

PROMINENT CANADIANS.—XXVI.

SKETCHES of the following prominent Canadians have already appeared in THE WEEK: Hon. Oliver Mowat, Dr. Daniel Wilson, Principal Grant, Sir John A. Macdonald, K.C.B., Louis Honoré Fréchette, LL.D., Sir J. William Dawson, Sir Alexander Campbell, K.C.M.G., Hon. William Stevens Fielding, Hon. Alexander MacKenzie, Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, C.B., K.C.M.G., Alexander MacLachlan, Hon. J. A. Chapleau, Sir Richard Cartwright, K.C.M.G., Sanford Fleming, C.E., LL.D., C.M.G., Hon. H. G. Joly, Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau, Sir William Buell Richards, Hon. Wilfrid Laurier, M.P., Hon. Honoré Mercier, Q.C., Hon. William Macdougall, C.B., Rev. Principal MacVicar, D.D., LL.D., Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts, M.A., George Paxton Young, M.A., Hon. Auguste Rea Angers and William Ralph Meredith, LL.D., Q.C., M.P.F.

SIR WILLIAM PEARCE HOWLAND, C.B., K.C.M.G.

THE man who serves his country, rather with an aim to its welfare, than his own advancement, and adds to that moral incentive excellent abilities and a sound judgment, is a singular and invaluable acquisition to his time. He is not often met with in public life to-day. And when we find that this aim turned to proper account has borne its peculiar fruit, the country which owes him so much would be guilty of gross negligence were it to forget him, because perforce, he has been unknown in public life for some years. We must all obey the mandates of time. The best and the worst must bow to them and retire. The object of this article will be attained, if it demonstrates the motive that actuated Sir William Pearce Howland throughout his public career. To publish a complete history of it would require much more space than is available here; for during his time he was not only prominently identified with several events of national importance, but while he was a Minister of the Crown, he introduced and carried through a number of salutary measures in connection with various departments of Government.

At the outset, it will not be without interest to enquire: Who were the Howlands? The family is of English descent and has some relation to the Duke of Bedford. Their American progenitor was one John Howland, a Quaker, who emigrated to this continent in the celebrated "Mayflower," in 1620. The descendants are numerous, and their natural force of character has made them prominent in both the United States and Canada. Sir William was born in the town of Paulings, Dutchess County, New York State, on May 29, 1811. His father, Jonathan Howland, was in early life a farmer, though later he embarked in commercial pursuits in Greenbush, New York. He died at Cape Vincent, New York, in 1842. The subject of the sketch was educated at Kinderhook Academy, and in 1830 he came to Canada and took up his abode in the township of Toronto. He at once commenced business with his brother and began to exhibit that industry which has characterized him ever since. A branch was soon opened at Stanley's Mills. In 1840 he purchased the Lambton Mills property, and subsequently engaged in the wholesale grocery trade in Toronto. At present he carries on a large milling business in several parts of the Province. As a merchant, he has always commanded the esteem of the mercantile community, his judgment and commercial experience have proved of great value to it, and for several years he was president of the Board of Trade.

But his business, large and urgent as it was, did not wholly occupy his time. He early turned his attention to public affairs and evinced a keen interest in the progress of this province. Prior to 1854, the opening of the North-West Territory had been thought of as a desirable thing, but it was in that year Mr. Howland, with the late Hon. J. McMurrich, Gordon Brown, and others, made the first practical movement in that direction, which ultimately led to the final acquisition of that great extent of valuable country. They provided funds to send Captain Kennedy there, who was instructed to invest a sum in the products of the country, to return by the interior to Fort William and report upon the practicability of the route, the character of the country, and the prospects for trade. A company was afterwards organized, a steamboat purchased, and the construction of a road commenced. When in England, sometime after this on public business, these gentlemen organized a committee, upon which the Barings and other great bankers were represented, to co-operate, so that the objects of the company in this country might be brought to a successful issue. They approached the British Government and different administrations in Canada upon whom they pressed their suit. They argued that if the Intercolonial Railway was built it would impose a burden upon Ontario out of all proportion to any benefits that could be derived from it, and, in that case urged, that as a compensation to the people of this Province the Government should take steps to acquire and open up the North-West.

In the year 1857 Mr. Howland was elected to represent the constituency of West York, first in the Canada Assembly until the Union, and afterwards in the House of Commons up to 1868, when he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. On the 24th of May, 1862, he became a member of the Executive Council of Canada, and until the birth of the Dominion, held these positions in the Government: 1862-3, Minister of Finance; 1863-4, Receiver-General; 1864-6, Postmaster-General; 1866, Minister of Finance. On July 1st, 1867, he entered the Privy Council, and became Minister of Inland Revenue, and resigned it in July of the following year to accept the position of Lieutenant-Governor.

In 1857 the Separate School question was one of the burning issues of the day. The Roman Catholics had been endeavouring and were endeavouring to obtain an extension of their privileges with regard to the control of Separate

Schools, and aimed at the diversion of school moneys to the propagation of their religious views. Mr. Howland had carefully considered the whole question in its various aspects, and was prepared to give his opinion with no uncertain sound. He said that there were but two courses open to any one who would desire to do justice to the whole community, viz., that the schools must be either secular or supported by voluntary contribution. The money devoted to the support of schools of any kind was obtained by taxing the whole community; it was, therefore, quite clear it could not be used to propagate any special religious views without doing an injustice to all those who were not in sympathy with them. The school question had periodically agitated the public mind some years before this. A spirit of unrest was abroad as to the most expedient system of training; public men were not wanting to encourage it; and this seemed to offer an opportunity to those who wished to profit by a lull in morals, to place their creed in the ascendant. In 1849 an attempt was made to hurry a revolutionary school Bill through Parliament at the close of the session—a Bill, the effects of which would have been the exclusion of the Bible and religious teaching and influence from the Public Schools. Fortunately, through the strenuous efforts of Hon. Robert Baldwin, the Bill was upset, and so the evils it would have wrought were averted. Mr. Howland was fully alive to the moral value of the Bible in the schools; but the retention of it, and the support of a religious programme, which in its nature was and is thoroughly repugnant to the Protestant community, are two very different things. He was therefore on the side that made for moral elevation; he was opposed to sectarian narrowness and priestly domination. If the Bible and religious teaching had been excluded in 1849 something else would have been substituted,—something no doubt, of a religious nature, but objectionable to a large portion of the community, while the whole body would have been required to render their contributions in support of it. The member for West York, who, no doubt, had this in mind, took a determined stand on the question, in 1857, and subsequently on the principle that justice should be done to all, or to the greater number, and in 1859 an Act entitled "An Act respecting Common Schools of Upper Canada" was passed, which contained the following provisions (sec. 128): "No person shall use any foreign books in the English branches of education in any middle or common school without the express permission of the Council of Public Instruction, and no portion of the Legislative School Grant shall be applied in aid of any Common School in which any book is used that has been disapproved of by the Council of Public Instruction, and public notice given of such disapproval." (Sec. 129): "No person shall require any pupil in any such school to read or study in or from any religious book, or to join in any exercise or devotion or religion objected to by his or her parents or guardians; but within this limitation pupils shall be allowed to receive such religious instruction as their parents or guardians desire, according to any general regulations provided for the government of Common Schools." During the same session another Act was passed respecting Separate Schools, in which it was provided that no Protestant Separate School should be allowed in any school section, except when the teacher of the Common School in such section was a Roman Catholic. These schools were not given a share in any school money raised by local municipal assessment, but they shared in the Legislative Common School grant according to the yearly average number of pupils. Owing to Mr. Howland having declared himself in opposition to the Roman Catholics, or as his action was construed by them to mean, he at once lost the sympathy of those in West York. When he again appeared before his constituents to ask a renewal of their support on his appointment to a position in the Cabinet, their opposition was manifested. The polling-day arrived, and about its close, Mr. Howland, who was standing not far from the booth, was approached by a typical Irishman. "Mr. Howland," said he, shaking the candidate firmly by the hand, "our priests are against you, they have set our people against you, but, be jabers, I'll vote for you, if I go to Purgatory to-morrow." And with that the sturdy Irishman, stalked into the booth, and it is presumed acted accordingly.

Upon taking office in 1862 as Finance Minister, and before the election, a measure prepared by the late Dr. Ryerson was presented, which contained some amendments to the Separate School law, claimed to be defective. Mr. Howland and those who shared his views had a difficult task before them. The former had already definitely announced himself. While he did not desire that the Roman Catholics should suffer in any way, he had no intention of committing any political recantation. He, however, was prepared to accede to any equitable claims. It was urged upon him and others, by the head of the Government, Mr. Sandfield Macdonald—who, although himself a Roman Catholic, had always pursued a very independent course with regard to Separate School matters—and Dr. Ryerson, that as the law existed in the statute book, and no majority could be found to repeal it, it would be better to remedy the defects in the law, which made it difficult to operate. They were assured that those in favour of Separate Schools would be satisfied if the proposed amendments were given effect to. It would, said Macdonald and Dr. Ryerson, prevent any further agitation on the subject, and no further demand would be made for increased powers and privileges in relation to Separate Schools. The amendments were finally agreed to, and the compact entered into before their passage was in the

nature of a treaty. The Roman Catholics did not regard it as such some years later. At the time the resolutions favouring Confederation were being adopted, it was agreed that they should contain a provision and guarantee that the right possessed with regard to Separate Schools by the minority in Lower Canada, and by the Roman Catholics in Upper Canada would be secured; and that an act providing some changes in the school law in Lower Canada should be agreed upon between the representatives of the Protestants in Lower Canada and the Roman Catholics. Late one evening, and shortly before the close of the session, a Bill was introduced. Mr. Howland, upon examining it, found it contained provisions making very important changes with regard to schools in Upper Canada, and extending the powers and privileges in a way that would give the control of superior education as well as of common schools to the Roman Catholics. He was convinced that the Bill must have been prepared and brought in with the sanction of some member of the Government. After consulting with his friends, Mr. Howland stated that the provisions relating to Separate Schools in Upper Canada were in violation of the agreement entered into in 1862, and insisted upon their being eliminated from the Bill. This was done and the Bill went through. As the Separate School law was framed then, so it exists to-day.

Although a member of the Reform party, and one of the most prominent, he invariably acted with that commendable independence that is consistent with principle and sound judgment. An instance of this may be given. In 1865, towards the close of the year, Mr. George Brown withdrew from the Cabinet. His reason for so doing was that he could not support the course his colleagues had decided to adopt with regard to the renewal of the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States, which was then about terminated, and created much anxiety among the mercantile community in Canada. It was determined to send a deputation to Washington to make another attempt to renew the treaty, and the terms upon which the deputation was empowered to act caused the disaffection and led to the withdrawal. Mr. Brown also considered it a mistake to manifest eagerness by sending delegates to the American capital. Mr. Howland disapproved of the course of his leader and resolved to remain in the Cabinet. He was then offered and accepted the leadership of the Reform element therein. Mr. W. McDougall strongly approved of Mr. Howland's course, and followed it by also remaining in the Government.

Mr. Howland was one of the deputation who went to London in November, 1866, to complete negotiations respecting confederation. After its consummation, Lord Monck, who was then Governor, committed to Mr. John A. Macdonald the formation of the first administration of the Dominion. The then and present Premier formed a coalition Government, choosing for his colleagues those who represented majorities in the respective Provinces to which they belonged. Mr. Howland was selected as Minister of Inland Revenue; and the title of Knight Commander of the Bath was conferred upon him for distinguished services in bringing about confederation. His acceptance of a portfolio in the coalition brought down upon him the thunder of the *Globe*. He was charged with political treason, and many Reformers shared the opinion of this paper, more because they simply followed it, and allowed it to think for them, than because they had arrived at a judgment of their own. The member for West York had also to pass under fire at a general convention of the Reform party in Toronto. Among the resolutions passed was one which denounced in very strong language the proposed combination. Mr. Howland who happened to be in the city at the time, attended the meeting and stated that a new era was about to be inaugurated; that new and great interests had arisen which were entitled to consideration and that the old party lines of the past were on the point of being swept away. A statement of this kind would be applauded by any intelligent audience of the present day, free from political trammels, but the inveterate Reformers—if the latter word can be properly used—would listen to nothing, and so Mr. Howland was practically read out of the party; his expulsion however being but temporary. Nothing more serious could be brought against him than that he was supposed to be guilty of "political treason." During the term he held office he fully justified the appointment, as the widespread recognition he commanded and the sterling abilities he possessed had caused it to be made.

His appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, in July, 1868, won the approval of the public generally. It formed a fitting close to a useful career, during a period when some of the most important events in our history transpired, and with which he had been prominently identified. In addition to occupying several posts in the Government, he more than once fulfilled responsible missions upon which he was sent by the Government. In 1865, and again in 1866, he was one of the commissioners appointed to visit Washington in the interests of reciprocal trade between the United States and Canada; and in 1875 he was made a commissioner to report on the route of the proposed Baie Verte Canal. In 1879 Her Majesty conferred upon him the order of knighthood.

Sir William has been charged with being a strong advocate of representation by population. There can be no doubt that he is in favour of such representation. But his sympathy is of a mild nature, notwithstanding what the *Globe* stated to the contrary in 1864. He has, moreover, been taunted with holding definite views on other given subjects, and with practically ignoring