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THE TIMES.

The great debate on the Constitutional question has come off at Ottawa. It began nowhere, passed through Bedlam, and ended in nothing. It had been hoped by many that our Dominion wisdom in council would have analysed the question at issue and laid the thing fairly before us. We had looked for the debate with nervous anxiety. So had the Ministerialists, if Opposition surmises were correct. A cry had been raised that the act of M. Letellier was unconstitutional; and although most of those who made a splutter about it scarcely knew what it meant, still, the cry was good and worth keeping up. To the discussion in the House of Commons we looked for light. The discussion came—but not the light. Sir John A. Macdonald opened with a long speech upon a mild motion—a speech which the *Montreal Gazette* said was "remarkable for an absence of anything like warmth or party feeling. Step by step he traced the development of the British Constitutional system, every point being made calmly and judicially, and showed that even the precedents which had been cited from English history as justifying Mr. Letellier have all been condemned by the best authorities in England." But the *Herald* read it all in quite another way—said Sir John's citations were all against his motion, and that he only gave them to contradict them, and build the Constituion upon his own word. In truth, the *Gazette* exaggerates the value of Sir John's speech, while the *Herald* talks absolute nonsense about it. The speech, like the motion it was based upon, lacked directness of aim and argument. It left too much to be disputed and decided. But it was the only speech during the whole debate that helped in any way to judgment on the subject. Mr. Mackenzie made no effort to reply, or even to defend his Lieutenant-Governor from the grave charges brought against him. The Prime Minister accepted it as a party question and called for a party vote, when he should have put it on higher grounds. Mr. Bernard Devlin made a vigorous speech in which he contended for the independence of the Local Government within its own sphere. Quoth the *Herald*, "This he made to appear with the most perfect lucidity." Quoth the *Gazette*, it was "unmitigated rot." And then came the Bedlam phase of it—confusion worse confounded—politics gone mad, madder, maddest. And then—nothing, that is to say, a party vote.

The politicians of the Province of Quebec have taken their cue from Ottawa, and the "grave Constitutional question" has become a mere party issue. A Liberal dismissed the late Government, and the Liberals must declare the thing right, while the Conservatives must declare the thing wrong, subversive of all "rights of the Crown," opposed to the best interests of the people, &c. So it shall be a question of parties. No matter what the de Boucherville Government have done to bring the Province into a condition verging on bankruptcy; no matter although they have no better men and no better promise for the future, let every Conservative support his party. And it has come to this, that men will sell their reason, their rights, their conscience, their honour, their very manhood for a party. Government by party may, under some circumstances, be good, and it may be an unmitigated evil. It creates passion, and feeds the fire of it; it blinds men to what is right; it leads them to espouse a wrong cause, to compound a political felony, and smile at a mere misdemeanour; anything, in truth, for party. Few things can be more shameful, more unbecoming a reasoning man than such a course. It is degrading to voters and to those for whom they vote. We should care for measures, and the prosperity of the whole body politic.

The Jacques Cartier election case has been decided at last, and in favour of Mr. Laflamme. The charges brought against the Minister of Justice were very numerous. Some of them on the face of it looked grave—grave enough at any rate to make us feel and say that the Supreme Court should not delay its judgment. It was not a matter of small concern that the Minister of Justice should for months have a judgment suspending, or under deliberation. Now that the judgment is given we are satisfied, and are glad that Mr. Laflamme is not found guilty of the charges brought against him. Not on his own account alone—but on the ground of political morality. It need not be wondered at that hard words were used by Opposition papers, and hopes indulged in by those who favoured the petition. Hard and rough language is the fashion in our political circles, and although the *Toronto Globe* affects now and then to condemn it in a lofty sort of a way—that same *Globe* must be held responsible for much of the violence now manifested as between parties. The *Globe* exults over the decision of the Supreme Court, and it has some reason for it. The difference of opinion among the Judges was only on a minor point, and that in no way personal to Mr. Laflamme. But the shout of the *Globe* is like a paraphrastic rendering into politics the song of Jael's wife when she had driven a nail into the head of the sleeping Captain. The *Globe* should rejoice—but always with trembling.

It is a sad pity that so many complaints should have to be made in the House of Commons, and out of it, of the reports given in our newspapers. The way our reporting is done is simply the prostitution of a good and useful work. The difficulty arises from the fact that the reporters are instructed to write up their own party and to write down the other. They may abuse political opponents, misreport them or anything else with perfect impunity. In the country generally the reporter supposes that he has to exercise no discretion, but to publish every bit of news he can pick up. No matter what harm it may do, how distasteful it may be to the friends of those reported, out it goes to the public. The reporters themselves should try to keep a good name, and not be a nuisance. Failing that, newspaper proprietors and editors should be held responsible by the *public*.

The measures which Lord Beaconsfield's Government have taken from the time when our fleet entered Besika Bay, and led Turkey into a false belief that England would back her up in war, to the sailing of the fleet through the Dardanelles, the extraordinary votes of credit, and the calling out of the reserves, have to all appearances been more the policy of bluster than an intention to follow them up by actual declaration of war. The situation in Europe remains almost unchanged. The position to-day appears to be in the hands of Germany, who is exercising her influence to bring about, by diplomacy, what England has failed to do by the show of power, and noisy demonstrations in the metropolis. There can be no doubt that the vast majority of the English nation are not desirous of embarking on a war with Russia, and the Government may well hesitate before entering on a course which must lead to it, when they see such indications at home as a probable strike of 130,000 operatives and their dependent families, concentrated within a few miles of each other, or their being forced to desist from work by a lock-out. Such a large body of men and women, without the means of support, as would doubtless be the case, and provisions at war prices might cause serious disturbances and outbreaks. Distress at home; agrarian outrages in Ireland; fierce competition with foreign countries for trade, and the questionable opinion of the majority of the nation in favour of war, may perhaps prevent even so reckless a statesman as the present Prime Minister of the British Empire, from an undertaking of such disputable necessity and doubtful result, without an ally. It should be remembered that Russia single-handed twenty years ago, with a population of Serfs, fought England, France, Turkey, and Sardinia, for two years, all of whom suffered fearful hardships and humiliation at the commencement of the war; and after its termination counted but the capture of Sebastopol with the loss of Kars, the whole fruits of which war have long ago been swept away. To-day, Russia has a splendid system of railways, a free population, and a veteran army. She will only fight on her own ground, with resources to back her, without foreign supplies, perhaps second to no other country, for defensive warfare.