

The last survivor of a great generation, he whose imposing stature, whose eagle eye and whose white plume recalled those noblemen of the eighteenth century, such as we meet them still in medallions of olden times, is sleeping his last sleep.

An illustrious ancestor has passed away. Let us incline our heads with respect in the presence of this grave: its closing writes 'finis' to a whole epoch of our history.

Death is a law and not a punishment. No one better understood this profound truth than the eminent statesman whose loss we mourn. He had long since made his preparations for the voyage from Time into Eternity. Without bitterness the old gladiator saw himself disarmed as he was about to descend once more into the arena. His spirit passed gently, serenely, as though 'midst the darkening shadows of life's falling night the Faith of his forefathers had already revealed the gleam of dawn, presage of Eternal Day.

Speaking here in the name of my colleagues of the old French province who counted him her most distinguished son, and whose idol he became, it does the heart good to recall that throughout his entire career he was ever faithful to his origin and to the finest traditions of his race.

"I love," he was wont to say, "I love France who gave us birth, I love England who gave us liberty, but the first place in my heart belongs to Canada, my country, my native land."

This striking formula was, if I may speak thus, the Ideal, the Polar Star which guided his public life. Affectionate gratitude towards the nation, resplendent among all nations—whose sons we have the honour to be—the splendour of whose glory lights up the highest summits; unswerving loyalty towards that great and generous nation who inherited the administrative genius of the Romans and of whom Tennyson could say that hers was the classic land of liberty. But, first and foremost, Laurier was a Canadian. To his French inheritance he owed his golden tongue, his keen intellectual vision, the boldness and the grandeur of his conceptions. To his contact with the great English school, the school of Burke, Fox, Pitt, O'Connell, Gladstone, he owed his deep practical knowledge of British institutions and it may be said without exaggeration that it was by assimilating the teachings of these parliamentary leaders that Sir Wilfrid Laurier made for himself a lasting niche in the Hall of Fame.

At the time when he stepped through the threshold of Parliament, the memory

[Mr. Lemieux.]

of the great Papineau still hovered over the country. And the image of Lafontaine, whose profound wisdom had saved many rights from the wreckage of a storm-tossed sea, was becoming greater as time went by.

In those days Cartier and Dorion represented the two different channels of opinion in our province. The one, dashing, impetuous, disdained all obstacles; the other, calm, of proverbial integrity, possessing a mind of very high attainments, trusted to time to dispel hoary prejudice. If it be true that, in a certain way, Laurier was the disciple of Dorion, events made him the fortunate successor, rather the direct heir, of Lafontaine's policy—the policy which strives to soothe all hurts, the better to build on a solid foundation; the policy of conciliation for the sake of unity; the policy of the golden mean; the best, the true, the sole policy which can obtain in our country.

Sprung from a vanquished people, but a people who, in their turn had themselves made the conquest of Liberty, his dream was to unite the two races on the only rational basis: equality of rights, mutual respect and tolerance. His political vision moved him to seal anew the pact entered into by Lafontaine and Baldwin in days gone by and so bring fresh strength to the work of the Fathers of Confederation.

Was this majestic vision too ambitious? History, that impartial judge of men and events, will say whether or not he brought it to realization, but what we of his time may uphold from this moment is his untiring perseverance, his steadfast courage, his invincible faith in the ideal he set out to attain from the very start of his career. However, he was too well versed in psychology not to realize the difficulties which beset his path.

In 1887, hardly a year after that historical debate when, at one flight, he had risen to the greatest heights of parliamentary eloquence, when the English-speaking press had acclaimed him as the "silver-tongued orator," the Liberal party, helpless after the retirement of Edward Blake, was casting about for a leader. The French Liberals formed a minority in this party, as they formed a minority in the country. Let it be said to the honour of the English Liberals, it was Edward Blake, it was Sir Richard Cartwright, it was David Mills, who selected the leader, and the unanimous choice fell upon Wilfrid Laurier. What was the answer of the young member for Quebec East? Ah, Mr. Speaker, our great countryman, despite his marvellous endowments, did not covet the honour