen and well-tempered whettles; well, they make bayonets there now just as sharp and well-tempered. When we can stand tyranny no longer, it will be seen whether good bayonets in Saxon hands will not be more than a match for a race and a majority."¹ On the streets of the city the question of annexation was freely discussed. The state of public opinion among the Montreal Tories was thus summed up by the local correspondent of *The Toronto Patriot*. "The only on-dit of the day worthy of credit refers to the undercurrent leaning of the Anglo-Saxons here towards an annexation with their brethren of the United States, unjustly and untruly attributed to them by Lord Durham in his time, but true as the gospel now."²

In Upper Canada the feelings of the Tories were scarcely less bitter and exasperated. In the month of March, *The Kingston Argus* announced that a petition to Her Majesty to allow the province to be annexed to the United States was being circulated in that city.³ Articles appeared in several of the staunchest Tory papers, such as *The Toronto Colonist* and *The*

¹ Despatch of Elgin to Grey, April 30, 1849.

² *The Patriot*, quoted from *The Examiner*, March 14, 1849.

³ *The Kingston Argus*, March 3, 1849.

Hamilton Spectator, containing scarcely veiled suggestions of annexation. A correspondent of the Hamilton paper declared: "Rather than be trodden upon by French licentiousness. . . let us seek an alliance with at least a kindred race, whose republican views are at least not so rampant. The sad alternative is painful to the loyal heart, but it is decidedly the least of impending evils." A few days later *The Spectator* warned the English authorities of the danger of separation. The Tories, it asserted, would never revolt, but neither would they submit to French domination. When they became dissatisfied with existing conditions, it would not be necessary for them to rebel, for the imperial tie would be severed without opposition. But in any case the responsibility for the final destiny of Canada remained with the English Government.¹ *The Colonist* likewise declared that the intolerable political conditions of the time would inevitably strengthen the demand for annexation among the commercial community.²

Political feeling ran almost equally high in the legislative halls. In the course of the debate on the Rebellion Losses Bill, Colonel Gagy frankly stated, in reply to a pointed question from across the House, that, "if this Bill, as passed, be assented to by Her Majesty, it will have the effect of absolving Her Majesty's colonial subjects from their oath of allegiance." The speeches of some of the other Tory members were scarcely less incendiary, if not as seditious, in character.

Some of the Tory fury was undoubtedly inspired by a genuine fear of French domination, but it is nevertheless true that much of the agitation was worked up for purely political ends in the hope of embarrassing the Ministry, and, if possible, of intimidating the Governor into vetoing the Bill.³ A few of the Tory

¹ *The Spectator*, April 7, 1849.

² *The Colonist*, July 3, 1849.

³ *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 75.

papers, realizing the dangerous course upon which the agitation was starting, endeavoured to check the seditious utterances of their contemporaries. "What," asked *The Quebec Gazette*, "would the Tories, and descendants of the United Empire Loyalists, gain as a political party by annexation? They cannot sincerely wish for it. They may, however, by talking of annexation for the purpose of intimidating the Governor, ~~and~~ by their own reputation for consistent loyalty, ruin the character and credit of the country abroad, and retard its prosperity by preventing the influx of British capital and population." *The Toronto Patriot*, likewise, scented the danger, and called its fellow Tories severely to task for their foolish talk of annexation for purely party purposes.

The Ministerial Party and press did all in their power to minimize the importance and significance of the growing agitation. Their favourite weapon of political warfare was to asperse the motives of their opponents by accusing the latter of stirring up a spirit of disaffection for selfish, political purposes. *The Toronto Globe*, in particular, scored the opposition in merciless fashion. "The Canadian Tories have not been a year out of office, and they are at the rebellion point. . . . Withdraw the supplies, and the Tory soon lets you know that it was not the man or his principles which he loved, but the solid pudding which he could administer." The lesser Reform journals throughout the province faithfully followed the lead of the chief party organ.

A somewhat similar view of the situation was taken by the English Government, which staunchly supported the policy of the Governor-General and his advisers throughout the political crisis. In a caustic editorial, *The London Times*, the mouthpiece of the Whig Ministry, tersely summed up the state of Canadian affairs. "We continue of the opinion, therefore, that at present it is quite unnecessary that

¹ *The Globe*, March 3, 1849.

we should throw ourselves into an agony of indignation at the conduct of the Canadian Cabinet. The province, of course, is in terrible excitement. Sir Allan MacNab is now out of office, and has nothing to do; so to satisfy a mind of more than ordinary energy, he has taken to agitation, and is lashing the whole colony into foam."

When it became apparent that the Government was determined to force the Rebellion Losses Bill through Parliament, the Tories turned to the Governor-General, and besought him either to veto the Bill, or reserve it for the consideration of the Crown. Indignation meetings were held in all parts of the country, and petitions and resolutions protesting against the passage of the Bill came pouring in to the Governor-General from all sides. But all this agitation was of no avail. His Excellency determined to accept the advice of his ministers; and, in accordance with the true principles of responsible government, to which he was pledged on his appointment, duly attached his signature to the Bill. At once a furious storm of Tory passion broke loose. A wild mob insulted the Governor-General, stoned his carriage, and completely disgraced the country by burning the Parliament buildings.

The Tory leaders resolved to carry the fight over to England. Sir Allan MacNab and a colleague accordingly set out for Westminster, in the hope of inducing the English Government to veto the Bill, and to recall Lord Elgin. The attitude of the extreme section of the party in respect to the mission was decidedly menacing towards the home Government. They declared, in effect, that, if the British Ministry did not comply with their demands, so much the worse for the British connection. But unfortunately for the Tory Party, they did not properly appreciate the change which had taken place in the views of Whig statesmen in respect to colonial policy. Despite the able championship of Mr. Gladstone, and the staunch support of the Tories in the British Parliament, the

mission of Sir Allan was altogether fruitless. The Whig Ministry stoutly defended the course of the Governor-General, and refused in any way to intervene in what they properly considered a purely domestic controversy between the two political parties.

But an even, more insidious source of political discontent was working as a canker upon the loyalty of the Canadian people. The whole province, and particularly the Montreal district, was passing through a period of severe commercial adversity. The trade of many foreign states and of the motherland was, at the time, in a generally depressed condition, the effect of which was unmistakably felt in all the colonies; but owing to local circumstances, largely arising out of the change in England's commercial policy, Canada was plunged into a slough of financial distress from which she did not seem able to extricate herself.

The early commercial policy of England, as of other European nations, had been based upon the strictest mercantilistic principles. The primary object of colonization was to gain a monopoly of trade. Imperial commerce was reserved, as far as possible, as an exclusive field for British traders and manufacturers. In time, the narrow policy of monopoly gave way to a more enlightened system of preferential trade,¹ but the old spirit of commercial privilege still reigned supreme. "The principle," said Earl Grey, "of placing the trade with the colonies on a different footing from that of other countries had been maintained up to the year 1846, and was generally regarded as one of unquestioned propriety and wisdom."² Although the colonies were chiefly prized as valuable markets for English exploitation, nevertheless the fiscal policy of the parliament at Westminster was not so selfish and one-sided as to exclude the colonies from certain reciprocal advantages in the markets of the homeland. The principle of a mutual preference between England

¹ Shortt, *Imperial Preferential Trade*, p. 30.

² Lord Grey, *Colonial Policy*, vol. 4, p. 7.

and the colonies served, it was thought, the twofold purpose of promoting inter-imperial trade, and of strengthening at the same time the loyalty of British subjects throughout the dependencies.

The preferential duties of the colonies in favour of the motherland were moderate in amount, and did not impose much of a burden upon either England or the colonies on account of the essential difference in their economic status. England was not a food-exporting nation, and the colonies as yet had scarcely entered upon the industrial stage of their existence. The preference was of little advantage to England in respect to European nations, since, by reason of her superior industrial organization, she could manufacture much more cheaply than any of her competitors. On the other hand, the colonial preference in the English market was of the greatest importance to the colonists, as their products were excluded from the markets of other nations by high protective tariffs. As a natural consequence, the export trade of the colonies was almost entirely restricted to Great Britain.

The principal products of Canada, especially corn and timber, enjoyed a substantial preference in England over similar products from foreign countries. In order to encourage the production of colonial corn, Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for the Colonies, introduced into parliament, and in the face of the strong opposition of the Whig Party¹ secured the passage of the Canadian Corn Act of 1843, by which, in consideration of the imposition by Canada of a duty on American corn, Canadian wheat and flour were admitted into England at about one-fifth of the rate levied upon similar products when imported from other countries. The leaders of the Liberal party warned the Government that the inevitable consequences of the Act would be to build up a few favoured industries in the colonies upon the unstable basis of a temporary commercial advantage. But the warning fell on unheeding ears.

¹ Egerton, *British Colonial Policy*, p. 331.

The Ministry were resolved to entrench the waning policy of protection behind the barrier of an imperial preference.

The people of Canada were equally heedless of the growing antagonism of the English free traders to any form of colonial preference. In their eager desire to take advantage of the manifest benefits accruing from the Act, they overlooked the danger of a reversal of policy in case of the advent of a free-trade government to office. The immediate results of the Act were beneficial alike to the agricultural and commercial interests of the province. Since the preferential tariff extended not only to Canadian-grown corn, but likewise to American wheat, if made into flour in Canadian mills, it gave a tremendous impetus to the milling industry throughout the province, and especially along the border. Large amounts of capital were quickly invested in various subsidiary undertakings, such as ship-building and transportation.¹ An active policy of improving the internal waterways of the country by the construction of canals and the deepening of the natural highways to the sea was set in motion with every prospect of diverting a large proportion of the trade of the Western States through the mouth of the St. Lawrence. Numerous warehouses were erected at strategic points along the inland highways for storing and forwarding the agricultural products of the country to the English market. The harbours on the lower St. Lawrence were filled with English ships, and the merchants of Montreal reaped a rich harvest from the transatlantic trade which centred in that city. As a natural result of this abnormal development, a dangerous boom in real estate and a wild speculation in wheat broke out in the business community. But the day of reckoning was at hand. The Canadian public had recklessly discounted the future in their intense pursuit of the almighty dollar; they

¹ Lucas, *Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, vol. v p. 125.

had foolishly left the changing sentiment of the British nation out of their calculations.

For a time the fiscal policy of successive English ministers had been weak and vacillating.¹ But the doctrines of Adam Smith were taking a firm hold upon the minds of the wide-awake manufacturers of the homeland, who saw in their economic superiority a splendid opportunity of capturing the markets of the world under conditions of free trade with outside nations. At the same time the high duty on foreign corn, though somewhat relieved by the colonial preference, was proving a heavy burden upon the poor working classes of the English cities. The famine in Ireland gave the *coup de grâce* to the policy of protection. But, however beneficial the abolition of the Corn Laws was to the English public, it proved, for the time being at least, disastrous to the interests of the colonies. The free-trade policy of the homeland dealt the trade and industries of Canada an almost fatal blow. In truth, the statesmen at Westminster, in endeavouring to relieve the prevailing distress at home, practically disregarded the dependent commercial conditions of the colonies, for which their legislation was largely responsible. They overlooked the fact that it was the commercial policy of England, and not that of Canada, which had rendered the interests of the latter almost entirely dependent upon the British tariff and the maintenance of an imperial preference. The Whig statesmen of the day were Little Englanders at heart; they were much more interested in the promotion of English trade at home and in foreign countries, than concerned about the preservation of the vested interests of the colonies.

With the adoption of the free-trade policy in England, the whole system of imperial preferential trade had to go.² The practice of granting English goods a preference in colonial markets, as well as the reciprocal

¹ Egeiton, *British Colonial Policy*, p. 331.

² *Ibid.*, p. 328.

advantage extended to colonial products in England, was incompatible with the new commercial tenet of international free trade. England, it was felt, could not consistently seek an open market in foreign countries on terms of equality with the native producers and manufacturers, if she herself maintained, or encouraged the colonies to maintain, discriminating tariffs against the products of foreign states, and in favour of imperial traders, whether English or colonial. Accordingly, in 1846, the Colonial Legislatures were empowered by the British Possessions Act¹ to repeal any or all tariff Acts imposed on them by the Imperial Parliament, including the various discriminatory duties by which a preference had been hitherto granted to British ships and products. The speech from the throne at the opening of parliament, the following year, invited the colonies to rid themselves of the obnoxious system of differential duties, with a view to the benefit of colonial consumers, and the general furtherance of an enlightened international policy. Instead of longer seeking to develop inter-imperial trade by preferential duties, the English Government now sought to foster international free trade by their abolition.

The mercantile community in Canada were quick to perceive the destructive effect which the adoption of the policy of free trade would have upon colonial trade and industry. Scarcely had Sir Robert Peel made his celebrated announcement in the House of Commons, when a letter of protest was addressed to *The London Times* by Mr. Isaac Buchanan, a prominent Tory politician, who was at the time on a visit to London. In this communication,² he predicted that the withdrawal of the colonial preference would involve, on the part of England, national bankruptcy and the downfall of the monarchy, and on the part of Canada the repeal of the Canadian preferential tariff and the inevitable severance of the imperial tie. The over-

¹ 9 & 10 Vict. c. 4.

² *The London Times*, February 6, 1846.

burdened people of England would soon begin to object most strenuously to the expense of administering distant dependencies which were no longer of any commercial advantage to the mother country. On the other hand, "Any hint from England of a desire for separation will be cheerfully responded to by the people of Canada, who will be writhing under the feeling that England has dishonourably broken the promise of protection to Canadian wheat and lumber made by every ministry from the timber panic of 1806 downward; and will have got their eyes open to the fact that, as there remains no longer any but the slightest bond of interest between Canada and the mother country, no reason can be given why Canadians should risk their lives and property in defending nothing, or should allow Canada to be any longer used as a battlefield of European and American squabbles." As soon as the details of Peel's proposals reached Canada, measures were at once taken by the leading commercial bodies of the province to fight the proposals. Memorials were drawn up to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Boards of Trade at Montreal, Toronto, and Quebec, setting forth the serious injury which the withdrawal of the colonial preference would inflict upon the principal industries of the province.¹

At a meeting of the Toronto Board of Trade, Mr. Workman, the President of that body, made a vigorous protest against the proposed legislation of the home Government. He had been informed that some of their fellow citizens, "from whom he had not expected such sentiments, had declared that there was nothing left for Canada but annexation. He implored those gentlemen to be very careful in the promulgation of their opinions or apprehensions."² The language of the Solicitor-General of the Crown conveyed an even more solemn warning of the danger of separation. "He did hope, however, that the commercial

¹ *Colonial Correspondence*, 1846.

² *Hausard*, vol. 86, p. 556.

class would maturely weigh all the consequences which must result from the substitution of the United States markets for those of the mother country. It would be impossible but that such a change in our commercial relations would very soon bring about a change in all our other relations. Our interests would cease to be identified with the interests of the parent state; our mental associations would assume new forms; our customs and laws, ay, and our institutions too, would be assimilated to those of the people with whom we cultivated mercantile relations. There was a time . . . when he believed that patriotism had no connection with self-interest; but he had lived long enough to change his opinion on that subject; and he did think that loyalty had some relation to pecuniary considerations. If, however, by a course of imperial policy, over which the people of Canada can exert no possible control, they are forced into a new sphere of social and political attraction, they are not the culpable party."¹

The memorial of the Quebec Board of Trade also proceeded to point out the serious political consequences of a change of fiscal policy on the relation of Canada to the homeland. "That the question no doubt will suggest itself to you, whether the natural effect of this seductive law will not gradually, silently, and imperceptibly to themselves, wean the inclinations of the subjects of Great Britain from their true allegiance to the parent state, and bias their minds in favour of a closer connection with a foreign country through which the transport of their merchandise and produce is encouraged, and a consequent more frequent intercourse with its inhabitants produced."² The situation of affairs, as it presented itself to a well-informed foreign critic, was admirably described in the columns of *The New York Herald*. "The intelligence from Canada is beginning to be of an extremely inter-

¹ Hansard, vol. 86, p. 557.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 86, p. 562; *Colonial Correspondence*, 1846; Porritt, *Fifty Years of Protection in Canada*, pp. 56-60.

esting character. On the receipt of the news of the proposed tariff of Sir Robert Peel, considerable dissatisfaction was manifested in Canada. They say, that to abolish the duties on grain produced in the western parts of the United States must materially affect the commercial interests of Canada, and facilitate its annexation to the United States. It does not require any great sagacity or foresightedness to arrive at this conclusion, nor to perceive that it will be the means of hastening the annexation—a measure which time and the moral effect of our laws and institutions must finally consummate.”¹

Notwithstanding the force of these warnings and representations, the British Government refused to alter its fiscal policy. The free-trade members of the House of Commons were not at all frightened by the threats of colonial separation which were borne to their ears from over the ocean. They placed little confidence in the good faith of these alarming rumours, the origin of which they ascribed to the selfish policy of the Canadian protectionists. The views of the Liberal members were admirably voiced by Mr. Roebuck, in reply to a speech of Lord Bentinck on the commercial policy of the Government in respect to Canada. “That very party, who had always pretended to such extraordinary loyalty and affection for the mother country, now, when they feared that some measure was to be adopted hurtful to their pecuniary interest, turned round, as he (Mr. Roebuck) had told them they would, and threatened them with annexation to America. It was not the people of Canada, whom they had deprived of all they held dear,—it was not the Lower Canadian French population who talked of annexation to America. It was the English, Scotch, and Irish merchants, who had embarked their capital in a favoured trade, supported as they believed by protective duties; and who, the moment it was proposed to do justice to the people of the country by the adoption

¹ Hansard, vol. 86, p. 500.

of free trade, threatened this country with republicanism and annexation."¹

The era of modern colonial history dates from the acceptance of the principle of free trade as the basis of the fiscal policy of the motherland.² The political consequences of this change of policy were scarcely less revolutionary than the economic. By the Act of 1846, Great Britain virtually surrendered her control over the fiscal systems of the self-governing colonies, save in respect to the treaty-making power. The limited right which Canada had enjoyed of imposing customs duties for local revenue purposes, subject to the careful supervision of the Colonial Office, was now extended into a complete control over the assessment, collection, and distribution of all the revenues of the colony. The period of commercial tutelage was ended. Canada was advanced to the status of fiscal independence. She was free to adopt such commercial policies as she might see fit, in so far as such policies did not conflict with the international obligations of the motherland.³

The local legislature quickly took advantage of its newly acquired liberty to alter materially the fiscal policy of the province. The budget of 1847 abolished the system of differential duties, and adopted the principle of a uniform tariff upon a revenue-producing basis. Henceforth no distinction was made as to the source of importation; the same duties were levied upon the products of the sister provinces, the motherland, and foreign states. Steps were subsequently taken for the improvement of the commercial relations of the province with the United States. A good beginning had already been made in this direction by the repeal of the discriminatory duties against the United

¹ Hansard, vol. 86, p. 570.

² Lewis, *Government of Dependencies*, Introduction by Lucas, p. xxxii.

³ Davidson, *Commercial Federation and Colonial Trade Policy*, p. 15.

States, and the reduction of the tariff on American manufactured goods from 12½ to 7½ per cent.¹

But a general reciprocity treaty for the free admission of natural products was felt to be desirable, in order to put their relations upon a satisfactory basis. Negotiations were accordingly set on foot by the Secretary for the Colonies, at the instance of the Canadian Executive, with a view to inducing the Government at Washington to enter into a reciprocity arrangement. But the American Government was too much absorbed in the domestic concerns of the moment to give due consideration to the fiscal proposals of its northern neighbour. The Canadian people were quickly made to realize that fiscal independence, though of the greatest constitutional importance as a recognition of their new nationality, could not compensate them for the loss of the special advantages they had heretofore enjoyed in the English markets. The abolition of the preference on English goods in colonial ports was of small concern to the colonists, but the withdrawal of the corresponding preference to colonial goods in English markets struck a terrible blow at the prosperity of the British-American provinces. The grant of commercial freedom was of little use to a country whose financial, agricultural, and industrial interests were paralyzed by the arbitrary action of the Parliament at Westminster.

The fears of the Canadian Boards of Trade were fully confirmed. In one of his letters Lord Elgin feelingly spoke of "the downward progress of events!" These are ominous words. But look at the facts. Property in most of the Canadian towns, and more especially in the capital, has fallen 50 per cent. in value within the last three years. Three-fourths of the commercial men are bankrupt, owing to Free Trade; a large proportion of the exportable produce of Canada is obliged to seek a market in the States. It pays a duty of

¹ U.S. Ex. Doc. No. 64, 1st Session, 31st Congress; Haynes, *The Reciprocity Treaty with Canada of 1854*, p. 12.

20 per cent on the frontier. How long can such a state of things be expected to endure?

"Depend upon it, our commercial embarrassments are our real difficulty. Political discontent, properly so called, there is none. I really believe no country in the world is more free from it. We have, indeed, national antipathies hearty and earnest enough. We suffer, too, from the inconvenience of having to work a system which is not yet thoroughly in gear. Reckless and unprincipled men take advantage of these circumstances to work into a fever every transient heat that affects the public mind. Nevertheless, I am confident I could carry Canada unscathed through all these evils of transition, and place the connection on a surer foundation than ever, if I could only tell the people of the province that, as regards the conditions of material prosperity, they would be raised to a level with their neighbours. But if this be not achieved, if free navigation and reciprocal trade with the Union be not secured for us, the worst, I fear, will come, and that at no distant day."¹

Temporary insolvency was the price which Canadians paid for the triumph of English free trade.² Much of the capital of the country was tied up in the ruined industries which the protective policy of the motherland had called into existence. There was but a limited local market for the agricultural products of the province, and, in the neutralized market of England, the Canadian traders now found themselves exposed to the keen and merciless competition of their American neighbours, whose larger establishments and superior transportation facilities enabled them to undersell their less favoured competitors. Piteous were the complaints which arose from the millers and ship-owners of the province against the injustice of the policy of England in arbitrarily withdrawing the colonial preference, without at the same time securing for them

¹ *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 70.

² Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question*, p. 142.

an alternative market in foreign countries. The feelings of this important section of the community were well expressed by Mr. James R. Benson, a leading ship-owner of St. Catherine's, in a letter to William Hamilton Merritt, in which, after voicing the general dissatisfaction of the public since the passage of Peel's Act, he declared¹: "If the former system of protection be not adopted by Great Britain, or she should not obtain for us the free admission of our produce into the United States market, I am well convinced that the result will be an alienation of the minds of the most loyal men in Canada from the mother country, and a desire to become a state of the Union; it is already frequently asked if such was the case now, would our property become less valuable: the answer is undeniable."

The question of finding a market for Canadian products became the most pressing problem before the country. With the loss of the English market the United States appeared to be the natural outlet for Canadian trade, but, unfortunately, that market was closed by a high protective tariff. The friendly attitude of the American Government fostered the hope in the minds of the Canadian public that a reciprocity arrangement might be effected with the United States for the free admission of certain raw materials of the two countries. For some time past, the subject of reciprocity had engaged the serious consideration of Mr. Hamilton Merritt, one of the most influential men of the Niagara District. As a result of his investigations, he was convinced that the only relief for the deplorable economic conditions of Upper Canada was to be found in a reciprocity agreement with the United States. Both in Parliament and through the press, he ably championed the cause of reciprocity. In a convincing letter to Lord Elgin upon this, his favourite

¹ April 20, 1848; *Canadian Archives*, 4995.

² See also a letter of Mr. J. Keefer, of Thorold, April 19, 1848, to Mr. Merritt; *Canadian Archives*, 4995.

topic, he pointed out that the higher prices which prevailed across the border "would produce dissatisfaction and lead to an early separation from the mother country."¹ The opinions of Mr. Merritt were shared by many members of the commercial community, as well as by the great bulk of the farming population of Canada West. In view of the growing depression, it was little wonder that many of the inhabitants lost faith in the future of the province and were prone to regard their country's fiscal freedom as a curse rather than a blessing.

In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin vividly described the "frightful amount of loss to individuals, and the great derangement of the colonial finances," which had resulted from the adoption of the policy of free trade. "Peel's Bill of 1846 drives the whole of the produce down the New York channels of communication, destroying the revenue which Canada expected to derive from canal dues, and ruining at once mill-owners, forwarders, and merchants. The consequence is that private property is unsaleable in Canada, and not a shilling can be raised on the credit of the province. We are actually reduced to the disagreeable necessity of paying all public officers, from the Governor-General downwards, in debentures, which are not exchangeable at par. What makes it more serious is that all the prosperity of which Canada is thus robbed is transplanted to the other side of the lines, as if to make Canadians feel more bitterly how much kinder England is to the children who desert her than to those who remain faithful. For I care not whether you be a protectionist or a free trader, it is the inconsistency of imperial legislation, and not the adopting of one policy rather than another, which is the bane of the colonies. I believe that the conviction that they would be better off, if annexed, is almost universal among the commercial classes at present, and the peaceful condition of the province, under all

¹ *Canadian Archives*, 4995.

the circumstances of the time, is, I must confess, often a matter of great astonishment to myself." ¹

The position of Canadian traders was made much more difficult by the unjust operation of the Navigation Laws. The policy of the English Government was carried out with reckless disregard of the rights and interests of the colonies. The British Parliament, in withdrawing the colonial preference, had retained a monopoly of the colonial carrying trade for British ships.² The Navigation Acts had undoubtedly proved of some slight benefit to Canadian ships in admitting them into the exclusive privilege of the West Indian trade, but this small gain was more than offset by the loss of colonial merchants through the higher freight to and from England on colonial and English products. So much were the freights enhanced by the British shipping monopoly, that it was extremely doubtful if the excess charges did not equal, if not exceed, the benefits which the colonists derived from the preferential policy. Such at least was the opinion of some of the leading members of the Free Trade Association of Montreal, and a comparison of the rates from Montreal and New York respectively, to and from England, appeared to lend considerable support to this contention.³ With the change in English policy, a twofold loss was inflicted on Canadian merchants. They continued to bear the burden of excess freights without the compensating advantage of English preference. Thanks to the Navigation Acts, they could no longer compete on even terms with their American competitors in the English markets. The colonies, in truth, were unjustly penalized in order to enhance the profits of English ship-owners.

The American Government was quick to take ad-

¹ *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 60.

² Lucas, *Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, vol. v. p. 106.

³ See letter of a Montreal merchant quoted in *The Patriot*, January 9, 1850.

vantage of the changing fiscal conditions in Canada. Prior to the abolition of the preferential duties in favour of English products, the merchants of Upper Canada had found it advantageous to draw their supplies from Montreal and Quebec rather than from New York, since the duties were from 25 to 30 per cent. higher on importations through, or from, the United States. The repeal of the discriminatory tariff in 1847 was speedily followed by the adoption by Congress of an Act permitting the carriage of foreign and Canadian goods through the United States in bond without the payment of duty.

The effect of these two measures was to throw a large part of the trade of the St. Lawrence merchants with the inhabitants of Upper Canada into the hands of the New York dealers, since the merchants of Toronto and the western districts now found it more advantageous to import and export their supplies through American ports, which, unlike the St. Lawrence, were open all the year round. It was indeed a great convenience to the merchants of Canada West to be able to secure their goods at short notice in New York, instead of having to order them, long in advance, through the wholesale houses of the Lower St. Lawrence. Moreover, as we have seen, the operation of the Navigation Acts placed the business men of Montreal at a still greater disadvantage, owing to the higher freight rates to colonial ports. New York accordingly became the distributing centre for the business of Western Canada, and the American traders reaped a splendid harvest at the expense of the unfortunate merchants on the Lower St. Lawrence. Loud and bitter were the remonstrances of the Montreal merchants against the differential operation of English and American legislation. They were suffering through no fault of their own; but, on the contrary, were made to pay the penalty of the "inconsistency of imperial legislation." A vigorous demand arose for the abrogation of the Navigation Laws, coupled in

some instances with a request for the restoration of the system of preferential duties in favour of the colonies.

The Provincial Legislature was alive to the danger of the situation, and lent a willing ear to the complaints of the St. Lawrence merchants. Although there was considerable difference of opinion among the members as to the wisdom of the free-trade policy of the motherland, there was general agreement as to the necessity for repealing the unjust discrimination of the Navigation Acts. A joint address was accordingly introduced by the Government into the Legislative Council and the Assembly, professing the loyalty of the people to the Crown, and praying Her Majesty's Government to repeal the Navigation Laws, and to throw open the St. Lawrence to the free navigation of all nations. In the Assembly, an amendment was moved on behalf of the Tory protectionist members to add a clause to the address in favour of the restoration of the system of protective duties in England. The House refused, however, to dictate the fiscal policy of the motherland, and, after an animated debate, the amendment was defeated by the decisive vote of 49 to 14.¹ The address was thereupon adopted without further opposition. In the Legislative Council the address was received with general favour, and carried without debate.

The complaints of the Canadian public aroused the English Government to a sense of its responsibility for the serious condition of affairs in that colony. The speech of the Lords Commissioners at the opening of Parliament recommended the consideration of the Navigation Laws with a view to ascertaining whether any changes could be adopted which might promote the commercial and colonial interests of the empire. Steps were subsequently taken by the Ministry to remedy the grievance of the colonists; but, owing to

¹ January 24, 1849.

² Lucas, *Historical Geography in the British Colonies*, vol. v. p. 196.

the lateness of the session, and the pressure of domestic concerns, the Government were reluctantly compelled to give up all expectation of passing a Bill for the alteration of the Navigation Laws that session. The President of the Board of Trade, however, promised that the question should be brought to the early consideration of the House at the next session, so that Parliament would be able to pass a well-matured measure.¹

A rumour of the intention of the British Government not to proceed with the Bill for the amendment of the Navigation Laws soon crossed the Atlantic, and at once called forth a strong letter of protest from Lord Elgin to the Secretary for the Colonies.¹ The report, he stated, had produced a very painful feeling: "The Canadian farmer is a supplicant at present to the Imperial Legislature, not for favour, but for justice; strong as is his affection for the mother country and her institutions, he cannot reconcile it to his sense of right that after being deprived of all protection for his products in her markets, he should be subjected to a hostile discriminatory duty in the guise of a law for the protection of navigation." His Excellency was confident that, "if the wise and generous policy lately adopted toward Canada be persevered in, the connection between the province and the motherland may yet be rendered profitable to both, in a far greater degree than has been the case heretofore." It would be dangerous, however, to Canadian interests, "if provisions are suffered to remain on the British statute book which would seem to bring the material interests of the colonists and the promptings of duty and affection into opposition."

With the withdrawal of the measure to free the St. Lawrence from the baneful restrictions of the Navigation Acts, the gloom of depression settled down more heavily upon the city of Montreal. The views

¹ August 10, 1848.

² June 15, 1848; Hansard, 1849, vol. 105, p. 71.

of the mercantile community of that city were ably voiced in a petition of the Board of Trade to the Queen at the close of 1848, which set forth :

" That the abandonment by the mother country of her protective policy is producing important changes in the commercial relations of the colony, which, unless regulated or counteracted by wise legislation, may lead in the end to consequences which every loyal subject would deplore. That the most prominent of the changes referred to is a growing commercial intercourse with the United States, giving rise to an opinion which is daily gaining ground on both sides of the boundary line, that the interests of the two countries under the changed policy of the Imperial Government are germane to each other, and under that system must sooner or later be politically interwoven.

" That being deeply interested in the trade and prosperity of this province, and, moreover, in common with the great mass of the population being devotedly attached to the institutions of Great Britain, and desiring to see the existing colonial connections which unite us perpetuated, your petitioners most respectfully take leave to lay before Your Majesty the following representations :

" 1. The result of a total cessation of the differential duty on grain in England will be to make New York the port of shipment for the great bulk of the produce of Canada.

" 2. The port which is found to be most eligible for the exports will also be found to be the best suited for the imports of a country.

" 3. The bonding system introduced by the American Government must have the effect of attracting the merchants of Canada to New York for the purchase of supplies, . . . and thus the ruin of the trade of the St. Lawrence . . . cannot fail to be consummated. It would be superfluous for your petitioners to point out the injurious effect which could not but result from

¹ *Quebec Gazette*, January 8, 1849.

such a diversion of trade; suffice it to say, it would create and cement ties of beneficial interest between Canada and the United States, and proportionally weaken the attachment which this colony entertains for the mother country.

"Your petitioners are indeed aware that it has been asserted by a class of political economists that the colonies are a source of pecuniary loss to England, and that she might profitably abandon them altogether; but your petitioners have too much confidence in the wisdom of Your Majesty's Government to suppose that such sentiments are shared in by them, or that, even were the proposition to be true, they would draw the same precipitate conclusion from it.

"In nations there are interests infinitely transcending those of a mere pecuniary nature, and your petitioners would regard the integrity of the British dominions, the preservation of Britain's political power and influence as cheaply purchased by any pecuniary loss the colonies may occasion her. It is in this belief, and with the desire to avert the dismemberment of the empire, so far at least as Canada is concerned, that your petitioners at this time approach Your Majesty. They do not seek the restoration of the old system of protection; on the contrary, they have no objection to the utmost freedom of trade compatible with the safety of the ties subsisting between the colony and the mother country; but, having shown how that connection must be endangered when the measures of Sir Robert Peel take full effect, they will briefly point out those remedial measures which, in their opinion, would avert the evil, and continue to attach the province to England by the claims of interest, as well as of affection and duty. These measures, as far as imperial legislation is concerned, are:

"1st. The repeal of the Navigation Laws as they relate to Canada, and the throwing open the navigation of the St. Lawrence; and

"2nd. The enactment of a moderate fixed duty, say

not less than five shillings per quarter on foreign wheat, colonial to be admitted free."

The memorial proceeded to set forth in detail the material benefits which such a policy would confer upon Canada, by the diversion of the trade of Upper Canada and the American West through the St. Lawrence. An alluring prospect was held out to the industrial interests of the motherland, that the increased revenue which would result from such an enlightened policy would enable the local legislature "to materially reduce, if not entirely repeal, the import duties on British manufactures." At the same time, the British public was confidently assured that the burden of the duty on wheat would not fall upon the English consumer, but would be borne by the unfortunate foreign producers. "A duty of this kind in favour of Canada would preserve the trade of the St. Lawrence, add to the revenue derivable from the St. Lawrence canals, diffuse universal satisfaction throughout the colony, and, what in the opinion of your petitioners is all-important, would continue to attach Canada to the mother country, thus perpetuating the present connection, and preserving inviolate the British dominions."

The language of the address was severely criticised by the Montreal free traders, as putting the loyalty of the colony on too low a plane. They professed the most self-righteous indignation that their "allegiance to the sovereign should be placed upon a purely mercenary basis. Accordingly, a protest was prepared, which won the enthusiastic commendation of Earl Grey as "the most important document which had proceeded from a large commercial body since the famous London petition in favour of free trade." This protest, which was signed by many of the leading Liberals of the city,¹ set out by declaring: "We trust that the loyalty of the province depends upon something loftier than a mercenary motive," and then proceeded by a carefully

¹ Including Messrs. Holmes, M.P., Boyer, McDougal, Holton, Grass, and Workman.

constructed argument to draw the sound constitutional conclusion: "We conceive that all we have a right to ask of the mother-country is to repeal the Navigation Laws as far as they relate to Canada, and to throw open the St. Lawrence to the navigation of the vessels of all nations, from which measure, coupled with our own energy and enterprise, we feel confident of being able to secure all that the Council of the Board of Trade expect to acquire from the re-enactment of a tax upon the bread of the people of the United Kingdom."

But little reliance, however, could be placed upon the professions of loyalty of some of the Liberal free traders. In a private communication to their English correspondent, shortly after, the firm of Holmes, Young & Knapp, one of the members of which had taken a prominent part in drawing up the recent protest, declared: "The feeling of annexation to the United States seems to be the most prevalent at present among our people; could the measure be brought about peaceably and amicably, there is not a doubt but that three-quarters, if not nine-tenths, of the inhabitants would go for it. No country can expect to retain colonies under a free trade system, unless allied to each other by contiguity, or for the purpose of mutual protection. The commercial system of the United States now offers more advantages to the province than any other within view, but to avail ourselves of it is impossible without the question of annexation being involved." The Canadian public were generally disappointed at the non-concurrence of the United States in the scheme for reciprocal free trade, and, in the judgment of the writer, would not rest content until they had secured the free admission of their native products into the American market. There was, however, "but one way to bring it about, and that way was annexation."

The majority of the mercantile community, together with most of the Montreal papers, supported the views

¹ See speech of Lord Stanley in the House of Lords, May 8, 1849.

of the Board of Trade, rather than the more reasonable judgment of the Liberal minority. The prevailing opinion of the business public found expression in a leading article of *The Montreal Gazette* (Tory), which declared: "We consider annexation as the last issue on the board and only to be thought of after England has determined to persevere in treating Canada as a foreign nation, instead of as an integral part of the empire. We shall resist it so long as we see a chance of our affairs being placed on a proper footing without it. . . . But the die is in the hands of England."

True to its promise, the English Ministry brought down a measure for the amendment of the Navigation Laws, soon after the opening of the session in 1849. In moving for a committee of the whole House to consider the resolution of the Government, the Hon. H. Labouchere, President of the Board of Trade, stated that, in the opinion of the Executive, since the protection which the colonies had hitherto enjoyed in the markets of the mother country has been withdrawn, "it would be the height of intolerable injustice to maintain those restrictions (of the Navigation Laws) upon their trade which prevent them from enjoying the advantages of foreigners—an injustice which I think absolutely incompatible with the continued connection between the most important of the colonies and the mother country." By the surrender of her shipping monopoly, England would confer "a boon of incalculable value" on the North American colonies, and "rivet them by ties of gratitude to the motherland" in the most effective manner. Parliament should not further delay to remove this colonial grievance. "They ought to be sensible of the patience and good feeling which the people of Canada had shown under the most trying circumstances; they should ill repay that patience and good-feeling, if they did not embrace the earliest opportunity to show

¹ May 8, 1849.

² November 14, 1849; Hansard, 1849, vol. 102, p. 682.

themselves anxious to set right a system so impolitic and unjust, which destroys the trade of the North American colonies, which destroys the trade of the inhabitants of the United States of America for no earthly object, which directs the trade from Canada to the United States of America without effecting any benefit in return, which injures the revenue of Canada by preventing the full use and employment of those canals which have been made there at so great an outlay, but which are now completely useless and unproductive, and must remain so as long as the Navigation Laws continue in force."

At the very outset, the proposals of the Executive met with the strongest opposition on the part of the Conservative Party. The members of the opposition, however, were too busy defending the last surviving tenets of the mercantile system to devote much attention to the interests and desires of the colonies. Mr. Herries was the only speaker to consider at length the colonial aspect of the question. He charged the Government with a callous indifference to the sufferings of the colonists; they had driven the Colonies to the point of exasperation, and had finally consummated their ruin by the withdrawal of colonial protection. The relaxation of the Navigation Laws, he contended, would not suffice to repair the mischief which the free-trade policy had inflicted upon the colonies.

The battle was renewed upon the second reading of the Bill. Save for an interesting pronouncement of Mr. Robinson on the subject of imperial relations, and a few scattered references to the state of colonial opinion, the debate was strictly confined to the consideration of the effect of the abrogation of the Navigation Laws upon the commerce and naval supremacy of England. The remarks of Mr. Robinson set forth in the clearest light the mercantilistic theory of the Tory Party in respect to the colonies. "He was satisfied that the ultimate aim of the United States was the possession of the entire American continent.

In fact, the measures of the Government had so disgusted the colonies, that in their public meetings now they were discussing whether it would not be better for them to unite themselves to the American Republic than to remain a dependency of this country. He was not quite clear himself whether that would not be the best thing for them to do. Sure he was of this, that, so far as England was concerned, it would be better for her to give them up than to persevere in their recent ruinous policy. When they had given up their colonial trade, what had they to do with colonies except to maintain expensive governments and a large military force? They were, in fact, abandoning them in maintaining the doctrine that their own subjects had no more claim upon them than the citizens of any other country."

The dogmas of Adam Smith were, however, in the ascendency; and notwithstanding the vigorous opposition of the Tory Party, the second reading of the Bill was carried by a majority of fifty-six: Ayes 266, Noes 210.

In the House of Lords, the policy of the Government was defended by the Colonial Secretary in a speech of exceptional power.¹ "It must be agreed on all hands," he declared, "that it is the want of steadiness and consistency in our legislation which has inflicted this injury upon Canada; and therefore we are bound, upon the plainest principles of common sense and justice, to relieve that colony from the consequences of our own conduct." He contended that, in the light of what had passed, it would be most unjust to tell the Canadians that their produce should not only be exposed to unrestricted competition in the English market, but that they should also be made to suffer the disadvantages of a monopoly, as compared with their rivals, in conveying that produce to this country. This Parliament, therefore, must do one of two things, unless they wished to set justice utterly

¹ May 8, 1849.

at defiance; they were bound either to retrace their steps, and to restore to Canada the protection of which they had deprived her, or else to give her the advantage of the fullest competition in bringing her produce here. If the present Bill were rejected in the face of the opinion of the Governor and the overwhelming sentiment of the colonists, he believed that they would give a most serious shock to the security of the British power in the North American colonies.

"They all knew, and, he believed, would all acknowledge that the connection between this country and the North American colonies could not be maintained on any other ground than that of perfect equality, and by this country possessing the confidence and affection of the people of those provinces. It was not possible, nor, if it were possible, would it be desirable that the possession of Canada and the other provinces of North America—for in this matter they should all be considered as one—should be maintained on any other terms. In the midst of the colonial agitation, no doubt impudent and violent men would sometimes be found to talk of a union with the United States. In the United States, too, some persons had talked of the same thing, or, as they termed it, of a nullification of the connection between this country and the North American colonies. But still, in the midst of all their party disputes and violence, he had no doubt but that they were sincerely attached to this country, and that they were becoming daily more sensible of the benefits which they derived from belonging to the British Crown." But he was not prepared to say that this feeling would be continued, if so gross an act of injustice should be committed as that of the rejection of this measure. On the contrary, he believed that if their Lordships threw out the Bill, they would part with their best security for the attachment of these colonies to the British Crown.

"It was the opinion of many who had watched the current of political opinion and events in the world

for the last few years, that the connection of these provinces with the mother country was drawing rapidly to a close, and that they would become an independent people at a very early day. If this were so, and this country should lose the present opportunity of doing with a feeling of good grace an act of favour to these colonies, they might put it out of their power to secure to themselves even the benefits which would arise from the maintenance of friendly relations with them, when they should become an independent power." He believed, however, that the colonies should be retained on higher grounds than the mere material advantages which were to be derived from their possession. On the contrary he considered "the maintenance of our North American provinces to be an essential element of our national strength," and on imperial grounds boldly justified the adoption of the present principles of the Government "as an important and necessary step for the security of the Colonial Empire." The two Houses, he concluded, should take warning, from their unfortunate experience with the United States, of the danger of attempting to limit the commercial activities of the colonies.

Lord Stanley, the leader of the Conservative Party in the Upper House, warned the Colonial Secretary that, by abandoning all attempts at controlling the dominant majority in the Canadian Parliament, he might lay "the foundations of deep-rooted discontent, disaffection, and disloyalty in the minds of a hitherto loyal and contented people." He scornfully referred to the spurious Patriotism of Messrs. Holmes, Young and Co., who were privately spreading the doctrine of annexation while openly professing the most devoted loyalty to the Crown. The affairs of Canada were indeed in a serious condition. "The conclusion was inevitable, that a connection with that country (the United States) could alone give all the privileges which they (the Canadians) desired; and that loyalty must indeed be powerful which continued undiminished

under circumstances of so great trial." The debate was very bitterly contested on both sides of the House, but the remaining speakers quite disregarded the colonial aspect of the question and the probable effect of the Government's proposals upon the relations of the colonies to the motherland. Upon a division being taken, the Bill was carried by the narrow majority of 10: Contents, 173; Non-Contents, 163. On June 26 Her Majesty duly signified her assent to the Bill.

Unfortunately the passage of the Bill was too long delayed to be of material service that season to the merchants on the St. Lawrence. More than half of the season of navigation was over before they learned of the opening of colonial ports to the ships of all nations. For the time being, therefore, the anxiously awaited boon was of very little value. Moreover the condition of business in Montreal was so stagnant that trade and shipping shunned the city. The docks of the city were deserted, and the warehouses filled with unsold goods.

For some time past the thoughts of the commercial community had been directed to the United States, by the impending change in the fiscal policy of the motherland. In 1846,¹ an address was voted by the Canadian Parliament to Her Majesty, praying that in the event of a modification in the law regulating the admission of foreign grain into the British market, due regard should be had to the interests of Canada; and, as a measure which would be greatly conducive to that end, Her Majesty was respectfully requested to cause the necessary steps to be taken for opening up negotiations with the Government of the United States for the admission of Canadian products into the ports of that country on the same terms that American products were admitted into the ports of Great Britain and Canada. To this request Her Majesty was pleased

¹ May 12, 1846; Haynes, *The Reciprocity Treaty with Canada of 1854*, p. 11 (Amer. Econ. Assoc., November, 1892).

to accede, and the Governor-General was authorised to assure the Canadian Assembly that the earliest opportunity would be taken to press upon the United States the subject of an "equality of trade" between the two countries.¹

Accordingly, towards the end of the year, the British ambassador at Washington brought the matter to the attention of Mr. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, who submitted the whole question to the President and his advisers. The views of the American Government "were favourable to the principle of a reciprocal relaxation of commercial intercourse between Canada and the United States" As the speediest way of bringing about so desirable an object, it was judged most expedient to introduce into Congress a Bill for the free exchange of certain agricultural and natural produce upon terms of reciprocity on the part of Canada. A Bill was drawn up by Mr. Grinnel, an influential member of the Committee on Commerce, and its adoption was strongly recommended by the Secretary of the Treasury in a communication to that committee. The Bill passed through the House of Representatives without opposition, but owing to the great pressure of other business was not voted upon by the Senate.²

Since the repeal of the Canadian differential duties, the attention of many American traders in the New England and Eastern States had turned to the possible development of a valuable market for American products in Canada. Already a considerable commerce had grown up between New York and the western district of Upper Canada, thanks to their propinquity, the beneficial operation of the bonding privileges, and the system of drawbacks of the United States tariff. The results of this limited freedom of exchange had

¹ Porritt, *Fifty Years of Protection in Canada*, p. 85; Haynes, *The Reciprocity Treaty with Canada of 1854*, p. 12.

² *Ex. Doc.*, No 64, 1st Session, 31st Congress; Porritt, *Fifty Years of Protection in Canada*, p. 89.

proved so satisfactory to some of the northern traders that an agitation had arisen in certain quarters for a more liberal commercial arrangement with Canada.

The fiscal policy of the President was well adapted to promote the interests of the border states. Early in the following session another attempt was made by the Administration to comply with the wishes of the Canadian people, as expressed by the British ambassador.¹ To this end a Bill was introduced into Congress by Senator Dix of New York, providing for a limited free trade across the boundary in respect to certain agricultural products, the growth of the respective countries. In the course of an able advocacy of the measure, the Senator was led to consider the state of Canadian opinion upon the question, and the relation between the kindred subjects of reciprocity and annexation. "I know personally," he declared, "many of the prominent men in Canada. I know that they are strongly opposed to separation from the mother country. They desire union with England first, independence next, and annexation with the United States last of all. They desire a free exchange of products with us, because they believe that the existing restrictions upon our commerce are prejudicial to both countries; and they desire nothing more. What the feeling is with the great body of people in Canada I have no means of knowing. That they desire free intercourse with us there is no doubt.

"For myself, I have hitherto spoken freely upon this subject. I would neither be forward in courting the annexation of adjacent states, nor backward in acceding to it. I would neither make overtures, nor repel them, without good cause. I believe that we are large enough for all the purposes of security and strength; but I do not fear further extension, nor would I decline it, when circumstances render it convenient to ourselves or others.

¹ Porritt, *Fifty Years of Protection in Canada*, pp. 90-94.

² *Congressional Globe*, 2nd Session, 30th Congress, p. 331.

" Mr. President, this consideration has been urged, and urged directly, as an objection to commercial freedom between the United States and Canada. I have recently heard it from the anti-Liberal party in Canada, who are for new restrictions upon our commerce. They are in favour of the existing restrictions, as well as new ones, upon the ground that free intercourse may lead to a political union between Canada and the United States. . . .

" Whether this view is just or not, I do not believe that the result is to be defeated in either of the modes proposed—by a continuation of existing restrictions, or by the imposition of new ones. I believe the tendency of such measures will be to hasten and to consummate the very end they are intended to defeat."

Reciprocity, he pointed out, had been recommended on several occasions by the Treasury Department, as a measure well calculated to promote the mutual interests of the two countries. He warned the Southern senators, who were opposing the Bill, that unless the existing commercial restrictions were removed, they might hasten the desire for annexation among the Canadian people. But, notwithstanding the support of the President, the Bill again failed to pass owing to a variety of causes—the lateness of the session, the insistent demand of the manufacturing interests for the addition of certain finished products to the list of free exchanges, and, more particularly, the stubborn opposition of the Southern members, who regarded the Bill with a jealous suspicion as a quasi-annexation measure, which might in the end adversely affect the maintenance of slavery by the incorporation of new free states in the Union.

At the same time, the Canadian Legislature was dealing with a similar proposal. A resolution was introduced into the Assembly by Mr. Hamilton Merritt,¹ at the instance of the Ministry, in favour of an agreement with the United States for the exchange of certain

¹ February 2, 1849.

natural products. The resolution was strongly opposed by the protectionist members of the House, who endeavoured to secure a postponement of the question until the views of Congress were officially made known. But, after a lively debate, the resolution was carried by fifty-eight to twelve. A Bill in conformity with the resolution was thereupon presented to the House; and, notwithstanding the stress of the struggle over the Rebellion Losses Bill, and the failure of Congress to take action, was adopted on the third reading by thirty-two Ayes to eight Noes.¹ In moving the final reading of the Bill, Mr. Merritt expressed his firm conviction that a favourable arrangement would be made with the United States Government in the near future. In the Legislative Council the measure did not encounter any serious opposition. As assented to by the Governor-General, the Bill had a purely facultative character, since its operation was made dependent upon the adoption of a similar measure on the part of the United States.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1849, commercial conditions on the Lower St. Lawrence were steadily growing worse. The prospects of the colony were as dark and gloomy as they well could be. Abandoned by the motherland, disappointed by the United States, and debarred from the markets of Europe, the commercial public were driven by sheer desperation into the dangerous course of disloyalty. The local government could render no assistance, for it was itself on the verge of insolvency. The condition of affairs was very vividly described by an acute observer, the Rev. Dr. Dixon, ex-president of the British Wesleyan Conference, who had recently made a tour of the provinces and of the United States. "Canada," he wrote, "now belongs to Great Britain by a figment, a tradition of loyalty, a recollection of heroic deeds, and not by any material interest or benefit. Nay, in the present depressed state of things, cast off by the

¹ March 6, 1849.

mother country, and left to their own resources, with the United States close by their side possessing vast political power and influence, a growing credit and monetary resources, a prodigious mercantile and commercial navy, an active, industrious, and virtuous people, a Government capable in all respects and equally disposed to foster, protect, and strengthen all its possessions—we say, with these things staring them in the face the policy of this country has made it the plain palpable interest of the Canadian to seek for annexation. This is as clear as any problem in Euclid. How long the traditions of loyalty will weigh against the interests now put in the balance against them, nobody need be at a loss to determine."

The uncompromising refusal of the English Government to reconsider the fiscal policy of the motherland, which was didactically pronounced¹ by the Colonial Secretary "to be best calculated to promote the permanent interests of the empire at large," at last convinced the Canadian people of the fruitlessness of further appeals to the British Parliament for the restoration of protective duties. In bitter disappointment at such ungenerous treatment from the mother country the commercial community anxiously turned their eyes to Washington in the hope of securing relief from that quarter. The Earl of Elgin continued to urge upon the English authorities the pressing necessity of securing a market for Canadian products in the United States; but so sorry was the condition of Canadian affairs, that His Excellency was forced to admit that the end of the imperial connection might be near at hand. The Governor-General, in fact, entertained grave doubts as to whether the empire which had been built up on the principle of a community of interest between the colonies and the homeland could long maintain its unity under the régime of free trade and colonial autonomy.²

¹ Letter of Earl Grey in reply to the petition of the Montreal Board of Trade, July 6, 1849.

² *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 113.

The position of the colony was made all the more difficult and dubious by the rapid growth in popular and parliamentary favour of a system of doctrines which aimed at a revolutionary change in the organization of the empire, and even appeared to threaten its total dismemberment. Since the close of the eighteenth century, English opinion in respect to the colonies had undergone several striking modifications. The loss of the American colonies, which was ascribed by the narrow-minded politicians of the time to an undue liberality of colonial policy, was followed by a long period of repression. Tory imperialistic ideas of the authority of the Governors, and the supremacy of the Colonial Office, were in the ascendency, and passed practically unchallenged. Democratic institutions were regarded as a source of discontent and a menace to the motherland. To the general public, the distant dependencies of the Crown were places of exile, the dumping-ground of convicts and other undesirables.

But in the second quarter of the nineteenth century a new, if somewhat artificial, interest was awakened in colonies and colonization. The rapid industrial development of England called for the opening of new markets. At the same time, the iniquitous operation of the Poor Laws, and the squalid poverty of the great manufacturing cities, were proving a serious burden on the tax-payers and a danger to the moral and social life of the State. Capitalists and philanthropists alike saw, or thought they saw, a happy means of escape from the ills that confronted them. The colonies, it was believed, would afford an expanding market for English manufactures, a profitable field for the investment of capital, and a promising home for thousands of emigrants. The Government caught the fever of the time. For the old policy of neglect, tempered by autocracy, was substituted a policy of benevolent, if often misguided, paternalism. Encouragement was granted to emigration, liberal appropriations were

made to public works, and to the cost of the civil and military administration in the colonies; and, most important of all, special fiscal advantages were extended to colonial products in the English markets.

On the political side, the powers of the governors were curtailed by the introduction of representative institutions and the promise was held out of a further extension of the principles of self-government, when the growth of population and the ripening experience of the colonists in local administration should warrant it. In short, the colonies were treated as the favoured children of the mother country. Though oftentimes vexed by the meddlesome interference of the Colonial Office in their domestic affairs, the colonies nevertheless took on a new lease of life. This development was undoubtedly partially artificial, and to that extent unhealthy, especially in fostering a spirit of undue dependence upon imperial favour. But, upon the whole, the paternal policy of the home authorities was helpful in assisting the weak dependencies over the hard pioneer stage of political existence.

But a new school of political economists arose, who boldly challenged the theories, and condemned the policies of the statesmen of the day. In opposition to the accepted doctrine of benevolent paternalism, they presented a new materialistic gospel of individual and national liberty. The tenets of free trade were only one phase, though a most important one, of the general political philosophy of the Manchester School. Their views on colonial policy were as clearly formulated, though not as fully developed, as their scientific opinions on economic questions. They abhorred the whole system of imperialism, as hostile to the interests of English democracy, and inimical to the spirit of colonial nationalism. They demanded the release of the colonies from the state of tutelage, and their elevation to the full rank of statehood, as equal and independent members of the family of nations.

In the House of Commons, the leaders of the Liberal

Party were constantly proclaiming that the government of the colonies should be surrendered to the colonists themselves. They desired to throw off on the colonies the financial burden and the political responsibility of their own administration, and to bestow upon them the same plenary powers of self-government as were enjoyed in England, save in respect to matters of exclusively imperial concern, such as the regulation of foreign relations and questions of war and peace. But the grant of national freedom ought, in their opinion, to be accompanied by the withdrawal of the special privileges the colonies enjoyed in virtue of their colonial status; in particular, the fiscal preference, the imperial contributions to the civil and ecclesiastical establishments of the colonies, and the maintenance by the mother country of the military and naval forces in the various dependencies.

Some of the more advanced of the Radical thinkers and politicians went even further in their political speculations.¹ The retention of the colonies, in their eyes, was incompatible with the maintenance of free institutions at home, or the development of a democratic government in the distant dependencies. The over-sea possessions represented to them the happy hunting-ground of Tory imperialism. They were a grand source of patronage and political corruption for the English aristocracy. The colonies not only imposed a heavy burden upon the British Treasury, but were a constant source of discord in English politics. In peace, they were a useless luxury; in war, a menace to the security of the nation. The frequent outbreaks of political discontent in the colonies furnished, in their judgment, the most con-

¹ Professor Egerton has brought out clearly the essential difference in the views of the early Liberal colonial reformers, as Lord Durham, Butler, and Sir W. Molesworth, who were genuine imperialists, and the narrow conceptions of colonial policy of Cobden, Bright, and other Radical leaders, who were thorough-going Little Englanders. Egerton, *British Colonial Policy*, pp. 366-7.

vincing proof of the incapacity of British officials at home and abroad to administer the affairs of distant possessions. The colonies, moreover, distracted the attention of the English public and Parliament from the consideration of more important social and political problems at home. They were a source of envy to foreign powers, and a frequent occasion of international difficulties. In short, they were an irksome, if not useless, encumbrance to the mother country. Under these circumstances, it was to the interest of both England and the colonies that the connection should be broken as soon as possible. It was evident, from the experience of the early American colonies, that the imperial tie could not be permanent. A distinct nationality was the manifest destiny of the self-governing dominions. Since independence was inevitable, it was better that the separation should take place peaceably, with the free consent and blessing of the mother country, rather than come as the result of bickerings, or, mayhap, of a bloody struggle, which might embitter their future relations for all time. As independent states, the colonies would take on a higher and nobler existence. Happily free from the dangers and complications of European politics, and rejoicing in the possession of civil and religious liberty, and a democratic form of social organization best suited to the development of their immense natural resources, the new-born states could aspire to play a prominent part in the affairs of the new world, and to wield a liberalizing influence upon the civilization of the old.

The doctrines of the Manchester School had just won a signal triumph in the field of economics in the adoption of the free-trade policy; they now threatened to exert an equal influence upon the course of the political history of the colonies. Some of the Whig leaders, and many prominent members of Parliament, Tories as well as Radicals, accepted, in whole or in part, the colonial as well as the economic tenets

of the Little Englanders.¹ A large proportion of the most influential magazines and journals of the kingdom, including *The Edinburgh Review* and *The London Times*, openly espoused the new political philosophy. The consecrated zeal of Cobden and the burning eloquence of Bright commanded the attention of the whole nation. From a thousand platforms of the Free Trade League, the economic and political philosophy of the Manchester School was widely disseminated.

The new political doctrines soon crossed the seas and made their influence, felt upon public opinion in the colonies. It was, indeed, a stunning blow to the colonial loyalists to be frankly informed by the press and politicians of England, that loyalty was not necessarily a virtue, that their devotion to the Crown was no longer estimated at its full face value, and that it would probably be better for both England and the colonies if the latter should peacefully cut the painter. It was but natural that the colonial Tories should resent the appearance of a set of dogmas which placed a stigma on their time-honoured traditions; and this resentment was still further accentuated upon the adoption by the Whig Government of some of the detested principles of the Manchester School. On the other hand, the new doctrines found much favour among the colonial Reformers. The sympathy which they naturally felt for the English Radicals, from whom they derived their own political principles, was intensified in this case by the earnest desire to free the colonies from the meddlesome interference of Downing Street officials. They were not ready as yet to sever the imperial bond, but they welcomed any doctrines which promised to extend the measure of colonial self-government.

In Canada, the moment was especially propitious

¹ Reid, *Life and Letters of the First Earl of Durham*, vol. ii. p. 137, Melbourne to Durham, July 22, 1837; Parker, *Sir Robert Peel*, vol. iii. pp. 388-90, Peel to Aberdeen, October 25, 1841.

for the reception of the new philosophy. The ground had already been prepared by recent events for the scattering of the seed. The Tories, sullen and embittered by the loss of power, were prone to adopt the tenet of colonial separation, as a means of justifying their vindictive spleen against the British Government. The Reformers, on the other hand, were delighted at the opportunity of putting into effect the constitutional principles of self-government for which they had so long struggled in opposition. The agricultural and mercantile interests were almost forced by the law of self-preservation into a movement to carry the political doctrines of the Manchester School to their logical conclusion. Surely, it was thought, a Government which had sacrificed the vested interests of Canada, could not complain if the colonists should, likewise, adopt such measures as might seem best calculated to restore their prosperity, "without regard to imperial considerations. Had they not been invited, in effect, to relieve the motherland of her colonial obligations, and to assume the responsibility of their own administration? In short, in the colonies, as well as the homeland, the theories of Adam Smith and the teachings of Cobden had prepared the way for a peaceful revolution.

"All parties," *The Montreal Gazette* declared,¹ "are convinced that the policy of England is to leave the colonies to themselves in politics and commerce. The withdrawal of colonial protection was followed by the invitation to the colonies to abolish their system of preferential duties. These steps indicate an intention of directing the colonial education towards total independence." *The Herald*, likewise, shared the opinion that the British Government would gladly give up the colonies. "The whole current of opinion," it maintained, "among England's most influential statesmen, is evidently tending towards that point where they will bid adieu to the colonies, with wishes

¹ April 13, 1849.

for their prosperity and hopes for continued friendship." Since England no longer retained a monopoly of Canadian trade, there remained to her only "the pride of sovereignty and the cost." The English Government, it believed, would be especially pleased to grant independence to Canada, since "British supremacy had been mocked, and Great Britain disgraced," by recent political events in the colony.

The character of the agitation for annexation at this time was admirably described by Lord Elgin in a communication to the Colonial Secretary. "There has been a vast deal of talk about annexation, as is unfortunately the case when there is anything to agitate the public mind. If half the talk on this subject were sincere, I should consider an attempt to keep up the connection with Great Britain as Utopian in the extreme. For, no matter what the subject of complaint, or what the party complaining; whether it be alleged that the French are oppressing the British, or the British the French—that Upper Canada debt presses on Lower Canada, or Lower Canada claims on Upper; whether merchants be bankrupt, stocks depreciated, roads bad or seasons unfavourable, annexation is invoked as the remedy for all evils imaginary or real. A great deal of this talk is, however, bravado, and a great deal the mere product of thoughtlessness. Undoubtedly it is in some quarters the utterance of every serious conviction; and if England will not make the sacrifices which are absolutely necessary to put the colonists here in as good a position commercially as the citizens of the States—in order to which free navigation and reciprocal trade with the States are indispensable; if not only the organs of the League, but those of the Government and the Peel party, are always writing as if it were an admitted fact that colonies, and more especially Canada, are a burden to be endured only because they cannot be got rid of, the end may be nearer at hand than we wot of."

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRIT OF DISCONTENT

Political conditions in the Province—Collapse of the Tory Party—Dissensions among the Reformers—French domination—Origin of the British American League—Address of the League—The League and the Annexationists—Opinion of members in Lower Canada—In Upper Canada—Attacks of Reformers on loyalty of the League—The Kingston Convention—Debates in Convention regarding annexation—Adoption of resolution of loyalty—The principles of the party, Protection, Retrenchment, and a Union of the Provinces—Address of the League—Disappointment of the Reformers and the American Annexationists—Annexation feeling among the French Canadians—Papineau and Le Parti Rouge Organs of the party support annexation—Attitude of the French Ministerial press—Growth of annexation sentiments in Montreal—Prospectus of an annexation paper—Favourable attitude of several Tory papers—Changing character of annexation movement—A commercial issue—Public opinion in Quebec—Launching of a Papineau paper—Sentiment in the Eastern Townships—Opinion in Upper Canada—Loyalty of the Toronto Tories—Attitude of the leading Reform journals—*The Canadian Independent*—Criticism throughout Upper Canada of the policy of annexation—Tour of Lord Elgin.

IN the meanwhile, out of the troublous times, a gradual reorganization of political parties was taking place. It would, indeed, have been strange if the existing political discontent and economic distress had not given birth to a new party with a new set of principles to remedy the ills of society. The public were ready for a change, if not for a political revolution. The Tory Party was wrecked. After enjoying for so long the spoils of office and the special favour of the Governors, it could not bear with equanimity to be cast out into the cool shades of opposition. The proceedings of the Montreal mob had

thoroughly humiliated them. The social order had changed; democratic ideas were in the ascendency, new constitutional principles were in vogue, the doctrines of divine right and special privilege in Church and State were discredited. They had fought a losing battle for a lost cause. The free spirit of the age was against them.

Unfortunately, in this crisis, the leaders of the party were unable to control the actions of their disunited followers, or to formulate a new political programme adapted to the necessities of the time. They stood helplessly by, allowing matters to drift along a dangerous course. An extreme section of the party, embittered by their humiliating treatment at the hands of the English Government, and freed from the restraining influence of their natural leaders, threw overboard the time-honoured principle of loyalty, and entered upon an active campaign in favour of annexation. The bulk of the party either groped around blindly in the dark, or, like Micawber, idly waited for something favourable to turn up. On the other hand, a small body of progressive members sought to rehabilitate the party by advocating the adoption of some of the democratic principles of their political opponents.

The condition of the Reformers, though seemingly prosperous, was by no means reassuring. After a long arduous struggle against heavy odds, they were at last returned to power under favourable circumstances which seemed to promise a long tenure of office. The Governor was a statesman of well-known Liberal principles, the leaders of the party were strong and able men, and the Assembly was overwhelmingly Reform in its composition. But, from an early date, the party had been divided in sentiment and policy into a Radical and a Conservative wing. The long struggle in opposition for the principle of responsible government had served to heal over the differences which the revolt of 1837-8 had caused among the leaders, and in the ranks

of the party. But on accession to office, the old cleavage threatened to open up again. The overwhelming strength of the party, together with the hopeless weakness of their opponents, weakened party discipline, accentuated personal rivalries and internal dissension, and aggravated the danger of a division of the party into two distinct and hostile camps. The Radical or Clear Grit wing preached the gospel of a triumphant democracy. They derived their political opinions to a large extent from the doctrines and experience of the neighbouring American states.

The Chartist agitation in the homeland, and the revolutionary propaganda in Europe, further contributed to spread the spirit of social discontent among the people, and to give them a roseate conception of the blessing of republican institutions. On the other hand, the Conservative element of the party were adverse to any important constitutional changes. They were satisfied with the grant of ministerial responsibility, and preferred, for the time being, to enjoy in peace the emoluments of office, rather than to go rushing forward into any further agitation. They were alarmed at the rapid growth of republican sympathies within the party, and fearful that these tendencies might develop into a distinct separationist movement. The leaders of the Government were placed in a most difficult and embarrassing position in their attempts to maintain the unity of the party, and, at the same time, to restrain the radicalism of a portion of their supporters. Unfortunately, their efforts were not attended with much success. The breach within the party grew wider and wider every day.

The policy of the English Government, as we have seen, had alienated the hearts of many of the colonists. The ruin of the colony was too high a price to pay for the reputed blessings of British citizenship. Not only was the vacillating policy of the mother country largely responsible for the prevailing commercial depression, but the British ministers had obdurately

hardened their hearts against the petitions of the colonists for the restoration of the protective system. The commercial community of Canada were quick to learn the lesson of national self-interest. In their distress and resentment, they caught up the demand of the English Radicals for the emancipation of the colonies. A connection which was mutually burdensome and disadvantageous should not, and, it was contended, could not, be permanently maintained.

The Provincial Government also had to bear a share of the public criticism that falls to the lot of every Government which has the misfortune to be in power during a period of economic distress. The fact that the Ministry were in no way responsible for the existing depression was quite disregarded, whereas the failure of their efforts to induce the Governments at Westminster and Washington to grant concessions to Canadian trade was keenly felt in every home. Through no fault of their own, the Government were made to present to the public a spectacle of helpless incompetence. Many of the mercantile community did not fail to draw the conclusion that they must needs look to another source than their own Government for the relief of the country's ills.

The situation was still further aggravated by the intensity of partisan feeling and the bitterness of racial hatred which had developed out of the events of the last ten years. Since the days of Mackenzie and Papineau, the relations of the political parties had been particularly envenomed; the struggle had been, not so much a conflict of men and of principles as a war between churches, races, and religions. The triumph of the Reformers in 1848, as we have seen, intensified the malignity of partisan and racial feeling. French domination was made the political issue of the day. A civil war was barely averted, and the danger was not yet past. A large part of the energies of the public was used up in these internecine struggles, which paralysed the economic vigour of the people,

destroyed the social unity of the community, and endangered the future welfare and prosperity of the colony.

Within the province, there appeared to be no immediate escape from these direful conditions; the races were too nearly equal in number, and the issues too vitally concerned the social welfare and the religious convictions of the participants, to permit either party to lay down its weapons of war, and declare a permanent peace of God. Since there was no prospect of an extensive immigration from the British Isles, or the United States, it almost seemed as if the war of races, broken only by temporary truces, must needs go on for ever, unless the ascendancy of the Anglo-Saxon race could be assured by a union with the United States. To many a loyal Briton, there appeared to be no other alternative to French domination than annexation to the neighbouring republic. To many others, who were comparatively indifferent to political and religious questions, annexation seemed the simplest remedy for the distracted state of the province. The commercial community longed, above everything else, for the cessation of the strife of parties and races and for the opportunity of pursuing their business interests under the more favourable conditions which prevailed across the border. The country was sick at heart and cried for peace.

Out of the economic distress, the social discontent, and the turmoil of race and party, arose the British American League, the primary product of an indeterminate spirit of political unrest and disaffection. "There is," declared *The Montreal Gazette*,¹ "a pre-sentiment of approaching change. At no time has there been greater disaffection, or so strong a desire for something different. Men know what they feel without particularly analysing the causes or tracing them to their sources, although they may not be able to determine definitely the objects they desire or the means of attaining them."

¹ *The Gazette*, April 13, 1849.

The first branch of the League was formed at Brockville, with the avowed object of uniting the Anglo-Saxon population against the dominant influence of the French. Soon after a branch was established in Montreal,¹ which became the headquarters of the League's activities. The prime mover in the new organization was the Hon. George Moffatt, an able and prominent business man of the city, and an influential member of the Conservative Party. By reason of his well-known moderate views, and his extensive business connections, he exerted a wide commercial and political influence throughout Lower and Upper Canada. By gathering together all the disaffected elements in the country, he hoped to build up a strong organization upon the wreckage of the Tory Party.

An address, accordingly, was issued by the League to the public, pointing out in detail the evils, commercial, racial, and political, from which the country was suffering, and calling for a convention to take into consideration the commercial crisis, and the constitutional changes which the situation demanded. The address expressly disclaimed any desire to determine in advance the principles by which the convention should be guided, or the remedies which should be proposed for the manifold ills of the colony. All such matters were reserved for the determination of the convention itself. But upon the much-mooted question of the political future of the country in relation to Great Britain, the address spoke out in the most uncompromising language. "To maintain that connection inviolate has been, and still is, the ardent wish of every member of the League. We devoutly hope that no measure of injustice may ever be inflicted, no power may ever be abused, to the extent of provoking reflecting men to the contemplation of an alliance with a foreign power; if there be, as some have said, a time when all colonies must, in the course of human events, throw off their dependence on the parent state,

¹ *The Gazette*, April 19, 1849.

and if, in our generation, that time should be destined to arise, we predict that, if true to ourselves, it will not come until no British hands remain able to hoist the flag of England on the rock of Quebec, and no British voices survive able to shout 'God save the Queen.'"

But the actions of the League by no means corresponded to its ultra-patriotic professions. The Montreal branch readily received into membership persons of the most varied beliefs in regard to the ills of the country and its political future. Annexationists, as the most active and energetic critics of the existing régime, were gladly welcomed into membership. In truth, the principles of the League were left vague and uncertain, in order the better to attract all the discordant opponents of the Ministry. The Annexationists on their part, either in the hope of converting the League to their own political purposes, or merely with a view to the more effective prosecution of their propaganda, joined the League in large numbers. Some of the officers of the League, and many of the members, were open and avowed supporters of continental union. Mr. Harrison Stephens, one of the vice-presidents of the local association, and moreover an American citizen, openly proclaimed his intention to do his best to bring about annexation.¹ Although not prepared to go so far as Mr. Stephens in advocating a breach of the British connection, many members sympathized with the movement to the extent of regarding the prospect of separation with complacency, as probably the simplest and best solution of the country's troubles; while in the minds of others annexation was a sort of *arrière-pensée*, a last means of salvation in case all other means of relief should entirely fail.

The active propaganda of the Annexationists did not fail to produce a feeling of irritation among the loyalist members of the League. Strife soon broke out between the two factions. The immediate occasion of discord

¹ *The Montreal Pilot*, May 17, 1849.

was the fear of the Tory loyalists that their annexation brethren might seek to procure the election of annexation delegates to the approaching convention, as a first and necessary step to capturing the convention itself, and committing the League to the policy of annexation. The Hon. George Moffatt took alarm, and, according to report, not only threatened to resign the presidency of the local branch, but announced his determination not to attend the approaching convention, unless all discussion of the subject of annexation was excluded from its deliberations. The resolute attitude of the President displeased many members of the League, who did not find his policy sufficiently progressive to suit their views. Some of the more pronounced Annexationists accordingly deserted the League, with a view to the formation of a distinct Association to bring about a union with the United States by peaceable means.¹ A test of the relative strength of the two factions took place soon after the election of delegates to the convention. This election, which was presided over by Mr. F. G. Johnston, Q.C., a prominent member of the annexation group, showed a decided majority for the candidates favourable to the British connection.² Only one of the five delegates chosen, Mr. Charles Backus, sympathized in any way with the views of the separationists.

The condition of affairs in Quebec was somewhat similar to that in Montreal. Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Thomas Wilson, a branch of the League was formed in Quebec, early in May. The League, he explained,³ was non-political in character, and had no connection whatever with the recent riotous proceedings in Montreal. The primary object of the Association was to devise some means of rescuing the country from its political and commercial difficulties. While professing the deepest loyalty to Great Britain, he declared that

¹ Montreal correspondent to *The Toronto Globe*, June 25, 1849.

² *The Montreal Pilot*, July 19, 1849.

³ *The Quebec Gazette*, May 5, 1849.

if the day should ever come when the welfare and prosperity of the province were incompatible with the colonial status, he would no longer advocate a connection which was prejudicial to the best interests of the country. He expressly declined to pledge the convention in advance to the maintenance of the imperial union.

The equivocal attitude of Mr. Wilson and other prominent members of the League served to strengthen the opinion of many outsiders that the real object of that body was annexation. *The Quebec Gazette* endeavoured to remove the unjust prejudice which this suspicion had aroused amongst the English population, by assuring its readers that "such a design was entirely foreign to the purpose of the League." Notwithstanding this assurance, persons of well-known annexation views were not only received into membership, but were honoured with responsible positions in the local League. The question of the attitude of the League towards annexation was publicly raised at a subsequent meeting of the League, but no satisfactory response was forthcoming. The League in Quebec, as in Montreal, was committed to no general principles, but each member was left free to maintain his own private opinion.

Mr. Wilson, who was elected President of the local Association, advocated the adoption of a protective policy for Canadian labour and industries, and the maintenance of the British connection until it should be found that such connection was not likely to be advantageous to England, or profitable to the colony, while Mr. John Gordon, a prominent Tory politician, who was subsequently elected a member of the local Grand Council, emphatically declared that he was in favour of annexation, and considered that nothing else would "right the country."¹ Just prior to the meeting of the convention Mr. Wilson addressed an open letter to the members of the Association, in which, after pointing out the various courses which had been

¹ Quoted from *The Toronto Globe*, July 5, 1849.

suggested to meet the altered policy and extraordinary legislation of the Imperial and Colonial Governments—namely (1) the separation of Eastern and Western Canada with a readjustment of boundary, (2) a legislative union of the British American provinces with a change in the constitution of the Government, (3) Independence, (4) Annexation—he pronounced himself as strongly in favour of the second solution. Although Mr. Wilson was chosen as delegate to the Convention, the local Association was by no means committed to the views of its able President.

In the eastern townships, annexation sentiment was somewhat prevalent among the English population, but, as yet, the new political gospel had not found general acceptance. Of the various branches of the League throughout the district, only one, that at Melbourne, came out distinctly for annexation, provided it could be effected "peaceably and honourably." Many of the members of the League were undoubtedly in sympathy with the growing movement in favour of annexation, but they hesitated to commit their several Leagues or the approaching Convention to a definite policy. As a result of this non-committal attitude, the delegates to the Convention were left free to draw up a platform for the Association according to their own best judgment of the political situation and the needs of the country.

In Upper Canada, annexation feeling had not made much progress among the members of the League; only here and there, at widely scattered points, was it at all in evidence. At Brockville, which was within the Montreal sphere of influence, several Annexationists were among those most active in organizing and directing the policy of the League. Even Mr. Gowan, the most loyal of Tory Orangemen, did not find it incompatible with his political principles to sit at the Council Board with fellow officers of well-known annexation views.¹ In the Hamilton district, an able and respect-

¹ *The Montreal Gazette*, April 13, 1849.

able member of the Tory Party, Mr. H. B. Willson, son of the Hon. John Wilson, formerly Speaker of the Upper Canada Assembly in the days of the Family Compact, took up the annexation cause with much energy and enthusiasm. He belonged to the interesting type of the democratic Tory; in brief, he was a Tory by education, a Radical in feeling, and an Annexationist by interest.¹ He set himself to the difficult task of converting the Leagues of the west to more democratic principles, but he soon found that the undertaking far exceeded his power and ability, and that he could not hope to accomplish his object in the limited time at his disposal before the meeting of the Convention. Thanks, however, to his earnest advocacy of the principle of elective institutions, he was chosen by the Saltfleet Branch of the League as a delegate to the Convention. But the movement in favour of republican institutions did not spread much farther among the Leagues. *The Hamilton Spectator*, the chief Tory organ of the district, distinctly disavowed all connection of the League with the annexation movement, and, with few exceptions, the members of the League in Upper Canada remained staunchly loyal to the British flag.

The Reform Party had been following the course of the League with anxious jealousy. The equivocal declarations of several of the leaders of the League, together with the open annexation proclivities of the Montreal Branch, furnished the Liberal press with plenty of material with which to throw suspicion upon the motives of the League. From one end of the country to the other, it was held up to scorn and ridicule as at heart a Tory annexation body. At a public meeting of Reformers at Peterborough, a resolution was adopted condemning the formation of the League, "the objects of which are to create strife and dissatisfaction in the country, and ultimately to sever the bonds between them and Great

¹ *The Toronto Globe*, August 4, 1849.

Britain."¹ Just prior to the assembling of the Convention *The Toronto Globe* solemnly declared that the Tories of Upper Canada "were sold into the hands of desperadoes whose real object was annexation."²

As the time drew near for the assembling of the Convention, an increasing interest was manifested by the public as to its probable declaration of principles. The election of delegates in Upper Canada, where the League had the largest number of branches and the bulk of its membership, resulted in the return of an overwhelming majority of supporters of British connection. On the other hand, the smaller group of representatives from Lower Canada were divided upon the question of separation. However, the general result was so decisive, that even the Annexationists saw little prospect of winning the Convention over to their views. The Montreal correspondent of *The St. John's News*—a League paper—expressed the fear that there were too many Tories who "still clung to the exploded theory of Divine Right" to raise successfully the question of annexation in the Convention.³ The special correspondent of *The Globe* in the same city likewise wrote that, according to report, the question would not even be considered by the Convention, as the time was not yet ripe for its discussion, and "the people would not stand for it."⁴ Mr. Wilson of Hamilton, who was well acquainted with the state of public opinion in Upper Canada, similarly declared that the subject would not be broadly broached by its advocates at the Convention, but that the preliminaries, separation and independence, might be proposed, "as more likely to win general support."⁵ In truth, the election of delegates disposed of the question in advance, and the Annexationists saw the necessity of accepting the verdict against them.

¹ *The Toronto Globe*, June 23, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, July 26, 1849.

³ Quoted in *The Toronto Globe*, July 26, 1849.

⁴ *The Toronto Globe*, July 29, 1849.

⁵ *Ibid.*, July 28, 1849.

The Convention, which met at Kingston, July 26, was a most heterogeneous body, representing almost every phase of public opinion, save that of the French population. There were about one hundred and fifty delegates in attendance, from all parts of the country from Quebec to Sandwich. Although but comparatively few in numbers, the representatives from Lower Canada wielded a much greater influence than their voting strength warranted, partly owing to the superior ability of the delegates, and partly on account of their more advanced opinions on the questions of the day. Although the High Church Tories of Upper Canada formed the backbone of the Convention, yet among the delegates were to be found Annexationists, supporters of independence, advocates of a federal union of the British American colonies, provincial partitionists who demanded a repeal of the Act of Union, Orangemen with pronounced anti-French views, and even a few Radicals who clamoured for popular elective institutions.

In such a gathering, where the chief bond of union was opposition to the Reform Administration, it was practically impossible to suppress all reference to the question of annexation, however anxious the chairman, Mr. Moffatt, and the majority of delegates might be to shelve its discussion. The question kept cropping up at inopportune moments. A resolution of Mr. Wilson, of Quebec, in favour of the election of Legislative Councillors, greatly alarmed the ultra-Tory members, who saw in the resolution a dangerous step towards the adoption of republican institutions. An amendment was accordingly moved by Mr. Ermatinger, setting forth in fervid language the loyalty of the Convention to the Crown and to the principles of the British Constitution. In the ensuing discussion, several of the delegates from Lower Canada bitterly arraigned the Imperial Government for its political and commercial policy. Although not venturing openly to avow themselves Annexationists, they were eager for a change in

the form of the local constitution, and for the adoption of such strong political measures as would teach the English Government to respect colonial opinion. A few Upper Canadians supported them in this attitude, but the vast majority, restrained by their Tory traditions, were desirous only of building up a working political organization of moderate views upon the basis of the old Conservative Party. The amendment was carried by 89 to 19.

Upon a resolution of Mr. Gowan for the organization of a National Association of the Leagues, the question was more directly raised by Mr. Backus of Montreal, who, in a fighting speech, declared: "If we are to be told by every succeeding Government in England that we are nothing in their eyes, that we are at perfect liberty to go whenever it is our interest to do so, let us raise ourselves at once to the standard of a nation." (Cheers and disapprobation.) It was unreasonable to suppose that nothing was to be said here but what would agree with their wonted feelings of loyalty; they must be prepared to forget that they were colonists, and take a step for themselves. This frank declaration got the speaker into difficulties, and he was forced to defend himself against the charge of being an annexationist. Annexation, he explained, ought to be adopted only as a final resort, in case all other measures should fail to bring relief. A subsequent resolution by Mr. Gowan expressing unfaltering attachment to the British connection, and praying for the recall of the Earl of Elgin, called forth several warm speeches in condemnation of annexation. Mr. Parsons of Beauharnois declared that it was necessary that the Convention should show the falsity of the representations of their opponents, who had led the whole American public to look forward to a declaration in favour of independence on the part of the Convention. Annexation, in his judgment, would be the greatest calamity which could befall a British subject; but, nevertheless, he would prefer annexation to a

change in the Constitution. Still another speaker¹ attacked the annexation movement on the ground that Canadians would thereby degrade themselves to the level of slaveholders. Both the United States and France should be made to realize that they would never see the severance of Canada from the British Empire. An effort was made by Mr. Wilson of Quebec and his colleague from Saltfleet to side-track the resolution, but without success. It was adopted unanimously.

The question again came up, this time, fortunately for a more general and dispassionate discussion, on a resolution in favour of a union of the British American colonies, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the Convention, upon which its fame chiefly rests. In an able speech in support of the resolution, Mr. Duggan maintained that such a union would not only establish the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race in Canada, but that it would make of the colonies a great nation, would strengthen the motherland instead of burdening her as at present, and would set up an equipoise to the preponderant power of the United States in America. If, he declared, he had to choose between French domination and annexation, he would prefer the latter, a view which found considerable favour in the Convention.

The ultra-Tories of Upper Canada, as was to be expected, were vigorous in their denunciation of separation. Annexation, in their opinion,² would not take place unless the loyalists were driven to desperation by the unfriendly action of the English Government. Mr. J. W. Gamble, leader of the progressive wing of the Convention, devoted considerable attention to the topic. He confessed that, at heart, he was in favour of the independence of Canada, provided the consent of Great Britain could be obtained. He was

¹ Mr. Ruttan of Cobourg.

² See speeches by R. MacDonald (St. Catharine's) and Strachan (Goderich), son of Bishop Strachan.

convinced that a relationship with Great Britain of the nature of a personal union, similar to that of the Ionian Islands, would be best suited to the condition of Canada, but for the sake of harmony he would yield his opinions in favour of the project of a federal union of the provinces. Notwithstanding the material advantages which annexation would bestow in doubling the value of property, the vast majority of the inhabitants of the province could not easily lay aside their inherited British feelings. Annexation, in his opinion, could only be looked upon as a last resort.

In conclusion, he indulged in some interesting prophecies as to the future relations of Canada and the United States. Before many years had elapsed, there would be a terrible convulsion in the neighbouring republic, which would rend that nation in twain. Some of the northern states would then desire to form a union with Canada. The topography of the continent, and the natural sequence of events "marked this out as our ultimate fate." An equally interesting opinion as to the future of the colony was expressed by Mr. Wilson of Quebec, who supported the proposed union of the provinces as the best means of overcoming the difficulties which would arise from Canadian independence. The time, he believed, was near at hand when Great Britain would cast off the colonies. She had already deprived them of all the commercial advantages of their connection with the empire, and was now retaining her political advantages at their expense.

The scheme of a federal union, it must be admitted, won favour among the delegates, not so much from its own inherent merits as a truly national policy, as from the evils it promised to avoid. To the loyalists, it held out the prospect of rendering a resort to separation unnecessary; and to the English population, it brought the hope of freeing the country from the danger of French domination. Of these two motives -

of policy, the former probably predominated in the minds of a majority of the Convention, though the latter found the more positive expression among the Orange members. Thanks to the combination of these two forces, the resolution was agreed to unanimously.

As a final summing up of the labours of the Convention, the League adopted an address in which, after strongly condemning the commercial policy of the motherland, and censuring the local Government and Legislature for their conduct in respect to the Rebellion Losses Bill, they set forth the political programme of the newly organized party. In respect to the economic condition of the province, the Convention adopted the materialistic view of the Montreal Board of Trade, that the loyalty of the province was a commercial product to be purchased or rewarded by fiscal considerations. They accused the British Government of responsibility for the "extensive bankruptcy and general distress of the colony." Local political conditions were likewise portrayed in sombre colours. The sins of the Government were heaped up measure on measure; the Government had kindled racial animosity, legalized rebellion, increased the debt of the province by the payment of traitors, juggled with the system of representation, interfered with the elective franchise, and abused the power of appointing legislative councillors. As a cure for the ills of the country, three principal remedies were proposed—Protection, Retrenchment, and a Union of the British American provinces.

The proceedings of the Convention clearly showed how weak was the annexation sentiment among the members of the League. Notwithstanding their general dissatisfaction with the conduct of the British Government, on both political and commercial grounds, the great bulk of the Tory Party in Upper Canada could not be brought to join hands with, or even countenance the seditious outbreaks of, their friends

in Montreal. The Reform press, in attaching an undue importance to the disloyal utterances of the Montreal branch of the League, had, in truth, grossly misrepresented the real state of public opinion among the Tories. The bulk of the party were loyal at heart, notwithstanding occasional murmurings of disaffection. The anxiety of the loyalists was relieved at the outcome of the Convention, for at one time they feared that it might be rashly committed to annexation. "We dreaded," said the Montreal Transcript, "lest a handful of disappointed politicians should drag their party, and it might be the country, into the arms of a republican confederation. This intent, we had been told, lurked in the minds of many of the Leagues. Had this folly been committed, our opponents would have won a great triumph. Had the question been even seriously discussed, the result would have been most injurious to the country. But, thanks to the good sense of the League, the question was shelved. Not even the sense of injustice could extort such a thought from an assembly of British colonists."

The deliberations of the Convention were a great disappointment to the Reform Party. They had hoped that the heterogeneous elements in the League would break up in discord, without being able to frame a political programme, or else that the Convention would be led to declare for independence or annexation. But the Convention had not only strongly asserted its loyalty to the Crown, but had succeeded in formulating an attractive and statesmanlike policy that promised to appeal with much force to the disheartened mass of the electorate. The League could no longer be fairly or honestly accused of annexation aims, however much many of its members might be suspected of sympathy with that policy.

The proceedings of the Convention were followed with very great interest by that portion of the American press which was watching the trend of Canadian events. It was expected by many Americans, according to

The New York Herald, "that the League would declare for annexation, but after reading the debates we are convinced that it is contemplated by only a few of the people." When the Convention made its declaration of loyalty, "we knew that the annexation game was over." *The Herald* was happily able to comfort its readers with the assurance that, under the circumstances, it was probably best "if a union were not consummated at present." The delight of a section of the Tory press over the disappointment of their American cousins could scarcely be concealed. The Americans, declared *The Kingston Chronicle and News*, "have been taught that the Conservatives value too highly their liberty to throw off their allegiance." The Canadian people, it concluded, could and would settle their own difficulties without the assistance of the United States.

The social and political influences which operated most strongly in diverting the current of public opinion among the English-speaking inhabitants of Upper and Lower Canada, away from England towards the United States, had but comparatively slight effect upon their French fellow citizens. The annexation movement among the French population was distinctive in origin and character. The growing disaffection of the English residents of Montreal had, as we have seen, no historical connection with the events of '37-8; it arose out of an unhappy combination of political and commercial circumstances which strained the loyalty of the English Tories to the breaking-point. On the other hand, the concurrent expression of annexation sentiment among a section of the French population traced its origin almost directly back to the rebellion in Lower Canada.

Papineau, the leader of the revolt, was a republican who derived his political principles from the doctrines of the French Revolution and the experience of the American states. He never properly understood the genius of the English Constitution. The principle of

responsible government was a mystery to him. The only true expression of the will of the people was, in his opinion, to be found in the popular election of the chief administrative officials, as in the American states. His experience in exile served only to strengthen his convictions as to the true basis of popular government. On his return to Canada he again plunged into the bitter political struggle then going on. Although elected to Parliament as a supporter of Lafontaine, his natural ambition and his Radical opinions soon rendered it impossible for him to co-operate with that statesman. He accordingly dissociated himself from the Liberal leader and the constitutional wing of the party, in order to carry on an independent democratic propaganda. Although isolated in Parliament, he soon succeeded in attracting to his standard a band of clever young men of Radical opinions, who received the name of *Le Parti Rouge*. In Parliament, the exigencies of politics led him to join forces, for the moment, with his erstwhile foe, Sir Allan MacNab, in an effort to defeat the Reform Government, whose cautious policy blocked, and, he believed, would continue to block, all efforts to usher in a democratic régime.

The new party, which was quickly organized under his leadership, soon after issued a political programme of an extremely radical and anti-clerical character. They advanced the principle of the popular election of all administrative officials from the Governor-General downwards; they bitterly attacked the interference of the clergy in social and political questions; they strongly condemned the existing colonial régime as inimical to political freedom and the natural progress of the province; and last, but not least, they loudly called for a constitutional union with the United States. Several newspapers were established in Montreal and Quebec to support these principles. But the Radical views of the party, and especially their unfriendly attitude towards the Church, aroused the

vigorous opposition of the clergy, who in self-defence rallied to the support of the Government. The Church and the Ministry alike were greatly strengthened by this tacit alliance against the common foe. There were," declared *The Montreal Witness*, two French parties in Quebec, "the priests' party and the party of progress."

The Rouge Party, though greatly inferior in numbers and influence to the Ministerialists, and, moreover, discredited by their connection with the revolt of 1837, made up for their inherent feebleness by the enthusiasm of their propaganda. At first, the organs of the party directed their efforts chiefly to the advocacy of the principles of republicanism and independence. But the course of events soon forced them to come out plainly for annexation. Far from accepting the doctrine, that union with the United States would destroy French nationality, they boldly avowed that annexation would best preserve and maintain their language, laws, religion, and political institutions. In an early article, *L'Avenir*, the principal organ of Papineau, declared: "The United States, far from extinguishing in our hearts the sacred fire of nationality, would fan it into a blaze. For they knew well that in confiding the safety of the St. Lawrence to the French of Canada, it would be as well guarded as was New Orleans by the French of Louisiana."

And again, in a later editorial, fittingly written on the Fourth of July, *L'Avenir* took up the challenge of *Le Journal de Quebec*, to demonstrate how the French could preserve their nationality in case of annexation. Under the American federal system, it carefully explained, each state was allowed to preserve its own social good life and political constitution. In case of a political union, "we shall enjoy the protection of one of the first empires of the world, be assured of our own nationality, and shall not, have to suffer, as to-day,

¹ Quoted in *The Toronto Globe*, April 4, 1849.

the rage of our embittered enemies. We shall not be subject to the mercy of the first English Governor who shall have the caprice to tyrannize over us, and to make heavy the burdens that we already bear. Further, we repeat it, masters of the election of our own officials, we shall have a legislature and an executive truly French-Canadian in personnel; our laws will be in reality official laws, and our language an official language; we shall be no more forced, as to-day, to submit our laws to the stroke of the pen of an English Queen, or to sacrifice our language to the necessity of being understood by our public officials. Furthermore, our general interests will be represented in the House of Representatives and the Senate of the United States by a sufficient number of members to make them known and respected. We shall have freedom of commerce with the entire world and the United States; we shall enjoy liberty of education and the largest and most complete political rights; we shall possess direct control over the policy and expenses of our Government, over our growing population, over the conservation intact of our rich and extensive territory, and over the improvement of our agricultural industry, by means of a strong and universal system of education."

Le Moniteur Canadien, the reputed organ of Mr. Viger, in a careful analysis of the political situation, declared, in effect, that there were three parties in Quebec: first, the Ministerial; second, the Tory; and third, the Democratic. The first was made up of the larger part of the French-Canadians, a few Irishmen and a small number of English Liberals. The organs of the party were discreetly reserved on the questions of democracy and annexation, although professing a loyalty to British institutions equal to that of the staunchest Tories. But, it alleged, should the Reformers be driven into opposition, they would almost unanimously declare for independence or annexation. The Tory Party, likewise, in order to

dominate over the French, would gladly join in any attempt to break the British connection. If the commerce of Canada developed as that of the United States, and the English Government restored to them their former political ascendancy, they would soon stop calling for separation; but if, on the other hand, they were kept out of office, they would continue to frighten the imperial authorities by threats of secession, and seek to popularize themselves with the electorate by crying for annexation. Canada, it prophesied, would be annexed to the United States in five years. Upper Canada would be formed into one state, Lower Canada into another, and New Brunswick into a third. The independence of the country would be obtained by means of petitions addressed to the parent country, signed by men of all parties, and, amongst others, by 60,000 French-Canadians. Papineau would be chosen as the first representative of the State to the United States Senate.¹ *Le Courier des Etats-Unis*, which closely followed the course of Canadian affairs, summed up the situation in the statement, that, despite the opposition of the clergy, and the intolerant attitude of the Tory Annexationists, which outraged the sensibilities of the French population, and made co-operative action extremely difficult, the French-Canadians would rally *en masse* to the cause of annexation, when they became truly acquainted with the operation of republican institutions.²

At first, the attitude of some of the French ministerial papers was doubtful. For the most part, they kept discreetly silent, awaiting their cue from the Government. A strong attempt was made by the Annexationists to win over *La Minerve*, the principal organ of Lafontaine, to their cause. For a moment the paper wavered in its allegiance. On one occasion it went so far as to express an opinion somewhat favourable to annexation; but, at the same time,

¹ Quoted from *The Colonist*, July 27, 1849.

² Quoted from *L'Avenir*, June 14, 1849.

guarded itself with many limitations, as became a ministerial organ doubtful of its position, but inclined to strike out a new policy if the future should appear propitious. "Annexation," it declared, "does not frighten us; the colonial status is only transitory." But, it added: "We can, we ought even, to wish for annexation; but the time is not yet come, we must wait." Although somewhat disappointed at the hesitancy of *La Minerve's* utterance, the annexation press were quick to interpret it as an evidence of a favourable movement within the ministerial ranks which would soon lead the whole party into the annexation camp. But the leading article of *La Minerve* was evidently written without sufficient knowledge of the real attitude of the Government upon the question. A few days later, the hopes of the Annexationists were blasted. *La Minerve* came out with an open disavowal of the interpretation which the opposition journals had placed upon its recent article. It emphatically denied the imputation that the Government was in any way responsible for its editorial policy on this or any other question. As though to atone for its temporary defection, it roundly declared that, not only had it not become an advocate of annexation, but that it did not even place it on the order of the day for discussion. "We are quite ready to admit that all those who desire order and security, uphold, and must uphold, as one basic principle, both the Reform Ministry and the connection with Great Britain, and that frankly and without reserve." Now that England had granted to the Canadians a Liberal Constitution, they should show their appreciation of her action by their loyalty to the Crown.

The ministerial papers quickly followed the lead of *La Minerve*. They threw aside their non-committal attitude, which had caused them to be suspected of annexation proclivities, and came out boldly against the new movement. *Le Journal de Quebec*, the chief organ of the Government in the ancient capital, was

especially outspoken in its criticism of the French Annexationists: while *L'Ami de la Religion et de la Patrie* appealed to the faithful to remember their duty of allegiance to the Crown. The old theory of Divine Right was again called into requisition to prove the heinousness of resistance to constituted authorities. By converting the question into a strict party issue, by representing it as a scheme of their ancient enemies, the Montreal Tories, to recover their ascendancy, and by appealing to the religious zeal of the faithful to withstand the insidious doctrines of the enemies of the Church, the organs of the Government succeeded in checking, to a large extent, the rapid spread of annexation views among the mass of the French population.

Since early spring, the condition of affairs had been steadily growing worse. The continuance of the commercial depression, and the growing social and political unrest were rapidly preparing men's minds for a radical change in the constitution of the province. The Montreal correspondent of *The New York Herald* vividly described the state of public feeling in Montreal just prior to the decision of the English Government on the Rebellion Losses Bill. "Let this Bill receive the royal assent, and the second ministerial measure of increasing the representation be passed, and the struggle will have commenced. Canada will go peaceably, if possible, forcibly if necessary. The year 1850 will see the Stars and Stripes float over the battlement of the Gibraltar of the New World, Quebec. The inattentive observer of affairs may doubt the probability of such an event, but let him carefully look into the causes which are bringing about this event, and he will at once see those shadows which portend the coming events. The colonies have lost all protection in the home markets; they can therefore no longer compete with the American exporter. The United States Congress have refused to pass the Reciprocity Bill; Canadians cannot, therefore, reap any advantage from the Republic. And, lastly, the

hatred of race against race has risen to such a pitch, that nothing but the succumbing of one will ever allay it."

Some of the Tory papers were already open to conviction as to the merits of annexation. On June 11, *The Montreal Gazette* came out with a feeler in favour of separation, in which, after depicting the bitter feelings which pervaded all English hearts, since the home Government had cast such unmerited scorn upon their loyalty, it concluded by raising the question, whether it was not a moral law of nations for colonies to be weaned, sooner or later, from the parent state. Similar, and even stronger, language was frequently heard in private conversations. The end of the month saw *The Herald* break ground cautiously in favour of annexation. It presented the policy of separation as essentially an English question. It was the duty of the motherland to grant independence to Canada, rather than the business of the latter to ask or demand the same. Some change was obviously necessary, since the country could not go on as it was. Canada, it concluded, should not do anything prematurely or designedly to bring about separation; she should rather throw off on England the entire responsibility of determining the future of the province, of leaving to the latter no alternative but independence or annexation.¹

The same day there appeared the prospectus of a paper intended "to advocate the peaceful separation of Canada from the imperial connection." Although the paper failed to materialize, the prospectus served the valuable purpose of a campaign document, of clearly setting forth the complex conditions which were forcing upon the public the question of a possible change of allegiance. The prospectus was, in fact, a manifesto rather than a business proposition. Mr. Sydney Bellingham, whose name was attached to the prospectus as *pro tempore* secretary of the organization

¹ *The Montreal Herald*, June 29, 1849.

committee, was one of the most active Annexationists in the city. The previous summer he had presided at an unsuccessful annexation meeting at which his fellow countryman, Mr. O'Connor, was the chief speaker,¹ and subsequently, according to report, had departed on a mission to New York, to solicit subscriptions towards the scheme of annexation.² He was a man of rather uncertain reputation. By *The Montreal Gazette* he was described as a "gentleman well known as a man of energy and talent"; on the other hand, his portrait was painted in the most unfavourable colours by the Governor-General,³ and by *The Hamilton Spectator*, which referred to him as "the toady of Lord Sydenham," and "the bosom friend of the New York repealers."⁴

The prospectus of Bellingham's paper was cordially greeted by both *The Courier* and *The Gazette*, the latter declaring that it would not be long before there would be but few journals in opposition to that policy. "We do not object to see our new companion succeed, and when the time comes we may not be found backward in seconding its efforts." An even more striking evidence of the rapid change of public opinion in the city was seen in the open display of many American flags on the Fourth of July. Such a display, as was pointed out by a keen observer, could scarcely have occurred a year or so previously.⁵

Just at this critical moment appeared the speech of Lord John Russell in the House of Commons, in which he stated that he would permit the Rebellion Losses Bill to go into operation. This last blow shattered the loyalty of the Montreal Tories. For some

¹ See letter of Lord Elgin, July 18, 1848, *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 57.

² *The Montreal Transcript*. Quoted in *The Toronto Globe*, July 12, 1849.

³ *Canadian Arch.*

⁴ Letter of Sir Francis Hincks to the *London Daily News*, August 10, 1849.

⁵ Special correspondent, *St. John's News*, July 5, 1849.

months past, they had been wavering in their political faith. Now, partly from choice, partly from chagrin, the principal papers of the party, with one exception, came out more or less openly for separation. The outburst was, to a large extent, "an ejaculation uttered in a moment of passion, rather than a deliberate conviction."¹ But several of these same journals were by no means certain of their own attitude; their utterances were weak and vacillating, the fitful expressions of editors who were anxiously following the varying course of public opinion, rather than seeking to direct the current of events by strong and clearly pronounced views. Nor were they agreed among themselves as to the future of Canada, or the mode in which she would work out her political destiny. *The Herald* alone was ready to commit itself to the policy of annexation. *The Courier* came out in favour of independence under an English guarantee of protection. It showed its sympathy with annexation, however, by throwing open its columns to a series of articles upon that subject.² For a time *The Gazette* wavered in its course; it adopted the attitude of a friendly critic of annexation, which, it claimed, would not be as beneficial to the province as the supporters of that policy maintained, since the effect would be to deprive the colony of its revenues, and to burden it with a portion of the United States debt. Before the end of the month, however, *The Gazette* had made up its mind in favour of independence.

Notwithstanding their superficial differences of opinion, all three papers were at last united in demanding a separation from Great Britain. Their tone towards the motherland was harsh and censorious. They bitterly attacked her as the source of all the colony's misfortunes. Far from discussing the question of annexation in a calm and reasonable spirit, they used it rather as a medium for venting their

¹ *The Toronto Examiner*, July 11, 1849.

² *The Montreal Courier*, July 5, 1849.

dissatisfaction with the existing conditions of government. Without actually hoisting the Stars and Stripes, they showed quite clearly in what direction their sympathies were turning, and what would be the inevitable end in case matters did not mend according to their several wishes. The unseemly and seditious conduct of the Tory press of the capital almost justified the bitter arraignment of *The Toronto Globe*: "Mercantile embarrassment, added to political discomfiture, appears to have upset them completely. They seem to have gone fairly demented; they rave against French domination, free trade, responsible government, in fact, against anything and everything on which they can vent their ill-temper."¹ Of the four Tory journals of the city, only *The Transcript* remained loyal to the British connection.

Side by side with *The Transcript* in hostility to any scheme of independence or annexation stood *The Pilot*, the sole English organ of the Reform Party in Montreal. It denounced the annexation cry, at the outset, as a Tory scheme, gotten up by "the most bigoted and selfish part of the people."² It questioned the motives and sincerity of the Tory Annexationists, since the result of such an agitation, if long protracted, would necessarily be the utter ruin of the Tory Party, and the destruction of their special privileges. But, as the movement took on a more serious character, *The Pilot* saw the necessity of treating the question in a more reasonable spirit. Nothing, it declared, but dire necessity could justify the severance of the imperial tie. It warned the Annexationists of the danger which such a policy might inflict, not only on Canada, but on the nations at large. Mr. Roebuck, an influential member of the English Parliament, had recently pointed out that the annexation of the British American colonies might prove dangerous to the liberties of the world, by making the United States too powerful and

¹ *The Toronto Globe*, June 20, 1849.

² *The Montreal Pilot*, April 28, 1849.

tyrannical in her relations with other powers. Over against the abolition of ecclesiastical privileges, the greatest boon which annexation promised to confer, *The Pilot* set the introduction of the curse of slavery into Canada. "We ask the annexationist if he is prepared to sacrifice justice and benevolence on the altar of Mammon, if he is prepared to enter into partnership with the owners of human flesh and bones, the oppressors of human souls, if he is willing that his country should become part and parcel of a system which denies the right of citizenship to men whose skin is of a darker hue than that of their neighbours, and takes from them the key to knowledge, lest they should learn to assert the dignity of their nature, and claim to be treated as brothers."

The remaining English paper, *The Montreal Witness*, an independent journal of high moral tone, was from the first sympathetic towards the annexation cause. After a period of hesitancy, it at last came out frankly for annexation. In a long editorial of August 13, it discussed the question in its own original manner, with special regard to the effect of a political union on the religious, temperance, and financial interests of the province. Annexation, it concluded, was "the natural and probable goal [an amusing misprint] towards which we are tending."

The French-Canadian papers divided upon the question according to strict party lines. *L'Avenir* and *Le Moniteur*, the two Rouge organs, were as ardent advocates of annexation as Papineau himself. On the other hand, *La Minerve*, the mouthpiece of the Ministry, after a brief period of irresolution, threw the whole of its powerful influence against the movement. The religious press, which was seriously alarmed at the prospect of the introduction of American liberal ideas in Church and State, was even more strongly opposed to annexation.

By the middle of July, political discontent was so far advanced in Montreal, that five of the leading papers

of the city were won over to the policy of separation ; only three, including the two ministerial organs, still clung to the British connection. The two extreme parties of the city, the ultra-Tory loyalists on the one hand, and the ultra-French Radicals on the other, had raised their voices in loud protest against the maintenance of the imperial tie. The moderate section of the Conservative Party and the great bulk of the Reformers still remained loyal. Public opinion, however, was flowing strongly in the direction of annexation. In view of these unfavourable conditions, the prophecy of Isaac Buchanan that Lord Elgin would be the last Governor-General of Canada seemed destined to be soon fulfilled.

During the remainder of the summer months, public interest in the question of annexation rapidly increased among all sections of the population. At the same time, a gradual modification in the character of the movement was taking place, the evidence of which may be clearly traced in the changing tone of public discussions of the question. In its origin, as we have shown, the annexation issue was the product of an unusual combination of economic, social, religious, and political conditions. On account of the bitterness of partisan feeling, the political element was predominant in the earlier stages of the agitation. The strident note of a bitterly disappointed party rose highest in the cry for annexation. It is easy to follow the ascending scale of Tory indignation : at first they murmured, then they threatened the English Government ; and finally a small section of the party denounced the British connection. But the outburst which greeted the acceptance by the Whig Government of the Rebellion Losses Bill soon spent itself, though the bitterness of spirit and the sense of injustice still remained. The hopes of the Annexationists rose high when the exasperation of the Tories against Lord Elgin and the English Ministry first broke forth ; but, with the subsidence of party feeling, these hopes were seen

to be premature and unfounded. Something more than political discontent was necessary to produce a revolution.

Moreover, the calling of the League Convention had a steadying effect upon the moderate section of the Tory Party. The organization of the League and the adoption of a political programme turned their energies in another direction, and helped to restore discipline in the disorganized ranks of the party. The party was no longer a mob; it was again provided with accredited leaders and an attractive set of political principles. The scheme of a colonial federation not only held out some promise of relieving the social and economic difficulties of the province, but was also much more acceptable to all true Britishers than annexation. "A union of the provinces," *The Gazette* declared, "would give the colonists practical independence, so much desired, and remove the idea of annexation now existing among many influential persons." In a similar spirit, a few days later, it asserted: "We feel with the League that it is the duty of British subjects to exhaust all means left to them of remaining under the government of the Queen in spite of all disagreeable and all adverse circumstances." Still the idea of annexation always remained as an *arrière-pensée* in the mind of *The Gazette*, as in the minds of the leading public men of the city, for it went on to declare that, in case the Maritime provinces saw fit to join with Canada in an intercolonial legislative union, well and good, "but, if they have made up their minds to go one step further, we have no objections to follow them."

But, in truth, neither the unpopularity of the Colonial and Imperial Governments nor the proceedings of the Convention was the determining factor in the life of the movement. The source of discontent went much deeper than mere partisan feeling. The pronouncement of the Convention had undoubtedly quieted, to a large extent, the cry for annexation which arose

from the excess of party spirit. But an ally, more powerful even than the League, was fighting on the side of the Annexationists. In Montreal, business was at the lowest ebb; both local and foreign trade were palsied; property was unsaleable; capital was unproductive; labourers tramped the streets in search of work; homes were deserted, and families were fleeing from the stricken city.¹ The seriousness of the commercial situation overshadowed all other matters. The angry cry of the partisan gave way to the anxious sigh of the merchant and the despairing groan of the workman. The political aspect of annexation was forced into the background; from this time forward, commercial considerations were all-powerful.

"When annexation was first spoken of," said *The Bytown Packet*, "it was merely held out as a threat. But, latterly, it has assumed a different aspect. Many are now annexationists whose views are not directed by party violence, and whose position and character entitle them to respect."² The mercantile community was seeking a way of escape out of the slough of despair. Some change was imperatively demanded, and that right speedily. For the moment, it appeared as if the interests and the allegiance of the mercantile community were in deadly conflict. The business interests of the city were suffering from the British connection, and out of that suffering there arose, in the minds of many honourable and public-spirited men, the certain conviction that prosperity could not be secured as long as that connection was maintained. "Herein," declared a keen-sighted American observer, "is the mainspring of annexation. All other grievances can be smoothed and obviated, but this reaches every man and is felt every hour."³ In annexation alone appeared the hope of financial salvation.

¹ Lucas, *Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, part 2, p. 195.

² *Bytown Packet*, November 10, 1849.

³ *The Rochester American*, quoted in *The Colonist*, September 7, 1849.

As time went on with but hazy prospects of a union of the provinces, the tone of the Montreal Tory press became increasingly favourable to annexation. Early in September, *The Gazette* declared that loyalty in Canada was shaken among the loyal, and totally lost in the hearts of many. "Canada has turned the corner, and will not return upon her trail. The second Parliament that will be elected from this date will address the Queen to be absolved from their allegiance, or else something extraordinary will happen to prevent it."¹ Nevertheless, it still hesitated to pronounce outright in favour of annexation, on account of the many obstacles in the way. It severely criticized the policy of those papers, more especially the French, which advocated immediate annexation without the intermediate step of independence. It threw upon them the difficult task of proving that such a step would be beneficial and possible of accomplishment. In the judgment of *The Gazette*, annexation could not take place without the consent of Great Britain and the co-operation of the Maritime provinces, whose sentiments were apparently unfavourable to such a policy at the present time.²

The utterances of *The Herald* and *The Courier* were even more friendly in tone. In announcing the projected publication of an annexation paper in Toronto, the latter declared that the views of Mr. H. B. Wilson "were only about six months in advance of the whole of the British population of the Canadas." The former, for some time past, had been carrying on an active propaganda in favour of annexation. Even the most partisan of the Reform papers were obliged to admit that the campaign of *The Herald* was conducted in good faith, though the gravest doubts were cast upon the sincerity of the cry for annexation on the part of the other Tory journals. It was suspected, and openly alleged, that the utterances of several of the latter were intended for English consumption,

¹ September 3, 1849.

² September 8, 1849.

with a view to intimidating the home Government into compliance with Tory demands, rather than for the education of the Canadian public in the doctrine of annexation. But, whatever the political motives, whether partisanship, racial antipathy, or commercial discontent, the press of Montreal was surely preparing the way for annexation in the most effective way by preaching the gospel of social and economic discontent with the colonial status.

But, in other portions of the province, the efforts of the Annexationists did not meet with the same degree of success. In the ancient capital, the advocates of separation obtained a respectable, if not enthusiastic, hearing almost at the very outset of the movement. Early in the year, it was reported that annexation rumours in the city were "as plentiful as blackberries in season."¹ At first the chief Tory paper, *The Quebec Gazette*, was inclined to discountenance the threats of separation, voiced by some of its contemporaries, as likely to prejudice the Tory Party, and prove injurious to the credit of the country.² But when the Whig Government supported the Baldwin-Lafontaine Ministry, its loyalty was strained almost to the limit of endurance. Although not yet prepared to support annexation, it could not help but sympathize with its Montreal friends, and even justify their seditious utterances.³ "Responsible government," it declared, "was the prelude, free trade laws the first act, the modification of the Navigation Laws the second, the royal sanction to the Indemnity Bill will be the third, and we doubt not that we shall soon have to chronicle the *dénouement*."⁴

Strong declarations in favour of separation were common throughout the city, and sometimes gave rise to excited feelings. On one occasion it was found necessary to call in the police to stop a fight which broke out in the city council over the statement of a

¹ *The Quebec Gazette*, January 22, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, March 30, 1849.

³ *Ibid.*, June 13, 1849.

⁴ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1849.

member that they would all be Americans in three months.¹ But the majority of the papers were not carried away by the excitement of the moment. *The Quebec Chronicle*, an influential Tory journal, determinedly set itself against the movement. Although it admitted that annexation might be financially advantageous to the country, it nevertheless expressed the hope that the British connection would not be sacrificed for mere material ends. *The Mercury*, the third Tory organ of the city, solemnly warned its political friends against having anything to do with annexation. "We still more distinctly maintain that the desperation cry of annexation to the neighbouring states is unreasonable, impudent, and highly prejudicial to the Conservative cause, and that no declaration from the British Canadians could be more pleasing to the Lafontainists, than that of an intention to hoist the Stars and Stripes."

Among the French population of Quebec, the gospel of annexation was able to make but little progress, partly owing to the racial isolation and conservatism of the people, but more particularly on account of the silent opposition of the clergy and the unfavourable attitude of the ministerial leaders and press. The charges of disloyalty, levelled against the French-Canadians by some of the Tory papers of Upper Canada, were, according to *The Quebec Gazette*, most unjust. The French-Canadians, it contended, appreciated the value of the British connection as much as their English fellow citizens; and, moreover, did "not feel the less need of it, because they were threatened with a war of extermination by some of the latter."² The French ministerial organs did not hesitate to affirm that the French-Canadians would turn out to a man to put down the Tories, should the latter attempt to annex them to the United States. With the launching of *Le Canadien Indépendant*, a Papineau

¹ *The Quebec Gazette*, June 12, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, April 4, 1849.

paper, the views of the Quebec Annexationists at last found expression. Mr. Aubin, the editor-in-chief, was a warm supporter of the annexation cause, and both by pen and counsel contributed largely to the spread of annexation sentiment among his countrymen. But, notwithstanding the advent of the new organ, the progress of the movement among the French habitants continued to be much less marked than among the English population.

In the eastern townships, the question of annexation possessed a special significance for the English population. Both political and commercial considerations combined to render their position most precarious. They could not help but contrast their social isolation and the deep commercial depression on their side of the line with the ethnic solidarity and the financial prosperity of the New England states. Their interests, both racial and material, appeared to lie with their fellow Anglo-Saxons across the border, rather than with their foreign fellow countrymen at home. The substance of the matter was stated very clearly by Dr. Colby, one of the leading Tories of the district, in a public address early in the year. Although he considered it premature as yet to discuss the subject of annexation, since the consent of both Great Britain and the United States would be requisite to make such a measure operative, he admitted, nevertheless, that in the end annexation "would be desirable," as a means of emancipating the English minority of the district from French domination. But, notwithstanding this confession, he was not prepared to support the movement, since "such a union would, on some accounts, be premature, and also unjust on the score of humanity"—premature, since the district would not willingly submit to the higher taxation of Vermont, and unjust, as subjecting the province to the legal obligation of returning runaway slaves.¹

In the early stages of the discussion, the views of

¹ *The Montreal Gazette*, June 8, 1849.

Dr. Colby expressed, with fair accuracy, the opinion of the majority of the English-speaking public. The tirades of Colonel Guy and other extremists, by arousing a very lively fear of French domination, had estranged the hearts of the people from the motherland, and prepared their minds for a favourable consideration of proposals of annexation. But with the deepening financial depression, the attention of the people in the eastern townships, as in other parts of the province, was directed more and more to the commercial aspect of annexation. The question of how to secure an entrance for the local produce into the American market became the most vital issue of the day.

In Upper Canada, the progress of the annexation movement was much less encouraging than in other parts of the province. On the one hand, the English population of the west did not stand in the same constant dread of French domination as their eastern brethren, who were in daily contact with the problem of racial relationship; and, on the other, they had not experienced the same measure of financial suffering as the merchants and agriculturists of the lower St. Lawrence. Among the Tories and some of the Clear Grits, though for entirely different reasons, there was, however, a strong feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing régime, and a growing desire for a change in the political constitution of the province. But this desire did not commonly assume the form of a demand for separation.

From a very early date, the Tories of Toronto had justly enjoyed a reputation for loyalty, but the attitude of the English Government upon the Rebellion Losses Bill put that reputation to the severest test. They could not help but sympathize with their political friends in Lower Canada. For the moment their devotion to the Crown weakened, and some of them were prone to follow the example of their Montreal brethren in demanding a release from the British

connection. The loyalty of *The Colonist*, which voiced the sentiments of the moderate Tories, was rudely shaken; at times, it adopted a tone not unfavourable to the cause of annexation. In the midst of the commercial unrest consequent upon the change in England's fiscal policy, it came out with the frank declaration that separation was inevitable. "Our opinion, declared repeatedly within the last three years, has been that commercial wants and intercourse would bring it (annexation) to pass in a very short period, independently of collateral circumstances of a purely political nature. Setting aside, therefore, all private and sectional considerations, a glance at the features of our present colonial position will establish clearly what is the early and inevitable destiny of the whole British North American provinces."¹

Out of this editorial, there subsequently arose a lively controversy between *The Patriot* and *The Colonist*, in which each endeavoured to clear its reputation by accusing the other of having favoured the movement. A hasty visit of the Hon. G. Moffatt to Toronto served to remove the erroneous impression that the League at Montreal was committed to the principle of annexation, and revived, to some extent, the doubtful loyalty of *The Colonist*. It denied the accusation that it had attempted to force annexation dogmas on the public; it had merely "argued the subject in full, confining its remarks rather to the current of events and the facts of history, than to the expression of particular inclinations."² A few days later, in a critical review of the political situation in the United States, Great Britain, and at home, in relation to the future of the colony, it expressed the view that the fate of Canada would depend upon future circumstances outside the determination of the province itself. All the elements of political, social, and commercial change were in full operation. Much would depend upon the character of the agitation in

¹ *The Colonist*, July 3, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, July 13, 1849.

the province, but even more upon external influence; the success of the annexation movement would depend "on the extent to which it may be encouraged by the conduct of the Colonial Office; by the pressure of the anti-colonial mob of the manufacturing district of England; and by the amount of the commercial and political sympathy infused from the United States."¹

But, after the League Convention, when evidence rapidly accumulated from all parts of the country that, for the present at least, the Conservatives of Upper Canada would have nothing to do with annexation, *The Colonist* recovered its wonted loyalty so far as to declare that it "was opposed to any agitation in favour of separation from Great Britain," especially in view of the possible submission in the near future of a satisfactory form of government for the North American provinces.² It contended that the only Annexationists were to be found among the Reformers, and, as that party was now in power, they would not, for the best of reasons, take any part in the agitation for separation. The greatest security against an early attempt to bring about annexation was to keep the Reformers in office; for, should they be forced from the Treasury Bench, the country might look for a revival of the seditious propaganda of 1837-8.

The loyalty of *The Patriot*, the organ of the High Church Tories, was not made of such flimsy material. True, its hatred of the Government led it at times to indulge in language that sounded almost seditious;³ still it never altered in its attachment to the Crown and British institutions. Although opening its columns at first to the Annexationists, it nevertheless declared itself "altogether opposed to the discussion of a subject so inimical to all true British feeling. The views of *The Patriot* were endorsed by the great bulk of the Tories of Upper Canada, a fact which was

¹ *The Colonist*, July 27, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, September 11, 1849.

³ *The Toronto Patriot*, July 5, 1849.

admitted by the Reformers themselves. At the very moment when *The Globe* was bitterly denouncing the partisan and mercenary action of the Montreal Tories in supporting annexation, it freely acknowledged that "a large and respectable portion of the Canadian Conservatives are thoroughly attached to Great Britain, and will not knowingly be led into an annexation agitation."¹

To *The Toronto Globe* is due the chief credit for preventing the spread of annexation opinion in Canada West, especially among the Reformers. From its very first number, *The Globe* had secured, and later successfully maintained, a political ascendancy over the Liberal Party. It wielded an influence and an authority greater than that of any other paper in the province. To almost all of the Scotch Reformers, the editorial utterances of George Brown were both the law and the gospel. From the very outset of the annexation movement, the attitude of *The Globe* was clear and decisive. The whole of its tremendous influence was thrown on the side of the British connection, and never for a moment throughout the whole contest did it swerve from its allegiance. The cry of annexation, it claimed, was a plot of the Conservative Party to frighten Lord Elgin into a change of ministry. Against those papers which affected to look on annexation as a mere matter of time, it poured forth its righteous indignation. "Show us the Liberal journals," it demanded, "which use such language, which would chain our free Canada to a republic whose desperate efforts to extend the region of slavery were continued up to the very last moment of the last sitting of Congress. We are told that capital would flow in from the States by annexation. But, if it did, and brought with it the deep degradation of a connection with slavery, better it were sunk in the deepest waters of Lake Superior."² The connection with Great Britain, it maintained, should and would be

¹ *The Globe*, June 20, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, April 14, 1849.

perpetuated in the face of the most adverse circumstances. It gloried in the loyalty of the people of Upper Canada, and their jealousy for the preservation of provincial freedom, which had disappointed and discomfited the plottings of the Montreal Tories.¹ It especially appealed to its fellow Reformers to demonstrate their faith in the liberal institutions they had so recently acquired, by a loyal support of the efforts of the Ministry to put the principles of political responsibility into practice in the present dangerous crisis.

The attitude of *The Examiner*, the leading organ of the Radical section of the Reform Party, was somewhat doubtful, and variable at times. It maintained a critical and almost hostile attitude towards the Baldwin Government, whose conservative policy it constantly contrasted with the more liberal principles of the Governments of the American states. Its eyes were turned from England, and were longingly cast across the boundary line. Although not prepared to support the cause of annexation, and even at times scorning that policy in no uncertain language, it assisted in spreading the belief that, sooner or later, the bond between England and the North American colonies would be broken. In short, it accepted and inculcated the principles of the Manchester School. It was opposed to an immediate separation, but looked forward without misgivings to its ultimate attainment by a peaceful process of evolution. The subject of annexation, in its opinion, should be approached in a spirit of earnest inquiry. It was a topic of the social circle, "a thing of which men speak as of a family arrangement." To many, it had become the all-important question. Men thought soberly upon it, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of such a step. Within a brief time, a revolution had taken place in the sentiment of the Tory Party, and the spread of the agitation threatened to work still further political disorganization.²

¹ *The Globe*, May 12, 1849. ² *The Examiner*, March 14, 1849.

The Examiner, however, refused to be rushed into annexation. At the moment when the cry of the Montreal Conservatives rang loudest for annexation, it calmly pointed out that Canada must first become a nation before she could contract an alliance with the United States. The people must be converted to the principles of independence before they rashly talked of annexation.¹ For its part, *The Examiner* preferred to await the course of events, and to watch the varying currents of public opinion, rather than to commit itself to any definite policy upon the question.

The growth of annexation sentiment in Canada West, though slow as compared with its progress in Lower Canada, was, nevertheless, steady. Early in September, the Annexationists believed that public opinion had become sufficiently favourable to warrant the establishment of an annexation paper. The progress of the movement had been greatly crippled by lack of an organ through which to carry on the propaganda. Almost the whole of the press of Upper Canada was opposed to separation, and even those papers which were sympathetic refused to commit themselves to a whole-hearted support of the cause. An independent organ was required to carry on an educational campaign throughout the western half of the province. A prospectus was accordingly issued by Mr. H. B. Willson, setting forth at length the purpose of the paper, and the political and economic conditions which had brought it into being. Although inexperienced in newspaper work, Mr. Willson assumed the editorship of the new publication.

The Canadian Independent was, according to the prospectus, "chiefly designed to promote by peaceable means separation from the mother country." Mr. Wilson emphatically disclaimed "all connection with either of the great political parties." The paper would confine itself to the advocacy of independence, "which must hereafter take precedence in importance over all

¹ *The Examiner*, July 11, 1849.

other questions." The necessity of an organ in Upper Canada was evident. In Lower Canada, with two or three exceptions, the entire press, both French and English, had declared for the cause of independence. In this section of the province, however, the virulence of party feeling; and the complete subserviency of the whole press to party purposes, had been such as to deter from espousing the cause even the conductors of those journals whose opinions were known to be favourable. The reasons for advocating independence were "of both a political and commercial nature, and the measure would be advocated on the broad grounds of political and commercial necessity.

"From the sentiments distinctly enunciated on various occasions during the last few years by English statesmen and writers of eminence, no reasonable doubt can be entertained that, whenever a majority of the people of these colonies shall, through their representatives in Parliament, ask to be freed from the imperial connection, their request will be conceded. Indeed, those who have attentively noted the sentiments propounded by the leading politicians in Britain of the present day must have noticed a growing desire to be released from the government of their colonies, as soon as it can be done with honour and safety; whilst others, whose influence has already effected one of the greatest changes in the commercial policy of the empire which the world has witnessed, do not hesitate to express an opinion that the colonies should be abandoned without delay. It is believed that a great majority of the people of Canada, influenced by the opinion that the province would be permanently and materially benefited by the attainment of this end, are already favourably inclined. In Lower Canada, which contains considerably more than one-half of the entire population of the province, and where the press has taken the initiative, the feeling amounts almost to unanimity; and in Upper Canada a very large proportion, if not an actual majority, of the

people may be regarded as entertaining similar sentiments."

The causes which had led to the desire for mutual separation were known to all. The recent measures of the Imperial Government had not only placed the colonies on the same footing as strangers, but actually restricted them from participating on favourable terms in the trade of any country in the world. Over these limitations upon its commercial freedom the province had no control.

"As the British provinces are so situated geographically in relation to the United States as to render them commercially dependent upon each other to a very large degree, the attainment of Canadian independence can only be regarded as a necessary preliminary to admission into the American Union. The advocacy of the one necessarily involves that of the other. The subject is, therefore, one of equal interest to our neighbours on the other side of the line."

In order to devote his energies exclusively to *The Independent*, Mr. Wilson soon after withdrew from the League.¹ It had not been his original intention to advocate immediate annexation. He had intended, on the contrary, to limit the policy of the paper to the advocacy of independence, leaving the question of annexation open for future determination, when independence had been attained. But the pressure of the Montreal Annexationists forced him out of this equivocal position. In a trenchant editorial of September 5, *The Herald* declared that the Annexationists of Lower Canada would prefer to see the province remain as it was, than to have independence without annexation. Although doubtful of the expediency of such precipitate action, in view of the traditional loyalty of the people in Upper Canada, Mr. Wilson yielded to the wishes of his Montreal friends to join in the annexation campaign they were about to start.

The advent of *The Canadian Independent* was awaited

¹ *The Globe*, September 22, 1849.

with considerable interest throughout the province. In the Montreal district, its appearance was welcomed as an evidence of the changing sentiments of the people of Upper Canada, but in the western district its advent was greeted with mixed feelings of chagrin, curiosity, and good-natured tolerance. As a mark of their disapprobation of its policy, *The Patriot* and *The Globe* refused to publish the prospectus in their columns, notwithstanding the fact that they were offered most favourable advertizing rates.¹ *The Colonist* was not so squeamish, and gave due prominence to the new publication. It refused to be a party to the attempt to gag the new paper, the object of which was limited to peaceful agitation. "At any rate," it asserted, "peaceful separation would not be productive of a tithe of the disaffection" which had been occasioned by the action of the Government in rewarding rebels. It charged the Ministry with responsibility for the distracted condition of the province, out of which the agitation for annexation had arisen, and accused *The Globe* of hypocrisy in endeavouring to discount the strength of the movement.² So far as *The Independent* was concerned, the Tory Party repudiated all responsibility for its policy; the views of the editor of that paper were purely personal, and found no favour in the League.³ The loyalty of the people of both Upper and Lower Canada, it asserted in conclusion, was too firmly established to be easily moved by the annexation views of one man. The friendly tone of *The Colonist* was doubtless due, in part, to a desire to placate the growing body of Annexationists, with a view to enlisting their support in overturning the Reform Government.⁴ Such an alliance, it thought, might prove politically useful, even though the views of the annexationists were most objectionable.

¹ *The Globe*, September 4, 1849.

² *The Colonist*, September 11, 1849.

³ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1849.

⁴ *The Examiner*, September 5, 1849.

The Examiner did not believe that the utterances of the Montreal press were a true reflection of public opinion in the province: The annexation cry of the Tories of Upper and Lower Canada was, it maintained, essentially political in intent, and was designed to frighten the English Government rather than to effect a change of allegiance. But, notwithstanding this hypocrisy of the Tory Annexationists, there were scattered throughout the province many mute republicans and genuine Annexationists who believed with Papineau that the British connection was incompatible with the development of free democratic institutions, and who felt, with *The Quebec Gazette*, that colonial dependence unduly restricted the expanding energies of a free-born people. Whatever the strength of these unorganized elements (for the Annexationists had not yet attained sufficient cohesion to be called a political party) the issue they presented was one which must be seriously considered by the country at large.¹

The discussion of the question was carried into the columns of the ecclesiastical press. *The Church*, the recognized organ of the Bishop of Toronto, maintained the historic loyalty of the Anglican clergy by rallying its adherents to the British cause. "The very idea of annexation to the United States," it declared, "was indignantly scouted by the immense majority of Western Canada, and we have reason to believe it meets with as little encouragement in the lower portion of the province."²

In the rural section of the west, interest in the subject of annexation was by no means equal to that in the chief cities. The question, as we have seen, was primarily commercial in character; it affected the merchants of the city much more than the independent farmers of the western district. The issue was quickly taken up by the metropolitan press as a matter of real vital interest to their urban readers,

¹ *The Examiner*, September 5, 1849.

² *The Church*, September 27, 1849.

but considerable time elapsed before the local town and village papers deigned to treat the question in any other than a very desultory manner. They were inclined to look upon the hue and cry of the Montreal Tories as a passing whim, or a sudden outburst of irresponsible opinion.

But, here and there throughout the western district, the question was given due consideration. In the city of Hamilton the views of the separationists found little sympathy. The columns of *The Spectator* were thrown open to a free and frank discussion of the subject, in which Mr. H. B. Willson took a leading part.¹ But in its editorial page, *The Spectator* took care to vindicate its unimpeachable loyalty by attacking the views of its annexation correspondents in an unsparing manner. Although bitterly opposed to Lord Elgin, on both personal and political grounds, it disavowed the attempts of some of its Tory contemporaries to convert that hostility into an attack on the British connection. It distinctly disclaimed the views of Mr. Willson as to the cause, extent, and cure of the manifold evils which affected the country.² It was especially zealous in repudiating the attacks of the Reform press upon the motives and the loyalty of the League. The Ministry itself was responsible, because of its maladministration, for the spread of annexation dogmas. Notwithstanding the intensity of its political feeling, *The Spectator* still preferred the mismanagement of the Reformers to the democratic heresies of the United States.

The Hamilton Journal and Express, and the *Guelph and Galt Advertiser* were equally hostile to annexation. At the very outset of the agitation, the former declared, "as a true representative of the Reformers of Canada West, and in their name," that the United States would "not annex Canada just yet";³ the latter proudly affirmed that the loyalty of the Reform

¹ *The Spectator*, March 28, April 4, etc., 1849.

² *Ibid.*, March 28, 1849.

³ Quoted from *The Spectator*, April 25, 1849.

Party was not in question. It was true, it admitted, that a few of the French-Canadian papers professing Liberal principles had unfortunately supported annexation, but "as a body the Liberal press of Canada has spoken out plainly and firmly for the continuance of British connection and responsible government, believing, as they do, that under responsible government we shall have all the advantages of limited monarchical government, with as much liberty and equality and civil justice, and smallness of national expenditures, as if we were a republic. And we do say that, as a body, the Tory press of Canada has come out as boldly for annexation as the Liberal press has denounced it." It acknowledged, however, that all the Tory papers had not gone over to the enemy, since "a few, such as *The Guelph Herald*, are still strong in their professions of loyalty to the British flag."

In the Midland district, *The Kingston British Whig* expressed the opinion that the Conservative Party was dead in every part of the country save Montreal. The province, it declared, would "not be ready for annexation for fifty years yet."¹

The question was altogether too important to escape the attention of the politicians, especially when it afforded such a splendid opportunity to the Reformers to make party capital at the expense of their opponents. During the summer, several of the Reform members of Parliament took occasion to refer to the matter in their public addresses. At a large Reform meeting at Brantford, the Hon. Malcolm Cameron scouted the idea of annexation,² harped upon the loyalty of the party, and denounced the action of the Conservative press in lending their sanction to the movement. In like manner, Mr. Morrison, in an address to his constituents of the county of York, attacked the

¹ Quoted from *The Globe*, September 15, 1849.

² *The Amherstburg Chronicle* accused Mr. Cameron of having formerly supported annexation as necessary to the prosperity of the country.

separationist proclivities of the League, and declared that the latter would soon find that Upper Canada repudiated the idea of annexation.¹

As autumn came on, Lord Elgin undertook a trip through the western provinces in order to familiarize himself with the condition of the people, and check, if possible, the growing separationist sentiment. Notwithstanding the semi-political character of his progress (for the Reformers turned out *en masse* to honour him with all the distinction of a party leader), he was greeted with loyal addresses from the various municipal bodies, and was accorded a friendly reception by the people at large. The Conservatives, for the most part, joined with the Reformers in testifying their loyalty to the Crown by a respectful, if not a hearty, reception to the royal representative. Even in Toronto, in spite of the intensity of party feeling, the corporation adopted an address emphasizing the loyalty of the city.² Only here and there, as in Brockville and London, were there spasmodic evidences of disaffection on the part of a small number of extreme Tories. The tour of the Governor-General had a beneficial effect in rallying the Reform Party to a heartier support of the Ministry, and in recalling the people at large to a sense of their duty and allegiance to their gracious sovereign. It served to dispel the suspicion, that at heart a considerable minority, if not a majority, of the people of Upper Canada favoured a peaceful separation from England. Many were undoubtedly dissatisfied, but few had been attacked by the virus of disloyalty. So strongly, indeed, was the spirit of loyalty shown throughout the tour, that the Annexationists found it advisable to avoid all hostile demonstrations, and to manifest a respectful deference towards the Governor-General.

¹ Letter of Hon. F. Hincks to *The London News*, August 10, 1849.

² *The Globe*, September 17, 1849.

CHAPTER III

THE MANIFESTO AND THE COUNTER MANIFESTOS

Disaffection in Montreal—Alliance of the ultra-Tories and Rouges—The commercial interests demand a change—Preparation of the Manifesto—An Address to the People of Canada—Signatures to the Manifesto—Minority of French-Canadians—Battle of the Montreal press—The *Herald, Courier, and Witness* declare for annexation—The *Gazette* favours independence—The *Transcript* and *Pilot* support British connection—The French-Canadian papers divide on party lines—Organization of Annexation Association—Declaration of Papineau—Annexation demonstration—Speeches and resolutions—Officers of the Association—Policy of the Association—Loyalty of the Reform Government—Letter of Baldwin—Protest of French Liberal members against annexation—Criticism of their action—Letter of Francis Hincks—Effect upon the Reform Party—Address of Montreal loyalists—Character of signatures—Dismissal of annexation officials—Criticism of action of Ministry by Tory press—Conduct of the Conservative leaders—Loyalty of the Orangemen—Opinion of the Governor-General—Criticism of Movement—Opinion of correspondent of *London Times*.

BUT we must return to the fountain-head of the annexation movement, the city of Montreal. Here, as we have seen, at the beginning of September the Annexationists were seeking to marshal their forces for a vigorous forward campaign. Disaffection was rife on every side. The people were distracted by radical jealousies and economic losses. The Ministry was powerless to grant relief, and the programme of the League had proved abortive. The spirit of unrest was abroad. The sharp but petulant cry for separation gave way to the general conviction that relief could be found only in annexation. The anti-colonial policy of the Whigs, according to *The Kingston Chronicle and News*, had strained the loyalty

of the Montreal merchants to the breaking-point. "When poverty enters at the door, love is said to fly out of the window, and it is very much the same with loyalty. The dollar is found by experience to be as potent on this as on the other side of the line 45. The Montreal Annexationists doubtless desire to retain their loyalty, but they flatly declare they can no longer afford the luxury. Cobdenism has rendered it too costly for them; and Elginism has led many of them to doubt whether the article is not dear at any price."

But up to this moment, the forces of discontent had remained unorganized. They were merely a rabble, or, at best, a loose group of hostile factions. The Tories were the traditional enemies of the French-Canadian democrats. The two opposing factions were separated from one another by race, language, religion, social usages, and political principles and ideals. Where, then, was to be found the mutual bond of sympathy, or common interest, to unite the Tory annexationist with his French-Canadian compeer? Apparently, they had nothing in common except their hostility to the Government. But, in politics, necessity often makes strange bed-fellows. We have already seen how Papineau, the Radical, had joined forces with MacNab, the reactionary, to overthrow the Reform Government. Much as these two leaders disliked one another, they hated Lord Elgin and his ministers even more. This unnatural parliamentary alliance prepared the way for future political co-operation. The popular clamour for annexation in Montreal brought about a temporary *rapprochement* of the Tories and the Rouges in that city. Here was an issue on which they could get together. They were alike convinced of the general advantage of annexation, though they widely differed as to the specific benefits they severally expected to derive from a union with the United States. The goal was the same, but the objects in view were fundamentally different.

Since neither the French nor the Tory Annexationists were strong enough of themselves to direct the course of events, political prudence demanded that they drop their ancient enmity, and unite to promote their common cause. To that end, a change of tactics was required on the part of the Tory Party of the capital. The violent language of the Tory press had long wounded the susceptibilities of the French population, and had driven them into the ranks of the Reform Party, through fear of an anti-clerical crusade. Unfortunately for the cause of annexation, the French democrats had very grave doubts as to the motives of the new-born Tory desire for annexation. "If," said *Le Courier des Etats-Unis*, "the French-Canadians believed in the sincerity of the Tories, the party [referring to the Annexationists] would be all-powerful here." It was folly, according to *Le Courier*, for the Conservatives to dream of freeing themselves from the British yoke without the co-operation of at least a portion of the French population.

But mere political blandishments would never have sufficed to draw the two parties together. The reciprocal attraction of their common misery was required to bring about the necessary co-operation. In their common suffering, they forgot for the moment their social, political, and religious differences. To both there was held out the glowing prospect of escape from insolvency. The appeal was made with particular success to the wealthier members of the mercantile community. For many years, they had been accustomed to look upon the British connection as a commercial relationship out of which financial profit was to be derived. Loyalty under the preferential tariff was a part of their stock-in-trade. But upon the withdrawal of the imperial preference, their loyalty became a drug on the market. All considerations of party policy or political allegiance were lost sight of in the demand for a restoration of their accustomed profits. On this fundamental basis of the common

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material interests of the two nationalities, the Annexationists determined to found a new political party.

The moment was favourable for the commencement of a vigorous propaganda. The press, for the most part, was friendly. The public was ripe for a change, and the interests of the merchants demanded it. The relations of the French and English inhabitants of the city had become more cordial. By the beginning of October, the plans of the Annexationists were well under way. The French and English Annexationists agreed to sink their differences, and to unite in the common cause. A small but influential group of representative merchants set to work to draw up a declaration of political principles.

The press took the lead in preparing the minds of the public for the coming announcement. *The Herald* came out with a frank declaration in favour of immediate annexation. "We have reason to wish for an incorporation with the states of the American Union; like reason prompts us to desire that this incorporation should take place as speedily as possible. A state of political transition is a state of personal and social misery. Here is no tranquillity, no improvement. It is of the utmost importance for the inhabitants of Canada, as the world believes that they are about to pass through a revolution, that they should do it at once." It drew an unfavourable contrast between the policy of the League for a federal union of the provinces and the scheme of annexation. The choice in reality must needs be made between annexation and independence, since a federal union of the colonies necessarily involved independence. The latter would be much more costly, especially in the matter of defence, whereas the former would save the expense of maintaining a distinct administration and, what was even more important, would afford relief to the economic distress of the province by opening

¹ *The Herald*, October 3, 1849.

up the American market, and affording means for transportation of Canadian products.

The same day *The Courier* made a similar avowal of annexation principles. "When," it declared, "men find things irretrievably bad, they must needs think of desperate remedies. Annexation is that remedy; it will be foolish now for us to wait to see what England will do for us. England can do nothing."¹ A couple of days later, it declared, in more offensive language, that while Canada remained a dependency of a distant empire, she would never be rich enough to make the internal improvements which were necessary to open up trade, nor would English capital be attracted to a colony which was certain to separate in the near future. The principles of free trade, it contended, were incompatible with the maintenance of a colonial empire. *The Pilot* and *Transcript* might "stick like lice to a dead corpse," but they could not revive the loyalty of the Canadian people.²

The Montreal Witness endeavoured to give a religious sanction to the annexation movement. "It is precisely because we think the indications of Divine Providence are pointing directly, constantly, and, we might add, urgently in the direction of annexation, that we have felt constrained to discuss the subject at some length, ere it becomes involved in the whirl of party strife." The most striking indication of providential direction was to be seen in the conversion of the Tory Party, which for many years had manifested "a passionate and chivalrous attachment to the British Crown," into an Annexation Party, "thus dissolving the only bond that was sufficiently strong to retain the Canadas for Britain against their own interest."

The city was on the tip-toe of expectation in consequence of a rumour that the Annexationists were about to issue a public manifesto.³ The preparation of such a document was taken in hand "by a committee of

¹ *The Courier*, October 3, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, October 5, 1849.

³ *The Gazette*, October 5, 1849.

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gentlemen of wealth, education, and influence," with a view to ascertaining to what extent public opinion was prepared to support them in their efforts. According to their own profession, they had "no desire to assume the leadership, or draw others into ill-advised measures"; but if the manifesto were favourably received, they were prepared to go ahead with the organization of a general association. The immediate object of the committee was limited, however, to setting before the public the advantages of annexation. They did not wish at the moment to discuss the future policy of the Annexationists, or the means by which the object in view might be attained.

The preparation of the manifesto was, according to *The Gazette*, a delicate undertaking, since much of the success or failure of the propaganda depended on the first impressions of the public. The committee were solemnly advised to attend carefully to the form of the declaration, to see to it that the statement was "well conceived and well matured," and not to be deficient in weight and strength, as it was reported. The secrecy with which the committee set about the preparation of the manifesto awakened considerable criticism from those who were not within the inner circle of the movement. The motives of the committee were undoubtedly good, declared *The Gazette*, but "we cannot help feeling that the issuing of such a document is beginning where we ought to end." Before such a publication was issued, there should be a full opportunity of ascertaining the opinion of the masses. The question of procedure was, after all, one of good political tactics. "An organization," in the opinion of *The Gazette*, "should take place first, and then a declaration of opinion." We have to consider what Upper Canada and the other provinces will do.¹ The people of Lower Canada, however unanimous, ought not to think of dictating to the majority of their fellow citizens in North America. An association, if

¹ *The Gazette*, October 5, 1849.

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properly organized, would always be in a position to make a declaration of principles, when the feeling of the public appeared favourable to such a statement.

But, notwithstanding this criticism of the tactics of the annexation leaders, *The Gazette* did not hesitate to affirm that the prevailing opinion in Canada was decidedly hostile to the British connection. "In Lower Canada, both the English and French are ripe for a change. In Upper Canada, we believe that there is still a majority of the population pretending to be desirous of continued connection with England, but the inhabitants of the towns along the lake are fast changing their opinions, and in a short time the old feeling—the loyal feeling—will be confined to the old country settlers in the back townships." Even the feelings of the latter would change when they realized the difference in the price of wheat on the two sides of the boundary line. This striking revolution in public sentiment was due, in the opinion of *The Gazette*, to the annihilation of every tie of interest between England and her colonies; and, as Canada withdrew from social and commercial intercourse with the motherland, she as surely cemented her relations with the United States.¹ *The Courier*, likewise, declared: "The desire for annexation has taken fast hold on all classes of the community, and every minor issue is about to be absorbed in this all-important question. The difficulty now is to find a man who is opposed to annexation," whereas, six months ago, the man who would have ventured to stand up openly in favour of such a measure would have been a *rara avis*. Such was the revolution in sentiment, which, in the opinion of *The Courier*, had been brought about by the incapacity and maladministration of the Government.

At last the expected manifesto, the most important document in the history of the annexation, made its appearance.

¹ *The Gazette*, October 8, 1849 ² *The Courier*, October 6, 1849.

AN ADDRESS TO THE PEOPLE OF CANADA

The number and magnitude of the evils which afflict our country, and the universal and increasing depression of its material interests, call upon all persons animated by a sincere desire for its welfare to combine for the purpose of inquiry and preparation, with the view to the adoption of such remedies as a mature and dispassionate investigation may suggest.

Belonging to all parties, origins, and creeds, but yet agreed upon the advantages of co-operation for the performance of a common duty to ourselves and our country growing out of a common necessity, we have consented, in view of a brighter and happier future, to merge in oblivion all past differences of whatever character, or attributable to whatever source.

In appealing to our fellow colonists to unite with us in this, our most needful duty, we solemnly conjure them, as they desire a successful issue and the welfare of their country, to enter upon the task at this momentous crisis in the same fraternal spirit.

The reversal of the ancient policy of Great Britain, whereby she withdraws from the colonies their wonted protection in her market, has produced the most disastrous effects upon Canada. In surveying the actual condition of the country, what but ruin or rapid decay meets the eye? Our Provincial Government and civic corporations embarrassed, our banking and other securities greatly depreciated, our mercantile and agricultural interests alike unprosperous, real estate scarcely saleable upon any terms, our unrivalled rivers, lakes, and canals almost unused; whilst commerce abandons our shores, the circulating capital amassed under a more favourable system is dissipated, with none from any quarter to replace it. Thus, without available capital, unable to effect a loan with foreign states, or with the mother country,

although offering security greatly superior to that which readily obtains money, both for the United States and Great Britain, when other than the colonials are the applicants—crippled, therefore, in the full career of private and public enterprise, this possession of the British Crown, our country, stands before the world in humiliating contrast with its immediate neighbours, exhibiting every symptom of a nation fast sinking to decay.

With superabundant water power and cheap labour especially in Lower Canada, we have yet no domestic manufactures, nor can the most sanguine, unless under altered circumstances, anticipate the home growth or advent from foreign parts of either capital or enterprise to embark in this great source of national wealth. Our institutions, unhappily, have not that impress of permanence which can alone impart security and inspire confidence; and the Canadian market is too limited to tempt the foreign capitalist.

Whilst the adjoining states are covered with a network of thriving railways, Canada possesses but three lines, which, together, scarcely exceed fifty miles in length, and the stock in two of which is held at a depreciation of from 50 to 80 per cent.—a fatal symptom of the torpor overspreading the land.

Our present system of Provincial Government is cumbrous and too expensive, so as to be ill-suited to the circumstances of the country, and the necessary reference it demands to a distant Government, imperfectly acquainted with Canadian affairs, and somewhat indifferent to our interests, is anomalous and irksome. Yet in event of a rupture between two of the most powerful nations of the world, Canada would become the battlefield and the sufferer, however little her interests might be involved in the cause of the quarrel or the issue of the contest.

The bitter animosities of political parties and factions in Canada, often leading to violence, and in one case to civil war, seem not to have abated with time; nor

is there at the present moment any prospect of diminution or accommodation. The aspect of parties becomes daily more threatening towards each other, and under our existing institutions, and relations little hope is discernible of a peaceful and prosperous administration of our affairs, but difficulties will to all appearance accumulate until government becomes impracticable. In this view of our position, any course that may promise to efface existing party distractions, and place entirely new issues before the people, must be fraught with undeniable advantages.

Among the statesmen of the mother country—among the sagacious observers of the neighbouring Republic—in Canada—and in all British North America—amongst all classes, there is a strong pervading conviction that a political revolution in this country is at hand. Such forebodings cannot really be dispelled, and they have moreover a tendency to realize the events to which they point. In the meantime serious injury results to Canada from the effect of this anticipation upon the more desirable classes of settlers, who naturally prefer a country under fixed and permanent forms of government to one in a state of transition.

Having thus adverted to some of the causes of our present evils we would consider how far the remedies ordinarily proposed possess sound and rational inducements to justify their adoption.

1. "The revival of protection in the markets of the United Kingdom."

This, if attainable in a sufficient degree, and guaranteed for a long term of years, would ameliorate the condition of some of our chief interests, but the policy of the empire forbids the anticipation. Besides, it would be but a partial remedy. The millions of the mother country demand cheap food; and a second change from protection to free trade would complete that ruin which the first has done much to achieve.

2. "The protection of home manufactures."

Although this might encourage the growth of a

manufacturing interest in Canada, yet without access to the United States market there would not be a sufficient expansion of that interest, from the want of consumers, to work any result that could be admitted as a remedy for the numerous evils of which we complain.

3. "A federal union of the British American Provinces."

The advantages claimed for that arrangement are free trade between the different provinces, and a diminished governmental expenditure. The attainment of the latter object would be problematical, and the benefits anticipated from the former might be secured by legislation under our existing system. The market of the sister provinces would not benefit our trade in timber, for they have a surplus of that article in their own forests; and their demand for agricultural products would be too limited to absorb our means of supply. Nor could Canada expect any encouragement to her manufacturing industry from those quarters. A federal union, therefore, would be no remedy.

4. "The independence of the British North American colonies as a Federal Republic."

The consolidation of its new institutions from elements hitherto so discordant—the formation of treaties with foreign powers—the acquirement of a name and character among the nations, would, we fear, prove an over-match for the strength of the new republic. And having regard to the powerful confederacy of states conterminous with itself, the needful military expenses would be too costly to render independence a boon, whilst it would not, any more than a federal union, remove those obstacles which retard our material prosperity.

5. "Reciprocal free trade with the United States, as respects the products of the farm, the forest, and the mine."

If obtained, this would yield but an instalment of the advantages which might be otherwise secured.

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The free interchange of such products would not introduce manufactures to our country. It would not give us the North American continent for our market. It would neither so amend our institutions as to confer stability, nor ensure confidence in their permanence; nor would it allay the violence of parties, or in the slightest degree remedy many of our prominent evils.

6. Of all the remedies that have been suggested for the acknowledged and insufferable ills with which our country is afflicted, there remains but one to be considered. It propounds a sweeping and important change in our political and social condition, involving considerations which demand our most serious examination. THIS REMEDY CONSISTS OF A FRIENDLY AND PEACEFUL SEPARATION FROM BRITISH CONNECTION, AND A UNION UPON EQUITABLE TERMS WITH THE GREAT NORTH AMERICAN CONFEDERACY OF SOVEREIGN STATES.

We would premise that towards Great Britain we entertain none other than sentiments of kindness and respect. Without her consent, we consider separation as neither practicable nor desirable. But the colonial policy of the parent state, the avowals of her leading statesmen, the public sentiments of the empire, present unmistakable and significant indications of the appreciation of colonial connection. That it is the resolve of England to invest us with the attributes, and compel us to assume the burdens, of independence is no longer problematical. The threatened withdrawal of her troops from other colonies—the continuance of her military protection to ourselves on condition that we shall defray the attendant expenditure, betokens intentions towards our country against which it is weakness in us not to provide. An overruling conviction, then, of its necessity, and a high sense of the duty we owe our country, a duty we can neither disregard nor postpone, impel us to entertain the idea of separation; and whatever negotiations may eventuate with Great Britain, a grateful liberality on the part of Canada should mark every proceeding.

The proposed union would render Canada a field for American capital, into which it would enter as freely for the prosecution of public works and private enterprises as into any of the present states. It would equalize the value of real estate upon both sides of the boundary, thereby probably doubling at once the entire present value of property in Canada, whilst by giving stability to our institutions, and introducing prosperity, it would raise our public, corporate, and private credit. It would increase our credit both with the United States and foreign countries, and would not necessarily diminish to any great extent our intercourse with Great Britain, into which our products would for the most part enter on the same terms as at present. It would render our rivers and canals the highway for the immigration to, and exports from, the West, to the incalculable benefit of our country. It would also introduce manufactures into Canada as rapidly as they have been introduced into the Northern States; and to Lower Canada especially, where water power and labour are abundant and cheap, it would attract manufacturing capital, enhance the value of property and agricultural produce, and give remunerative employment to what is at present a comparatively non-producing population. Nor would the United States merely furnish the capital for our manufactures. They would also supply for them the most extensive market in the world, without the intervention of a Customs House officer. Railways would forthwith be constructed by American capital as feeders for all the great lines now approaching our frontiers, and railway enterprise in general would doubtless be as active and prosperous among us as among our neighbours. The value of our agricultural produce would be raised at once to a par with that of the United States, whilst agricultural implements and many of the necessaries of life, such as tea, coffee, and sugar, would be greatly reduced in price.

The value of our timber would also be greatly

enhanced by free access to the American market, where it bears a high price, but is subject to an onerous duty. At the same time there is every reason to believe that our shipbuilders, as well at Quebec as on the Great Lakes, would find an unlimited market in all the ports of the American continent. It cannot be doubted that the shipping trade of the United States must greatly increase. It is equally manifest that, with them, the principal material in the construction of ships is rapidly diminishing, while we possess vast territories covered with timber of excellent quality, which would be equally available as it is now, since under the free-trade system our vessels would sell as well in England after annexation as before.

The simple and economical State Government, in which direct responsibility to the people is a distinguishing feature, would be substituted for a system at once cumbrous and expensive.

In place of war and alarms of war with a neighbour, there would be peace and amity between this country and the United States. Disagreement between the United States and her chief, if not only, rival among nations would not make the soil of Canada the sanguinary arena for their disputes as under our existing relations must necessarily be the case. That such is the unenviable condition of our state of dependence upon Great Britain is known to the whole world; and how far it may conduce to keep prudent capitalists from making investments in the country, or wealthy settlers from selecting a foredoomed battlefield for the home of themselves and children, it needs no reasoning on our part to elucidate.

But other advantages than those having a bearing on our material interests may be foretold. It would change the ground of political contest between races and parties, allay and obliterate those irritations and conflicts of rancour and recrimination which have hitherto disfigured our social fabric. Already in anticipation has its harmonious influence been felt—the

harbinger, may it be hoped, of a lasting oblivion of dissensions among all classes, creeds, and parties in this country. Changing a subordinate for an independent condition, we would take our station among the nations of the earth. We have now no voice in the affairs of the empire, nor do we share in its honours or emoluments. England is our parent state, with whom we have no equality, but towards whom we stand in the simple relation of obedience. But as citizens of the United States, the public service of the nation would be open to us—a field for high and honourable distinction, on which we and our posterity might enter on terms of perfect equality.

Nor would the amicable separation from Great Britain be fraught with advantages to us alone. The relief to the parent state from the large expenditure now incurred in the military occupation of the country—the removal of the many causes of collision with the United States, which result from the contiguity of mutual territories so extensive—the benefit of the larger market, which the increasing prosperity of Canada would create, are considerations which, in the minds of many of her ablest statesmen, render our incorporation with the United States a desirable consummation.

To the United States, also, the annexation of Canada presents many important inducements. The withdrawal from their borders of so powerful a nation, by whom in time of war the immense and growing commerce of the lakes would be jeopardized—the ability to dispense with the costly but ineffectual revenue establishment over a frontier of many hundred miles—the large accession to their income from our customs—the unrestricted use of the St. Lawrence, the natural highway from the Western States to the ocean, are objects for the attainment of which the most substantial equivalents would undoubtedly be conceded.

Fellow Colonists,—we have thus laid before you views and convictions on a momentous question,

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involving a change which, though contemplated by many of us with varied feelings and emotions, we all believe to be inevitable; one which it is our duty to provide for, and lawfully to promote.

We address you without prejudice or partiality—in the spirit of sincerity and truth—in the interest solely of our common country, and our single aim is its safety and welfare. If to your judgment and reason our object and aim be at this time deemed laudable and right, we ask an oblivion of past dissensions; and from all, without distinction of origin, party, or creed, that earnest and cordial co-operation in such lawful, prudent, and judicious means as may best conduct us to our common destiny.

A committee of six prudent Annexationists undertook the task of securing signatures to the document. Their efforts met with immediate success, for in five hours 325 names were obtained, almost without solicitation.¹ After that, when the first wave of enthusiasm had somewhat subsided, and the calmer second thought of the public began to prevail, progress was much slower, yet withal encouraging. Within ten days somewhat over 1,000 signatures were secured without much labour on the part of the canvassers.² But the personnel of the signers was even more significant than the number of signatures. On the list were to be found many of the leaders in the political and financial life of the city, including John Redpath, John and David Torrance, Robert Jones, a prominent Conservative politician and member of the Legislative Council, Jacob Dewitt and Benjamin Holmes, Liberal members of the Legislative Assembly, John and William Molson, D. L. Macpherson, subsequently Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, L. H. Holton, later a member of the Mackenzie administration, J. Rose, afterwards Sir John Rose, Minister of Finance in the Cabinet of Sir John

¹ *La Minerve*, October 11, 1849.

² *The Toronto Examiner*, October 24, 1849.

Macdonald, T. Workman, and J. J. C. Abbott,' a future premier of Canada. A stronger and more influential body of men could scarcely have been recruited. The banking and the larger industrial and commercial interests were especially well represented.

Although the great majority of the signers were Conservatives in their political affiliations, the names of a few prominent Reformers were included in the list. "Taking the newspapers as our guide-book," said *The Montreal Transcript*, "we are forced to the conclusion that, in this city, the friends of annexation are to be found in the ultra-Conservative party and the most democratic and republican of the French. One by one," it reluctantly admitted, "the Conservative journals have come over to that doctrine, and many influential Conservatives, who not long ago would have rejected the address with scorn, are now its shameless and unflinching advocates. And it cannot be doubted

¹ In a speech in the Senate, March 15, 1889, Sir John Abbott said: "The annexation manifesto was the outgrowth of an outburst of petulance in a small portion of the population of the Province of Quebec, which is amongst the most loyal of the provinces of Canada. Most of the people who signed the annexation manifesto were more loyal than the English people themselves. There were a few people of American origin who seized a moment of passion into which the people fell, to get some hundreds of people in Montreal to sign this paper. I venture to say that, with the exception of those American gentlemen, there was not a man who signed that manifesto who had any more serious idea of seeking annexation with the United States than a petulant child who strikes his nurse has of deliberately murdering her. They were exasperated by the fact that when 10,000 men, who had suffered distress and disaster in the unfortunate rising before those days, petitioned the Governor for the time being to retain for the consideration of Her Majesty a Bill which they believed to be passed for paying the men whom they blamed for the trouble, the Governor-General, with an ostentatious disregard, as they believed, for their feelings and in contempt of their services and their loyalty, came down out of the usual time in order to sanction the Bill. The people were excited and did many things they ought not to have done; they behaved in a very rough manner to His Excellency, which they ought not to have done, and within two or three days, while still under the influence of this excitement, a number of them signed this paper. But there was no evidence of any agitation by these people for annexation. Before the year was over, it was like the shower of last season. . . ."
Pope, *Life of Sir John Macdonald*, vol. i. p. 70.

but that a great part of their supporters go with them in this strange and sad revulsion of opinion." To a similar effect was the declaration of *The Kingston Herald*. "It is worthy of remark that the proposition has not been introduced by the old tried and faithful adherents of reform and equal rights, but on the contrary by men who have ever been the stern and uncompromising enemies of both. The bigot, the exclusive High Churchman, the man of rectories and ecclesiastical domination, the excusers of book-burning and vandal ruffianism, who have been in the habit of calling themselves *par excellence* 'Britons' and 'Loyal Anglo-Saxons,' have been and are the promoters of the treasonable proposition." The names of the officers of the Montreal branch of the League were particularly in evidence; almost one-half of the Executive Council, including two of the Vice-Presidents, signed the manifesto, and the example of the officials was followed by a large number of the private members of the League. "The warp," declared *The Pilot*, "is high rampant Toryism"; the rest, a few scattered British, Irish, French, and American Liberals, whose presence there is somewhat of a mystery. "By far the largest portion of the names appended to the annexation address" were, according to *The Pilot*, members of the League.¹ The conduct of these gentlemen was, indeed, the more remarkable, since but a few months before the League had issued an address of a diametrically opposite character. Many other members of the League, according to *Le Courier des Etats-Unis*, felt themselves debarred from signing the manifesto by reason of the Kingston declaration, although they were secretly in sympathy with the movement; and it was fondly believed by the Annexationists that many such would gladly support the address as soon as they could recover their freedom of action.

The position of the free-trade Liberals, such as

¹ *The Pilot*, October 18, 1849.

Holmes, MacDougal, Holton, and Glass, was equally inconsistent, since less than a year before they had protested against the petition of the Montreal Board of Trade as disloyal. But, despite the fact that England had repealed the obnoxious Navigation Laws, and that the effect of the remedial legislation for which they had pleaded could not, as yet, be fully felt, their boasted loyalty had evaporated, and they were found clamouring for such a protective tariff under the United States flag.¹ But, in the face of economic distress, consistency was not a virtue of which the adherents of either party could boast.

Of the names appended to the address, barely one-thirtieth were those of French-Canadians. Of the signers only one, the Hon. S. De Bleury, a former member of the Legislative Council, was a person of any political distinction.² With the exception of a few young men connected with *L'Avenir* and *Le Moniteur*, there was, declared *The Gazette*, "hardly a name on the list of signatures connected with politics that one knows."³ The signers were almost all either young Radical-republican followers of Papineau (of whom the ablest representative was A. A. Dorion, subsequently leader of the French-Canadian Liberals) or small retail merchants who, by reason of the hard times, had adopted the fiscal views of their English fellow traders. Both in numbers and personnel the French signers were manifestly inferior to the formidable array of English Annexationists. The French republicans were, indeed, a feeble minority, without economic strength or political prestige; the English Annexationists, on the contrary, were representative of the best elements in the city's life.

The appearance of the address was the signal for an outburst of public criticism. From one end of the province to the other, it became the chief topic of

¹ *The Montreal Transcript*, quoted from *The Globe*, October 8, 1849.

² *Le Canadian*, October 12, 1849.

³ *The Gazette*, October 18, 1849.

conversation. In Montreal, in particular, excitement was at fever heat. For the moment, it appeared as if the movement would sweep the city and the surrounding district. It was the absorbing subject of discussion in the counting-house, at the market-place, and even in the home. The press exploited the matter for all it was worth. Public opinion was greatly divided, but amongst the English population the majority appeared for a time to favour the Annexationists. With the publication of the manifesto, *The Herald* came out unequivocally in favour of annexation. Mr. Kinnear, the editor, was one of the first to sign the address, notwithstanding the fact that, shortly before, he had contributed an eulogistic article to an American magazine upon the prosperity of Canada. Thanks to his earnest championship of the movement, *The Herald* came to be looked upon as the mouthpiece of the annexation party. *The Herald* did not fail to point out with pride that the cause of annexation had won a splendid victory at the outset, in the calm, masterful tone of the address, and the truly cosmopolitan personnel of the signers. "The names which are attached to the document prove how false are the accusations that there is not in this country a sentiment in favour of annexation."

Such a sentiment, it contended, was not confined to a few disgruntled adherents of a disappointed party in quest of office, but was equally in evidence among members of both political parties, and among citizens of the highest social rank, and representative business men who were not identified with any party organization. The heartiness and alacrity with which the address was adopted afforded the most convincing proof "of the unanimity of almost the entire population." In subsequent editorials, *The Herald* strongly supported the scheme of annexation in preference to a federal union of the provinces. With the defeat of the Baldwin Ministry, it believed, all the factions in Lower Canada would be fused into one independent

party, and thus put an end to racial issues. It denounced the fiscal policy of the motherland as sufficiently provocative in itself to justify the colonies in throwing off their allegiance. "Since England had withdrawn the preferential policy, it behoved the people of Canada to demonstrate their spirit of independence by "emerging from the state of pupilage." The conduct of the English Government, it continued, had absolved them from their allegiance to the Crown. Moreover, the interests of the homeland had "from various circumstances become distinct from ours; they have not been slow in telling us so, and even in regretting the necessity which forced an anti-colonial policy upon them. The very suggestion of separation and independence was not, it is notorious, first broached on our side of the Atlantic, but by British statesmen and British journalists."

But after the first enthusiasm was over, *The Herald* began to modify the positiveness of its original declarations. Annexation was no longer represented as the all in all, but rather spoken of as a *dernier ressort*. "If," it asserted, "the interests of the people at large are likely to be best promoted by annexation, our loyalty has ceased to be so strong as to make us postpone them to sentiment; but if, on the other hand, they are best subserved by the maintenance of the British connection, then we will perforce put up with British affronts." The question of separation was thus freed from sentimental considerations and reduced to the basis of comparative material advantage.

The Courier was not a whit less enthusiastic about the appearance of the manifesto. It published a declaration of political independence, setting forth the reasons which had determined its policy. In a few brief words it summed up the case for annexation in the most effective statement of facts and fancies to be found in the whole literature on the subject. "We are annexationists as much from necessity as from choice, because it affords a simple escape from the

complicated political, religious, and social obstacles which beset our path, because it would give us a written constitution, preserve us from a war of races, enlarge our fields of commerce, foster manufacturing interests, augment the value of real estate, and elevate our labouring classes from their present degraded and depressed condition." From these motives, and for these reasons, "and in order to get rid of a vicious administration, we should proclaim our independence, and invite our beloved Mother to sanction, and other nations to recognize, the same." In a moment of petty chagrin and disappointment, it assailed its fellow Conservatives of Upper Canada for their hostile attitude towards annexation and more popular democratic institutions. Towards the close of October, *The Courier* suspended publication, only to reappear, however, a few days later, as an organ of the Annexationists.

The erratic attitude of *The Gazette* furnishes a most interesting commentary on the course of the annexation movement. Prior to the issue of the manifesto, *The Gazette*, as we have seen, had been suspicious of the "hole-in-the-corner methods" of the annexation leaders. It was, however, duly impressed by the eminence and respectability of the signers of the manifesto, towards whom it showed an unusual degree of courtesy and consideration, but it still kept up its adverse criticism of the political methods of the Annexationists. "A great portion," it admitted, "of the men of wealth and standing among the inhabitants of British origin in Montreal have arrived deliberately at the conclusion that the colonial connection ought to be dissolved." But the sudden and private manner in which the address was prepared, and the unsatisfactory form of its composition, were not in its favour. Although a great mistake in judgment had been made in failing to consult the outside public about the preparation of the document, *The Gazette* admitted that the sincerity of the leaders of the movement, and the respectability of the signers, could not be questioned in any way

even by the most captious critics. If the address had been prepared by a popularly selected delegation, it would have been received with much greater confidence by the general public. It should not have been the product of a Cabal, but the result of a great public movement.

The Gazette professed itself "unable to go as fast as the signers of the manifesto." But as there was little prospect of the continuance of the British connection, unless a great change should come over English public opinion, "it did not feel opposed to the ultimate decision of fate, when the time should come." As British subjects, however, they should exhaust all means of alleviating the prevailing distress before finally determining upon separation. "Nor do our private views differ materially from those who have signed the manifesto. It is only from our anxiety to proceed with due caution, and a proper regard to the effect that the action of Montreal ought to have upon the country at large, which leads us to point out the preferable mode of attaining the common ultimate end. There should be no hesitation or division of opinion among the opponents of the existing régime about thoroughly informing the English Government and people of the real state of public feeling in Canada. But to attempt to hasten the prospect of separation would, in its opinion, only defeat the object in view."

The equivocal attitude of *The Gazette* lent some credence to the accusation that its editor had been offended because the paper had not been permitted to play the leading part in the movement.¹ This charge *The Gazette* indignantly denied. All those who favoured annexation, but disapproved of the style or material of the address, had, it contended, a right to complain of the injury done to the cause by the publication of an unsatisfactory document. The manifesto was neither well written nor properly arranged. The premises were totally inadequate to carry the conclu-

¹ *The Gazette*, October 31, 1849.

sion, and many of the statements were unsupported by any official evidence. Under these circumstances, *The Gazette* announced that it would not take a prominent part in the agitation, but would limit itself to supporting the Annexationists where they did right, and to endeavouring to check them where they went wrong.¹

It especially warned the Annexationists against attempting any hasty action, since there were several most important matters on which the public would require assurances before they finally determined to sever the imperial tie. Canadians were entitled to know first of all the terms of separation from the motherland, and the relation of England to the United States after the incorporation of Canada in the Union. The slightest consideration of England's past favours towards the colony must lead to the conclusion that Canadians ought to establish the incompatibility of English and Canadian interests to the satisfaction of the English people before they ventured to approach the British Government with a request for release from the colonial tie. Furthermore, the country ought also to be assured that, in case of annexation, there would be a settlement of the most dangerous domestic question, the racial issue, and that there would be neither a war of races nor the domination of one race over another.²

The matter of the terms of annexation raised, in the mind of *The Gazette*, very serious and critical questions.³ They ought not to take a leap in the dark, nor trust to the generosity of their neighbours.⁴ Among the questions which demanded serious consideration were the following: Should Canada be admitted into

¹ *The Gazette*, October 12, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, October 13, 1849.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In a subsequent editorial *The Gazette* stated: "We must have an opportunity to understand what we are called to participate in, before we can with prudence or honour throw ourselves unreservedly into the annexation fad" (October 20, 1849).

the Union as a single state, or divided up into several distinct states? What should be done with the Maritime Provinces, with the imperial property and guarantees, and with the public debts? Would the United States assume the provincial debt of Canada, or would the latter be burdened with a full share of the American indebtedness? What arrangements would be made in respect to the seignorial tenure, the clergy reserves, and provincial boundaries? These and many other questions demanded satisfactory answers before the country could properly consider the general question of annexation. In forcing the issue on too rapidly, without due preliminary consideration, the leaders of the annexation party would assuredly meet with a repulse, and find it necessary to retrace their steps, if they desired to carry the country with them.¹ Indeed, the hasty promulgation of the manifesto was likely to retard rather than to advance the cause of annexation; for although the injustice of the Rebellion Losses Bill had released the loyalists from their allegiance to the Crown, the old feeling of affection for the homeland was as yet too strong to permit of the dissolution of the imperial tie in an indecent and improper manner.²

But notwithstanding this criticism, *The Gazette* concluded: "The feeling is without a doubt spreading that the final result of all our moves in Canada, unless checked by Great Britain, will be into the arms of the United States. We believe so ourselves." After all its dubious wobblings, *The Gazette* at last came out freely for Canadian independence, in preference to annexation, "because we are convinced that it is worth a trial, and that it is attainable, while we believe that Great Britain will never consent to a bare, unqualified demand to hand us over to the United States."³

The Witness was so much pleased with the manifesto, that it began a series of articles in favour of annexation;

¹ *The Gazette*, October 15, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, October 17, 1849.

³ *Ibid.*, October 23, 1849.

but the sharp protest of the Hon. M. Cameron, together with the criticism of some of its readers, led it to stop the publication of the articles in question. It declared, by way of explanation, that there were certain other reforms, such as the abolition of the clergy reserve and ecclesiastical tithes, which ought to precede annexation, and that it would consequently devote its attention, for the present, to the discussion of these more pressing matters.

The Transcript, as was to be expected, came out flat-footed against the address. In an exceptionally keen analysis of the social, economic, and political conditions which had produced the manifesto, it declared: "We doubt if an act so questionable in itself was ever before sent forth in so questionable a manner. Notwithstanding the unanimous refusal of the Kingston Convention to sanction annexation, a handful of Montrealers "decide on their own mere motion on this most delicate and difficult question." Of the signers, it continued, there are some "who really believe that annexation to the States would be a remedy for the evils from which we suffer, and who desire it, therefore, on patriotic grounds as being best for the interests of the country. Many of these parties fly to annexation as a relief from the turmoils of our own Government. They see no other cure for the dissensions which divide us." But however much "we may admire the unselfish motives and the high-minded feelings" by which they are influenced, we cannot but realize that annexation, far from relieving these evils, would rather increase them. "Next to this class, we find a considerable number of merchants and traders who have suffered severely from the depression of the times, and who have no hope in the revival of our system. They lay everything to the withdrawal of protection, and will not wait to see what a little time will do. Among them are some quondam free traders who are in an amazing hurry to falsify their own theories. Doubtless they feel uneasy at the economic

outlook ; but with the many evidences of a revival of trade about them and knowing full well as business men the liability of all countries to periods of commercial depression, they act impatiently in seeking to drive the country into immediate annexation. But there is still another class of annexationists, the most zealous, though not the most numerous, whose feelings are certainly far less disinterested than those of either of the previous classes. These are the holders of real estate in the city. We have not a great deal of sympathy with these gentlemen in their desire for higher rents. As a mere Montreal real property movement, we look upon annexation as anything but a patriotic agitation."

On one point only, *The Transcript* continued, were the Annexationists agreed, namely, to get rid of the British connection. To that end, they showed the greatest eagerness in "accentuating the evils of the country, and in assigning to the whole province a condition of wretchedness which is mainly existent in Montreal. To all such clamours, we need only reply that prosperity will return in time without the abandonment of British allegiance." Besides, it was most unfair for the Annexationists to present only the dark side of the picture, and to hold the colonial régime responsible for the depression which was partly due, at least, to their own unlucky speculations.

The reference of the manifesto to the dangerous position of Canada in case of war between England and the United States would bring a blush of shame to the cheek of thousands of honest-hearted Britons throughout the country. It was criminal to think that England would engage in an unjust war ; but, should war occur, she would make every sacrifice for the defence of Canada. There must needs be a great change in the sentiments of Canadians of English stock, before they would allow their allegiance to be affected by such a miserable pretext.

The belief that a " political revolution " was at hand

in Canada was, according to *The Transcript*, much more prevalent in the minds of Yankees and English Radicals who favoured such a revolution, than amongst the Canadian people. Although the virus of annexation was widely scattered throughout the province, it was not likely to produce serious effects. Already the public press of Quebec had condemned the manifesto as false in its premises and misleading in its conclusion—false, inasmuch as it misrepresented the economic situation of Canada and the attitude of the English public; and misleading, in that it professed to make the consent of England a condition precedent to separation, when, if the premises were true, annexation would be desirable even if England should object thereto. The country at large would doubtless ratify this judgment, notwithstanding the alluring promises of material prosperity and social rest held out by the Annexationists.

However much the question might be openly canvassed in Montreal, it had not yet been seriously considered by the country at large. To have any chance of success, annexation must cease to be a local or a party question and become the great provincial issue. "At the present time we have no evidence of this national movement, nor do we think that it is at all likely that it will take place. Men will require much more evidence than they now possess, before they will agree to abandon their present allegiance. All we see at present is a small party in this city, a party respectable, we acknowledge, in the character of its members, but certainly not in a position to dictate either to the province at large or to this community. The party has only had a few weeks' existence as a party, and presents nothing in its composition which can invite confidence."¹

The Transcript was especially earnest in warning its fellow Conservatives against any alliance with the French republicans. The Conservative Party was not

¹ Quoted from *The Globe*, October 16, 1849.

"cut out" for republican institutions. "Every natural thought, every natural act, every impulse of the party gives, and has given, the lie to such a union. They may cheat themselves into the belief that annexation is practicable and desirable, or be led away by a sense of injury, but they can never be reconciled to republicanism." It would involve a recasting of their social usages and habits, a total surrender "of the soul and body to the imperious tyranny of a democratic republic"; it would mean more than a change of Government, "it would bring about a social revolution."

Besides, there could be little real sympathy between them and their French allies. The aim of Papineau was French domination, an idea fundamentally opposed to that of his Anglo-Saxon supporters, who "probably imagine that by making a bargain with the neighbouring Union their influence will be all in all, and that the influence of their French allies will count for nothing." One or the other party was being deceived, and that party was certainly not the French. "So far from their influence prevailing, the influence of Mr. Papineau and his friends is much more likely to turn the scale than that of the British ultra-Conservative Party." Under such circumstances, Conservatives should be especially careful how they involved themselves in a dangerous movement. British citizenship, *The Transcript* concluded, was no valueless thing to be exchanged for a mess of pottage. If the Annexationists pursued their present blind policy, the people of the colony would go down in history as guilty of the basest ingratitude towards the parent state, in using their newly acquired constitutional freedom "to sell themselves to the Yankees."

The New Era, a recently established Tory paper, followed the lead of *The Transcript* in opposing annexation, and supporting the principles of the League, protection and a union of the provinces.

The Pilot was equally vigorous in its condemnation of the manifesto. So far did it carry its opposition,

that it refused to open its columns to the publication of the address. A protest by a small group of prominent Liberal Annexationists,¹ against what they considered the unfair attitude of the paper, served only to call forth the crushing reply that, even if the address had been handed to *The Pilot* at the same time as to the other journals (which, however, was not the case), it would not have been inserted. *The Pilot* "would not lend its columns to the dismemberment of the empire." The Annexationists could get the Tory organs to do their publishing for them, for the ministerial press would refuse to do so. The Liberals of Montreal would not throw away the substance of good government they now enjoyed for the shadowy benefits of annexation. That was the spirit in which they rejected the pressure placed upon them to sign an address which they had never read. The Annexationists, it believed, had adopted a mistaken policy in issuing a manifesto instead of establishing a paper to advocate their principles.²

With the majority of people, annexation was, as yet, "more a matter of feeling than of reflection." The disaffected "and the disappointed wish for a change, and that is the change which appears easiest and most feasible." Although annexation was an open question in both parties, it was especially disconcerting to the great mass of loyal Reformers to find a few Liberal politicians uniting with the Tories in promoting the cause of annexation. *The Pilot* loudly called upon all Reformers to avoid such an entangling alliance and to range themselves loyally under the party flag.

In a series of able editorials it attacked seriatim the arguments of the address. Canada, it declared, was now suffering "from mushroom organizations." The majority of the signers were members of the League which had recently proposed a different means of saving

¹ Messrs. Boyer, McKay, Holton, Workman, De Witt, Hart, Glass, Bruneau, Holmes, and Knapp.

² *The Pilot*, October 11, 1849.

society. "Such extraordinary tergiversation in their past conduct bodes ill for their future consistency, as such extreme haste in adopting a new system betokens little study and labour in the concoction of it." They had simply accepted it without due consideration as the best means at hand for promoting the prosperity of Montreal. But before distracting the country by such an agitation, the Annexationists should offer the most convincing proof—first, that the Canadian public desired annexation; second, that the majority of the inhabitants of the other British North American colonies supported it; third, that England was prepared to grant it; and finally, that the United States was ready to incorporate Canada in the Union. But on all these points there was a signal lack of satisfactory evidence. Only in Montreal was annexation regarded as a really vital issue. All the Reform and most of the Conservative papers, especially in Upper Canada, had pronounced against it. Neither was any evidence offered on the second proposition, to prove that public opinion in the Maritime Provinces was less unfavourable to annexation than in Canada. In regard to the third proposition, it was entirely unwarranted to assume that either the British Government, or the nation at large, desired to compel, or even to induce, the colonies to dissolve their allegiance, merely because Lord John Russell and other English statesmen favoured the policy of throwing off on the colonies the whole burden and responsibility of their own administration. The fourth and last proposition, which required to be established, was equally doubtful. For, even though Great Britain should agree to peaceful separation, annexation "could be effected only after long and difficult negotiations, even if it were possible to be effected at all with the Union as it is now composed."

The Pilot did not hesitate to attack the blue-ruin cry which the Annexationists had unscrupulously made the chief issue of the day. It endeavoured to prove by a liberal use of statistics that the existing depression

was mainly confined to the Montreal district, and that business conditions throughout the province were already improving, as was evidenced by an increase in the public revenue and the canal tolls.¹ The action of the Montreal Conservatives in raising the annexation cry at the very moment when the Government was about to enter upon negotiations for reciprocity with the United States was, according to *The Pilot*, exceedingly unpatriotic. A continuance of the present agitation would inevitably weaken the hands of the British Government in dealing with a foreign power, and might even endanger the success of the negotiations. *The Pilot* explicitly denied the contention of the Annexationists that the expenses of the Government of Canada were higher than those of the neighbouring states, and that the danger of international complications would be less if they were American citizens instead of British subjects.²

On the other hand, it concluded, Canadians would lose by annexation the healthy and liberal spirit of public criticism, which was characteristic of English public life as contrasted with that of the United States, a loss which could not well be estimated in terms of mammon. Throughout the whole controversy the tone of *The Pilot*, unlike that of several of its contemporaries, was admirable. Although arraiging the conduct of the Tory Party in no uncertain terms, it did not permit its partisanship to run away with its judgment. It recognized the seriousness of the issue which was presented, and endeavoured to discuss the question in the calm and reasonable spirit which its importance demanded.

The skill of the political cartoonist was likewise placed at the service of the British connection. *Punch in Canada*, the one distinctive comic paper of the province, used the gentle art of raillery with telling effectiveness against the Annexationists. It pictured the sorry state in which Papineau and his young Radical

¹ *The Pilot*, October 16, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, October 25, 1849.

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compatriots would find themselves in case of a political union with the United States. Even more effective were the cartoons at the expense of the English Annexationists at Montreal. Mr. Benjamin Holmes was made a special object of attack. He and his friends were represented as small boys who were caught in the act of trying to pawn their mother's pocket-handkerchief to Uncle Sam. It did not even hesitate to attack the convivial propensities of the member for Montreal. The commercial side of the annexation movement was hit off admirably by "a business flourometer":

"Flour, 33s. per barrel--loyalty up.

Flour, 26s. per barrel--cloudy.

Flour, 22s. per barrel--down to annexation."

It must be admitted that in the battle of the press the pro-British papers had considerably the better of the argument over their opponents. The latter were by no means sure of their own position, and were divided in their counsels between annexation and independence. They were prone to appeal to racial prejudices and partisan antipathies; they engaged in general denunciation of both the local and English Governments without seriously attempting to analyse the situation of affairs, or to ascertain to what extent the free-trade policy of England was really responsible for existing conditions in the colony. The pro-British papers, on the other hand, were much less partisan and intolerant in their views; with few exceptions, they endeavoured to argue the question out on its merits, trusting that the calm judgment of the public would sustain their reasoning.

The French press again divided on strict party lines. *L'Avenir* hailed the manifesto as the most important doctrine since the Ninety-Two Resolutions. It expressed the greatest satisfaction at finding the names of many leading French Canadians in the list of signatures: "C'est un appel fait à toutes les classes, et à toutes les parties, d'oublier les anciennes causes de division, pour se réunir dans le but d'obtenir ce dont

le pays a le plus puissant besoin, la prospérité avec l'annexion." By remaining outside the movement, the French-Canadians would sacrifice the future of their race and of the colony, and subject themselves for all time to the tyranny of the Colonial Office, from which they had suffered so long. The movement, according to *L'Avenir*, was spontaneous in its origin, and had met with a ready response from the French merchants. The bearers of the address, it boasted, had found only three persons who really objected to annexation, although several had desired time for consideration before attaching their signatures. *L'Avenir* thought that a better way of verifying public sentiment might perhaps have been found; but, since the manifesto was issued, all sympathizers should lend their hearty support to the movement.¹

La Minerve, on the contrary, looked upon the address as a sad page in the history of Canada. It accused the Conservative Party of taking up the question of annexation for the purpose of defeating the Government, rather than from any real desire for a political union with the United States.² The attitude of several of the other French papers was likewise critical. *L'Ami de la Religion* declared that it was not at all surprised at the appearance of the manifesto, since events had been pointing towards annexation for some time. It did not regard the address as an occasion for either gratification or chagrin and shame. Looked at from the standpoint of French nationality, annexation was undesirable, but any opposition to annexation on this ground was greatly weakened by the bitter controversies of the French press and parties, which threatened to destroy all sense of racial solidarity.

It was admitted, on the other hand, even by those who were opposed to separation, that annexation was inevitable in the not far distant future. *L'Echo des Campagnes* approached the subject from a very in-

¹ *L'Avenir*, October 13, 1849.

² *La Minerve*, October 18, 1849.

teresting but practical standpoint. There were, it declared, three classes of annexationists: first, partisans calmes; second, outrés; and third, partisans tièdes. In the third class were to be found the former Tories, who had been in despair since the day of their defeat. They had at first raised the cry for annexation in the hope of overthrowing the Government by causing a division in the Liberal ranks. They had played with fire, and got burned in consequence. To-day the demand for annexation was serious, but they could not well draw back; they were led on unwillingly, and even in spite of themselves. Very little sympathy could be felt for those persons of wealth and ambition who had joined the movement with a view to exploiting it to their own advantage.¹

Although on general principles annexation would be advantageous, nevertheless, the benefits of union would, it contended, be more than offset by the restrictions which annexation would place upon the powers of the local legislature to deal freely with the greatest of local problems, the seignorial system of tenure. The judicial interpretation of Article I, Section 10 of the United States Constitution, in respect "to the impairment of the obligation of contracts," would effectually prevent the local government from abolishing the burdens of the feudal system.² The validity of this argument was denied by *L'Avenir*, but without greatly weakening its effect upon the intelligent part of the French-Canadian public.³

The sober demeanour of the great majority of the French Ministerialists showed the splendid discipline of the clergy and the party leaders. The rank and file of the party refused to commit themselves in any way to the annexation movement, until there had been an official expression of opinion from their spiritual and political guides. The Papineau party, it was

¹ *L'Echo des Campagnes*, October 18, 1849.

² *Ibid.*, November 2, 1849.

³ *L'Avenir*, November 15, 1849.

admitted; had gained considerable strength by its union with the Annexationists, but it was still too weak to grapple alone with the Government. The real state of French opinion would, in the judgment of *The Montreal Gazette*, never be known until the Lafontaine Ministry was driven out of office.¹

The favourable reception of the manifesto encouraged the annexation leaders to proceed to the formation of a permanent organization somewhat after the type of the English Anti-Corn Law League. The organization of such an association was, in the opinion of *L'Avenir*, all that was required to make the Annexationists "the strongest and most numerous political party in the country." The association, it was proposed, should enter upon an aggressive educational campaign, and flood the country with tracts and speakers. A call was accordingly sent out by about one hundred of the signers of the address, summoning a meeting to organize an association. The committee of arrangements requested several prominent politicians and merchants, including Papineau, Holmes, De Witt, De Bleury, Workman; and others to address the meeting, and otherwise assist in the work of organization.

Papineau, however, much to his regret, was unable to be present; but in a letter to the Committee he expressed the strongest sympathy with the judicious efforts which were being made to obtain for all Canadians the right to govern themselves; instead of being governed by a distant authority. Under the colonial régime, he declared, the interests, desires, and necessities of Canada were being sacrificed. Distance alone, not to mention the essential differences in the social conditions and economic interests of the two countries, made good government from Westminster impossible.

As far back as 1823, in consultation with English political leaders, he had advocated the independence of Canada, and they had all admitted that it would be to the mutual advantage of both countries to part,

¹ *The Gazette*, October 18, 1849.

company. Voluntary separation, he urged, was much preferable to a warlike dissolution of the imperial tie, such as had been effected by the United States. British statesmen did not maintain that the connection should be perpetual, but only that it should be prolonged, for fear that if Canada were incorporated in the American Republic, the other North American colonies would soon follow suit. Such a splendid addition of wealthy states to the American Union would, it was feared, make the United States a dangerous economic competitor in the markets of the world. The government of the colony had, he declared, become most corrupt and expensive. The grant of responsible government could not rescue the country from depression, since England would not change her fiscal policy to please the colonies. Had he been in Montreal at the date of the issuance of the manifesto, he would have been one of the first to support its judicious, patriotic, and reasonable declaration of principles.

On account of ill health, the Hon. S. De Bleury also found it impossible to be present at the meeting. In a letter to the committee expressing his regrets, he deplored the evils from which the country was suffering. The condition of affairs was, he declared, even worse than at the time of the Ninety-Two Articles. The only hope of relief was to be found in peaceful separation, to be followed by annexation to the United States. But Annexationists must first show to England by public demonstrations and petitions that the majority of the people of Canada desired a change of allegiance. "Courage, then, citizens of Quebec; to the work, and at once."

Although the purpose of the meeting was merely to effect a permanent organization, the gathering took on the character of a public demonstration in force. According to the annexation papers, the hall was incapable of holding the crowd who sought admission. The audience was largely composed of prominent business men of the city. Apparently only a few French-

Canadians were present, and such of them as participated in the proceedings belonged to the "Young Canada" party. John Redpath was chosen chairman, and Messrs. John Glass and G. P. E. Dorion acted as joint secretaries. In his opening remarks, Mr. Redpath declared that the commercial distress of the colony was due to the action of Great Britain in withdrawing protection from colonial products. Canada, he admitted, could not properly question the right of England to change her fiscal policy, even though such change, as in the present instance, inflicted the severest suffering upon the colonies. But, under these circumstances, Canada must needs look to her own interests. It was incumbent upon them to take measures to stop the drain of thousands of skilled artisans to the United States.

He enlarged at length upon the prosperity of the States as contrasted with the poverty of Canada; prices were 20 per cent. and property 50 per cent. higher across the line than in this province. To save the country from impending ruin, annexation was absolutely necessary. The League was, in his opinion, "going in a roundabout way to attain what they, as Annexationists, sought to secure by direct means" (cheers). Annexation was the only subject which had aroused real interest at the Kingston Convention. He was advocating annexation, not for any party purpose, but solely for the advantage of the country. Partisanship had been the curse of the province, and he hoped that the Canadian people would now bury all past dissensions and unite on the policy of annexation.

In moving the first resolution in favour of the formation of an annexation association, Mr. H. Taylor declared that he respected the motives of those who were strongly opposing the present movement, for he, too, honoured the Queen as much as any of them. Some of their opponents, however, were actuated by personal interests and considerations. He felt that he owed his first loyalty to the country in which he lived.

Union and organization were necessary to attain the object they had in view. In seconding the resolution, J. De Witt, M.P., instituted a comparison between the economic conditions of Canada and of the United States, most unfavourable to the former. The agricultural, railroad, and steamship interests, in fact, every interest in the country was suffering severely. The people of Canada should rise up, and make their country truly great. They should act like men, and not like children and dependents. Above all, they must place their country above party.

The second resolution, which was proposed by B. Holmes, M.P., read: "That our state of colonial dependence can only be prolonged at the sacrifice of our most valuable interests; and that this meeting, considering the social, commercial, and political difficulties of Canada, and feeling the weight of the evils which oppress our society, believe that the only attainable measure capable of improving permanently our condition consists in a peaceable separation from Great Britain, and the annexation of Canada to the United States of America."

In moving the resolution, the local member denied that the Annexationists were unfriendly to the motherland. The address, he stated, had limited itself to a simple statement of the facts of the case. The Annexationists had an equal right with the pro-Britishers to express an opinion on the existing situation. The manifesto of the latter had been signed by hundreds "who are unknown in the city, and by a large number of officials, and by others who are advocates of restriction and protection, and by a few free traders." Every one admitted that separation would come in time, and why not now, when thousands were crossing the line on account of the free-trade policy of England. So far from criticizing the action of England in this regard, he would rather cut off his right hand than see the English people starve owing to the Corn Laws. The repeal of the Navigation Acts, though tardily

granted, would be of some advantage, but it could not alter the Canadian climate. Reciprocity was unfortunately not now obtainable, though it might have been a few years ago, before Canada had uttered threats of secession. The United States desired the whole of Canada, in order to round out their empire, and "they know that by withholding reciprocity they can force us into annexation." The Canadian farmers could not successfully compete with their American neighbours. They could afford "to admire England, but not to starve for her." The economic interests of England were incompatible with those of Canada. England would not return to a protective policy, nor would she encourage, but rather discourage, the growth of colonial manufactures. One of the important effects of annexation would be to bring American capital into the country, which would raise the rate of wages, and enable the manufacturers of Montreal to compete on an equal footing with the Lowell manufacturers. In order to attain their end, Annexationists must go to the polls, and elect a majority of members to the local legislature. England, he was convinced, would not refuse to accede to the demand of the Canadian Parliament for separation.

A similar view was expressed by Mr. Molson in seconding the resolution. He desired to make annexation the test question at the coming elections. For his part, he would not support any candidate for Parliament, Whig or Tory, who was not an annexationist. He summed up his political principles in the statement that "this country and himself were first," and he would stick to that. Mr. Robert McKay declared that, although the Annexationists were now charged with treason, time would prove that they were right. As their opponents were endeavouring to deny them the right of expressing their feelings, they should start an active campaign for the extirpation of the ignorance, bigotry, and intolerance of their critics.

The third resolution, which ran to the effect that;

"burying all past dissensions," they should bind themselves to co-operate by all lawful means to promote the object of the association, and that to this end they should invite the Canadian people to form similar associations in the same fraternal spirit, was moved by Mr. John Rose, Q.C., one of the most influential lawyers of the city. He urged that they should not allow their zeal to be chilled by the strength of the opposition. The demand for separation had arisen in England, not in Canada. In proof of this statement, he cited the opinions of many English statesmen to the effect that Canada was not wanted. Lord Vincent had predicted that Canada would be a "running sore" to the motherland; Mr. Sherwin, one of the permanent Under-Secretaries, had recently stated before a Committee of Parliament that he would not regard a colonial revolt as treason. Lord Ashburton had also told them plainly that they were free to join the States, if they so desired. When English statesmen said these things, why should Canadian Annexationists be charged with treason? For his part, he regretted the necessity of a separation from the mother country, but they could still keep alive their old affection for her. It was a sublime, and not a base, ideal for England to adopt the policy of training up the colonies to take their places among the nations. He was convinced that he could best prove his loyalty by endeavouring to promote the interests of his adopted land, in accordance with the desires of the English Government and nation.

The Hon. Robert Jones stated that he had signed the address only after long consideration, and that he was prepared to assume full responsibility for his action. Both the aims and methods of the Annexationists were legitimate and proper. The principle of responsible government, in his judgment, could not be worked successfully in this country; in fact, the people had been worse off since its introduction. The progressive opinion of the day laid it down as a political

maxim, that the republican form of government could alone promote the prosperity of the human race.

In an able legal argument, Mr. F. G. Johnston, Q.C., maintained that the members of the association were acting within the limits of their constitutional rights as British citizens. As the object of the association was peaceful, there could be no question of treason or disloyalty. The movement was not designed, as some of their opponents maliciously represented, to secure annexation at all hazards and by any means whatever. The movement was not specious or artificial, it arose out of the dire necessity of the time. Protection was now out of the question in England, and reciprocity with the United States was impossible, since the latter country could dictate to Canada what terms it desired, and those terms would undoubtedly be annexation. Several of the French-Canadian speakers urged their compatriots to join with their English fellow citizens in the movement for annexation. Canada, Mr. Latté declared, could never become great as a colony; she must first become independent before she could hope for national prosperity.

The audience was enthusiastic in its support of the speakers, and all the resolutions were carried unanimously. A committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. McKay, Dorion, Torrance, Mulholland, and Ostell, to nominate a ticket of officers, to be submitted, and voted upon, at a future meeting of the association. A constitution, setting forth the object of the association, and providing for the administration of its affairs, was drawn up by the committee in charge, and duly adopted. The association mapped out an ambitious programme. It proposed to offer a prize of from \$300 to \$500 for the best monograph on annexation, to be distributed at the lowest possible price, to send public lecturers over the province, to organize branch associations in local centres, to lend financial assistance to annexation papers, to participate in elections by securing the return to Parliament of mem-

bers who were favourable to independence or annexation, and to hold a provincial congress, when sufficient branches should have been organized throughout the colony to assure a representative gathering. The association expressly repudiated any idea of resorting to party violence to promote its objects.

At the adjourned meeting of the association for the election of officers, only about sixty persons were present.¹ The nominating committee brought in its recommendations, and the following officers were duly elected: President, John Redpath; Vice-Presidents, John D. Torrance, J. De Witt, L. H. Holton, W. Workman, D. E. Papineau, P. Drumgoole, and F. B. Anderson; Councillors, H. Stephens, W. Molson, D. Kinnear, J. Rose, J. Papin, J. Bell, R. Laflamme, and J. Ostell; Treasurer, D. Torrance; Secretaries, R. McKay and A. A. Dorion.

In pursuance of the policy of carrying on an active agitation, the secretaries subsequently sent circulars to all parts of the provinces, announcing the formation of the Montreal association, soliciting the assistance and co-operation of friends and sympathizers, urging the formation of branch associations, and enclosing copies of the manifesto.² An office was established in St. Jacques Street, to serve as a permanent bureau of the association. Mr. Perry, of *The Herald*, was installed as assistant secretary, at a salary of £150 a year, with instructions to keep in touch with the movement in all parts of the country. A very interesting pamphlet was prepared by the association for general circulation. It set forth in detail the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the Canadian and American forms of government. Special attention was devoted to a statement of the cost of the executive, judicial, legislative, and military departments of the State of New York, as compared with the cost of administering the same departments in Canada.³ Need-

¹ November 15, 1849.

² Weir, *Sixty Years in Canada*.

³ *L'Avenir*, November 30, 1849.

less to say, the comparison in almost every item was made to appear most unfavourable to Canada.

The bold manner in which the Annexationists carried on their treasonable propaganda demanded the serious attention of the Canadian Government. As long as the agitation was confined to the Tory Party, the Ministry did not deem it advisable to interfere; but when the movement began to spread among a section of the Reformers of Upper Canada, it was felt that the time had come for a definite declaration of policy on the part of the Government. Upon the Hon. Robert Baldwin devolved the unpleasant duty of dealing with the dangerous situation which had arisen in the ranks of the party. It was a fortunate thing for the empire that there stood at the head of the Provincial Government at this moment a man of the character of Robert Baldwin. By reason of his ability, soundness of judgment, unquestioned probity, and long and valiant service in the struggle for constitutional freedom, he had gained a striking ascendancy in the councils of his party and at the same time had won the respect of many of his opponents. His strong feelings of attachment to the British connection had been proved by his conduct during the revolt of 1837. Even a keen sense of political injustice, and a strong feeling of resentment against the partisan and arbitrary action of the Tory Governor, had not been able to drive him into the seditious plots of the more extreme Reformers. He had been throughout his career loyally attached to the British Crown, and a great admirer of British institutions.

The approaching bye-election for the Third Riding of York afforded Baldwin an excellent opportunity of voicing his opinion on the question of annexation. In this case there was the greater reason for a decisive expression of party policy, since Mr. Peter Perry, the prospective Reform candidate, was known to be more or less sympathetic towards the views of the Annexationists. During a visit to Montreal a short time

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before, he had, according to report, openly avowed himself an annexationist. In the candidature of Mr. Perry, the annexation issue was unmistakably presented to the party and to the electorate. Mr. Baldwin did not hesitate to throw down the gage of battle to the suspected Annexationists within the party. On the very eve of the publication of the Montreal manifesto,¹ he addressed an historic letter to Mr. Perry in which he declared, in no uncertain language, that the maintenance of the British connection was a fundamental principle of the Reform Party. His letter read as follows:

"MY DEAR SIR,

"The expediency of applying to the mother country to give these colonies a separate national existence, or to permit them to annex themselves to the neighbouring Republic, has become a subject, not only openly discussed in some of the leading journals of the province, but appears to be entertained, to some extent at least, in quarters where we would naturally have looked for the existence of very different sentiments. It becomes necessary, therefore, that no misapprehension should exist on the part of any one, friend or opponent, as to my opinions, either on the question itself, or on the effect which a difference respecting it must necessarily produce on the political relations between me and those of my friends (if any there be) who take a different view of the subject. And I take the liberty of addressing this letter to you, as well from the political connection which has so long subsisted between us, as from the circumstance of an election about to take place for the Riding in which you reside. At that election, whether you may become a candidate or not, it is due to my friends that no room should be left to suppose me undetermined upon, or indifferent to, the question. It is but right that they should be made aware that I have not changed

¹ October 4, 1849.

my opinion in relation to it, but that I retain unaltered my attachment to the connection with the motherland, that I believe now, as I did when last I addressed my constituents from the hustings, that the continuance of that connection may be made productive of material good to both the colony and the parent state.

"It is equally due to my friends that they should, in like manner, be made aware that upon this question there remains, in my opinion, no room for compromise. It is one of altogether too vital a character for that. All should know, therefore, that I can look upon those only who are for the continuance of that connection as political friends—those who are against it as political opponents.

"The mother country has now for years been leaving to us powers of self-government, more ample than ever we have asked, and it does appear a most impious return to select such a time for asking for a separation. . . . I can, at all events, be no party to such proceeding, and must not suffer it to be supposed that I have a moment's doubt respecting it. Let the declaration which I have above made lead to what it may, as respects the relative political position of either myself or others, I feel that I am in the path of duty in making it. I abide the consequences."

Scarcely had the manifesto made its appearance, before other members of the Government took steps to assist the Attorney-General in checking the spreading contagion of unrest. The Hon. Malcolm Cameron sent a letter to *The Montreal Witness* protesting against its attitude on the question of annexation, and characterizing the movement as the conspiracy of a set of disappointed men to dismember the empire.¹ Thanks to his initiative, a formal protest was drawn up, a few days later, and signed by all the ministers of the Crown then in Montreal, and by all the French Liberal

¹ *The Globe*, October 13, 1849.

members of the city and vicinity. The protest ran as follows:

"We, the undersigned members of the Provincial Legislature, residing in the city of Montreal and its vicinity, have read with astonishment and regret a certain address to the people of Canada, recently published by divers persons, with the avowed intention of exciting, in the midst of our population, a movement in favour of the separation of this province from Great Britain, and of its annexation to the United States of America. Sincerely attached to the institutions which the mother country has acknowledged, and convinced that those institutions suffice, through a system of wise and judicious legislation, to secure prompt and efficient remedies for all the evils which the province can complain of, we consider ourselves urgently bound to protest publicly and solemnly against the opinions enunciated in that document.

"We deem it our duty at the same time, and without awaiting the concurrence of the other members of the Legislature—upon the approval of whom, with few exceptions, we may, however, confidently rely—to appeal to the wisdom, the love of order, and the honour of the inhabitants of this country, and to call upon them to oppose, by every means in their power, an agitation tending to subvert a constitution which, after having been long and earnestly sought for, was received with feelings of deep gratitude towards the metropolitan Government; an agitation, moreover, which can result in nothing beyond the continuation of the scenes from which this city has already so severely suffered, the disturbance of social order, and a renewal of the troubles and disasters which we have had to deplore in time past."

To the protest were appended the names of twenty members of the Legislative Council and Assembly.¹

¹ Messrs. Leslie, Bourett, Morn, Viger, Cameron, Price, Drummond, Dumas, Cartier, Davignon, Lacoste, Nelson, Jobin, Massue, Methot, Chabot, Lemieux, Cauchon, etc.

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including the following members of the Government: Messrs. Leslie, Price, Taché, Caron, Cameron, and Drummond. Of the signers, all but Price and Cameron hailed from Lower Canada, and almost all were of French extraction. The document was, in fact, a joint declaration of the Government and the French Liberal members, in repudiation of the annexation movement. Shortly after, two other French members signed a similar protest, as officers of militia.¹

In times of bitter racial and political feeling, when the loyalty of the French-Canadians is sometimes called in question, this fact should not be forgotten, that the first protest against the annexation manifesto was made by the French Reformers, not by the English-speaking Conservatives. This circumstance is rendered all the more interesting by the fact that several of the signers, such as Morin, Cartier, and Nelson, had taken part in the revolt of 1837. After the grant of responsible government, these men rallied to the support of the English connection, and by their prompt action checked the spread of annexation sentiment among their compatriots.

The decisive action of the French Reform members aroused the severest criticism of the Papineau organs, which accused them of supporting the British connection from purely mercenary motives. *Le Canadien Indépendant* recited at length the salaries of the Executive Officers of the Crown, and the special remuneration of certain other members of the Legislature who had signed the counter manifesto. Chabot, it declared, was the advocate of the Jesuits, and as such the humble servant of the Crown. *L'Avenir* denounced the perfidy of the former patriotic leaders of 1837. Messrs. Morin, Leslie, and Nelson, who for the sake of personal preferment had sacrificed their political principles, and had gone over to the enemy. Cartier was accused of having changed front, since, for some years past, he had been an avowed advocate of annexa-

¹ Messrs. Duchesnay and Laurin.

tion, and had only recently pronounced himself as still in favour of it.¹ However this may be, there can be little doubt but that at the time of signing the protest Cartier was a loyal supporter of the British connection. He had recovered his faith in the future of the colony, and he entertained a lively hope of its economic development when its resources should have been opened up by an improved system of communication.²

The intense interest of the Government in the political situation in Upper Canada was clearly shown in a letter of the Hon. Francis Hincks to Mr. C. Crosby, a leading Reformer of Markham. The question of annexation was, in the judgment of the hon. minister, primarily a commercial question. Setting aside those subjects with which the local Parliament could satisfactorily deal, the single cause of discontent sprang, he declared, from the restriction on trade across the American border. Public opinion was agreed that "the inconsiderate cry for annexation would be at once stifled by the establishment of reciprocal free trade with the United States."

There was, however, he continued, a general opinion that the American Government would not make fiscal concessions to Canada. One thing was certain, the annexation movement was not calculated to assist the local government in its efforts to obtain reciprocity. If the Annexationists would drop their ill-advised agitation, he held out the hope that the Imperial Government, which at last was fully alive to the seriousness of the Canadian situation, would be able to secure from the United States the free admission of Canadian products into the American market.

The Montreal manifesto, he declared, was based upon a misconception of the state of English public opinion. "The generous sentiments expressed by the British statesmen to the effect that they had no desire to retain the colonies against the wish of their inhabi-

¹ *L'Avenir*, October 18, 1849.

² De Celles, *Life of Cartier*, p. 45.

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tants, have been construed into indifference as to the permanency of the connection, an indifference which is most assuredly not felt by any numerous party. Not only are the leading statesmen of the political parties . . . most favourable to the subsisting connection, but the warmest advocates of Colonial Reform, such as Hume, Molesworth, and Roebuck, would view annexation with deep regret." It would be especially mortifying to the Liberals in England, as well as in the colonies, if the recent concession of self-government should lead to the severance of the imperial tie, instead of the strengthening of the connection as had been anticipated. He appealed to the Reformers to rally to the support of the Government in the struggle which was apparently about to take place between the loyalists and the Annexationists in the Third Riding. Every member of the Ministry, he concluded, entertained the views of Baldwin; as set forth in the letter to Perry, and would carry them out if backed up by the party. But if their former supporters should fail them, the Government had a primary duty to their sovereign and country "to sustain any administration favourable to the British connection which could command a larger share of public opinion than themselves."

The Government was using every effort, both of a personal and partisan character, to stop the spread of annexation views within the Reform Party. Baldwin officially read all the Annexationists out of the party. Cameron and his associates denounced the movement in unsparing terms, and Hincks declared in effect that the Ministry placed their allegiance to the Crown before their party, and were prepared, if necessary, to support a loyal-Tory Government, rather than to retain office by the grace of annexationist Reformers. The ministers were undoubtedly alarmed at the growing strength of the Clear Grit Party, and at the tolerant, if not sympathetic, attitude towards annexation of some of the papers, and many of the supporters of that faction

¹ October 22, 1849.

of the party. But they did not lose courage, nor hesitate for a moment as to the proper policy to pursue under the circumstances. They boldly attempted to stifle the spirit of sedition at the outset. To this end they cleverly represented the annexation movement in the light of an act of treason to the party and to the Crown, and adroitly appealed to the fealty of their supporters, to the constitutional principles of the party, and to the old chivalric affection of the colonists for the motherland, in the hope of stemming the rising tide of republicanism which was threatening to carry away so many of their former supporters. The appeal was to a large extent successful. The timely intervention of the Ministry rallied the bulk of the party around the British standard, and enabled the Government to direct its full strength against the Annexationists in another quarter.

Meantime, the loyalists of Montreal had taken steps to counteract the impression that the city had wholly gone over to the Annexationists. Thanks to the energetic initiative of Mr. John Young, a prominent Reformer President of the Free Trade League, and business partner of Benjamin Holmes, a counter declaration of loyalty was prepared and circulated throughout the city. Prominent members of the League¹ joined hands with leading Reformers to make the protest a success. The address ran as follows:

"We, the undersigned inhabitants of the city of Montreal, owing and acknowledging allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, having read a certain address to the people of Canada, in which separation from the British connection and a union with the United States of America are recommended as presenting the only practicable remedy for the evils which affect this province, do hereby solemnly and deliberately record our dissent from the precipitate and ill-advised conclusions

¹ Messrs. Mack, Montgomerie, Smith, Isaacson, officers of the League, signed the protest

which the authors and signers of that address have arrived at.

"We believe that there is nothing in the depressed condition of Canada which may not be promptly and effectually remedied by the adoption of a well-considered system of legislation, without having to resort to a measure revolting to our feelings, revolutionary in character, and tending to the dismemberment of the British Empire. These views we are anxious to maintain by all constitutional means. Anxiously alive to the importance of promoting the material interests of this our native and adopted country, and of preserving unanimity and good-will amongst all classes of our fellow citizens, we cannot but express an earnest hope that means may be devised without delay to restore prosperity to this province, cement the ties which have so long existed with the mother country, and allay all agitation which may otherwise prove formidable."

To this protest over a thousand names were subscribed, notwithstanding the fact that no regular canvass of the city was attempted. The counter declaration represented, according to *The Transcript*, but a feeble reflex of Montreal feeling upon the question, since in matters of this kind it was exceedingly difficult to put aside their personal opinions. In this case, a large number of gentlemen had refused to sign the declaration, because they were of the opinion that no protest was necessary, and that the good common sense of the public, without outside efforts, would put down the agitation of the Annexationists. A still larger number of citizens objected on political grounds, "from a fear lest the movement might weaken the Conservative Party, and strengthen that of their opponents." On the other hand, the annexation press threw out the insinuation, which was subsequently repeated by Mr. Holmes in the Assembly, that every stipendiary and office-holder in the city was compelled to sign the protest on penalty of dismissal; and it was further

alleged that there were many false names upon the roll.

The truth of the first of these accusations was challenged by *The Pilot*, which declared in rebuttal that much less pressure was exercised in securing signatures in the case of the counter, than in that of the original manifesto. However this may be, it must be admitted that the names of Government officials occupied an important place on the list, and that, in point of social and commercial standing in the community, the adherents of the counter declaration made a much less pretentious appearance than the formidable array of the original manifesto. The larger commercial interests of the city were undoubtedly in favour of annexation. Amongst the mass of the English population opinion was very evenly divided. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of the French inhabitants were unresponsive and unsympathetic, their passive attitude constituted the strongest barrier against the spread of annexation tenets.

Encouraged by the many evidences of loyalty throughout the province, the Ministry proceeded to carry the war into the camp of the enemy. The Government had already been challenged by a section of the Tory press to dismiss from the public service any or all of its supporters who had signed the annexation manifesto.¹ Although the task was an exceedingly unpleasant one, and likely to react disadvantageously upon the Government, the Ministry did not hesitate to do its duty. No other course, in fact, was open to it. The question presented to the Government was not one of party expediency, but of public honour and of true allegiance. No matter how liberal the principles of the Government might be, it could not permit its officials to forswear their allegiance at will, without proclaiming thereby its own powerlessness and dissolution. The Government, from its very character as the ruling organ of the State, was not only entitled

¹ *The Montreal Gazette*, October 31, 1849.

to demand obedience from its citizens, but was compelled to assert and maintain its authority, even by arbitrary means, against its recalcitrant servants.

A circular letter was accordingly addressed by Colonel Leslie, the Provincial Secretary, to the magistrates, Queen's Counsels, militia officers, and other servants of the Crown, whose signatures were appended to the manifesto, "with a view of ascertaining whether their names had been attached to it with their consent," and, if so, demanding an explanation of their conduct.¹ To this communication an interesting variety of responses was forthcoming. Some of the recipients disavowed their signatures; a few of the Annexationists courteously acknowledged their offence, and in some cases attempted to justify their action; but several, on the other hand, refused to afford the desired information, and even denied the right of the Government to question them in regard to the matter.²

With striking inconsistency, *The Gazette*, which had taunted the Ministry with weakness in dealing with the Annexationists, now faced about, and denounced the Government for its inquisitorial proceedings. The Queen, it declared, would lose through this persecution the services of many brave and loyal men whose places would be vacated in order to make way for traitors. The Bar, it ventured to assert, would resist this dangerous attack upon its independence. The recipients of the circular were advised to consult together, "to meet so unprincipled and despotic an invasion of public liberty and the right of free discussion."

The Ministry was in no way deceived or intimidated by the bluffs and threats of the opposition, but calmly proceeded to deal with the offenders. At a meeting

¹ Despatch of Lord Elgin to Earl Grey, December 3, 1849.

² Prominent among the recalcitrants was Mr. Johnston, Q.C., who denied at first the power of the Executive to interrogate him, since he held no office of profit under the Crown, and was not a servant of the State. Later, he sought to justify his refusal to reply on the ground of his high regard for the privileges of the Bar.

of the Executive Council, on December 1, it was resolved that those officials who had admitted being parties to the annexation address, and those who had failed to give a direct answer to the Government's inquiry, should be dismissed from the service, and that the guilty Queen's Counsels should be deprived of their gowns. The attitude of the Government was clearly set forth in a minute of the Executive Council, a copy of which was addressed by the Provincial Secretary to the dismissed officials.

"There can be no doubt in the opinion of the Committee of Council that His Excellency must feel bound by a sense of duty, as well to his sovereign and the empire at large, as to the people of Canada themselves, not only to maintain the connection of the province with the parent state by the fullest exercise of all the prerogatives conferred upon him by Her Majesty, but to discourage by all the means constitutional within its control every attempt calculated to impair it. In the performance of this duty there can be no desire to question any one upon mere abstract speculations regarding different forms of government. It is for parties to satisfy themselves to what extent they may proceed with such speculations, without the risk of compromising themselves by a breach of the laws of the land. When, however, an individual arrives at the deliberate conclusion, that what he deems the evils under which his country labours require not merely a reformation of the Constitution, but its entire overthrow, and when such person entertains this opinion not as a mere speculative theory, possibly to be realized in some remote and undefined future, but actually takes measures directly intended to bring about such revolutionary change, it appears to your committee perfectly obvious that, apart from all considerations or inquiry as to consequences of a still more serious character, such party should not be permitted to remain in the anomalous and invidious

¹ December 5, 1849.

position of holding a commission during the pleasure of a sovereign power which he desires to subvert."

The Government was no respecter of persons: Reformers and Tories, magistrates, officers and civilians, men of high and low degree alike, felt its displeasure. Conspicuous in the list of the dismissed Justices of the Peace were Jacob De Witt, Benjamin Holmes, and the Hon. Robert Jones; John Molson was dropped from the Wardens of Trinity House, and Messrs. Johnston and Rose lost their status as Queen's Counsellors. The victims were found in all parts of the province, but the Montreal district and the Eastern Townships especially suffered from the expurgatory process.

The decisive action of the Ministry aroused the vindictive ire of the Annexationists and their friends. The dismissed officials very cleverly endeavoured to gain the sympathy of the public by posing as the victims of an arbitrary Government, and by standing forth as the champions of liberty of speech. In reply to his notification of dismissal, Mr. Holmes endeavoured to assume the patriotic rôle of a John Hampden. He claimed that he had acted for the advantage of the province in promoting the manifesto, the representations of which he believed to be true, and the object of which was not looked upon as seditious by the English Government. In conclusion, he expressed the deepest regret "to find that a full and free discussion of political questions, even though they might involve the ultimate severance of this colony from the parent state, was denied, and to be suppressed and punished by the Provincial Executive, while in England, even in the Imperial Parliament, the self-same questions were freely mooted."

In an elaborate argument, Mr. Rose also endeavoured

¹ *The Kingston Whig* alleged that, while the Government was dismissing annexationist magistrates in Lower Canada, it was appointing Annexationists to the Government service in the Kingston district. *The Examiner* also charged that Mr. Wilson, of *The Independent*, was permitted to retain his commission in the militia.

to clear himself and his friends from the charge of treason. The objects of the association, he contended, were perfectly peaceful and constitutional. The Annexationists did not aim at a revolution, nor did they intend to resort to illegal practices to attain their ends; they merely asserted the constitutional right of every British subject to seek to bring about by public discussion a change in the political organization of the country, by and with the consent of the English Government and people. The annexation journals, as was to be expected, raised a hue and cry against the "tyrannical conduct" of the Ministry, the result of which, they prophesied, would yet prove disastrous to the British connection. The action of the Government, declared *L'Echo des Campagnes*, would not suppress the annexation movement, but only serve to give a more personal character to the struggle, and separate more widely the partisans and the opponents of English supremacy in the province.

The Tory and Clear Grit journals were divided upon the question. Some of the Tory papers, such as *The Quebec Mercury* and *The Toronto Colonist*, condemned the dismissal of worthy officials who had proved their loyalty to the Crown during the revolt of 1837. A few of the Clear Grit organs joined in the clamour against the policy of the Government. The dismissals, according to *The Examiner*, were a violation of constitutional principles, and a bad piece of political tactics; such a policy would not make converts of the Annexationists, nor convince the public of the impropriety of a political union with their neighbours; neither the loyalty nor the honesty of the servants of the Crown would be promoted by a policy of coercion.¹ The chief result of this mistaken policy would be, *The Mirror* added, to arouse a general sense of injustice, and to harden the hearts of the Annexationists.

On the other hand, the leading Reform papers heartily approved of the conduct of the Ministry,

¹ *The Examiner*, November 14, 1849.

though a few of the more timid journals questioned the wisdom of the policy of the Government, on grounds of political expediency. *The Pilot* severely arraigned the contention of Mr. Rose that annexation could be peaceably obtained with the free consent of England. However peaceful, it concluded, the professions of the Annexationists might be, they could only attain their object by force—in other words, by treason. Even among the Clear Grit sections of the party but little sympathy was felt for the ex-officials. The feelings of the Upper Canada Reformers were voiced at a public meeting at Pickering of the Radical wing of the party, at which a resolution was adopted expressing approval of the dismissal of avowed republican office-holders.¹

This lack of sympathy was doubtless due in part to the fact that the great majority of the dismissed officials were Tories in politics. At the same time it is but fair to add that neither the Ministry in making the dismissals, nor their adherents in supporting the same, were primarily influenced by vindictive motives, or by mere partisan considerations. It was not a case of the application of the spoils system under the most favourable circumstances. Even *The Globe*, which could scarcely be accused of undue consideration for Tory officials, expressed the hope that many of the offenders would recant their errors, and be restored to their former posts on showing works meet for repentance.

The vigorous action of the Ministry had a salutary influence upon both the civil and military services. The great body of the servants of the Crown were undoubtedly warmly attached to the British connection. A few were admittedly wavering in their allegiance; but, however sentimentally inclined they might be towards annexation, the majority of them were not prepared to play the part of martyrs. The Government made it more profitable for them to be

¹ *The Examiner*, April 10, 1850.

loyal, than to profess sentiments of disloyalty, and they were not beyond the reach of worldly wisdom. Henceforth, the Executive had very little occasion to exercise its disciplinary authority over its officials on account of their seditious conduct.

The tactics of the leaders of the Conservative Party were strikingly different from those of the Ministry. Although the great majority of the most influential members of the party, as MacNab, Macdonald,¹ Sherwood, Allan, Moffatt, Gugsy, and Badgley, were personally opposed to annexation, but few of them ventured to take any active part in opposing the movement. For the time being, they surrendered their position as political leaders, and became passive spectators of the struggle between the Government and the Annexationists. They did not even endeavour to suppress, like the Liberal Ministers, the annexation propaganda within the party ranks. Their party was thoroughly disorganized; in the Montreal district some of the most prominent members had gone over to the Annexationists, and many others in different parts of the province were wavering in their political allegiance. Under these circumstances, the Conservative leaders thought it best to await developments, and to adopt the safe, if not highly honourable, rôle of political opportunists, in the hope of reaping some advantage from the internecine struggle of their opponents.

The course of political events had strained the loyalty of the Orangemen. They had been in the forefront of the battle against the Rebellion Losses Bill. No section of the Tory Party had been so

¹ (Sir) John A. Macdonald refused to sign the manifesto, although urged to do so. Many years after, he told his biographer, Mr. Pope, that he had "advocated the formation of the British American League as a much more sensible procedure," and that, under the influence of the League, the annexation sentiment had disappeared (Pope, *Life of Sir John A. Macdonald*, vol. ii, p. 71). He had evidently forgotten that the League Convention was held in Kingston more than two months before the manifesto appeared.

vigorous in its denunciation of Lord Elgin and the policy of the English Government as they; at times the language of some of their leaders was defiant of the authority of the Government, if not almost seditious in character. But unlike many of their fellow partisans they did not allow the bitterness of defeat to undermine their loyalty to the Crown. When all around them wavered, they rallied staunchly to the British flag. At the critical moment of the struggle, the Grand Master of the Order issued an appeal to the brethren to remember the immemorial loyalty of the Order, and their bounden obligation to maintain the connection between the colonies and Great Britain.¹ "Therefore, my brethren . . . our course is clear and appointed. No matter what may be the clamours of the ignorant, or the projects of the wrong-minded, and still less the craft of the vicious, this outburst of democratic turbulence must be resisted, and all revolutionary projects, whether made under professions of loyalty or otherwise, we are bound by our solemn obligations to oppose."

The decisive conduct of the Grand Master offset to a large extent the inaction of the Tory leaders. When the latter failed to lead, the rank and file of the Orangemen were able to look to their own officers for direction in the crisis. The response to the appeal of the Grand Master was quick and decisive. The London Orangemen presented an address bearing over 900 signatures, deploring the payment of rebels, but stoutly affirming their unswerving devotion to the Crown.² The loyal attitude of the Orangemen did much to check the spread of annexation sentiment among the Tories of Upper Canada.

The Governor-General had been anxiously watching the dangerous course of events in Montreal. Although fearful of the outcome, he did not for a moment relax his efforts to maintain inviolable the connection

¹ October 19, 1849.

² *London Times* (C.W.), November 23, 1849.

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between the colony and the mother country. "To render annexation by violence impossible, and by any other means as impossible as may be," was, he declared, "the polar star" of his policy. In a striking despatch to the Colonial Secretary soon after the appearance of the manifesto, he took particular pains to point out the serious responsibility of the English Government for the future of Canada.

"Very much, as respects the results of this annexation movement, depends upon what you do at home. I cannot say what the effect may be, if the British Government and press are lukewarm on the subject. The Annexationists will take heart, but, in a tenfold greater degree, the friends of the connection will be discouraged. If it be admitted that separation must take place sooner or later, the argument in favour of a present move seems to me almost irresistible. I am prepared to contend that with responsible government, fairly worked out with free trade, there is no reason why the colonial relation should not be indefinitely maintained. But look at my present difficulty, which may be increased beyond calculation, if indiscreet expressions be made use of during the present crisis. The English Government thought it necessary, in order to give moral support to its representative in Ireland, to assert in the most solemn manner that the Crown never would consent to the severance of the union. . . . But, when I protest against Canadian projects for dismembering the empire, I am always told the most eminent statesmen in England have over and over again told us that whenever we chose we might separate. Why, then blame us for discussing the subject?"

A part of the alarming success of the manifesto was undoubtedly due to the chagrin of the people of Montreal at the proposed removal of the capital, which touched their civic pride, and, at the same time, threatened still further to affect the social and political

¹ November 16, 1849; *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, p. 112.

prestige, and the commercial importance of the city. The circumstances of the time favoured at first the policy of the Annexationists. Their vigorous propaganda took the loyalists by surprise, and for a time appeared to sweep everything out of the way. But the latter soon rallied, and presented a strong united front to their opponents. Instead of winning an easy victory, as they had anticipated, the Annexationists found it necessary to undertake what promised to be a long and strenuous campaign to overcome the sentimental scruples of the great body of loyalists. The prospects were by no means as encouraging after the Government came out so decisively against them. Moreover, the reports which came in from the distant parts of the province, especially Upper Canada, clearly showed that both the public and the press were generally unfavourable to annexation.

Almost at the outset of the struggle the Annexationists found themselves fighting against heavy odds. Scarcely a month had elapsed since the issuance of the manifesto before some of the signers of that document realized their mistake, and began to withdraw quietly from the association. An excellent harvest in Upper Canada gave a fillip to the trade of the province. Business conditions were, according to *The Transcript*, better than they had been for some time past, the receipts from customs and canal dues were almost 50 per cent. above those of the previous year. The worst of the crisis was apparently over, and the commercial community again took heart. With the slow but steady improvement in trade, evidences of a waning interest in annexation became manifest. The meetings of the local association were but thinly attended, in spite of the efforts of the officers to maintain an active organization. The business instincts of the public again asserted themselves, and this time to the disadvantage of the Annexationists.

The situation was admirably described by the Montreal correspondent of *The London Times*. "I

am more confident every day that the late move (annexation) is a bubble which will have burst before next summer, to be blown up again and again at recurring periods of distress. Nine-tenths at least of the Annexationists are so reluctantly. They believe that incorporation with the United States will act in a magical manner on the value of property and labour in Canada, and on commerce; that it will, in short, restore their own dilapidated fortunes. Show them a revival of prosperity without it, and annexation will be laid on the shelf until the next rainy day.

"The remaining tenth is composed of a few Montreal merchants who have long been Yankees in heart, and have a natural inclination for democratic institutions, and manufacturers who want admission to the American market. Among the former are some of the richest men in Canada, who have been making enormous profits in their several lines of business, and who, disgusted at the falling off of their receipts, throw the blame on the British connection, and erroneously believe that annexation would restore them their beloved gains.

"I believe the prospects of Canada were never as good as they are at this moment. During the autumn, the exports to the United States have been double what they ever were before in the most prosperous year during an equal period, consisting principally of flour, grain, peas for the manufacture of Yankee coffee (this is now a large business), horses, and a large quantity of timber. Next spring, the St. Lawrence will bristle with masts from all parts of the globe. The revenue derived from the canals will not only pay the interest of the debt incurred for their construction, but will yield a considerable surplus."

¹ *The Times*, December 20, 1849.