

Lord Durham and His Report.



ORD DURHAM is one of the most celebrated names in the history of Canada. To this great man, we Canadians are indebted for the excellent form of government that we enjoy today.

In 1838 Durham was sent to Canada by the English Parliament to inquire into the causes of the Rebellion of 1837-38, and to restore order. He was given a free hand but the free use of his extraordinary powers, caused him to fall into disfavor with his colleagues of the Home Government.

Towards the end of May, the new Governor General landed at Quebec, and he immediately set to work. His first action was to dissolve the council which Colborne had appointed, and to form one, consisting chiefly of members of his own staff. Commissions of inquiry were formed. Durham himself made a trip of investigation through Upper Canada; he also discussed the union of the British colonies in North America, with the lieutenant-governors of the different provinces at a meeting held in Quebec. In Lower Canada, there were three hundred and forty political prisoners awaiting trial. Durham released one hundred and seventy-four, deported sixteen to the Bermudas, and ordered eight of the ring-leaders to be hanged. Papineau and several others who had fled from the country were forbidden to return under pain of death. In England, the opposition violently attacked the Transportation Act, and the government itself deemed it advisable to disallow it.

Fortunately Lord Durham knew nothing of the storm that was brewing in the Mother Country; being on his tour of investigation in Upper Canada. As a result of his assiduous inquiry he learned that the divisions in this province, resulted from the jealousies of three classes of people. Members of the Family Compact, Reformers, and Patriotic Immigrants from the United States. The clergy reserves were also a constant source of annoyance and inconvenience. In Quebec or Lower Canada, the main cause of trouble was that the minority ruled the majority.

When he had terminated his investigations, Durham returned to Quebec. He was in high spirits. Several letters of approval awaited him, notably one from the Queen herself. But one day while looking over an American newspaper, he read, to his great chagrin, of the disallowance of his Transportation Act. Lord Durham was not merely a proud man, but a very sensitive man,