

## Our Contributors.

### TWO MEN WHO HAVE SERVED FOR HALF A CENTURY.

BY KNOXONIAN.

On the platform at the Queen's Jubilee there sat two men who have served the public for more than fifty years. Both were present when Queen's University was founded and both took a prominent part in the jubilee. One of the two is the most influential politician in the Dominion, and the other the most influential Presbyterian. Half a century of service is such a rare thing that it is scarcely necessary to say we refer to Sir John Macdonald and Dr. William Reid.

Dr. Reid, we happen to know, dislikes newspaper publicity, but we hope that he will not seriously object to having a few lessons drawn from his long, honoured and useful career for the benefit of younger men. As for Sir John, he couldn't escape publicity even if he wanted to. Fifty years of service in his line must make a man sublimely indifferent as to what newspapers say about him.

Sir John has been leader of his party for something over thirty years. Dr. Reid has occupied his present position for thirty-six years and a half. Both have served for over fifty years and have been in the front rank for over thirty.

The constituencies of both have changed. Confederation brought in new provinces but Sir John remained at the helm and led his party whether in power or in opposition. Union brought in new churches but Dr. Reid remained where he was, the only difference being that his influence was greatly increased. Presbyters from Nova Scotia or New Brunswick acknowledged his worth quite as readily as his old friends in Ontario and Quebec.

It has never been seriously proposed to displace Sir John Macdonald. Political intrigue is never scrupulous, but even political intrigue has never ventured to propose publicly that Sir John should make way for a younger man. It has never been proposed either seriously or in any other way that Dr. Reid should resign. The most reckless schemer in the Church would scarcely venture to hint at any such thing. Both of these men occupy a position at the end of fifty years that few mortals ever do occupy after having served that length of time—their places need them quite as much as they need their places.

A position so unique is well worth study, especially at the beginning of a new year when we are all considering the effect produced by the flight of time upon our persons and our work. What are some of the elements that enable a man to serve fifty years with ever-growing influence?

To begin at the basis, fifty years of service requires a good physical constitution. A mortal machine constitutionally weak in some of its parts would be sure to break down in less than half a century of continued exertion. To many men half a century of hard work is a physical impossibility.

Fifty years of work can be performed only by a man who can withstand worry. No nervous, irritable, excitable, worrying man can work for half a century. Sir John Macdonald, as everybody knows, is a steady joker and always sees the humorous side of things. A good joke relieves tension, lessens friction, and helps one to stand the tear and wear of business. Had Sir John been a grim, desponding sort of man he would have been in his grave long ago.

Dr. Reid has a marvellous faculty for taking a calm view of the situation, which greatly helps to preserve health and prolong working power. He usually has, or seems to have, a sort of it-will-come-all-right-in-the-end feeling, which is worth more to a public man than almost any other feeling he can have. A nervous, irritable man who has no power to throw off worry, and who is frequently haunted with gloomy forebodings can never work fifty years. Half that time will be nearer his limit.

A man who holds his own and a little more for half a century must always do some positive work. He must do something that people are interested in, and profit by, or at least think they profit by. As a rule, Sir John Macdonald always has a positive policy to submit to the people. It may be the N. P., or the Canadian Pacific, but it is always something. If anybody expects Sir John to go to the country at next election merely defending himself on the Jesuit Question, he will have a rude awakening. The Old Man will come down with some big scheme, and before the Equal Righters know, nine-tenths of the people will forget there is a Jesuit in Canada. A strong Government policy on Continental Free trade in the present state of business would bury the Jesuit Question out of sight in twenty-four hours. Gladstone is driving the Salisbury Government into a corner just now in exactly the same way. He has a positive plan for Ireland, and proposes to do something. The Government are mainly on the defensive, and therefore weak. Mr. Mowat always has some work going on. Every man who keeps his hold long does something. You cannot hold on by nothing. You cannot hold on by criticizing other people. Human nature soon wearies of a mere fault-finder. People get sick of a nibbling critic. They want a man who can do something.

In addition to many other most important services, Dr. Reid has for thirty-six years invested the funds entrusted to him without the loss of a dollar. During these years every other Church in Ontario that had any money to lose has, we believe, lost, and some of them have lost heavily. Banks have gone down, loan companies have been wrecked, financial institutions of every kind have gone under, but the finance department under the care of Dr. Reid is always safe.

Not only has he done something, he has done what, perhaps no financial man in Canada has ever done—invested thousands for thirty-six years and never lost a dollar.

The moral is, that if a man is to hold his own for half a century, or one quarter of that time, he must do something positive.

He must also have natural adaptation for his work if he works fifty years. Sir John Macdonald was born to magnetize and manage men. The Orange and Green march together kindly under his leadership. It does not require great powers of observation to see that Dr. Reid was intended by nature to take care of important matters. No man is likely to keep his hold for many years if at work that he has no natural aptitude for.

To serve the public for a long period one must keep up with the public. In nearly every speech of Sir John Macdonald's you see evidence that he knows what is going on in the world. He reads current literature and keeps up with the times. Dr. Reid is always thoroughly well informed on all questions of the day, and has pronounced opinions on most of them. Gladstone, at eighty, never gets a day behind the age. A man who lives exclusively in the good old times is already miles behind the sleigh, and the sleigh will never back up to let him get on again.

Few of us will see fifty years of service. All the more reason why we should improve the years as they pass. And they are passing quickly.

### A QUESTION OF HONESTY.

I ought not to contribute to religious or benevolent causes until I have paid my *honest debts*? We ought to be just before we are generous.

Let us see:

1.—If I owe Brown, Jones and Robinson one hundred dollars each, and I have only one hundred and fifty dollars to pay them all off, I will be more of an honest man if I pay fifty cents on the dollar to all than if I should pay Robinson one hundred dollars and Jones fifty, leaving nothing for Brown. And if Robinson knows all these facts and still receives the hundred dollars—which he may do legally—he will be much less of an honest man than if he should insist on my settling with all my creditors on an equal basis.

2.—But if Brown has a first mortgage on my property covering his hundred dollars, and Jones a second mortgage, while Robinson holds a third, the case is very different. In these circumstances it will be my duty to pay off the mortgages in the order of their being contracted—Brown first, Jones second, and Robinson last. And no hardship is sustained by either Jones or Robinson if they fail of receiving as much from the estate as Brown does, as it is taken for granted in all law and in common honour that later mortgages or debts are always to be settled after former obligations have been cleared. And for this reason all civilized States secure some adequate means of publication of mortgage indebtedness. Any different basis of settlement than is indicated here would be dishonest.

3.—Again, suppose that Brown should loan me enough money to start business with, and afterwards Jones should come to my aid and assist me with money and skill until I had acquired sufficient experience and accumulated enough capital to successfully run the business with. And still further, suppose that through carelessness or recklessness I become involved, and Robinson taking advantage of my involved circumstances lends me enough to help me out of the difficulty, taking therefor my note. Now, suppose I should become bankrupt, how ought I to settle with the three? Brown and Jones trusted me, but Robinson secured himself with a note. Surely the only honest method of settlement would be a fair *pro rata* division of the assets among the three creditors. And if Robinson objected then the only other alternative would be to settle with the first creditor first, and in full, then with the second as far as the estate would go, and so on. The question before us is one of *honesty*, not of Shylock's law. Therefore the fact that Brown and Jones trusted my honour and did not protect themselves with a first and second mortgage respectively, does not affect the obligation to pay the debt I owe them. Indeed, honourable men are, if anything, even more particular in paying debts of honour.

Now, let us see:

I was set up in business by my divine friend. He endowed me with a capital of physical and mental power; he furnished me with social, moral and intellectual means of culture; and he supplied me with social, political, educational and religious advantages and opportunities. And he laid it as a solemn obligation upon my manhood to cultivate all this capital stock, and to present him with a certain proportion of the fruits of it, as a legitimate interest on capital. It does not alter the binding force of this obligation that he has left it to my honour whether I pay or not and what proportion I shall pay. But he has also so arranged affairs that, so far forth as I honour him with the first fruits of the capital provided, he will also give me the prestige of his influence in my business and, as far as may appear to him wise, assist me in its conduct. Thus, to a wise man, it becomes not only an honest duty, but a wise forecasting of the future, to honour my benefactor with the first fruits in liberal measure.

Clearly, then, if I squander so much of this capital as impairs my ability to repay a fair proportion, or if I use all the fruits on my own pleasure, or to the proposed extension of my business, I am guilty of ingratitude and am not an honest man. I am both guilty of dishonesty and, by

the code of honour, am also guilty of a mean and unmanly act.

And should I contract additional obligations, and pay them with the money which ought to be returned to the original creditor, I am guilty of another and a greater wrong. And the man who lent me the money, and then demanded that I cheat the Lord out of his dues to pay him—the later creditor—is not only guilty of dishonesty, but is also a base and unmanly fellow. He wants me to be dishonest to my first contract in order to satisfy his—the second; and he takes advantage of my embarrassed circumstances and want of moral stamina to coerce me into a course of wrong doing which is certain to involve me in deeper ruin—and all to line his Shylock pocket with blood-money. He is besides guilty of hypocrisy in attempting to force me into a swindling transaction under the guise of morality and honesty. He is surely guilty of the utmost meanness, who would both rob God and ruin the soul of the poor debtor if only he can have his "pound of flesh."

The following, then, is the order in which honest men will pay their debts, and all later obligations are on the understanding that prior obligations have preference:

1. Their debt to God.
2. Their debt to the family.
3. Their debt to the Christian Church.
4. Their debt to society and the State; and
5. All other debts personally contracted, and in the order in which they have been contracted.

This natural order ought to be—whether it is or not—recognized in all obligations assumed. And the more civilized States do recognize it in many things. For example, it is not considered a hardship when the civilized law refuses—as it does in the higher civilizations—to permit the creditor to sell personal property, personal liberty, or the means of making a livelihood. A sewing machine may not be sold, or a cow, or cooking or sleeping necessities, or a piano where it is used by the owner in making a living. Not only is it no injustice to refuse the creditor the right to take these and such like necessities from the embarrassed debtor, but all right feeling people consider such prohibition as in the line of morality and honesty. It is but common justice that a debtor shall not be deprived of the common capital, by which he is to support himself.

Of course, in contracting debts, debtor and creditor tacitly acknowledge these prior limitations and obligations, or if they do not, they should. Where either creditor or debtor does not know of them, or fails to recognize them, the law still remains. It is the duty of the State to prevent the debtor from doing himself a wrong, or the creditors from wronging him. The State prevents *felo-de-se* as well as murder, so far as possible.

It is also conceded that religious and spiritual culture is more of a necessity than even physical health or life. The body is more than raiment, and the soul is more than its raiment—the body. Even so then, if justice require that a man be not robbed of the means of living—in collecting debts—it also demands in louder tones that he be not deprived of the means of spiritual support. What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?

This is but common justice. The natural is understood in all transactions—or should be—which is practically the same so far as the public recognition of what is right and *honest* is concerned. And should the spiritual be always understood.

Here it is well to remember that the Lord is not a hard taskmaster. He does not require of us, Shylock-like, the last "pound of flesh." He has secured a relief fund in the Bank of Heaven by which impossible debts—so far as bankrupt man is concerned—shall be liquidated by Himself. He does not require His children to pay up all arrearages of interest. These he freely cancels—for Jesus' sake. And he does not require of us the entirety of interest on the whole capital supplied. How much of this that we have squandered and are thus unable to earn interest on, He also freely cancels—for Jesus' sake. But He asks and expects a fair proportion of what has been earned, leaving all the balance for the settlement of subsequent claims. And He requires that his share shall be the first selected and the first paid. He does not surrender His claim. He has lightened the load. What otherwise would have swamped us in hopeless bankruptcy, He has by His gracious help so alleviated that it is possible for us to be continued in business. But in these circumstances the obligation on honest men to pay a fair interest on the present profits of life to the Lord is all the more obligatory. And the Lord must be dealt with fairly and frankly. He will not be robbed with impunity. When His merciful treatment is abused and He is still robbed, the Divine claim for all the original capital rests upon the ungrateful debtor.

To evade our obligations to God is to sell ourselves to the devil; and to coerce another poor soul into doing this is devilish.

How many of us have paid our *honest debts*? Are our debts to God all paid? Do we owe nothing to the Christian Church? To the family? To the State? Have we paid our debt to education—commercial, social, moral, religious?

Are we honest men?

How much we ought to pray, "Forgive us our debts!" And how very chary we should be of talking about the dishonesty of others! We are taught by the Master to pray to be forgiven as we forgive our debtors! Can we expect the Lord's blessing upon us and ours if we do not pay up with liberal and loving hand?

Knox Manse, Galt, Ont.

ALEX. JACKSON.