

In judging the pureness or its opposite of the characters of public men, we must look at the facts of their public lives, without suffering ourselves to be guided by the mere shouts of their partisans, which are generally very far from being disinterested.

In 1871 Mr. Blake was a member of the House of Assembly of the Province of Ontario, when Mr. Sanfield Macdonald was the Premier. It was immediately after a contested election, which was remarkable for singular bitterness, Mr. Blake, during the contest in the constituencies, having very vigorously waved,—to borrow a figure from American politics—the “bloody shirt” of Thos. Scott; and having, as was not inaptly said during the late provincial election contest, done very much to creep into power by his loud denunciations of the action of the Government of the day in dealing with, to use his own words, the “murderer, Louis Riel.” Still he did not quite succeed. Mr. Sanfield Macdonald’s Government obtained a nominal majority, but unfortunately suffered from an absence of eight of his supporters at the critical moment for him, owing to the incidents of contested elections, leaving him with only a majority of *one* in the House; and here came Mr. Blake’s opportunity.

The precise overtures which were made to Mr. E. H. Wood, the Treasurer of Mr. Sanfield Macdonald’s Government, have never yet been published, but they are and have been known. Without, however, going further on this point, it is quite sufficient for the present purpose to say it is indubitable that overtures were made to him to betray his chief, and so throw the Government into the hands of the Grits. And it is equally indubitable that the dishonourable incitement at the fatal moment was made by Mr. Blake.

There are several circumstances about the evidence on this point that are not very nice, but still we cannot forbear to receive the facts by whatever means they may have been brought to light. Mr. Blake was seen to write and send a missive to Mr. Wood, which that gentleman tore up and put in a spittoon. The fragments were, however, picked out of their congenial receptacle and put together, revealing the fact of the following words in the handwriting of Mr. Blake:

“You had better speak now.

ED. BLAKE”

Mr. Wood did accordingly “speak now,” and the Government of Mr. Sanfield Macdonald fell, betrayed by one of his own Ministers. Perhaps this is, in all its incidents, one of the most dishonourable and meanest acts that the history of our politics has produced. It has made a stain on the character of Mr. Blake, like that stain of blood which Lady Macbeth could not rub out, and the simple recital of this history sounds strangely when contrasted with the claims of “the white flower of a blameless life.”

The ambition of the man who betrayed his master, or rather his Premier, had been played upon in the operations to which we refer, and he subsequently found a seat in the Dominion Parliament. He was afterwards appointed Chief Justice of Manitoba to the great scandal at the time of many of the loyal people of that province; but it is only just to his memory to say that he did, by his great abilities and industry as a judge, very much which might be put as an offset to the unsavoury and dishonourable proceedings we have related; proceedings that did not tend to bring peace in the arena of Dominion politics, to the parties concerned in them.