

merits or demerits of the policy of the government of which Sir John Robinson was the head, and which ruled Upper Canada for so many years. If, viewing his political conduct by the light of modern experience, it can be said that in his opposition to Responsible Government he erred, all will admit that his error was of the head, not of the heart.

Sir John held the doctrine that parliamentary representation was essentially different from delegation; that as a representative, he was neither elected to legislate for a particular class, nor to advocate exclusive interests; nor was he a mere agent, with defined powers, and intrusted, as it were, with proxies of the votes of his constituents, to give effect to limited instructions. He claimed the right of individual judgment, and that he was intrusted with discretionary powers, to be exercised as conscience and circumstances suggested. In an address to his constituents he thus expressed himself: "You will do me the justice to remember that I have always plainly told you that there was no object I could propose to myself in my political career, for which I would exchange the satisfaction I desire to enjoy at its close, in the reflection that I have ever moved in that path which my judgment pointed out to be the right one. Whenever it shall appear that this conduct disqualifies me for running the race of popularity, I shall cheerfully submit to the consequences."

As a parliamentary leader, Sir John has scarce ever been equalled in this colony. Amid the turmoil and excitement attendant upon constitutional changes, he not only kept his obligations to his friends, but, without pandering to their passions, gained the honorable estimation of even his bitterest opponents. The secret of his success was his sterling honesty of purpose, and his unbending integrity in its performance. He could be courteous and conciliating to all, without weakening his influence or compromising his principles; and both friend and foe applauded that reliability and truthfulness, which at once despised artifice and all kinds of deceit. As a speaker, Sir John Robinson had few equals. He was a good debater, forcible in expression, and convincing in argument. His ability in responding to an opponent was unmatched. Never taken by surprise, he has been known, after a long and stormy debate, conducted against him by no mean antagonists, to rise, without the slightest preparation, and grapple with every proposition, leaving no argument unanswered or misstatement uncontradicted. He had great command of language. His speaking did not, perhaps, often rise to eloquence, in the general acceptance of the term. He seldom attempted to electrify, or appeal to the feelings and passions of his audience; he looked upon eloquence and wit as weapons of delicate nature, the use of which was

blunted and impaired by frequent employment. But on the few occasions when he appealed to the loyalty of his followers, or repelled, in a burst of virtuous indignation, some ill-intentioned personal attack, he seldom failed to rally his friends into enthusiasm, and cover his opponents with shame and confusion. On one occasion he thus replied to an opponent: "My acquaintance with the honourable member is of long standing, and I have derived a respect for his character as an individual that has not been destroyed by the extreme injustice he has exhibited towards myself individually, as a member of this House. In his private relations I see there is much to esteem, and I respect him for his integrity in personal transactions; but from my observation of his public conduct during the time we had sat together in a former parliament, I must declare it to be impossible that any candid and honorable mind can seriously approve of it, for it was at once ungenerous and unjust. He seemed to have a mind formed for brooding over the most unworthy suspicions, and suffered feelings not of the most amiable or enviable kind so far to overcome his judgment and obscure all sense of justice, that he would, with a degree of heat and impatience that almost prevented his utterance, inveigh against the public authorities of his country, and support his convictions by statements of fancied grievances, which vanished the very instant they were examined. So here the honorable and learned member, upon an occasion that neither called for nor justified such a display of temper, has sought relief for his mind by bringing up charges against me, which, if there was the slightest foundation for them, ought to disgrace me as a public officer and a man. All this time has he been wearing the smile and holding out the hand of friendship, while it is now quite evident he has been tormented with a feeling towards me, for which God knows I have never given him cause, and which goads him on to conduct in the highest degree unjustifiable and indefensible. \* \* \* \* \* As to his personal attacks upon me, I beg him to be assured that I regard them with unqualified contempt. I know the motives by which they are prompted, and I expect he will proceed to the last inch in his attempts to injure me; but I defy his efforts; I ask no indulgence; I serve a just Sovereign; that conviction is sufficient to render me fearless and independent; and I assure the honorable and learned member that all such efforts will recoil, as fit they should do, upon his own head."

The fruits of Sir John Robinson's life as a legislator are to be found in the pages of our statutes. Several of our most important acts were framed by his own hand. They bear evidence of his great legislative ability, and of his clear perception of an existing evil or defect, and the remedy most fitted to remove it. They show his strong attachment