

But old leaders, who have successfully grappled with an existing evil, are seldom inclined to engage in new conflicts. In our own day, indeed, we see Mr. Gladstone ever enthusiastically active, as soon as the battlements of some long-standing wrong have been carried, at once again charging for further reform. Such, however, is not the experience of mankind, and such was not the disposition of Mr. Baldwin, nor of Mr. Lafontaine. They had both given the best years of their lives to one reform. They had triumphed. They now acted as if believing that nothing more remained to do but to enjoy the blessings of what had been done. They did not respond to the enthusiastic ardour of the younger recruits in their party, who impetuously called for an immediate charge upon clergy reserves and feudal tenure and upon everything that was yet standing of family compact and oligarchical rule. Far from moving onward, they both withdrew from power and from public life shortly after the signal triumph which they had just achieved, leaving the reins of the Government in the hands of Messrs. Hincks and Morin. These were well known and well tried Liberals. Yet while advancing, still they were moving too slowly to keep abreast of the ever increasing current in favour of reform. Even in the House as constituted their majority was gradually but irretrievably dwindling; not because Tories were getting stronger, but because Liberal views and Liberal principles were becoming bolder and more aggressive as they became more diffused through the community, and when that Parliament came to an end, in 1854, the elections which took place left the Government still weaker.

The elections of 1854 were remarkable. They brought to the representation of Lower Canada, to fill the ranks of the Liberal party, a galaxy of able and brilliant men, whose equals in ability, courage and enthusiasm the Province has never since mustered. In the first place was Mr. Dorion, elected for the great metropolis of Montreal, then in his thirty-seventh year, already trusted and respected for the vast learning, the legal acumen, the high character which had marked his career at the bar. Next came Joseph Papin, a tribune of great power; Charles Joseph Laberge, a classical orator; Charles Daoust, a broad, limpid and sure mind; Jean Baptiste Eric Dorion, a brother of Mr. Dorion, fervent, eloquent, intrepid, fearless, one of the noblest hearts that ever beat in this land or any land. With the single exception of Mr. Dorion, all those men at that time full of life and vigour, ardent and hopeful, were destined to die young, not one of them attaining the full measure of his powers. They represented that more advanced section of the Liberal party, which was already designated as the *Rouges*. By the common consent of all Mr. Dorion was chosen as their leader.

The ministry, finding themselves hopelessly in the minority, had to resign, and the Governor called upon Sir Allan Macnab to form a new administration. Then took place the famous coalition between the Tories of Upper Canada and the Liberals of Lower Canada. The Lower Canadian section of the late cabinet, headed by Mr. Morin, joined the new administration. It is due to those Liberals to say that they then made no sacrifice of opinion, while on the other hand Sir Allan Macnab and his Tory colleagues from Upper Canada kicked away, without any ado, their professed principles of many years, and undertook to carry into execution those measures of reform long sought by the Liberals, long fought by themselves: the abolition of clergy reserves in Upper Canada, the abolition of feudal tenure in Lower Canada. All opposition being thus removed, clergy reserves and feudal tenure were at once swept away before the unanimous consensus of public opinion.

There now remained no irritating question pressing for a solution. All the old abuses which in former years had goaded the people to rebellion had been removed by the natural working of the new institutions. The bitter passions, which the new institutions had at one time provoked, had subsided. The reciprocity treaty which had just come into force, coming opportunely in the lull following the political excitement of many years, had opened an era of unprecedented prosperity.

This very state of things now developed a new evil, which, indeed, was inherent to the Constitution, but which greater evils, more pressing questions, more urgent wants, absorbing for a long time public attention and taxing public energy, had left comparatively unfelt.

The Imperial Act of 1840, which had re-united the two Provinces, severed by William Pitt, fifty years before, was a most clumsy instrument, replete with difficulties almost insuperable. The new Constitution established a purely legislative union: a single Legislature for two Provinces differing in everything except a common allegiance, and in this single Legislature it was an organic disposition that the number of representatives was to be the same from each Province, without any reference to population. No one now disputes that representation according to population is a fair, just and sound principle. But equality of representation for each Province had been recommended by Lord Durham for a purpose, and adopted on his suggestion. Lower Canada, at the time of the union, had the larger population, but the loyalty of the French population was not trusted, and Lord Durham thought that equality of representation in each Province would give to the English population, as its aggregate numbers in the two Provinces gave it a majority, an effective means of keeping the others in check. Thus did he state his views in his report:—

"If the population of Upper Canada is rightly estimated at 400,000, the English inhabitants of Lower Canada

at 150,000, and the French at 450,000, the union of the two Provinces would not only give a clear English majority, but one which would be increased every year by the influence of English immigration; and I have little doubt that the French, when once placed by the legitimate course of events and the working of natural causes in a minority, would abandon their vain hopes of nationality. I do not mean that they would immediately give up their present animosities, or instantly renounce the hope of attaining their ends by violent means. But the experience of the two unions in the British Isles may teach us how effectually the strong arm of a popular Legislature would compel the obedience of the refractory population."

These views of Lord Durham, expressed in this cold, implacable language, could not but create, throughout the whole French population of Lower Canada, a feeling of intense bitterness against the new Constitution. When Mr. Papineau returned from exile, the first public words which he uttered were in impassioned condemnation of the whole act of union. After his re-appearance in Parliament, he took the early occasion of the address, in the Session of 1849, to repeat those attacks on the floor of the House. He was particularly emphatic and bitter in his denunciation of the disposition enforcing equality of representation for each Province. On this point he was squarely met by Mr. Lafontaine, who was Prime Minister, and had at his back the support of a powerful majority. He pointed out with great force that, under existing circumstances, under the act of union, such as it had been framed, with a total absence of checks to restrain the majority, the application of the principle of representation by population would be virtually to place the smaller Province under the subjection of the other; that he would not impose it on Upper Canada while she was the weaker, nor concede it to her if she became the stronger.

No one was more qualified than Mr. Lafontaine to use this language. It had been the plan and design of Lord Durham to have the united Province of Canada ruled by the strong hand of an English majority over a French minority, but it is to the eternal glory of Mr. Lafontaine and Mr. Baldwin that they inaugurated and successfully carried out a policy based upon a broader and more generous conception of human motives and interests. They substituted principles for race as the rallying ground of parties; they avoided the bitter passions and dangerous conflicts which divisions founded on race and creed must ever engender; they brought together English Liberals and French Liberals and gave them common aspirations to look to, a common aim to pursue.

Yet there can be no doubt that the principle advocated by Mr. Papineau and opposed by Mr. Lafontaine was true, but the Constitution was sadly deficient which made fair minded men resist the concession of a true principle, from the legitimate apprehension of placing in the hands of the majority a power unchecked by any constitutional safeguard to the minority. The evil was in the Constitution and must always have caused agitation. Whichever Province had numbers on its side was certain to claim the preponderance which legitimately appertains to numbers.

At that time, however, the contest was not carried very far; the old grievances which had long engaged the bitter contentions of parties continued, as long as they had not been abated, to put every other question under the shade. Now at length, in 1856, the last of those irritating issues was settled by the removal of the clergy reserves and the feudal tenure. In the meantime the respective position of the two Provinces, in a most important feature, had been totally reversed. Under the new institutions Upper Canada had progressed with gigantic strides. As foreseen by Lord Durham, her population had "been increased every year by the influence of English emigration;" it already outnumbered and was every day more and more outnumbering the population of the Lower Province.

In a new country, where everything is to be created and developed, where roads, canals, harbours are questions of primary importance, public expenditure became correspondingly important. Prosperity was increasing and spreading throughout the land generally, and the public revenue, without any additional taxation, was rapidly swelling. This very state of things, this very prosperity contributed, in no inconsiderable degree, to again force upwards the question of representation by population. The Reformers of Upper Canada now took up, in behalf of their own Province, the position adopted by Mr. Papineau, at an earlier day, in behalf of Lower Canada. They argued that since the people of Upper Canada had a larger population and contributed more largely to the revenue, it was but simple justice that in the application of the revenue they should be allowed a proportionate voice. The question had now to be faced and settled.

The two years which followed the elections of 1854 brought prominently to the front four men who were to be the chief actors in the coming conflict, Mr. John A. Macdonald and Mr. Cartier, who were now at the head of the Government, and on the other side of the House Mr. Brown and Mr. Dorion.

The position of Mr. Macdonald and of Mr. Cartier, assumed from the first and to the last maintained, was that there was no evil to remedy, that the constitution was as perfect as it could be under existing circumstances, and they steadily opposed all demands of reform. Mr. Brown's policy, most vigorously prosecuted for years, was that the principle of representation by population was right and just, and, therefore, with or without constitutional changes ought to be conceded and applied. But representation by

population without constitutional alterations and modifications would have subjected one Province to the other, as clearly pointed out by Mr. Lafontaine some years before. It may perhaps be said that the application of a principle admitted to be just and fair never could work any real injury to any one, and that its effects should never be dreaded. So, indeed, it ought to be; so, indeed, it would be, if all elements in the community had exactly identical passions and interests; but so long as men are drawn in different directions by conflicting passions and interests, especially those passions and interests which have their foundation in historical associations and religious convictions, it must ever be the duty of statesmen, even in the application of the truest principle, not to place in the hands of the majority an absolute, unchecked power of working to the fullest extent its own conception of right, and to lay a ruthless hand upon what the minority may deem right and sacred. When Mr. Papineau demanded representation by population, the people of Upper Canada, whose Province had then the smaller population, strongly opposed his policy; in the same way the people of Lower Canada, under the altered relative condition of the Provinces, strenuously resisted the same policy, when presented by Mr. Brown.

Mr. Dorion enunciated the true principle which alone could prove an adequate reform to the undoubtedly existing evil. As early as the session of 1856, he formulated it in the following notice of motion:—

"That a committee be appointed to enquire into the means which should be adopted to form a new political and legislative organization of the heretofore Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, either by the establishment of their former territorial divisions or by a division of each Province, so as to form a confederation, having a Federal Government and a Local Legislature for each one of the new Provinces, and to deliberate as to the course which should be adopted to regulate the affairs of united Canada, in a manner which would be equitable to the different sections of the Province."

It requires no argument at this day to satisfy everyone that the idea here propounded by Mr. Dorion was the right one; that a federative union was the only form of government which could satisfy all interests, conciliate conflicting passions and give to each and to all sections a full measure of justice. Yet Mr. Dorion never followed up the idea which he had thus so clearly enunciated. The reason is that neither at that time nor at any time during his political career had he a following large enough from his own Province to enable him, as a parliamentary leader, to assume an aggressive attitude.

A modification had taken place in the public opinion of Lower Canada, which permanently affected it, and which became for Mr. Dorion and his party an insuperable obstacle. No political coalition ever took place which did not involve, at some time, the sacrifice of important principles by one of the contracting parties. In the coalition of 1854, the sacrifice was made by the Conservatives of Upper Canada, who knelt down to adore what they had previously burnt. But from the moment the two vexed questions of the day, clergy reserves and feudal tenure had been settled, the Conservative element of the coalition gradually rose up until it had finally and completely absorbed the Liberal element originally furnished by Lower Canada. Indeed the new recruits, as is ever the case with converts, soon out-Toried the Tories. In the Upper Province the party has always preserved the name of Liberal-Conservative which it at first assumed. In the Lower Province the new party shook off every vestige of those principles which it had at one time upheld as the champion of reform, and the day came when it shunned with horror the very names of Liberal and Liberalism. This was the result of peculiar causes peculiarly affecting the French population of Lower Canada.

Those who have followed the history of the Roman Catholic Church in continental Europe, France, Belgium, Italy, for the last forty years, are aware that up to a comparatively recent period a bitter struggle was waged between two classes of Catholics, the Ultramontanes on the one side and the Liberal Catholics on the other side. It would be difficult to reduce to an actual definition the exact ground of difference between the two rival schools; it was more theoretical and abstract than real and practical. Ultramontanism represented and enjoined an absolute hostility to the spirit of modern freedom and progress: Liberal Catholicism leaned towards the acceptance by the Church of the new ideas and principles represented by modern freedom and progress.

The controversy may be said to be now over; the Ultramontane view seems to have everywhere prevailed; indeed when the noble lives of Montalembert and Lacordaire came to an end, what was known as Liberal Catholicism became a thing of the past. But while it lasted, the controversy was maintained on either side with impassioned vigour, by writers of great eminence. It radiated from its focus throughout the whole Catholic world, and in no part of the Catholic world did it evoke keener passions than in the Roman Catholic population of Lower Canada.

Manifestly the point involved in the dispute was purely doctrinal, and could not be held, by any process of reasoning, to apply to the organization of political parties in constitutional countries. Yet, strange as it may seem, the whole of the controversy was introduced bodily into the political questions submitted to the electors of this country, and upon which Protestant electors as well as Catholic electors had to pass judgment.