

# Sir John Macdonald

W. Stewart Wallace

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# SIR JOHN MACDONALD

BY

W. STEWART WALLACE

Librarian of the University of Toronto

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TO  
MY SON

**PREFACE**

There are in print many biographies of Canadian statesmen and men of action, and some of these are books of outstanding merit. But there is a lack of such biographies suitable for use in schools and colleges, or indeed adapted to the requirements of the general reader. To supply this deficiency is the aim of the series of which this little book is the first. Whether this aim is realized, in whole or in part, it will be for the reader to judge; but a sincere attempt has been made in this volume—and will be made in the subsequent volumes of the series—to present the story of an important figure in Canadian history in a way that is at once brief, interesting, and accurate.

The study of biography is one of the best methods of studying history. Not only does one get, in a biography, a comprehensive idea of the general history of the period with which the biography deals, but one gets also a narrative interest which is lacking as a rule in histories of a general character. Especially is this so in the case of the life of Sir John Macdonald. For nearly half a century, the story of Sir John Macdonald was the story of Canada. There was hardly a phase of Canadian history during this period with which he was not intimately and vitally connected. And, at the same time, his career had a romantic interest not surpassed by that of the president of the United States who rose "from log cabin to White House." If, in these pages, the author has been able to combine this story interest with a general picture of Canadian history during Sir John Macdonald's long life, he will have attained his object.

The thanks of the author are due to Professor George M. Wrong, the head of the department of history in the University of Toronto, for his kindness in reading the book in manuscript, and for many helpful criticisms and suggestions.

W.S.W.

University of Toronto Library,  
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# SIR JOHN MACDONALD

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY DAYS

In the early summer of 1820 there sailed into the Gulf of St. Lawrence the *Earl of Buckinghamshire*, an East Indiaman engaged in carrying immigrants to Canada. Among the three hundred passengers that thronged her decks, anxious to obtain a first glimpse of the shores where they were to make

their home, was a small bright-eyed boy of five years, with a merry face and a head of dark curly hair, whose name was John Alexander Macdonald. Probably no one on board suspected that this little boy—so inconspicuous perhaps among the other children on the ship—was destined to become the prime minister of the country he was approaching, and the most conspicuous figure in its history.

The little lad's father was a native of the Highlands of Scotland, Hugh Macdonald by name, who had been engaged in business in Glasgow as a cotton merchant. Fortune had not smiled upon him; and he had decided to begin life anew, with his wife and four small children, in Canada—whither an increasing number of Scotsmen were at that time beginning to emigrate. For himself, the change was fated to bring little relief; in the new world he was to prove as unsuccessful as in the old. But for his small son Canada was destined to offer opportunities which would never have come to him in his native land.

In due course the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* made port at Quebec; and Hugh Macdonald and his family began their long journey inland. There were in those days no passenger steamships or railway trains; and travellers had to make their way up the St. Lawrence by means of batteaux, or "Durham boats," which were in some places rowed or sailed, and in others hauled through the swift current by oxen on the banks. It is significant of the difficulties of travel at that time that the Macdonald family took three weeks to journey from Quebec to their destination at Kingston on the Bay of Quinté—a distance which travellers now cover in one day.

In Kingston, Hugh Macdonald set up in business as a shopkeeper. Here, however, his ill-fortune continued to pursue him; and after struggling on for a few years, he failed and had to make a fresh start elsewhere. He tried first shopkeeping at a little place named Hay Bay, on the Bay of Quinté, in the heart of the old United Empire Loyalist settlements in this district; and then he started a flour-mill at a place known as the Stone Mills. But both ventures turned out badly; and in 1836, broken in health and spirit, he returned to Kingston, to take a humble post in the Commercial Bank—a post which he held until his death five years later.

It was not apparently from Hugh Macdonald that his son inherited the qualities which were to make him famous. These he seems to have derived rather from his mother, a really remarkable woman who came of good old Scottish Jacobite stock, and whose father is said to have fought with Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden Moor. It was she who, amid the misfortunes which befell the family in Canada, kept it together; and who made possible, in many ways, her son's success—a success which happily she lived long enough to see.

Sir John Macdonald owed nothing to birth or fortune. His boyhood was passed amid poverty and obscurity. "I had no boyhood," he once remarked in later years. "From the age of fifteen I began to earn my own living." What schooling he had was of the most elementary sort. Five years at the Royal Grammar School in Kingston seem to have been his sole academic preparation for the business of life. He always regretted that he had not had a university education; and only



the habit of omnivorous reading, which he retained throughout life, enabled him to overcome the deficiencies of his early training.

The conditions amid which he was brought up are well illustrated by a story which, in after life, he himself used to tell. One day, on returning home from school, he found the whole family ill in bed, and without food. The art of baking bread was something which he had never mastered; but, with characteristic resourcefulness, he met the situation. He carried his invalid sister downstairs on his back, and placed her on a sofa beside the kitchen fire. Then he rolled up his sleeves, and kneaded the dough and baked the bread under her directions.

As a boy, Sir John Macdonald was plain and even unattractive. He had thin spindly legs and a large lumpy nose; and he was known as "ugly John Macdonald." In after years, his sister was much incensed when a stranger informed her that he had recognized her by her resemblance to her brother. "A curious compliment to pay to me," she exclaimed, "considering that John Macdonald is one of the ugliest men in Canada." It would seem also that he lacked the free-and-easy manner which marked him in later life. "I do not think," wrote an older man to him, not long after he had left school, "that you are so free and lively with the people as a young man eager for their good-will should be. A dead-and-alive manner with them never does." Yet it must not be imagined that he was unpopular with his school-fellows. Sir Oliver Mowat was a contemporary of Sir John Macdonald at the Kingston Grammar School; and sixty years later he

testified that Macdonald "was as popular with the boys then as he afterwards became with the men."

In 1830 the young Macdonald left school, and entered the law office of George Mackenzie, a friend of his father's. As a law student, he made rapid progress, and in 1833, when only eighteen years of age, he was sent to Picton, Ontario, to take charge of the practice of a lawyer who had to absent himself from his office. It was here that he conducted in court his first case; and there occurred on this occasion an incident which has since become famous, and which throws a light on Sir John Macdonald's character. He had a hot Highland temper; and while arguing the case in court, he fell foul of the opposing counsel. To the scandal of the judge, the two disputants closed in physical combat in open court. The court crier was immediately instructed to enforce order, and circling about the combatants, he proceeded to cry loudly, "Order in the court, order in the court." But, being a staunch friend of Macdonald's, he took the opportunity, when Macdonald came near him, to whisper loudly, "Hit him again, John, hit him again." In many an encounter in later life, Sir John Macdonald confessed that he seemed to hear, above all earthly sounds, the voice of the old crier murmuring in his ear, "Hit him again, John."

After an apprenticeship of six years, the young Macdonald was called to the bar. He opened an office in Kingston, and began the practice of law on his own account. Into his office there came as students two young men who were later to make their mark in Canadian history, Oliver Mowat and Alexander Campbell. As Sir John Macdonald's biographer has happily put it:

A young man, barely twenty-one years of age, without any special advantages of birth or education, opens a law office in Kingston, at that time a place of less than five thousand inhabitants. Two lads come to him to study law. The three work together for a few years. They afterwards go into politics. One drifts away from the other two, who remain in close association. After the lapse of twenty-five years they meet again, at the Executive Council Board, members of the same Administration. Another twenty-five years roll by, and the principal is Prime Minister of Canada, while one of the students is Lieutenant-Governor of the great province of Ontario, the other his chief adviser, and all three decorated by Her Majesty for distinguished services to the State. I venture to doubt whether the records of the British Empire furnish a parallel to this extraordinary coincidence.

There must have been in that office a talisman of success.

At first, Sir John Macdonald's progress at the bar was not remarkable. He was unfortunate in that several of his early clients in criminal cases were convicted and hanged. There is a story that one of his colleagues at the bar said to him one day, jokingly, "John A., we shall have to make you attorney general, you are so successful in securing convictions." Gradually, however, he made his way. He became solicitor

for the Commercial Bank, in which his father had been employed, and for a number of other financial and mercantile institutions; and by 1841, when the union of Upper and Lower Canada opened a new vista for the people of Old Canada, he had achieved a recognized position in the legal profession in the province.

## CHAPTER II

### FIRST STEPS IN POLITICS

The law has frequently been, in Canada, a stepping-stone to politics; and, with his genius for the management of his fellow-men, it was inevitable that John A. Macdonald should, sooner or later, have found his way into public life. That he should have done it at such an early stage in his career is, however, remarkable. He was still a comparatively young man of only twenty-eight years of age when he was elected in 1843 a councillor of the town of Kingston. There is a story that his election was the result of a chance meeting in the street with a friend of his, a prominent Orangeman, named Shaw.

"Mr. Shaw," he asked, in his jocose way, "what shall I do to become popular?"

"Join our lodge," replied his friend, "and run for alderman."

Within a month, so the story runs, John A. Macdonald was both an Orangeman and an alderman.

From municipal politics it was only a step to provincial politics. In 1844, there took place in Canada a general election, the echoes of which are still remembered. Lord Metcalfe, the governor-general of Canada, had fallen foul of the Reform administration headed by Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine; and, after governing the country for several months with only one secretary of state, had formed a Conservative ministry, had dissolved parliament, and had appealed to the country. Unable to sympathize with the aspirations of the Reformers for a more complete measure of responsible government, he charged them with disloyalty; and he actually believed that the continuance of the British connection depended on the victory of his Conservative advisers. The election was one of unparalleled bitterness. In Kingston, the sitting member was far from popular; and a number of the Conservatives waited on Alderman Macdonald, with a request that he would stand in the Conservative interest. He himself, in later years, explained that he was chosen "to fill a gap." "There seemed," he said, "to be no one else available, so I was pitched upon." His selection, however, when not yet thirty years of age, was proof of his growing popularity and a recognition of his great ability.

In his reply to the request of his friends to be allowed to nominate him as a candidate, and in his subsequent address to "the free and independent electors of the town of Kingston," John A. Macdonald laid down the principles which were to guide him throughout his long political career.

Though he was standing in the Tory interest, he did not allow himself to fall into the extreme language of the Family Compact. He avoided all reference to the vexed question of responsible government, except to deprecate "fruitless discussions on abstract and theoretical questions of government." But with regard to the broader question of the British connection he uttered no uncertain sound. "The prosperity of Canada," he avowed, "depends upon its permanent connection with the Mother Country, and I shall resist to the utmost any attempt (from whatever quarter it may come) which may tend to weaken that union." In these words one seems to hear the veritable accents with which, nearly fifty years later, he assured the people of Canada that "with his utmost efforts, with his latest breath, he would oppose the 'veiled treason' which attempts by sordid means and mercenary proffers to lure the Canadian people from their allegiance."

The result of the elections throughout the country was a victory for the Conservatives by a narrow majority. But in Kingston, John A. Macdonald swept everything before him. His opponent polled only forty votes, and retired at the end of the first day's voting—for in those days elections lasted several days. In this way there began a political connection between Kingston and John A. Macdonald which was to last, almost without intermission, for forty-seven years.

In those days, Canada had no permanent capital, and parliament migrated from one city to another. From 1841 to 1844, the seat of parliament had been Kingston—a fact which brought rising young barristers in Kingston into closer touch with political life than would otherwise have been the

case. But in 1845 the capital was moved to Montreal, and thither, when parliament met, John A. Macdonald went.

The session that followed proved a stormy one. The government's majority was so small that eternal vigilance was the price of safety. The member for Kingston, as appears from the division lists, was constant in his attendance at the House. But he spoke little. In the first five sessions of the House, indeed, he did not make more than five speeches. Almost the only important speech he delivered was one in which he advocated the adoption of a protective duty on manufactures—a speech which forecasted his "National Policy" of later years, and which affords yet another refutation of that charge of "total absence of all fixed principles and settled convictions" which his opponents afterwards brought against him. For the rest, he employed his time in quietly familiarizing himself with the business and forms of parliament, and in biding his opportunity.

He had not long to wait. Though his voice was seldom heard in the House, he seems to have made rapid progress in the councils of his party; and in 1846 he was already regarded as a cabinet possibility. His name was actually proposed to the governor-general for the commissionership of Crown Lands; and only the difficulty of satisfying the French Canadians prevented his appointment. The next year, however, the difficulties in the way of his entrance into the cabinet were removed; and he became the receiver-general, or finance minister, of the administration. He was at this time thirty-two years of age.

The days of the government were, however, numbered. It was not only supported by a very slender majority in the House, but it contained within it two discordant elements—the old High Tory or "Family Compact" group, which like the Bourbons had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing, and the moderate Conservative party, to which John Macdonald belonged. Under these circumstances, the government was unable to grapple effectively with some of the vexed questions of the day; and when it became necessary, in 1848, for it to appeal to the country, it did so with defeat sitting at its helm. John A. Macdonald was himself returned by a large majority in Kingston; but the government failed to obtain a majority of members in either Canada East (Lower Canada) or Canada West (Upper Canada). In Canada East, indeed, the government did not carry a single French constituency. The new governor-general, the Earl of Elgin, thereupon sent for the leaders of the Liberal opposition, Robert Baldwin and Louis Lafontaine; there was formed the second Baldwin-Lafontaine administration, often called "the Great Ministry"; and for six years John A. Macdonald and his friends were condemned to the shades of opposition.

Baldwin and Lafontaine, with a substantial majority behind them, and with the cordial co-operation of Lord Elgin, settled forever in 1849 the long-debated question of responsible government. Henceforth, there was to be no interference by the governor-general or the British government in purely Canadian affairs; and Canada was to be governed in accordance with the wishes of her own people. But though Baldwin and Lafontaine achieved this great advance, they were unable to cope with some other problems of the day. Two questions in particular proved a



stumbling-block. The first was the question of the Clergy Reserves, an endowment of land which had been set apart in 1791 for the Church of England. The second was the question of the seigniorial tenure of land in Lower Canada, a tenure which went back to the early days of the French colony, and which was regarded by many people as hopelessly antiquated. The advanced wing of the Reform party demanded that the Clergy Reserves should be diverted to education, rather than that they should be applied to the endowment of religion; and they insisted also that the archaic features of the seigniorial system in Lower Canada should be abolished. Baldwin and Lafontaine, however, had grown more and more conservative with advancing years. They refused to be driven or hurried by the more radical wing of their supporters; and when they found disaffection growing in the ranks of their party, they took the dignified course in 1851 of resigning their portfolios and retiring from public life.

The ministry was reorganized by Francis Hincks, who enlisted the support of A. N. Morin, one of the leaders of the French Canadians in the Assembly, and who attempted also to conciliate the Upper Canada radicals—or "Clear Grits," as they were called—by including two of their number in the cabinet. The new ministry—known as the Hincks-Morin administration—went to the country in 1851, and emerged from the contest with a considerable majority. But this government, too, found it embarrassing to deal with the thorny questions of the Clergy Reserves and the seigniorial tenure; and though it held office for three years, it steadily lost ground, until, in September, 1854, it was defeated in the debate by a direct vote implying want of confidence.

During these years John A. Macdonald's progress in the art of politics was steady, though unspectacular. During the period of the Baldwin-Lafontaine administration, his prominence was not greater than that of a member of the House who had been for ten months a cabinet minister. But during these stormy days he showed a caution and shrewdness that did not mark the conduct of some of his seniors. In 1849 there occurred in Montreal, where parliament was then sitting, some disgraceful riots in connection with the passing of the Rebellion Losses Bill, a bill providing for the indemnification of persons in Lower Canada who had lost property during the rebellion of 1837-38. This bill was described by the Tories as a device whereby "Louis Lafontaine hoped to reward his fellow-countrymen for rebelling against the Queen"; and feeling over it ran very high. In the riots that occurred, Lord Elgin was assailed with stones and rotten eggs; and the parliament houses, with their priceless and irreplaceable records, were burned to the ground. So great was the anger of the Tories that, a few days after the riots, many of them signed a manifesto advocating the annexation of Canada to the United States. In these proceedings, however, John A. Macdonald had no share. He took no part in the riots, of which indeed he frankly disapproved; and he refused to sign the annexation manifesto, though urged to do so. It became clear that he had a cool head, and was not easily stampeded.

We have a picture of him at this period which is worth quoting:

John A. is described at this time as wearing a long-tailed coat and baggy trousers, with a loose necktie somewhat of the Byronic style. His face was smoothly shaved, as it always was, and he had the appearance of an actor. His walk then, as ever after, was peculiar. His step was short, and when he went to a seat, there was something in his movement which suggested a bird alighting in a hesitating way from a flight. His quick and all-comprehending glance, and that peculiar jerking of the head, bore out the comparison in other respects.

He was already popular with members on both sides of the House. A retentive memory enabled him to remember by name almost anyone he had ever met; and he had a manner which, while not without distinction, was genial enough to attract men to him. Like Abraham Lincoln, he had an apparently inexhaustible repertoire of stories and anecdotes; and these he delighted to share with friend and foe.

When, therefore, a number of the leading Conservatives in Upper Canada were left at home in the elections of 1851, it was only natural that the surviving members of the party should have begun to look to John A. Macdonald as their leader. Under the Hincks-Morin administration, Sir Allan MacNab was regarded as the leader of the Old Tory or Family Compact group, but Macdonald was looked upon as the chief figure among the moderate Conservatives, and as the organizing genius of the opposition. From being an infrequent speaker in the House, he became the head and

front of the attack on the government; and his speeches bristled with that mingled sarcasm and banter of which he became such a master. He developed also a gift for witty and epigrammatic phraseology. It was at this period that he coined the famous phrase which was later turned into a byword against himself. "They are all," he said of the government, "*steeped to the lips in corruption*; they have no bond of union but the bond of common plunder."

In nothing, however, did he reveal his qualities of leadership more strikingly than in his advance in the art of political strategy. There have been few greater masters of the political game, and already he was beginning to give evidence of that adroitness, that skill in the management of men, which was such a conspicuous characteristic of his statesmanship. He had already grasped the cardinal fact in Canadian politics that, as Sir Charles Bagot had said, "you cannot rule Canada without the French"; he realized, moreover, that the great majority of the French Canadians, though they were called Liberals, were at heart Conservative; and he lost no time in establishing friendly relations with them. The conciliation of the French Canadians was, indeed, throughout life the corner-stone of his policy. At the same time, he realized that no great gulf divided the moderate Conservatives and the moderate Liberals of Upper Canada, and toward the latter he held out an olive branch. The result was that when, in 1854, the Hincks-Morin administration was defeated in the House, it was found that the key to the situation lay in the hands of John A. Macdonald. He alone was in a position to bring about a re-alignment of parties such as would give a new government the support it required.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ORGANIZER OF VICTORY

There existed in Canada in 1854 no two great parties such as have prevailed as a rule in more recent times. There were rather, both in parliament and in the country, a number of groups or factions.

In Upper Canada there were four groups. In the first place, there was the remnant of the old Family Compact or High Tory party, led by Sir Allan MacNab, the "belted knight of Dundurn," who had commanded the loyalist forces in Toronto during the rebellion of 1837. Associated with this group, but distinct from it, were the moderate Conservatives, led by John A. Macdonald. On the opposite side of politics, but not far removed from the moderate Conservatives in principle, were the moderate or "Baldwin" Liberals, who had followed Robert Baldwin, and now supported Francis Hincks. Lastly, there were the advanced Liberals or "Clear Grits"—so called because they had been described as "all sand and no dirt, clear grit all the way through." This group had no recognized leader, but in it George Brown, the forceful and domineering proprietor of the Toronto *Globe*, was beginning to assume a commanding position.

In Lower Canada there were three groups. The largest of these comprised the great majority of the French-Canadians, led formerly by Louis Lafontaine, and now by A. N. Morin—both rebels of '37. Nominally Liberals, they were really Conservative in instinct, and had little in common with the real Liberals of Lower Canada—a small group of radicals who looked to the veteran Louis Joseph Papineau as their leader, and were known as the *parti rouge* (the Red party). Lastly, there was the English-speaking element from the Eastern Townships and Montreal, led by Alexander T. Galt, the son of John Galt, the Scottish novelist.

The Hincks-Morin administration derived its support mainly from the moderate Liberals of Upper Canada and the so-called Liberals of Lower Canada. It had also at first the support of the "Clear Grits" of Upper Canada and the *parti rouge* of Lower Canada; but as time passed, and the government failed to deal with the questions of the Clergy Reserves and the seigniorial tenure, these groups drifted into an attitude of opposition. The Hincks-Morin administration thus found itself attacked on both the right and the left flanks; and the extraordinary spectacle was seen of William Lyon Mackenzie (who had returned to the country, and had aligned himself with the Clear Grits) voting with Sir Allan MacNab. This double attack proved too much for the government; and, early in the session of 1854, Hincks and Morin were defeated in the House on a direct vote of want of confidence, and placed their resignations in the hands of the governors-general.

The formation of a new government Lord Elgin entrusted to Sir Allan MacNab, the official leader of the Conservative

opposition. Sir Allan, whose immediate followers numbered only a handful, promptly sought the assistance of John A. Macdonald. The latter's policy, in the event of the formation of a new government, was already decided. "Our aim should be," he had written, "to enlarge the bounds of our party so as to embrace every person desirous of being counted as a progressive Conservative." He therefore set about the task of forming a coalition of groups; and in so doing he gave the first conspicuous illustration of his genius for the management of men.

There were two chief groups which he had to conciliate—the moderate Liberals of Upper Canada and the so-called Liberals of Lower Canada. The moderate Liberals of Upper Canada were angry at the treatment which both Robert Baldwin and Francis Hincks had received from the advanced Liberals; and Macdonald did not find it difficult to persuade them that the gulf existing between his Party and theirs was purely imaginary. It was understood, indeed, that both Robert Baldwin and Francis Hincks had given their blessing to the proposed union. The winning over of the French Liberals was a more difficult matter. It was not easy for the sometime rebels of '37 to join hands with English-speaking Tories. But Macdonald's relations with them were so cordial, and their natural instincts were so essentially conservative, that in the end they, too, agreed to the coalition. In this way there was brought about between Macdonald and the majority of the French Canadians a working alliance which lasted throughout his long life, and was the basis of his policy.

These four groups—the High Tories, the Moderate Conservatives and the Moderate Liberals of Upper Canada,

and the so-called Liberals of Lower Canada—were welded into a strong coherent party, which still remains one of the two great political parties of the Dominion of Canada. To it was given the somewhat self-contradictory name of "the Liberal-Conservative party"—still the official designation of what is popularly referred to as "the Conservative party." The nominal head of the government was Sir Allan MacNab, and it was known as the MacNab-Morin administration. But the real head, the organizing spirit, was John A. Macdonald; and, as we shall see, it was not long before both MacNab and Morin were to disappear from the scene, and Macdonald was to become first minister in name as well as in fact.

Though the English-speaking element from Lower Canada did not formally throw in their lot with the new government, they gave it a general support. This meant that the opposition was confined to the two remaining groups—the "Clear Grits" of Upper Canada and the *parti rouge* (the Reds) of Lower Canada. These two groups had this in common, that they held what were for that time advanced views in politics. But it was just at this juncture that George Brown, who was rapidly assuming the leadership of the Clear Grit party, began in the pages of his newspaper, the *Globe*, a vehement onslaught on the Roman Catholic Church and the people of French Canada—an onslaught which rendered it impossible for any considerable number of the French Canadians to act in harmony with him, and condemned the *parti rouge* to political impotency.

John A. Macdonald's position in 1854 was, therefore, as strong as it could be. The government of which he was the organizer-in-chief had behind it a solid majority of the



members from both Upper and Lower Canada; and the opposition was both weak in numbers and lacking in harmony. Macdonald took advantage of his majority to settle once and for all the two questions on which first Baldwin and Lafontaine, and then Hincks and Morin, had come to grief—the questions of the Clergy Reserves and the seigniorial tenure. The Clergy Reserves were applied to secular, rather than religious, objects; and the seigniorial tenures of Lower Canada were virtually abolished. Thus, by the simple process of stealing their clothes, Macdonald succeeded in "dishing the Whigs." If, in his change of front in regard to these questions, there was, on Macdonald's part, what seemed an "abandonment of principle," this was more in appearance than in fact. The truth is that, in matters of secondary importance, John A. Macdonald was always a frank opportunist. Opportunism was with him raised almost to the dignity of a principle. He used the Clergy Reserves and seigniorial tenure controversies as stepping stones on which to rise to power; but when he had attained power, he saw that it was to his interest to have these stepping-stones removed, and it did not, in his view, really matter very much just how they were removed.

## CHAPTER IV

### POLITICS IN OLD CANADA, 1854-1864

The ten years that followed the formation of the first Liberal-Conservative cabinet in 1854 were years of bitter political turmoil. Politics were marked in those days by a rancour that is happily unknown to-day. Even within the charmed circle of the cabinet, animosity was not absent; and hardly a year passed without a "reconstruction of the government."

The MacNab-Morin administration had hardly entered upon its duties when, early in 1855, Morin found the strain of political life too much for him, and resigned his portfolio to accept a position on the bench. His place was taken by Colonel (afterwards Sir) Etienne Taché, a French-Canadian gentleman of the old school; and for a year or more the MacNab-Taché administration successfully weathered the storms of state. Sir Allan MacNab was however, becoming old and gouty; and a growing discontent with his leadership began to show itself among the supporters of the government, and especially among the Liberals. In May, 1856, the discontent came to a head, and Sir Allan was forced, much against his will, to retire to private life. His place as leader of the Upper Canadian supporters of the government was taken by John A. Macdonald; and Sir Allan did not hesitate to accuse his former colleague of treachery. There is, however, no evidence that Macdonald conspired against his leader; and his whole record goes to disprove the charge. All he did was to place himself unreservedly in the hands of his friends. The reconstructed ministry, which was known as the Taché-Macdonald administration, held office for eighteen months, until, in November, 1857, Colonel Taché desired to be relieved of the burdens of public life and placed his resignation in the hands of the governor-general.

Sir Edmund Head, who had succeeded Lord Elgin in 1856 as the representative of the Crown in Canada, thereupon invited John A. Macdonald to form a ministry. Macdonald invited the co-operation of George E. Cartier, the successor of Colonel Taché as leader of the French-Canadian Liberal-Conservatives; and thus there began between Macdonald and Cartier a close alliance which was destined to last until death parted them, and which had an almost incalculable influence on the future history of the country.

John A. Macdonald was now the first minister of the Crown; and it might have seemed that the ball was at last at his feet. In truth, however, his troubles were now only beginning. Since 1854, the government had had a comfortable majority in the legislature; and the country had been exceptionally prosperous. Now these conditions were about to be reversed. The harvest of 1857 was one of the worst in many years; and it was, of course, only to be expected that the government should be blamed for the "hard times" which were the result. Moreover, political conditions in the country had changed to such an extent since 1854, especially in Upper Canada, that it was difficult to predict what would be the consequence of an appeal to the people; and such an appeal was now due.

In 1854 the opposition had been confined to the Clear Grits of Upper Canada and the *Rouges* of Lower Canada, and neither of these groups had been numerically important. In the years that had elapsed since that time, the *Rouges* had made little progress in Lower Canada; indeed they had become, if anything, less influential. But the Clear Grits in Upper Canada, under the leadership of George Brown, had

made great strides; and they now threatened to rob John A. Macdonald of his Upper Canadian majority.

George Brown is one of the most amazing figures in Canadian history. A man of magnificent stature (he stood six feet four in his stockinged feet), he began to make his mark almost immediately after he came to Canada in 1843. He was one of the greatest journalists Canada has ever known; and he built up for his paper, the *Globe*, a position such as has never been occupied by any other Canadian newspaper. For many years the *Globe* was familiarly known as "the Scotchman's Bible"; and from its editorial chair Brown wielded "a long literary despotism" (to use the phrase of Goldwin Smith), such as the present generation finds it difficult to comprehend. He was intensely ambitious, without a trace of humour, and full of moral fervour. On the platform, the full tide of his vehement rhetoric carried all before it; and few men cared to brave the avalanche of his invective.

Between John A. Macdonald and George Brown there was a striking contrast. Though both were Scots, Macdonald's antecedents were Highland and Jacobite, whereas Brown's were Lowland and Cameronian. Macdonald made no such pretensions to moral superiority as Brown did; but his actions were more in accord with his professions than Brown's always were. It is perhaps too much to say that George Brown was a hypocrite; but he had the happy faculty of convincing himself that he was always right, no matter what course his ambition led him to adopt.

The issue on which George Brown swept Upper Canada was that of representation by population—or, as it was

popularly known, "Rep. by Pop." This principle is nowadays so universally recognized that it is difficult to realize that there can ever have been any controversy about it. Yet the fact is that in the Canada of 1850, the idea was revolutionary. The Act of Union of 1840, which had joined Upper and Lower Canada in a single legislative unit, had given to each part of the province (Canada East and Canada West) equal representation in the legislature, irrespective of population. In 1841, this arrangement worked to the advantage of Upper Canada, which had at that time the smaller population. By 1851, however, the situation was reversed. Upper Canada had now, mainly as the result of immigration from the British Isles, the larger population, and Lower Canada the smaller. This meant that the vote of a French Canadian was worth more than that of an Upper Canadian; and under these circumstances there arose a demand in Upper Canada for a re-adjustment of representation to correspond with the change in population.

Naturally, the people of Lower Canada did not look on this demand with a kindly eye. They pointed out that equal representation had worked to their disadvantage in 1841; and they thought that, now the boot was on the other foot, the people of Upper Canada should accept the situation as they had accepted it. Colonel Taché avowed that, in his opinion, "the surplus population of Upper Canada was no more entitled to representation than so many codfish in Gaspé Bay"—a phrase that rang through the length and breadth of Upper Canada, and did not tend to allay the growing discontent.

John A. Macdonald, whose alliance with the majority of the French Canadians was the basis of his power, was unwilling to change the representation except with the consent of his Lower Canadian colleagues; and he was averse to the principle of representation by population for other reasons as well. He thought, for instance, that it might lead to universal suffrage, which at that time was an idea of the advanced radicals. He agreed however, that the subject was one which might be discussed; and if he had been left alone, he might have found a compromise in which the interests of Upper Canada might have been safeguarded.

Unfortunately, George Brown forced the issue; and he did so in a most mischievous way. Not content with advocating the principle of "Rep. by Pop.", he accused the government of being under the thumb of the French Canadians and of the Roman Catholic Church. His Presbyterian prejudices got the better of him; and the columns of the *Globe* were filled with cries of "No Popery" and of "French-Canadian domination." It is always easy, in a country like Canada, to rouse racial and religious strife. George Brown was able to do it even more easily than other men; and he did not fail to obtain a large following in Upper Canada when he "rode the Protestant horse." But—and this he did not seem to realize—his language made it forever impossible for any considerable number of the French Canadians to join hands with him; and he thus virtually condemned himself to a state of perpetual opposition.

The results of his course were seen in the general elections of December, 1857, which took place immediately after the formation of the Macdonald-Cartier government. In

these elections, John A. Macdonald was returned as usual by a large majority in his faithful constituency of Kingston, but his supporters lost heavily in other parts of Upper Canada. On the other hand, the government gained strength in Lower Canada, where even George Brown's political allies had to repudiate him; and on the whole the government had a small majority.

The position of the government, when the Houses met in the summer of 1858, was, nevertheless, far from comfortable. Though he had a working majority, the new prime minister was supported by a minority of the members from his own part of the province. He had never subscribed to the doctrine of the "double majority"—which was that the government of the day should have, not only an absolute majority, but a majority from each part of the province as well. But it was unpleasant for him to be forced to govern Upper Canada by means of his Lower Canadian majority. The situation gave too much colour to George Brown's charge of "French domination."

It was, therefore, decided to give George Brown an opportunity of demonstrating his inability to govern the country. The chance came on July 29, 1858, when the government was defeated on the question of the choice of Ottawa as the new capital of Canada. The vote was not a direct vote of want of confidence; and, indeed, a motion of "no-confidence," which was immediately moved by George Brown, was defeated by a majority of eleven. The government, however, took the view that the vote against the choice of Ottawa as the capital was an insult to the Queen,

who had selected Ottawa at the request of the Canadian legislature; and they therefore resigned as a body in protest.

Sir Edmund Head, as was natural, then invited George Brown to form an administration. It is possible that Macdonald and Cartier did not think George Brown would be able to get a cabinet together; and that Sir Edmund Head would consequently have to ask them to resume office. If so, they were mistaken; for George Brown accepted the governor-general's invitation with alacrity, and—apparently by swallowing most of his principles—succeeded in getting together a cabinet, half the members of which, strange to relate, were Roman Catholics.

It was the rule in the Canadian parliament, then as now, that a member who accepts office under the Crown automatically vacates his seat in the House, and must seek re-election by his constituents. The seats of the new ministers were hardly cold when a supporter of the late government brought in a motion of "no-confidence." In the debate that followed, the new administration was attacked with such vigour that someone suggested, with grim humour, that the ministers should be heard at the bar of the House in their own defence; and when the vote was taken, it was found that the Brown government had been defeated by seventy-one to thirty-one.

The next day George Brown asked the governor-general to dissolve the legislature, and to order a new general election. This, however, the governor-general declined to do, since a general election had been held only a few months before, and there was no reason to suppose that in the



interval the electors had changed their minds. There was therefore no course open to George Brown but to resign; and this he did, after holding office for two days. Thus came to an end what is known as the "Short Administration," the only result of which was that its members found themselves deprived of their seats in the House for the rest of the session.

When Macdonald and Cartier resumed the reins of office, it was no doubt confidently expected by George Brown that they, too, would have to vacate their seats in the House; and he hoped perhaps that some of them might be defeated in the by-elections. But Macdonald found in the statutes a provision whereby a minister who resigned his portfolio might within a month assume another portfolio without having to seek re-election. Only a few days had elapsed since the members of the Macdonald-Cartier administration had resigned office; and there was therefore no legal necessity for them to vacate their seats in the House, provided they all took different portfolios from those they had held before. This they did, and then, having satisfied the requirements of the law, they shifted themselves back into their old offices.

This incident, which is known as the "Double Shuffle," caused rage and indignation among the Clear Grit ranks; and the editorial columns of the *Globe* reeked for months of fire and brimstone. As long as Macdonald lived the "Double Shuffle" was held up against him as one of the blackest of his political iniquities. As a matter of fact, it was nothing worse than a rather clever political stratagem; and the way in which, throughout the crisis, George Brown was out-generalled and out-manoeuvred by John A. Macdonald,

probably did the latter no real harm in the country. On the contrary, the demonstration of George Brown's political incapacity, as Macdonald had anticipated, seems to have strengthened the hands of the government; and from August, 1858, to May, 1862, a period of nearly four years, the Cartier-Macdonald administration was able to carry on public business with a small but consistent majority behind it.

George Brown, however, had this about him that he was never willing to accept defeat; and he continued his campaign against the government, the French Canadians, and the Roman Catholic Church with more vitriolic vigour than ever. The result was seen in the general elections of June, 1861. In these elections the government's majority in the House was still further reduced; and during the session of 1862 Macdonald was defeated over the question of the organization of the militia, though chiefly through the defection of a number of his Lower Canadian supporters.

A Reform administration was formed by John Sandfield Macdonald, a moderate Liberal who had never bowed the knee to the *Globe*; and this administration survived for about a year, when it was defeated, was reorganized, and appealed to the country. It was sustained by a majority of three; but subsequent by-elections went against it, and on March 21, 1864, Sandfield Macdonald threw up the sponge and resigned.

Lord Monck, who had succeeded Sir Edmund Head, persuaded Sir Etienne Taché, in this crisis, to come out of his retirement, and undertake the task of forming a cabinet. Sir

Etienne enlisted the co-operation of John A. Macdonald; and thus the second Taché-Macdonald ministry came into existence. But parties in the Assembly were so evenly divided that the life of the ministry hung for weeks by a thread; and when, on June 14, it was defeated by a majority of two votes, the defeat probably came as a relief.

In later years, when members came to him for permission to absent themselves from their places in the House, Sir John Macdonald used to observe, "The position of a government supporter has grown much less onerous than it was in my earlier days. Then, if a member left his seat for half an hour, the ministry ran the risk of being defeated." It was under such conditions as these that the political history of the decade 1854-1864 in Old Canada came to a close.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **A FATHER OF CONFEDERATION**

The defeat of the second Taché-Macdonald government in 1864 was recognized everywhere as having brought on a crisis. In three years there had been four successive ministries, and two general elections, but without any decisive result. Government was at a standstill. Parties were so evenly divided, and the two parts of the province were so

bitterly arrayed against each other, that anarchy seemed to be not far distant.

Even in ordinary times this situation would have been fraught with danger. But the times were not ordinary. To the south of the border-line there had been raging for four years the greatest civil war in history, a war in which millions of men were engaged; and people were beginning to ask what the victorious armies of the North would do, once the war was over. Would they return quietly to their homes or would they, flushed with success, turn their arms against Canada? Relations between the British and American governments were far from amicable; and already in 1861 the *Trent* affair had brought the two countries to the verge of war. If war were to break out, what chance would the British provinces in North America have against the invader, when Canada, the largest of them, was rent with internal strife?

As events turned out, the armies of the North did return peacefully to their homes. But no one in 1864 could have foreseen that this would be the result. It was known that many Americans cast longing eyes on what is now the Canadian North-West. This territory was at that time the property of the Hudson's Bay Company, which would have been helpless against American aggression. Canadians regarded it as their natural heritage, for it had been claimed as part of Canada in the days of the French régime. But if it was to be preserved intact, and above all if it was to be linked with Canada by railways and telegraphs, some means had to be found for strengthening the government of Canada. A government fighting for its life day by day in the

Assembly was not likely to be able to deal effectively with the momentous problems then looming up.

Still another factor entered into the situation. In 1854 Lord Elgin had negotiated between Canada and the United States a reciprocity treaty which had been a great boon to Canadian trade. This treaty was now approaching its termination; and there was little hope that the United States would renew it. Canada had, therefore, to look forward to the loss of the United States market; and it was clear that something would have to be done to create markets for Canadian trade elsewhere. At the least, means would have to be found to stimulate trade between the various provinces of British North America.

Under these circumstances, an increasing number of people in Canada came to the conclusion that the only salvation for the country, the only solution of its difficulties, lay in the union of all the British North American provinces from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. Such a union would, it was argued, give British North America a defensive strength to be obtained in no other way, it would alone make possible the acquisition and development of the Great North-West; it would stimulate inter-provincial trade; and it would mean that the age-long squabbles of Upper and Lower Canada would be lost to view in the larger arena.

The idea of the union of British North America was not new. It had been advocated by Lord Dorchester after the American Revolution; it had been a favourite idea with many of the United Empire Loyalists; and it had been seriously considered by Lord Durham in 1838. It had never been

looked upon with a kindly eye, however, by the officials of the Colonial Office, who thought that the colonies when disunited would be more docile than when united; and even Lord Durham had been forced to the conclusion that the idea was not in 1838 within the sphere of practical politics. He found that at that time there was lacking both the physical and the psychological basis for union. Communications between the provinces, especially between the Maritime Provinces and Canada proper, were still too difficult and primitive to permit of them being governed from one centre; and local feeling in the provinces was still so strong that a common national sentiment throughout the whole of British North America was as yet a thing of the future.

Since 1838, however, both these difficulties had been partially surmounted. The railway era had come in the meantime; and while the Interprovincial Railway had not yet been built, and the Transcontinental Railway was still hardly thought of, both were recognized as engineering possibilities. Much had been done, moreover, to develop a sort of national feeling among the people of the various provinces. This feeling was still in its infancy; but it found an eloquent exponent in one of the most brilliant orators who have graced Canadian public life, Thomas D'Arcy McGee. McGee was an Irishman who had begun his political career as a Fenian; he had had to leave his country for his country's good, and he had come to America; after a few years in the United States, he had settled in Canada; and there he immediately made his mark in politics. As soon as his feet touched Canadian soil, he seems to have dropped his Fenianism—probably because he found in Canada the self-government which he had longed for in Ireland. He had been trained, however, in the vivid

school of Irish nationalism; and the nationalist aspirations which he had learnt at his mother's knee, he merely transferred from his old to his new and adopted country. He had a vision of the Dominion of Canada. "I see," he said, "in the not remote future one great nationality, bound, like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of ocean." With his enthusiasm he infected many of the younger men in the various provinces; he gathered about him a party of Young Canada; and in this way he and his friends helped to create the psychological basis for Confederation.\*

\* It will be remembered that it was at this time that national unity was approaching fruition also both in Germany and in Italy.

The time seemed auspicious, therefore, for an attempt to bring the provinces of British North America together in a political union. All that was necessary was co-operation among the leading politicians in order to bring it about. In Canada, however, this was the very thing most difficult to obtain. Between George Brown and John A. Macdonald there had existed for ten years a bitter personal enmity. Macdonald was not a saint. He had at that time, in common with a good many of his contemporaries, the fault of occasional intemperance. George Brown, whose pretensions were always highly moral, did not scruple, both in the *Globe* and on the platform, to attack Macdonald on account of this personal failing. On the other hand, Macdonald's contempt for Brown was pithily expressed on the classic occasion when he assured an audience that he knew they "would

rather have John A. drunk than George Brown sober." The relations between the two men were such that for years they had never recognized each other on the street; and to bring them together in the crisis which had now occurred was not easy.

Fortunately, Canada had in Lord Monck a governor-general whose tact and foresight were admirably calculated to bring about the necessary reconciliation. When the Taché-Macdonald ministry were defeated in the House on June 14, 1864, they thought first of appealing to the country in a general election; but Lord Monck, who had little hope that a general election would greatly alter the situation, urged them to try to form a coalition government with their opponents, with a view to finding a way out of the *impasse*.

Intermediaries were set to work between Brown and Macdonald, one of the "nationalist" group, Alexander Morris, acting as the chief go-between; and the next day the Assembly saw the extraordinary and unusual spectacle of George Brown and John A. Macdonald conversing amicably on the floor of the House. During the week that followed, repeated conferences took place between the leaders on both sides; and the outcome of these conferences was a coalition government under Sir Etienne Taché, in which both John A. Macdonald and George Brown held portfolios.

For the way in which they sank their personal differences on this occasion Macdonald and Brown deserve equal credit. It was George Brown who, seeing the straits into which his tactics had brought the country, signified first his willingness to discuss the proposal of a coalition; but it was Macdonald who, in a rare spirit of self-abnegation, called on the man



who had for years traduced him. George Brown was at first unwilling that the coalition should be formed on any basis but that of representation by population; but he finally yielded to Macdonald's arguments, and to the persuasions of the governor-general and others, and agreed to unite with Macdonald on a platform in which the principal plank was the federal union of British North America.

It has sometimes been said that John A. Macdonald was not originally in favour of Confederation, and only adopted the idea when he was forced to do so. This is not quite the whole truth. It is true that on one occasion in the House he had voted against a proposal for "changes in the direction of a federative system;" but this was because he did not think the circumstances auspicious. The idea of the union of British North America had been supported by him as early as in 1849, when the project was proposed in the platform of the British North American League, of which he was one of the organizers; it had been adopted in 1858 by the Cartier-Macdonald government; and in 1861 Macdonald had avowed on the floor of the House that "the only feasible scheme which presents itself to my mind as a remedy for the evils complained of, is a confederation of all the provinces."

John A. Macdonald, it is true, was not a crusader, like George Brown and D'Arcy McGee. He had never staked his political life on the issue of Confederation; for he was a practical politician, and he never liked to be far in advance of public opinion. It was this element of caution in his character which later gave rise to his nickname of "Old To-morrow." But when once he had convinced himself that public opinion was favourable, he was quite willing to nail his flag to the

masthead; and frequently, as in the case of Confederation, he came to be regarded as the chief champion of the cause he had espoused.

The Great Coalition of 1864 was formed with the object of bringing about the union of all the British North American provinces, but with the proviso that, if the larger union proved impracticable, the federal principle would be applied to Canada alone. Hardly, however, had the new government been formed when word came that there was meeting, on September 1 at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, a convention which had been called to discuss the project of the union of the maritime provinces. The idea of union was apparently in the air. A number of the Canadian ministers, headed by Macdonald and Brown, promptly repaired to Charlottetown, and there extended an invitation to the delegates from the maritime provinces to adjourn their meetings, and to come to Quebec for a joint conference with delegates from Canada, in order to discuss the union of all the British colonies in North America. The invitation was accepted; and on October 10 there met in the historic capital of Old Canada what is known to posterity as the Quebec Conference.

Out of the Quebec Conference came the Dominion of Canada. The Fathers of Confederation—as the members of the Conference are now known—sat behind closed doors, and we know comparatively little about their proceedings. But after two weeks of constant deliberation, they agreed upon seventy-two resolutions; and these resolutions were the basis later of the British North America Act. In the Conference, there were many conflicting interests to be

reconciled. In particular, great concessions had to be made to the French of Quebec. Macdonald himself would perhaps have preferred a legislative rather than a federal union; but Cartier insisted that the French must have control of their own local affairs, and, out of deference to his friend, Macdonald had to agree to the federal principle. In the same way, he had to agree to the continuation of separate schools for Protestants and Roman Catholics. In the end, a compromise was arranged in regard to all matters of dispute; and the delegates went home to their respective provinces to submit the Seventy-two Resolutions to the provincial legislatures for ratification.

In Canada the coalition government had little difficulty in carrying the resolutions in the legislature. There was some opposition from the *Rouges* of Lower Canada, in whose ranks was a young man named Wilfrid Laurier; and in Upper Canada, John Sandfield Macdonald, one of the Liberal leaders, and some of his friends attacked the proposals. But the union of the forces of John A. Macdonald and George Brown was irresistible; and the resolutions carried by a large majority.

In the maritime provinces, however, there was a different tale to tell. In Prince Edward Island, the resolutions were rejected by the legislature; in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland, there was such a popular outcry against Confederation that the provincial governments did not dare to broach the question; and in New Brunswick the government, which had appealed to the people on the issue, was defeated at the polls.

The prospect looked indeed black for Confederation. Only in Canada had the Seventy-Two Resolutions been ratified. But the Canadian government had set its hand to the plough, and it was loth to turn back. A delegation of ministers, headed by Macdonald and Brown, went to England to enlist the assistance of the British government in bringing Confederation about; and this mission served to keep the question alive. In the summer of 1865 the movement received another set-back in the death of Sir Etienne Taché, the Canadian prime minister. George Brown had been willing to serve under Taché, but he was not willing to serve under either Macdonald or Cartier. A compromise prime minister was found in Sir Narcisse Belleau; but everyone understood that Macdonald was the real head of the administration, and George Brown found the subordinate position which he was compelled to occupy increasingly galling. He became jealous, not only of Macdonald's growing prominence in the government, but even of the position occupied by others of his colleagues; and in December, 1865, he saw fit to resign from the cabinet, with Confederation still uncompleted.

That George Brown's resignation caused much grief to Macdonald cannot be pretended. The two men had agreed to forget their private differences for the public weal, and outwardly they had done so. But Macdonald had found Brown a difficult colleague, and their relations could never have been cordial. Many years later Macdonald described their temporary alliance in the following terms;

We acted together, dined at public places together, played euchre in crossing the Atlantic, and went into society in England together. And yet on the day after he resigned, we resumed our old positions and ceased to speak.

Fortunately, Brown's resignation did not seriously affect the prospects of Confederation. His Liberal colleagues did not withdraw from the coalition with him; and the only result of his resignation—other than his permanent withdrawal from the parliamentary arena—was that henceforth John A. Macdonald stood out as the chief architect of Confederation.

For Macdonald's patient handling of the political situation during the two critical years which followed the Quebec Conference, no praise can be too high. A single false step would have ruined the prospects of Confederation for many years. But Macdonald's strategy did not fail him. He played his cards with consummate skill, and in the end he had the satisfaction of seeing the Confederation project ratified both in Nova Scotia and in New Brunswick.

Once this result was achieved, all that remained was a final conference between the British government and the delegates from the various provinces, with a view to framing satisfactory legislation. This conference took place in London in the autumn of 1866; and in it Macdonald played by far the most important part. Lord Blachford, who was at that time the under-secretary of state for the colonies, has left

us a picture of Macdonald which illustrates the impression he made:

He was the ruling genius and spokesman. I was greatly struck by his power of management and adroitness.... The slightest divergence from the narrow line already agreed on in Canada was watched for—here by the French, and there by the English—as eager dogs watch a rat-hole; a snap on one side might have provoked a snap on the other, and put an end to the concord. He stated and argued the case with cool, easy fluency, while, at the same time, you saw that every word was measured and that, while he was making for a point ahead, he was never for a moment unconscious of any of the rocks among which he had to steer.

The upshot of the London Conference was the framing of the British North America Act. This Act was passed by the British parliament, almost without alteration, in the spring of 1867, and it came into operation on the first day of July of that year. Thus was born the Dominion of Canada; and in that happy event there was no one entitled to more immediate credit than the statesman who, as a little lad, had first seen the shores of Canada from the deck of the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* forty-seven years before.

## CHAPTER VI

### FIRST PRIME MINISTER OF THE DOMINION

It was not surprising that the task of forming the first government of the Dominion should have been confided by Lord Monck, who was appointed first governor-general of the Dominion, to John A. Macdonald. George Brown was still sulking in his tent; none of the political leaders from the lower provinces could compare with Macdonald in experience or prestige, with the exception of Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia; and Joseph Howe was numbered among the opponents of Confederation. Macdonald had, moreover, worked hand in hand with Lord Monck for several years to bring Confederation about; and it was natural that, now Confederation was accomplished, they should work together to make it a success.

Macdonald saw clearly that the first years of the new Dominion would be a critical period. "Confederation," he said, as late as 1872, "is only yet in the gristle, and it will require five years more before it hardens into bone." Not only was there the machinery of a government to be created, both in the Dominion and in the provinces, but there were a hundred and one conflicting interests to be conciliated, if the Dominion was to be launched on its career with fair prospects of success. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

there was a strong anti-unionist sentiment; in Quebec the English minority was jealous of the French majority; and the French majority in Quebec was jealous of the English in Ontario. The Roman Catholics were jealous of the Protestants; and the Irish Roman Catholics were jealous of the French Roman Catholics. Everyone was afraid that, in the new arrangements, someone else would obtain an advantage.

These difficulties confronted Macdonald, at the outset, in the formation of the first Dominion cabinet. He once described himself in a visitors' book as "John A. Macdonald, cabinet-maker;" and there was no one who could make cabinets better than he. His ideal, he once laughingly remarked, was a cabinet in which the members were "all highly respectable parties whom I could send to the penitentiary if I liked." But in 1867 he was not able to consult his own wishes. His hands were tied. "I do not want it to be felt," he said, "by any section of the country that they have no representative in the cabinet and no influence in the government." To obtain this result taxed all his ingenuity and patience. How many portfolios should go to Quebec, and how many to Ontario? How many to his Conservative friends, and how many to those Liberals who had supported Confederation? How many to the various Protestant denominations, how many to the French Roman Catholics, and how many to English-speaking Roman Catholics? The problem was—and still is, in the formation of a Canadian cabinet—a Chinese puzzle.

In the end, the problem was settled by giving Ontario five portfolios, Quebec four, Nova Scotia two, and New Brunswick two. Of the ministers appointed, about half were



Conservatives and half Liberals; for Macdonald was insistent that the government which presided over the infancy of the Dominion, like that which had presided over its birth, should be a coalition. He even went the length of decrying the evils of partyism. "Party," he said, "is merely a struggle for office, the madness of many for the gain of a few." But, with the best will in the world, he was not able to fit all the pieces into his puzzle. If any of the Fathers of Confederation were entitled to inclusion in the first cabinet of the Dominion, they were D'Arcy McGee, the representative of the Irish Roman Catholics, and Charles Tupper, the representative of the Conservatives of Nova Scotia. It proved impossible, however, to find room for both of them; and so they both stood aside, in a spirit of noble self-abnegation, in favour of an Irish Roman Catholic Conservative from Nova Scotia whose name is forgotten to-day.

The cabinet thus formed commended itself, on the whole, to the people. In the first parliamentary elections of the Dominion, the government swept three of the provinces. In Ontario, where George Brown had already raised the standard of opposition, the "Brownites" carried only fifteen seats out of eighty-two; in Quebec the *Rouges* won only twelve seats out of sixty-five; and in New Brunswick but three opposition members were returned. Only in Nova Scotia did the government fail to obtain a majority. There Joseph Howe carried everything before him in his campaign for the repeal of Confederation; and out of nineteen members returned, only one, Charles Tupper, was a supporter of the government. The opposition members from Nova Scotia, however, refused to coalesce with the opposition from Ontario and Quebec, most of whom accepted Confederation;

and the new prime minister, when he met parliament, not only had the advantage of a large parliamentary majority, but he was faced by a divided opposition.

Yet, strong as he was in parliament, Macdonald was too astute a politician not to realize the grave danger to Confederation latent in the triumph of "Repeal" in Nova Scotia; and during the first year or two after 1867 he watched the situation there with anxious care. When Joseph Howe went to England to launch there a campaign for the repeal of Confederation, Macdonald promptly sent Tupper to London to counteract Howe's efforts. Despite the fact that Howe enlisted on his side the eloquence of John Bright, Tupper succeeded in holding the British government to its determination not to undo the work of Confederation; and then, in a memorable interview, he succeeded in persuading Howe himself that his campaign was doomed to failure, and that it held within it possibilities of grave disaster. Already some of the baser sort of politicians in Nova Scotia had begun to talk of annexation to the United States; and Howe, with all his faults, was too loyal a Briton to countenance language of such a character.

This interview between Howe and Tupper paved the way for one of the most remarkable illustrations, in the whole of Macdonald's career, of his skill in the art of managing men. On Howe's return to Nova Scotia, Macdonald with some of his colleagues went down to Halifax to meet him; and there the great "tribune of the people" succumbed to the charm of "John A.'s" blandishments. One of Howe's chief grievances had been the financial terms on which Nova Scotia had entered union; and Macdonald met him with the offer of

"better terms." In the end, Howe agreed, not only to desist from his opposition to Confederation, but actually to enter the Dominion cabinet under Macdonald. The accession of Howe did not perhaps bring to Macdonald the strength he had anticipated; for anti-Confederation feeling long continued vigorous in Nova Scotia, and Howe never succeeded in winning in the federal arena the commanding position which he had occupied in Nova Scotia. But his conversion marked the end of the campaign for "Repeal" as a real danger to Confederation, and it served to throw into still greater relief the pre-eminence of Macdonald among Canadian statesmen.

The danger of the dissolution of the original Confederation having been averted, Macdonald next turned his attention to the completion of the union of the British North America provinces. The union of 1867 had included only Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario. There still remained to be brought within the fold not only Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, but also British Columbia and the vast north-western territories which owned the sway of the Hudson's Bay Company. These territories, or a part of them, had belonged to Canada in the days of the French régime; and Canadians had always looked on them as their heritage. The Canadian Nationalists, especially, had looked forward to the time when Canada should stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and it was said that the new Dominion had derived its very name from the scriptural verse, "His dominion shall be from sea unto sea, and from the rivers unto the uttermost ends of the earth."

The first step in the extension of the Dominion westward was obviously the acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories. The Company, however, had hitherto been loth to surrender its ancient sovereignty over these territories; and it required all Macdonald's diplomacy to persuade them to do so. He sent two of his colleagues to London to enlist the assistance of the British government; and in 1869 the Hudson's Bay Company, under pressure and after much delay, agreed to hand over the North-West to Canada in return for the sum of £300,000, on condition that one-twentieth of the fertile belt and the land adjacent to the Company's posts should be reserved to it. This was an excellent bargain for Canada, since it meant that for less than one and a half million dollars she obtained a veritable empire of the future.

There occurred, in connection with the acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories by Canada, an unfortunate rebellion among the *Métis*, or half-breeds, of the Red River valley, of which something must be said later; but the rebellion was put down bloodlessly by a force sent out to the North-West under Colonel (later Lord) Wolseley in the spring of 1870. Once the outbreak was over, the province of Manitoba was carved out of the Hudson's Bay territories, and was given the same sort of self-government as was enjoyed by the other provinces of the Dominion. The province had at that time a very small white population; but its fertility was already recognized, and it was confidently expected that it would before long have a population of considerable proportions.

The remainder of the Hudson's Bay territories were placed under the administration of the Dominion, with a government consisting of a lieutenant-governor and a nominated council. The population of these territories was not such as to warrant a provincial organization; nor was it until 1905 that the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were set up. In 1870 these parts were inhabited almost exclusively by Indians and fur-traders; and it was for the purpose of keeping the peace in them that Macdonald organized in 1870 the North West Mounted Police. This body—the story of which is one of the romances of Canadian history—performed its duties with such devotion that there was never in the Canadian West that lawlessness which characterized the development of the American West. Its scarlet coats were respected by Indians and by white men alike; and if Sir John Macdonald's fame rested on nothing more than his creation of the Royal North West Mounted Police, it would still be secure against the tooth of time.

But the acquisition of the North-West was only the first item in Macdonald's programme. Hardly had the rebellion of 1869-70 been crushed, and the arrangements been made for the government of Manitoba and the North-West, when Macdonald opened negotiations for the inclusion of British Columbia in the Dominion. The province of British Columbia had been formed only in 1866 of the two crown colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island; and its entire white population was not in 1870 greater than that of a moderate-sized town in Eastern Canada. There were those who accused Macdonald of indecent haste in bringing British Columbia into the union, and who even attributed to him the desire to bring the province into Confederation for the sake

of the half-dozen members who would probably be added to his adherents in the federal House. But the truth is that Macdonald, remembering how Oregon had been snatched from Great Britain in 1842, was loth to let a day pass before Canada made sure of British Columbia at least. He had to offer the people of British Columbia great inducements—chief among which was the promise that Canada would build a transcontinental railway—and he even brought pressure to bear by persuading the British government to send out to the province a governor who was favourable to union; but he had his reward when the legislature of British Columbia in 1871 voted the province into Confederation. Two years later, by similar means, he induced Prince Edward Island to reconsider its decision of 1865, and to enter Confederation also.

Thus, in six short years, Sir John Macdonald completed the work of Confederation. From the original group of four provinces, the Dominion had grown in this time to a union which stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and which covered an area comparable only with that of the Great Republic to the South. That such an achievement in nation-building should have been primarily the work of one man, is one of the marvels of modern history. Much has been said and written of the work of Bismarck and of Cavour in connection with the attainment of national unity in Germany and in Italy; but Bismarck never displayed a more astute diplomacy, or Cavour a more far-seeing vision, than did their Canadian contemporary in his task of uniting British North America.

## CHAPTER VII

### "THE FALL OF LUCIFER"

The five years immediately following Confederation were perhaps the most creditable years of Sir John Macdonald's whole career. He had at this time largely reformed his personal habits, which had been, between the death of his first wife in 1857 and his second marriage in 1867, somewhat irregular. He had risen above the personal and partisan considerations which had governed Canadian politics before Confederation; and he seemed sincerely anxious to administer the duties of his high office in the interests of the whole country. Never, moreover, did the superb gifts in the art of government shine more brightly than at this period.

It often happens, however, in human affairs that the moment of one's highest success is nearest the moment of one's fall. The new Dominion was hardly created when there occurred a series of incidents, over some of which Macdonald had no control, which yet helped to undermine his position. At the very outset, two of his leading colleagues, Galt and Cartier, were grievously offended because Macdonald was knighted for his services in connection with Confederation, while they were made merely C.B.'s (Companions of the Bath). The

recommendation of these honours rested with Lord Monck, and Macdonald knew nothing of them until they were announced; but he smoothed matters over by obtaining a baronetcy for Cartier and a knighthood for Galt. Cartier continued to act in concert with Macdonald for the few remaining years of his life; but with Galt the salve was not so effective. In 1868, Galt had another disagreement with Macdonald in regard to the failure of the Commercial Bank, in which he was interested; and he made this disagreement the excuse for leaving the Cabinet. This "double C.B." incident (as it was known) caused Macdonald no small amount of embarrassment, and was the first rift in the lute.

During the years immediately following Confederation, moreover, Macdonald gradually lost most of his Liberal colleagues. The two associates of George Brown, who had remained with Macdonald after Brown had left him were rather ignominiously repudiated at a Liberal convention held in Toronto in 1867; and Macdonald, finding their usefulness gone, soon discarded them. When Sir Francis Hincks, the former leader of the moderate Liberals, returned to Canada in 1869, after a long absence from the country, Macdonald promptly pressed him into service as his minister of finance; but Hincks had lost touch with Canadian conditions, and his "resurrection" brought little strength to the government. In the same way, the accession of Joseph Howe proved, in a political sense, a disappointment. Gradually the government lost the aspect of a coalition, and became frankly and predominantly a Conservative administration. This result was, no doubt, not without its advantages, but it weakened the government greatly with those Liberals who had supported Confederation. These flocked back into the fold of



George Brown; and ere long the editor of the *Globe* was once more a power in the land. The first success of this revived Liberal party was won in 1871, when the coalition or "patent combination" government to which Macdonald had entrusted the affairs of Ontario was driven from office by the Liberals under Edward Blake.

Another episode which did Macdonald incalculable harm was the North-West Rebellion of 1869-70. It is difficult to acquit the government of culpable negligence in connection with the taking over of the North-West territories from the Hudson's Bay Company. The French half-breeds of the Red River valley resented the way in which they and their lands had been "bought" by the Canadian government, and, under the clever but unbalanced Louis Riel, they rose in revolt, set up a provisional government, and for a time defied the authority of the Canadian parliament. Riel and his followers were, in the spring of 1870, overawed by means of military force; but not before influences had been set in play which threatened, not only the existence of the government, but even the existence of the Dominion.

Naturally, the French-speaking population of the province of Quebec sympathized with the French half-breeds of Manitoba in their struggle for what they regarded as their rights. On the other hand, the English of Ontario regarded the *Métis* as nothing more or less than rebels; and when, during the rebellion, an Orangeman from Ontario, named Thomas Scott, was brutally put to death by Riel, after the mere pretence of a legal trial, feeling in Ontario rose to fever heat. The government of Ontario offered a reward for the apprehension of Scott's murderers; and pressure was brought

to bear on the Dominion authorities to hand out the severest punishment to the rebels. This placed Macdonald in an awkward predicament. If he dealt severely with the rebels, he would deeply offend the French of Quebec, including his French-Canadian colleagues; if he did not deal severely with them, he would offend even more deeply the English of Ontario and the maritime provinces. In the end, he prevented a split, both in the party and in the cabinet; but it was only by inducing Louis Riel to keep out of the way, so that he could not be arrested. Had he been arrested, both the Conservative government and the Conservative party would have been rent in twain. As it was, the cracks in party unity were plain for all to see.

The direct cause, however, of Macdonald's ultimate downfall in 1873 was an episode in connection with the granting of a charter for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. One of the conditions on which British Columbia had entered the union in 1871 was, it will be remembered, that a railway should be built which would link British Columbia with the rest of Canada, just as the Intercolonial Railway was being built to connect Ontario and Quebec with the maritime provinces. As soon as British Columbia was incorporated in the Dominion, Macdonald addressed himself to the problem of building this railway; and, after careful consideration, the Dominion government gave a charter for the building of the road to a group of financiers headed by Sir Hugh Allan, a Montreal capitalist.

In this itself there was nothing amiss. But in 1872 the life of the first parliament of Canada came to an end, and in the general elections of that year Macdonald and Cartier were so

indiscreet as to go to Sir Hugh Allan for contributions to their party funds. In those days there were no party organizers to look after these details, and it was customary for the cabinet ministers themselves to handle the campaign funds. From Sir Hugh Allan contributions were obtained totalling nearly \$300,000—a very large sum at that time. These transactions were, however, private and secret; and nothing would probably have been heard of them had not some one stolen from a law office in Montreal copies of the correspondence which had passed between Allan and Macdonald and Cartier. This correspondence was placed in the hands of the Liberals; and when the first session of the new parliament opened, L. C. Huntingdon, one of the Liberal leaders, rose and charged Macdonald with having sold the charter for the Canadian Pacific Railway to Sir Hugh Allan and his friends in return for large contributions to the Conservative party funds.

Macdonald at first met the charges with a flat denial; and the resolution offered by the Liberals was rejected by the large and automatic Conservative majority in the House. But it was felt that the charges were too serious to be ignored, and Macdonald himself brought forward a motion for the appointment of a select committee of the House to inquire into them. The Liberals, however, were not satisfied with the conditions under which the inquiry was to be carried out, and on it, the Liberal members of the committee refused to serve. After some delay, Macdonald then decided to appoint a royal commission of three judges to hear the evidence and to report it to parliament. The commission was not to pronounce judgment and its function was merely to enable evidence to be taken under oath. Yet it was open to the

objection that it was, in fact, appointed by Macdonald to inquire into charges against himself; and some of the Liberal leaders refused to give evidence before it. The feeling of many people with regard to the commission was aptly illustrated by a famous cartoon of that period, in which a court room was depicted, with a judge sitting on the bench, a counsel pleading at the bar, and a prisoner standing in the dock—and in all three cases were seen the well-known features of Sir John Macdonald!

Though the Liberal leaders declined to appear before the commission, they were not above publishing in the newspapers, however, the documentary evidence which had been stolen from private offices. Some of this had a very ugly look: for example, a telegram from Macdonald to Allan which ran as follows:

Immediate, private. I must have another ten thousand—will be the last time of calling. Do not fail me; answer to-day.

This evidence, together with that which was taken before the royal commission, created a painful impression in the country; and when parliament was called together in October, 1873, to receive the report of the commission, the atmosphere was electric.

The first gun in the debate that followed was fired by Alexander Mackenzie, the leader of the opposition, and a henchman of George Brown. In view of the facts disclosed before the commission, he moved a resolution to the effect that the government had merited the "severest censure" of the House. From the beginning, it was clear that some of the supporters of the government were wavering. If anything could have saved the government, it was the speech in which Macdonald reviewed the charges which had been made against him. Macdonald was not a great orator; but on this occasion he rose to heights which perhaps he attained at no other time. He did not deny the receipt of campaign funds from Sir Hugh Allan; but he insisted that there was no necessary connection between these contributions and the granting of the charter for the railway. Above all, he rejected the accusation of corrupt motives. "These hands," he said, with a dramatic gesture, "are clean." And in a magnificent peroration he threw himself on the mercy of the House:

Sir, I commit myself, the Government commits itself, to the hands of this House, and far beyond the House, it commits itself to the country at large. We have faithfully done our duty. We have had party strife setting province against province; and more than all, we have had in the greatest province, the preponderating province of the Dominion, every prejudice and sectional feeling that could be arrayed against us. I have been the victim of that conduct to a great extent, but I have fought the battle of Confederation, the battle of Union, the battle of the

Dominion of Canada. I throw myself upon this House; I throw myself upon this country; I throw myself upon posterity; and I believe, and I know that notwithstanding the many failings in my life, I shall have the voice of this country, and this House, rallying round me. And, sir, if I am mistaken in that, I can confidently appeal to a higher court—to the court of my own conscience, and to the court of posterity. I leave it to this House with every confidence. I am equal to either fortune. I can see past the decision of this House, either for or against me; but whether it be for or against me, I know—and it is no vain boast for me to say so, for even my enemies will admit that I am no boaster—that there does not exist in this country a man who has given more of his time, more of his heart, more of his wealth, or more of his intellect and power, such as may be, for the good of this Dominion of Canada.

For the first and the last time in his life he failed. Not even this appeal sufficed to stem the tide of defection. First, the new members from Prince Edward Island, on whose support Macdonald had counted, announced that they intended to vote with the opposition. Then, in a breathless House, Donald Smith, the member for Winnipeg, and afterwards Lord Strathcona, rose and expressed his regret that he, too, could not any longer "conscientiously" support the government.

The defection of Donald Smith sounded the death-knell of the administration, and stirred Macdonald to one of those rare outbursts of anger which revealed the hot Highland temper behind his usually genial demeanour. "I could lick that man Smith quicker than hell could frizzle a feather," he cried; and it is said that only the physical constraint of his friends prevented him from carrying his threat into effect.

In a cooler mood, Macdonald saw that defeat was inevitable and without waiting for a formal vote, he placed his resignation in the hands of the governor-general. The latter immediately sent for Alexander Mackenzie, the leader of the Liberal opposition in the House of Commons; Mackenzie formed a new government; and the first administration of the Dominion of Canada passed into history.

Upon the "Pacific Scandal", as the incident is known which brought about Macdonald's downfall, it is difficult to pass judgment even to-day. That the prime minister of the Dominion should have accepted money from a railway contractor, even for purely party purposes, was a matter of profound regret. Yet it cannot be denied that political parties need campaign funds, and if they cannot obtain them from their friends, where are they to obtain them? It was undoubtedly, moreover, the custom at that time for political leaders to solicit campaign funds personally; and in this respect Macdonald was merely following the practice of his time.

Probably the verdict of history on the "Pacific Scandal" will be that it was rather a grave indiscretion than actually a

moral offence.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SHADES OF OPPOSITION

On the defeat of Macdonald in 1873, Alexander Mackenzie obtained a dissolution of parliament; and the new general elections were held in the beginning of 1874. The Conservatives went to the polls, of course, with certain defeat facing them; but perhaps even they hardly expected the extent of the disaster which overtook them. The "Pacific Scandal" had so shocked the country that only forty-five Conservatives were returned in the whole of the Dominion, out of a total representation of over two hundred members; and many of these held their seats by narrow majorities. Sir John Macdonald himself was almost defeated in his own constituency of Kingston, where for thirty years he had had no serious rivalry; he was unseated on an election petition, and then re-elected by a still smaller majority.

There is no doubt that his defeat, first in the House, and then in the country, and the defection of many of his former supporters, cut him to the quick. Despite the accusations of corruption levelled against him, he left office a poor man; and the seeming ingratitude of his fellow-countrymen, in view of his great services to the state, must have been hard to



bear. But, after the first outbreak of anger over Donald Smith's desertion, no word of complaint or reproach passed his lips. He refused to allow himself to become embittered, and deliberately decided to bide his time.

Immediately after his resignation, he had called a "caucus" of his followers, and had placed in their hands his resignation as leader of the party. He described himself as "an old man who had done his share of the fighting;" he pointed out that the party would be much better led by a younger man who had not been, as he had been, the target for all the shafts of calumny and abuse; and he begged to be allowed to lay off his armour. But his followers would not hear of his retirement; and when he asked them to take a day to reconsider their decision, and to meet him in the same committee-room twenty-four hours after, he proved to be the only person who turned up at the appointed time. Not one of his followers would, by his attendance, give colour to the idea that he had even contemplated the possibility of a change of leader. Sir John Macdonald experienced many a triumph; but never in his whole career was there perhaps a prouder moment than when he walked from that deserted committee-room to receive, a few minutes later, in the House of Commons, the loyal cheers of his supporters.

Confident, then, of the attachment of the "Old Guard" (as he called those of his followers who had survived the election of 1874), he decided to play a waiting game. During the sessions of 1874 and 1875, he refrained from bringing about frequent divisions of the House, believing that these would merely advertise the numerical weakness of his following. When some of his friends complained that his

attitude was not aggressive enough, he merely replied, "Give the Grits rope enough, and they will hang themselves." He knew that governments, if left alone, generally contrive to make themselves unpopular; and his shrewd estimate of the Mackenzie government taught him that they would incur unpopularity rather more quickly than usual.

All Macdonald had to do was to exercise patience and wait for his opportunity. This occurred in the autumn of 1875. In September of that year the constituency of West Toronto fell vacant. In 1874 it had been won by a Liberal. Macdonald felt that if it could now be captured by the Conservatives, the by-election would be a signal that the tide had turned, and that the time had come for more aggressive measures. The issue, however, was very doubtful; and it was a surprise perhaps even to Macdonald when John Beverley Robinson, the Conservative candidate, was elected by a sweeping majority. This result was, naturally, a severe blow to the Mackenzie government, and marked the beginning of the reaction which culminated in the defeat of that government three years later.

Macdonald accepted the omen, and immediately declared open war on the administration. He had already demonstrated on many an occasion his skill in politics when, as leader of the government, he held in his hands the trump cards; he was now to demonstrate it as leader of the opposition. In the summer of 1876 he organized throughout Ontario a series of political picnics, at which he spoke, attacking the government in the vein of raillery and badinage of which he was such a master. At these picnics he came personally into touch with the electors, and here his marvellous memory for

names and faces stood him in good stead. The story is told that on one occasion he recognized, by name, a man whom he had seen only once, thirty years before; and on another occasion he was able to address by name a man whom he had never seen, but whose brother he had known forty years before. So uncanny was his influence over the people with whom he came into contact, that his opponents likened it to the influence of "the Prince of Darkness." "We read of one who went to and fro in the earth many years ago," said one of the Liberal members of parliament, "and tempted the people by false promises. He tempted Our Saviour by taking Him up into a high mountain, and showing Him the kingdoms of the earth, and promising Him all these, if He would fall down and worship him." Then he went on to draw the parallel in the case of Sir John Macdonald; but he added, "This other tempter did not go to the top of the mountain; he went around the country holding picnics and tempting the people."

In his genius for remembering people, and in attaching them to him, Sir John had greatly the advantage of the Liberal leaders. Alexander Mackenzie, the prime minister, was a man of the strictest integrity and sense of duty; but he had in his make-up a strong admixture of that "dourness" which is one of the characteristics of the Lowland Scot. The story is told that, in the seventies, a Canadian journalist who had at one time been a parliamentary correspondent, but who had been for a number of years in the United States, returned to Ottawa on a visit. He went up to the Parliament Buildings, and one of the first persons he encountered was Mackenzie. Going up to him, he held out his hand, and said:

"How do you do, Mr. Mackenzie? I wonder if you remember me."

Mackenzie looked at him with a cold eye, and replied, in his broad Doric accent:

"No, I do not. And let me tell you this, young man: I'm too old to be taken in by any confidence tricks."

A few minutes later the expatriated journalist ran into Macdonald. Rather abashed by the rebuff which he had received from Mackenzie, he was diffident about calling himself to the recollection of Macdonald, but the latter caught sight of him out of the corner of his eye, and, recognizing a familiar face, immediately came over and shook hands with him, saying at the same time, "Now don't tell me your name. I'll have it in a minute. Smith—John Smith—of the *Detroit Free Press*. How are you, John? I'm glad to see you again."

Both Edward Blake and Sir Richard Cartwright, Mackenzie's leading lieutenants, were equally lacking in affability. A Liberal member of parliament, who had been absent from the House for a whole session through illness, returned to Ottawa, and thus described his reception: "The first man I met on coming back was Blake. He passed me with a simple nod. The next man I met was Cartwright, and his greeting was about as cold as that of Blake. Hardly had I passed these men when I met Sir John. He didn't pass me by, but grasped me by the hand, gave me a slap on the shoulder, and said, 'Davy, old man, I'm glad to see you back. I hope you'll soon be yourself again, and live many a day to vote

against me." As may be imagined, the member in question complained bitterly about having "to follow men who haven't a kind greeting for you, and oppose a man with a heart like Sir John's."

By such methods as these Sir John Macdonald won his way back into the hearts of the Canadian people; and, as the life of the third parliament of Canada approached its termination, he already commanded a support in the country which no one, at the time of the Pacific Scandal, could have thought possible. Before, however, he could hope to turn the Mackenzie government out of office, he knew that he must have something more than personal popularity and mere verbal triumphs on picnic platforms. A constructive programme was necessary if the Conservative party was to rehabilitate itself with the electors; and this Macdonald now set himself to formulate.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **THE NATIONAL POLICY**

The years during which the Mackenzie administration held power saw three of the worst harvests in Canadian history. Of this Sir John Macdonald was not slow to point the moral. "It only goes to show," he said, "that Providence is on our side.... While we were in power, there were splendid

crops, good prices, no weevil, and no potato-bugs. We are going to have a good crop now," he added, "though a Grit government is in—but the reason is this: *the Grits are going out.*"

Bad harvests, however, meant bad times; and the question was, what measures were to be taken by the government to relieve the country's distress. Alexander Mackenzie and most of the Liberals were dyed-in-the-wool free traders, and were opposed to any remedial measures which might be in restraint of the international exchange of commodities. Under these circumstances, some of Macdonald's colleagues advocated the adoption of a policy of protective tariffs as the means best calculated to restore prosperity. Macdonald himself, though theoretically a free trader, had already on more than one occasion showed himself sympathetic toward protection in a young country like Canada; but, with his customary caution, he declined at first to commit himself until he was sure of his ground. One of his supporters, indeed, has testified that "he was timid unto death of protection;" and Goldwin Smith has left it on record that, when he was accused of flirting with protection, he replied, "No, you need not think I am going to get into that hole." Yet scarcely two months later into that hole he had got; when he was rallied on his change of heart, his only defence was the jocose remark, "Protection has done so much for me that I felt I must do something for protection."

The truth seems to be that Macdonald, though favourable to a policy of protection for native industries, was at first uncertain of the popularity of such a policy in the country, and uncertain also of the attitude of the Mackenzie

government. There seemed a possibility at one time that Mackenzie might be forced by the protectionists in his own party to take up protection; and Macdonald was too wise a tactician to show his hand before his opponents had shown theirs. When, however, Mackenzie nailed the free trade flag to his masthead, and it became clear that the idea of protection was gaining strength in the country, Macdonald threw caution to the winds and came out as an advocate of what he called, with happy phraseology, the "National Policy."

The adoption of this battle-cry was one of the cleverest political strokes in Sir John Macdonald's career. At Confederation in 1867, the hope had been expressed that it would result in the creation of "a new nationality." The years that followed saw a remarkable growth of national sentiment in Canada—a growth seen most clearly in the formation in 1872 of the "Canada First" party. One of the leading features of the platform of this party was protection for native industries and the development of interprovincial trade; and this was in itself most natural, since protection is merely the expression of nationalism in the economic sphere. As a political organization, "Canada First" had a short life. But the ideas of its founders continued to spread, and it is to Sir John Macdonald's credit that he had the foresight to borrow a large part of their programme. The very name of the "National Policy" won for him the support of that growing nationalist feeling in Canada to which "Canada First" had made its appeal.

With the issue thus clearly joined, the two parties went to the polls in the autumn of 1878. Up to the last minute,

Mackenzie refused to believe that the electors would go back on him. His administration had been so honest, and so economical, he had been (according to his lights) such a faithful public servant, that defeat was to him unthinkable. Even Macdonald hesitated to prophesy what would happen. "An election," he said, "is like a horse-race, in that you can tell more about it the next day." The result was a surprise perhaps to everyone, but certainly not least to Mackenzie. When the election returns were in, it was seen that a veritable landslide had taken place. From being the leader of a small group of forty-five in the House, Macdonald came back from the polls with no less than one hundred and forty-six supporters in a House of two hundred and six—that is to say, with a clear majority of eighty-six. In this dramatic fashion did the electors of Canada reverse their verdict of 1874. The apparently discredited politician of Pacific Scandal fame had, within five short years, won his way back to power. There have been few more remarkable changes of fortune in the history of political warfare.

Reinstalled as prime minister, Sir John lost no time in putting into effect his pre-election pledges. He brought in a tariff policy of moderate protection which has remained in force, with only slight amendments, from that day to this, and which (whatever else it may have done) has helped to build up the manufacturing industries of Canada. It was a significant commentary on the wisdom of the "National Policy" that, when the Liberals came into power under Wilfrid Laurier in 1896, they did not attempt to reverse the tariff policy of their predecessors.



This task accomplished, Macdonald turned next to the kindred question of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The Mackenzie government had been very lukewarm in its prosecution of the project of a transcontinental railway. The *Globe* had expressed the opinion that the railway "would not pay for its axle-grease," and Mackenzie had advocated a policy of building only such parts of the railway as were necessary to link the available water-routes. But Macdonald saw that, if Canada was to be anything more than a geographical expression, if the provinces of Canada were to be bound together in any sort of national unity, an ocean-to-ocean railway was essential. He took up the project, therefore, where he had been compelled to drop it in 1873. The arrangements with Sir Hugh Allan having lapsed, he opened negotiations with a new group of capitalists, backed (curiously enough) by Donald A. Smith, who had been largely instrumental in bringing about Macdonald's defeat in 1873; and in September, 1880, the contract for the construction and operation of the Canadian Pacific Railway was signed.

The terms, so far as the railway company was concerned, were generous; it was to receive twenty-five million dollars in cash, twenty-five million acres of land, and six hundred and forty miles of railway, either already completed, or in process of construction. That the terms were, however, too generous, it would be wrong to suggest. During the five or six years which were to elapse before the railway was completed, the company had to surmount crisis after crisis. Donald Smith placed at the disposal of the railway all he possessed, and faced beggary if the company failed. Time and again the directors of the railway had to come to the

government for further assistance, and even Macdonald's resolution at one time forsook him. But every crisis was successfully averted; the railway was pushed forward to completion with record-breaking speed; and on November 7, 1885, the last spike of the main line was driven home by Sir Donald Smith at Craigellachie, a lonely village in British Columbia.

What the Canadian Pacific Railway has meant to Canada, it would be difficult to exaggerate. It has given the country what geographical unity it possesses; it has opened up for settlement and development the Great West; and it has given to the world a striking illustration of what Canadian enterprise and Canadian efficiency can accomplish. The part which Sir John Macdonald played in the actual building of the railway was slight; but his was the foresight and determination which made it possible, and if his title rested on nothing else, he would still have to be reckoned on this account as one of the "makers of Canada."

## **CHAPTER X**

### **"THE OLD FLAG, THE OLD MAN, AND THE OLD POLICY"**

The new lease of power which Sir John Macdonald obtained in 1878 lasted until his death in 1891. During this

period there were three general elections, in 1882, in 1887, and again, just before Macdonald's death, in 1891. In all three the Conservatives were triumphant, not by the majorities of 1878, but by majorities that were nevertheless adequate. During this period the Liberals, in an endeavour to restore their fallen fortunes, changed leaders twice: first, Alexander Mackenzie was replaced by Edward Blake, and then Edward Blake was replaced by Wilfrid Laurier. But these changes were to no purpose. While he lived, Sir John Macdonald retained a supremacy in the country which no antagonist could shake, and in his own party he was without a rival near the throne. Seldom, indeed, in the history of parliamentary government has one man obtained such an ascendancy, and for so long a period, as Sir John Macdonald obtained in Canada during the last thirteen years of his life.

There have not been wanting those who have accused him of having won these triumphs by unfair means; and there is not a little truth in the charge. By his Redistribution Act of 1882 he so altered the constituencies in Ontario that he placed the Liberal party in this province under a handicap for five successive general elections. The census of 1881 had shown that Ontario was entitled to four new members; and Macdonald made this the excuse for carving up the constituencies in such a way that Liberal townships were added to constituencies already overwhelmingly Liberal, and Conservative townships were added to constituencies that were doubtful. The device was borrowed from the United States, where it was known as a "gerrymander." Macdonald himself humorously described it as "hiving the Grits," and he made merry over the plight of his opponents. "The Grits complain," he said to his constituents, "that they are hived all

together. It seems they do not like the association—they do not like each other's company. They like to associate with Conservative gentlemen such as you. Your being with them rather gives tone to their society."

The "gerrymander" of 1882 was one of the least creditable of all Sir John Macdonald's proceedings. It represents his statecraft at its worst. Not only was it playing the game with loaded dice, but it was a measure that struck at the very root of representative government. An extraordinary feature of the Act, however, was that it was unnecessary. In the elections of 1882 Sir John Macdonald was returned with a comfortable majority of over sixty in a house of little more than two hundred; and of this majority only a small part could be said to be due to the "gerrymander." Indeed, so great was the indignation roused over Macdonald's rather cynical trickery that it is quite possible his majority might have been just as large, if not larger, had the "gerrymander" never taken place.

When, however, he went again to the country five years later, in 1887, it is quite possible that the "gerrymander" of 1882 saved him from defeat. His majority on this occasion was reduced to about twenty, and for a good part of this majority the "gerrymander" was directly responsible. The elections were very bitterly contested, and up to the announcement of the returns confident predictions were made of Liberal victory. For this partial reverse of the Conservatives several factors were to blame. The Conservatives had already held power during two successive parliaments; and the argument that "it is time for a change" always has weight with the electors under such

circumstances. Another factor was a federal Franchise Bill introduced by Macdonald in 1885, with a view to reducing to uniformity the lists of voters in the various provinces. It was charged by the Liberals, and not without reason, that this was a new attempt to load the dice against them. The measure was bitterly contested by the opposition, which resorted to deliberate methods of obstruction. Repeatedly the sun rose on the debates of the House; in one session no less than twenty-five divisions were taken; and Liberal members spoke with such frequency, and at such length, that Sir John, in order to carry through his legislative programme, was compelled to drop some of the more obnoxious features of the bill. Nevertheless, the incident, coming only three years after the Redistribution Bill of 1882, created an unfortunate impression, and did the Conservatives no good in the country.

By far the most powerful cause of the decline of Sir John Macdonald's majority in 1887, however, was the situation created by the second North-West Rebellion in 1885 and the subsequent hanging of Louis Riel. The Rebellion of 1885 was without doubt due to official inaction and ineptitude at Ottawa; and for this Sir John Macdonald, who was preoccupied with other things, must, as the head of the government, bear his full share of the blame. But, once the rebellion had broken out, and Riel's half-breeds and Indians were on the warpath, Macdonald acted with vigour and dispatch in crushing the rebellion; and it was his unflinching discharge of his duty rather than any dereliction of duty, that was the cause of the political troubles which now threatened to overwhelm him.

After the first North-West Rebellion in 1869, Louis Riel had fled to the United States; and there is reason for believing that Macdonald did not exert himself very greatly in bringing him to justice. But when, in 1885, Riel returned to Canada and headed a second revolt, Macdonald made up his mind that the time for leniency was past. The Orangemen of Ontario had not forgotten the judicial murder of the Orangeman, Thomas Scott, by Riel in 1869; and, apart from other considerations, any condonation of Riel's offence in 1885 would have roused to anger the whole Orange Order, which was by this time an important mainstay of the Conservative party in the English-speaking provinces. Among the French Canadians, however, Riel, on account of his race and religion, was regarded as a hero. He was the champion of the rights of the French Roman Catholic half-breeds in the West; and the hearts of the French Roman Catholics of the province of Quebec went out to him in sympathy and defence. Great pressure was put upon Macdonald by his French supporters to temper justice with mercy; and his position must have been far from comfortable. He had hitherto depended for his support on a rather unnatural alliance of the Orangemen of Ontario and the French Roman Catholics of Quebec. Now the alliance had broken down; and the two wings of his party were each holding loaded pistols to his head, threatening him with extinction if he did not accept their views.

Sir John Macdonald, however, was nothing if not a loyalist. In his eyes the offence of Riel, especially after he had been given a second chance, was unpardonable; and when Riel was condemned to be hanged, he refused to lift a finger to mitigate the punishment. "He shall hang," he said

fiercely, "though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour." And the Toronto *Mail*, the chief Conservative organ, declared that, rather than submit to dictation from French Canada in this matter, "Ontario would smash Confederation into its original fragments, preferring that the dream of a united Canada should be shattered forever, than that unity should be purchased at the price of equity."

Louis Riel paid the price of his mad career on the scaffold at Regina, and the feelings of French Canada were deeply outraged. Edward Blake, the Liberal leader, had espoused the cause of Riel in parliament; and the result was that, in the election of 1887, the Liberals made considerable gains in the province of Quebec. Blake disclaimed any desire to rise to power on "the Regina scaffold"; but it was clear that Riel's execution had threatened seriously to disrupt the diverse elements on which Macdonald had relied for his support.

Soon after the elections, moreover, another question arose which tended still further to widen the breach. This was the question of the Jesuits' Estates Act. The Society of Jesus (as the Jesuits are officially known) had been suppressed over a century before, in 1773, and their property had reverted to the Crown. In 1887, however, the Liberal government of the province of Quebec re-incorporated the Society of Jesus; and Honoré Mercier, the brilliant and audacious prime minister of the province, proposed to compensate the Jesuits for the loss of their estates (over a century before) by voting them the sum of \$400,000. This extraordinary measure, which contemplated the diversion of the taxes of Protestant taxpayers to the endowment of a

Roman Catholic society, immediately roused widespread opposition. It became law in Quebec; but the Orangemen of Ontario promptly moved to have it disallowed by the Dominion government. Sir John Macdonald consequently found himself once more between the upper and the nether millstone. If he disallowed the Act, he was certain to offend gravely his French-Canadian Roman Catholic supporters; if he did not, he was certain to offend just as gravely his Orange supporters in Ontario.

The agitation that followed illustrates well the truth of Sir John Macdonald's rather plaintive remark that "Canada is a hard country to govern." In the matter of Kiel's execution, he had alienated many of his French-Canadian supporters; now, by refusing to disallow the Jesuits' Estates Act, he alienated some of his supporters from Ontario. He took his stand on the purely constitutional aspect of the question, maintaining that the people of Quebec had a right to do what they liked with their own money, even to the point of "throwing it into the sea"; and in this view he carried with him the majority of his party. But one of his chief supporters, D'Alton McCarthy, proceeded to organize the Equal Rights Association, which had as its object the combatting of the political influence of the Roman Catholic Church. This movement threatened for a time to detach from Macdonald the support, not only of the Orangemen, but also of a great many other English-speaking Protestants; and it must have caused Macdonald, who was sensitive to the charge that he was under French Roman Catholic domination, no small concern. It was, however, short-lived; and when the next general elections came around, the battle-ground had shifted back to where it had been in 1878, in the field of fiscal policy.



The elections of 1887 were hardly over when a movement sprang up among the Liberals looking toward what was first called "commercial union with the United States", and was later (more cautiously) described as "unrestricted reciprocity." The National Policy had not quite performed all the miracles that had been promised of it. It had perhaps built up interprovincial trade; it had helped Canadian manufactures; but it had not brought conspicuously good times, and it had not staunched that running sore in the Canadian body politic, emigration to the United States. The adherents of the doctrine of Free Trade believed that the only hope for the economic salvation of Canada, lay in the obliteration of the tariff barrier between Canada and her great southern neighbour. Not all the leaders of the Liberal party were whole-heartedly in favour of the new policy: both Edward Blake and Wilfrid Laurier supported it with reservations. But the majority of the Liberals held up both hands for it, and it was on this platform that the Liberals went to the country in 1891.

Sir John Macdonald had repeatedly tried to secure from the United States a measure of reciprocity in trade. But the idea of unrestricted reciprocity was distasteful to him. "Commercial union" he regarded as the precursor of political union; and political union with the United States was something which he was not willing to contemplate. "As for myself," he said in his election address, "my course is clear. A British subject I was born—a British subject I will die. With my utmost effort, with my latest breath, will I oppose the 'veiled treason' which attempts by sordid means and mercenary proffers to lure our people from their allegiance."

He was now an old man of seventy-five years of age, and the election took place in the depth of the Canadian winter; but he threw himself into it with the energy of youth. He covered the length of Ontario in his speech-making campaign, and sometimes spoke two or three times a day at places widely apart. Nowhere did he neglect the personal appeal. His campaign managers had chosen as his slogan, "The old flag, the old man, and the old policy"; and he more than hinted that this would be the last time when "the old man" would be appealing for the suffrages of his friends. His appeal did not go unanswered. For the fourth time in succession, the electors of Canada returned him to power—this time with a majority of a little over thirty in the House.

But the effort was too much for him. Election day found him in bed, under the doctor's orders; and a few weeks later he suffered a slight stroke. He still endeavoured to carry on with public business; but at the end of May, 1891, he suffered a second and more severe stroke, and eight days later, on June 6, he passed away. He was buried in a little cemetery outside the city of Kingston, the people of which he had for so many years represented in the parliament of Canada; and there, as his official biographer has put it, "under the waving pine trees, John Alexander Macdonald awaits the resurrection of the dead."

## CHAPTER XI

## EPILOGUE

There are few figures in Canadian history on whom the historian finds it more difficult to pass judgment than on Sir John Macdonald. In his lifetime he was either loved or execrated; and to this day opinion is divided with regard to him.

Those who contend that his was a pernicious influence in Canadian history are not without reasons for their belief. He had some grave faults. He was for many years addicted to the heavy drinking habits of his day and generation, and his behaviour was not always such as befitted the prime minister of a great Dominion. He did very little to raise the moral tone of political life in Canada during his life-time, or afterwards. He studied human nature, as Goldwin Smith said, "perhaps too much on the weak side." If he was a past-master in the management of men, it was by playing on their foibles and weaknesses, rather than by appealing to their better natures. Though himself above the acceptance of a bribe, he was not above the indirect bribery of other men. There was, indeed, in the rough-and-tumble of political warfare, hardly a weapon in his armoury which he would not use. The "Pacific Scandal", the gerrymander of 1882, the Dominion Franchise Act of 1885—these are only illustrations of the lengths to which he was prepared to go.

There were times, also, when he seemed unprincipled. He opposed the secularization of the Clergy Reserves and the abolition of the seigniorial tenure of Lower Canada; and then, when he succeeded to power in 1854, he promptly carried out both of these measures. He voted against

Confederation, and only embraced the idea whole-heartedly when convinced that it was practicable. He declined to commit himself to the policy of high protection until the Mackenzie government had pronounced against it. The truth is that he raised opportunism almost to the level of a principle, and seldom allowed himself to be in advance of public opinion. "Lost causes and impossible loyalties" had no attraction for him.

Yet it would be easy to exaggerate his faults. He was not, at heart, a bad man. He showed his strength of character by overcoming, in his later years, the drinking habits of earlier years; and it is worthy of note that he conquered in the same way, as time went on, his naturally hot Highland temper. His political morality may have been low; but it is a remarkable fact that, after a period of office unparalleled in the history of the British Empire, during which he enjoyed almost unlimited opportunities for the amassing of wealth, he died in 1891 a poor man. His personal honour was never successfully impugned; and there was almost a touch of pathos in his famous protest, "These hands are clean."

So far as his political methods are concerned, it may perhaps be doubted whether a man with a stricter code of ethics could have guided the destinies of Canada in the latter half of the nineteenth century as successfully as he did. When political purists remonstrated with Macdonald in regard to his sins, he used to reply, with some force, "Send me better men to deal with, and I will be a better man." Political morality throughout the country in his day was not high; and he merely accepted the situation as he found it, and made the best of it. Men of loftier ideas, like Alexander

Mackenzie and Edward Blake, tried to swim against the current, and were submerged. Macdonald swam with the current; and though he too was submerged for a time, he came again to the surface, and reached his goal.

It is easy to say that he was unprincipled; but it is not true. There were some principles with which he never trifled. He believed, for instance, in the preservation of law and order; and where this was at stake, he knew no compromise. Even his bitterest opponents had to admit that in his appointments to the bench he never yielded to the claims of patronage or favouritism. He believed, too, in the British Empire and the British connection; and there was never any uncertainty in his attitude in this regard. Loyalty with him was a cardinal virtue, as it had been with his Scottish forbears. If, in other matters, he sometimes consulted expediency rather than principle, this was merely because he distinguished between principles of primary and of secondary importance. Rigid consistency is not always a merit in a politician: where no fundamental principle is at stake, the greatest statesmen have always been willing to change their minds when new facts have appeared, or new conditions have arisen.

But, after all, the true test of statesmanship is accomplishment; and judged by this standard, Sir John Macdonald stands head and shoulders above every other figure in Canadian history. He was the founder of the great Liberal-Conservative party. He was the chief architect of the Confederation of 1867, and it was he who brought into the new Dominion the Great West. He was the prime mover in the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway; and he was the

author of the tariff policy which Canada has followed continuously for the last half century. The Dominion of Canada, as it is to-day, might almost be said to be the creature of his hand and brain. Certainly, he had more to do with fashioning it than anyone else. In the face of such a record, it is perhaps uncharitable to lay stress on private or political peccadilloes.

As time passes, the lineaments of Sir John Macdonald's character emerge more clearly. He was fond of power; but he used power, not for his own private ends, but for those public objects which he had at heart. His hold on the affections of the people of Canada proceeded, not from any of the electoral dodges which he practised, but from his warm humanity, his freedom from cant, his native sense of humour, his love of a pleasantry even at his own expense.

Of these traits in him many illustrations might be cited; but perhaps one or two will suffice. Sir John Macdonald was, as has been explained of a somewhat plain cast of countenance; and, in particular, he had a large and protuberant nose with which the political cartoonists made great play. One day, when he was in the barber's chair, being shaved, the barber was holding this famous nose between thumb and forefinger. A friend, seeing this, said laughingly to him, "I suppose, Sir John, this is the only man in Canada who can take you by the nose with impunity." "Yes," said Sir John, in a flash, "and *he* has his hands full." He could even joke about his own failings. Before Confederation, some of his friends complained to him about the drinking habits of D'Arcy McGee. He immediately went to McGee, and admonished him thus, "McGee, no cabinet can stand two

drunkards in it, and *you* have got to stop." No one ever accused Sir John Macdonald of a false sense of dignity.

His knowledge of human nature had in it something approaching to genius. During Lord Dufferin's administration, Macdonald and one of his colleagues, Sir Hector Langevin, attended a convocation at McGill University, at which Lord Dufferin delivered an address in Greek. Sir Hector was afterwards reading the newspaper report of the proceedings, and was struck by one sentence, which ran, "His Lordship spoke in the purest ancient Greek, without mispronouncing a word, or making the slightest grammatical solecism."

"Good Heavens," exclaimed Sir Hector, "how did the reporter know that?"

"I told him," said Sir John.

"But you don't know any Greek."

"True," replied Sir John, "but I know a little about politics."

An equally instructive story is told of a trip which Sir John made down the River St. John not long before his death. As the steamer neared Gagetown, N.B., where it was expected there would be a large crowd at the wharf to welcome him, he was asked if he was going to make a speech. "I can't tell," he said, "until I see the crowd." As the steamer came to the landing-place, he scanned the crowd, and announced that he was going to speak. He then went to

the vessel's side, and delivered one of those short and happy speeches at which he was so successful. At the next stopping-place, as the steamer approached the wharf, he was again asked if he was going to speak, but again replied, "I can't tell till I see the crowd." When the steamer was tied up to the wharf, he announced that he would not make a speech, but would go ashore. He went ashore, and mixed with the crowd, patting one child on the head, giving a flower to another, and kissing a third, meanwhile indulging in pleasantries with the older people. As the steamer proceeded on its way, one of Sir John's friends asked him, "Why was it that you spoke to the people at Gagetown, but did not speak to them here?"

"Why," said Sir John, "they were mostly men at Gagetown, while here they were nearly all women and children."

He was an adept at making political opponents the captives of his bow and spear. His attitude toward his opponents was well illustrated in the quotation which he once made for the benefit of a Liberal newspaper editor who was introduced to him as having been once a good Tory, but as having become "a very bad Grit." Sir John shook hands with him, and, with a twinkle in his eye, quoted:

"While the lamp holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

For the man who pursued, however, an independent course in politics, he had little use. He once asked Principal Grant of Queen's University why he no longer supported him.



Principal Grant replied that he had always supported him when he thought he was right. "Ah," said Sir John, sadly, "I have very little use for that kind of support."

Another outstanding feature of his character was his caution. He seldom made a decision until he had to make it; and it was this characteristic which earned for him his nickname of "Old To-morrow"—a nickname which he gladly accepted, for when rumours were going about that he was to be created a peer, and someone asked him what title he would assume, he immediately replied, "Lord To-Morrow."

It was this nickname, too, on which *Punch* seized in the lines with which it commemorated Sir John Macdonald's death—lines which may serve as a fitting conclusion to this study of his life:

Canada's 'Old To-morrow' lives to-day  
In unforgetting hearts, and nothing fears  
The long to-morrow of the coming years.

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