

STRUGGLES FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

When Parliament assembled the Draper Ministry was promptly defeated, and resigned. Lord Elgin thereupon sent for the Hon. Louis Lafontaine, and entrusted him and the Hon. Robert Baldwin with the formation of a new, homogeneous government, to be composed entirely of Reformers, and fully recognizing, as Her Majesty's representative, the principles of Responsible Government as the only basis upon which future administrations should be formed and the business of the country carried on. Thus this dangerous conflict happily ended in the enlargement of popular rights as well as the signal triumph of the Reform party, more especially of its eminent leaders, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Lafontaine, whose ability, moderation and dignity, in carrying the agitation to a final and successful issue in the face of the most violent antagonism, forms one of the brightest chapters in the political annals of this country.

The second Lafontaine-Baldwin Administration, though firmly seated in power, found the political caldron still boiling. Their Tory opponents, though reduced to a small minority, made up in bitterness what they lacked in numbers. When, therefore, the Administration passed the famous Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849, and Lord Elgin came down to give the Royal assent thereto, as he felt constitutionally bound to do, their rage and vexation burst all bounds, and Montreal was soon at the mercy of an organized Tory mob, whose violence culminated in the mobbing of Her Majesty's representative and the burning down of the Parliament Buildings!