

"the chief events of the time within its purview, faithfully recorded in chronological order. There is not much party bias in the book, though the writer's head 'has a cant' towards Government (towards which of the many Governments of opposite politics of which it treats?), and as a rule Mr. Dent's bones are marrowless, and his blood is cold. To enthusiasm he does not once rise. From the first cover to the last, one might fancy that he was a fish which had lived under the ice in the Arctic Sea all his life till captured by the publisher to write *The Last Forty Years*. Mr. Dent has fair ability, much prudence, and a mind and impulse under a state of rigid discipline. He is cleverer than several Canadian writers whom we know, and inferior to many others that we have met. He has not the faintest scintilla of genius; he never sinks below common sense, and never rises to superiority. In his whole book there is neither a bad nor a good sentence, save where he describes Mr. W. H. Blake's eyes as assuming the lurid glare of forked lightning, and compares the sparkling of Gavazzi's orbs to the glint of royal jewels. He is very pedantic here and there through his book, and has a way of putting quotation marks around poor phrases of his own coining. He is usually correct in his statements, and has no mercy in that cold heart of his for a brother who makes a slip in recording a date or an incident, yet there glares out through his own pages among some other inaccuracies the statement that the present Chief Justice (Sir W. J. Ritchie) was one of the confederate delegates to England, and that Mason and Slidell were taken off the Trent in mid-ocean. But Mr. Dent's book is a valuable addition to our literature, as is also his *Canadian Political Gallery*, which contains sketches of our leading public men." We have given at full length Mr. Collins' criticism of Mr. Dent's work "*Canada since the Union*." When we read it we were forcibly reminded of a scene in the British House of Commons, described in Greville when Sir Edward Sugden, speaking of Fox, said, "that he had no great respect for his authority, on which Brougham said loud enough to be heard all over the House, and in that peculiar tone that strikes like a dagger—'Poor Fox.' We were tempted to exclaim when we read Mr. Collins' criticism—Poor Dent! How differently he has been treated from not only Mr. Goldwin Smith, but Mr. Roberts, Mr. Elder, Mr. George Stewart, and Mr. Mercer Adam. Apart from the

criticisms in style there are two alleged inaccuracies which we noticed with pleasure, as affording proof that if the critic had been able to find others he would not have failed to mention them. Mr. Dent described the capture of the "Trent" as having been effected in mid-ocean, whereas it was, according to Mr. Collins, in the Bahama Channel. We apprehend that Mr. Dent's object was to state in the most concise manner possible that the occurrence took place outside the prescribed three-mile limit of territorial jurisdiction. No one with any brains could have imagined that Mr. Dent meant mid-ocean literally, and we venture to assert that he never was misunderstood by a single reader. As to Mr. Ritchie, we presume that Mr. Dent was so far in error that there being two Ritchies, brothers, both lawyers, both raised to the bench, and both of course eminent in their profession, Mr. Dent fell into the error of thinking that there was only one, the present Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The error is of no importance whatever. The other criticisms are simply unworthy of notice. What we have specially desired our readers to note is the acknowledgment: that Mr. Dent's history is "a fairly accurate record of the chief events of the period." That is what we desire to find in a history, and we are quite willing that a writer should reserve his "enthusiasm" for a work of a strictly party character, which a history ought not to be. We must refer very briefly to the notice of Mr. Turcotte's history, "*Le Canada Sous l'Union*." Mr. Collins asserts that Turcotte "considers that Metcalfe held the balance fairly between all parties." Such being exactly the reverse of truth, we can draw no other inference than that Mr. Collins is himself unacquainted with Turcotte's history. In describing the resignation of Ministers under Lord Metcalfe, Mr. Turcotte states that they "gave proof of a noble independence," that their conduct "was approved by the mass of the population of Canada and supported by the great majority of the representatives of the people." Elsewhere he stated that "during nine months Lord Metcalfe violated the principles of Constitutional Government as established by the resolution of 1841." In short, there is no room for doubt as to Turcotte's opinion, which, in his own words, was "Lord Metcalfe did not understand Constitutional Government or, if he understood it, he did not practise it." All that Mr. Collins can find to justify his statement is that, after his censure of Lord Metcalfe's policy

Turcotte contrasted him with Lord Sydenham, favorably to the former, holding that he had not wounded the feelings of any part of the population as to the distribution of power—in other words, Lord Sydenham could not obtain the support of any French Canadians, while Lord Metcalfe did obtain that of a Viger and a Papineau. This, however, does not justify the severe remark of Mr. Collins:—"It might seem almost as if a portion of the same poison which seduced poor old Viger from the path of duty had in some manner found its way to the ear of the brilliant young historian." It is because we entertained a high esteem for the "brilliant young historian" that we have considered it right to vindicate his memory from the gross misrepresentations of Mr. Collins.

We shall proceed to notice the life of Sir John A. Macdonald in connection with the history of Canada during the last forty years. There seems no doubt that the father of Sir John Macdonald had resided in Sutherlandshire, Scotland, and removed thence to Glasgow prior to his emigration to Canada in the year 1820, at which time the future premier was about five years old, so that he may be considered a Canadian. He was educated at Kingston, where he studied law with Mr. George Mackenzie, and commenced the practice of his profession at the age of about 21. It would be inferred from Mr. Collins' notice that prior to his entrance into public life he became solicitor for the Commercial Bank and also for the Trust and Loan Company. As regards the latter institution it was not chartered until a few years after Sir John A. Macdonald became a Member of Parliament. He acquired his first distinction by his defence of Von Shoultz, a Pole, who was induced to join the American sympathizers with the Canadian rebels of 1837, and who was so rash as to invade Canadian territory near Prescott, where he was taken prisoner and subsequently tried and executed. Of course, Mr. Collins in his Life enters into much more detail than Mr. Dent could possibly do in the occurrences of Sir John A. Macdonald's life, but it cannot be alleged that the historian has not done full justice to the statesman. It may be admitted that those who have described Sir John Macdonald's public life as "a series of contradictions" have not reflected on the changes of opinion that almost invariably occur in the minds of men who have been many years actively engaged in public life. Those changes are often apparently contradictory. We find Liberals becoming Conservatives because the measures which they deemed important in the