

THE LATE SIR JOHN MACDONALD.

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THE wave of emotion which swept over Canada on the death of Sir John Macdonald has not yet wholly subsided. The incidents of the political struggle of the session of Parliament at the very beginning of which he died have stimulated the zeal of his followers, and given them a clearer knowledge of the loss they have sustained. Thus personal feeling and political fealty join in keeping fresh the sense of regret for the loss of their old chief.

In the nature of things, there has necessarily been some subsidence of public sorrow. All the circumstances surrounding the death of the Premier tended to create a feeling that since at seventy-six death must be expected, Sir John Macdonald was fortunate in dying as Premier of his country, and in the confidence alike of the people and Parliament of Canada, and of the Parliament and Queen of Great Britain. He passed away with dignity, and dignity, in such a case, affords some alleviation to sorrow.

The life which thus closed was spent almost wholly before the public, and in the discharge of public business. Born at Glasgow in 1815, Sir John Macdonald came with his parents to Canada at an early age; was educated at Kingston; studied law, and was in due time admitted to the bar; and in 1844 entered on his long parliamentary career. A brief list of his various employments in the service of the state will indicate the variety and extent of his public life:—

Receiver-General, May 21 to December 7, 1847.

Commissioner of Crown Lands, December 8, 1847, to March 10, 1848.

In opposition, 1848 to 1854.

Attorney-General, September 11, 1854, to August 1, 1858.

Postmaster-General for one day, August 6, 1858.

Attorney-General, August 7, 1858, to May 23, 1862.

In opposition, May 23, 1862, to March 30, 1864.

Attorney-General, March 30, 1864, to July 1, 1867.

Premier of New Dominion, July 1, 1867, to November, 1873.

In opposition, November, 1873, to September, 1878.

Premier of Canada, September, 1878, to June 7, 1891.

Thus, out of his forty-seven years of parliamentary life, from 1844 to 1891, he was thirty-two years in office, most of that time leader of his party. He was only three years in public life before he was in the government; and in all he was only twelve years in opposition,—still, however, leading his party. His opponents always feared him; his friends never abandoned him in opposition; and whether in power or in opposition, he was always the most versatile and vigorous force in Canadian public affairs.

In order to make as clear as possible to the reader the conditions of public life and the questions which public men had to solve at the time when Sir John Macdonald entered public life, a brief history of political development in Canada must be given.

Among the possessions of the British crown, Canada holds a peculiar place. For Canada, the empire made a great and costly struggle alike against France and against the United States. For the empire, Canada has thrice resorted to arms—in 1775, in 1812, and in 1866—and turned the tide of invasion from the walls of Quebec and from the frontiers of Ontario. For Canada, the empire has exerted at all times its full