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Liberalism; the second, his declaration and triumph in the election of 1896.

How did the unique phenomenon of a political philosopher in Canadian politics come to be? Well, for one thing, Laurier at an early age read widely in English History, especially in the history of the revolutionary 17th century. He soaked himself in the Whig historian Macaulay, and I can testify from personal experience that anyone who absorbs Macaulay as a youth will never cease to have the great phrases of liberty ringing in his ears.

Then Laurier spent a formative year in a Scottish-Canadian community and was strongly impressed by the sturdy independence and God-fearing attitudes of these Presbyterian pioneers. Such a year would make its impression on any sensitive youth, and with Laurier it took the form of that kindly understanding of his English-speaking Protestant fellow-Canadians for which the word is tolerance. His own nature, as every witness testifies, disliked extremes and was instinctively against the harshness of personal condemnation, and so we have his moderation. These qualities were to carry him through life and they were to prove his most precious gift to Canada in their ability to soften the prejudices of the two races.

In the Lower Canada of 1860's a young man so endowed could go nowhere else than into the camp of les rouges, the spiritual descendents of Papineau, the radicals and anti-clericals of Lower Canada. Laurier began as a Lower Canadian rouge; he ended as a Canadian Liberal, but he was the same man throughout his career, the only change being that as he grew older, life and experience broadened his views, extended his charity and gave him a grasp of the practical. Sneering remarks that his evolution was simply opportunism are merely evidence of the bile of those making them.

The story of the gallant fight made by the rouges of Quebec against the arrogant and intolerant ultramontanism of their day is known to readers of Canadian history, if not to the general public. Few people on the English side of the fence can imagine how much high courage it took to remain a rouge or Liberal in the days when liberalism was anathematized by the church. In the eyes of the extremists, or ultramontanes, in the church, and their Tory supporters, les Castors, to be a Liberal was to be a recreant to faith and race, to be anti-clerical and, worse, to be heretical, or even atheistic. Ultramontanes took their stand on the papal Syllabus of Errors, and among errors, liberalism, involving the right of private judgement, ranked at the top. Laurier's first major battle was with ultramontanism, the school of opinion that, if triumphant, would not have allowed a Liberal in politics or what is much more important in thought to remain in the province of Quebec. His remarkable accomplishment was that he fought this battle without incurring the direct ban of the church and lived to triumph - not over his church, to which his allegiance never wavered, but over the narrowness of many of its clergy. When one considers how often repression ends in revolution, it may not be an overstatement to suggest that in his epic victories, whose result was to allow of liberals both in party and mentality remaining good Catholics, Laurier saved the disruption of his church.

So far had ultramontane tyranny gone in the middle of the 1870's that Laurier decided to fight a pitched battle and, sink or swim, get it over with. A meeting was arranged in Quebec City for the 26th of June, 1877. Laurier was to make an address to Le Club Canadien on the subject of Political Liberalism. Never was a political occasion more eagerly looked forward to. When the evening arrived, the great hall was crowded with over 2,000 people, and the atmosphere was tense. The speaker, then thirty-six, appeared pale and nervous. He began cautiously, not knowing what reception to expect. But after a few minutes, waves of sympathy began to pour back to him from the audience, and he warmed to his work. In the course of his speech, he laid down the doctrines from which he never after departed - the only doctrines on which a country of two races,