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Sir Wilfred Laurier Pays Graceful Tribute to Memory of Late Sir Charles Tupper

Sir Wilfred Says the Great Standing of Canada To-Day is in No Small Measure Due to the Great and Active Life of the Old Conservative Chief.

The Mail and Advocate takes pleasure in giving to its readers to-day the magnificent eulogy by Sir Wilfred Laurier on the memory of the late Sir Charles Tupper, recently delivered in the Canadian House of Parliament. Sir Wilfred's address, for eloquence, accurate judgment, felicitous phraseology, sentiment and historical atmosphere, will rank with any orations he has pronounced in the course of his long and eventful public career.

MR. SPEAKER, the House of Commons will honor itself, even more than it will honor the memory of Sir Charles Tupper, by testifying in the most solemn manner its appreciation of the many services and arduous labors of one who in his time, and who must remain for all time upon its roll of honor, one of its most illustrious members, one who contributed in no small degree to make Canada what it is to-day.

Sir Charles Tupper was the last survivor of that galaxy of strong and able men whom the Canadian people delight to honor with the name of Fathers of Confederation. Amongst the able men, who in the fall of 1864, assembled in the city of Quebec with the object of finding a basis of union for the then disjointed provinces of British North America, and whose united efforts brought forth Canadian Confederation, the name of Tupper stands eminent among the most eminent. Fifty years more have passed since that date, and perhaps now, we are sufficiently removed from those stormy times to be able to frame a correct estimate of the part played by the statesmen of Canada in that intensely dramatic period of our history.

The Part Played by Brown. Undoubtedly to George Brown was due the first initiation of Confederation. He it was, who, by his strong and persevering agitation against the union of Upper and Lower Canada, directed the destinies of Canada towards the Confederation of the older provinces of British North America. It seems to be equally true that it was Sir George Cartier who first put the idea into shape, and set upon it the seal of his essentially practical mind, and brought to the support of the one province which was material to the idea, if he idea was ever to become a fact.

Galt's Share in the Work. By his talent and ability, Galt lent aid to the movement still more did he do so by obtaining for it the support of the strong and enthusiastic minority in the province of Quebec, of which he was the illustrious representative. It was the good fortune of Tilley to be able, almost from the first, to bring his province to support the idea with a minimum of division and difficulty. Then we come to Macdonald. It is on record that for many years he objected to any change in then existing conditions of things, and only a few days before the coalition of 1864 he had opposed the idea of a federal union. But when he did adopt the principle of Confederation, he became at once the captain and the pilot. It was his master hand that took hold of the helm, met difficulties as they arose, arrived at solutions of unforeseen obstacles, and steadily and unerringly directed the course until port was reached.

And what was the part of Tupper? In its day, this question of Confederation antagonized friends and divided foes. Now that we may look upon it in the calm judgment of history, it must be admitted, I think, that Tupper brought to the cause more firm conviction and took more chances than did any one else. It must be remembered that at that time Nova Scotia was completely against him, and that instead of losing time and patience to win the province over to the idea of Confederation, he forced it into a union by the doubtful authority of a dying Legislature. The grandeur of the idea strongly appealed to his mind, and he would not let pass an opportunity which might occur again for many years. It is recorded that he erred at that time because he loved not wisely but too well. Indeed, in order to understand the character of Sir Charles Tupper at this important juncture in the history of our country, we must remember what was the chief characteristic of the man. In my judgment the chief characteristic of Tupper was courage. Courage which no obstacle could daunt, which rushed to the assault, and which, if defeated, came back to the combat again and again; courage which battered and hammered, perhaps not always judiciously, but al-

ways effectively; courage which never admitted defeat, and which in the midst of overwhelming disaster had always the proud characteristic of unconquerable defiance. This attribute of courage was the chief characteristic of his whole public career, and it shone more brilliantly than any other trait of his character during the whole of his public life. It had not been his lot to be born to wealth or affluence. The son of a poor Baptist clergyman, he had succeeded by his own efforts in obtaining an education, and winning a diploma in the medical profession. He was a young practitioner, not known at all outside the precincts of his own city, and hardly known within them. The time came when he threw himself against a man who was the darling of the people, the most potent influence in Nova Scotia, and perhaps, the brightest impersonation of intellect that ever adorned the halls of the Canadian Legislature. Joseph Howe was then the member for Cumberland. In the province of Nova Scotia there is a tradition, still extant, transmitted from father to son, and repeated many times, that on one occasion, when Howe had addressed a meeting of his constituents and had brought about among his auditors a pitch of enthusiasm even greater than that which his magnetic eloquence had ever before elicited, a young man rose from the audience to reply. It is stated that Howe, who was somewhat surprised and not a little amused, looked on the young man with something like patronizing condescension. But if he was surprised at first, he had great cause for surprise when he listened to the address of his hitherto unknown opponent. He found that in the speech of this young man there was meat and substance which moved the people, and which gave cause for deep reflection. The tradition further has it that when Howe returned to Halifax he stated that he had met in Cumberland a young doctor who would be a tower of strength to the Conservatives, and a formidable foe of the Liberals. The truth of his prediction was soon borne out. At the elections which followed in 1855 young Tupper came forward against Howe in the county of Cumberland, and wrested it from him. Howe at that time was at the zenith of his fame. The Conservative party was then led by Sir William Johnson, a man of eminent ability who, far advanced in years and in poor health, was only too glad to rely on the services of a young man of so much promise. From the day that young Tupper came to the fore in the Legislature of Nova Scotia, he became the guiding spirit of his party and the inspiration of all his followers. Almost from the day his life became associated with the life of Canada, because it was only a few years afterwards, when he had become premier of his province, that the movement for Confederation was started. In that movement for Confederation, with all the excitement that it produced, and with all the agitation to which it gave birth, he found a genial field for his great parliamentary ability.

Tupper's Broad Conception. I have said that courage was his chief characteristic; but it was not his only characteristic. His mind had been cast in a broad mold. Whatever question he had to deal with he never approached it from the limited sphere of parochial limitation; on the contrary, he approached it always from the broadest conception it was susceptible of. When I entered this House, more than forty years ago, he was in the prime of life, and in the full maturity of his powers, always strong, always ready to accept battle and to give battle. Though often my judgment was against him, in every case I could not say that he was animated by anything else than the broadest view of Canadian political questions. When Confederation had become an accomplished fact he rose to the front in the broader arena, just as he had taken the first rank in the Le-

gislation of his own province. From the day that he first entered the Chamber of the House of Commons, now unfortunately destroyed, his powers asserted themselves, and were acknowledged by everybody. He came into the Federal House under the most distressing circumstances, because in the elections of 1867, the first after Confederation, his whole province had gone against him; he alone had succeeded in retaining a seat. But his conduct under these circumstances was worthy of all praise. He applied himself with untiring zeal to the task of binding the wounds of his province, and of reconciling the people to the new conditions. At first he met with no success, because only the soft hand of time could assuage the feeling which existed. He had not the quality of which Sir John A. Macdonald was pre-eminently the master; that of reconciling conflicting views and, with the minimum friction, of bringing all these different elements together as if they had been one.

Protection. In this House his name must ever remain attached to two different measures—measures very different in character, but each of which brought forth the particular quality with which he was endowed; I refer to Protection, and the Canadian Pacific railway. This is not the time nor the occasion to discuss Protection as an economic principle, but I think everybody, friend or foe, must admit that the introduction of Protection into Canada was primarily due to Sir Charles Tupper. Sir John A. Macdonald, as in the case of Confederation, had at first been rather indifferent and doubtful; Sir Charles Tupper never had a doubt. He it was who first became its advocate in his House, and he it was who carried on the agitation in the country; and in my humble judgment, great as was the personality and prestige of Sir John A. Macdonald, the victory of 1878 was due more to Sir Charles Tupper than to any one else. But it was not he, after all, who introduced the principle of protection as an actual measure. He had been the artisan, but he was not its champion in his House. That honor was reserved for Sir Leonard Tilley. But if Sir Charles Tupper did not introduce the protective measure in this House, it was simply because he did not choose to do so. He might have had the portfolio of Finance, but he rather chose the portfolio of Public Works, which at that time included railways. With this portfolio he had the occasion to attach his name to another very great measure, the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway.

The Canadian Pacific Railway. All parties in this country had been in favor of a transcontinental railway, but no party had taken up the question seriously until Sir Charles Tupper took it up with all the vigor of his nature. He organized the syndicate which built the railway, but notwithstanding the extravagant terms which were given the syndicate, such was the immensity of the enterprise that it was more than once on the eve of collapse. Nothing lent the courage of Sir Charles Tupper. He never had any doubt of its ultimate success, and it was his good fortune to see all his predictions more than fulfilled.

Sir Charles Tupper had reached the zenith of his fame and power in this House when suddenly he withdrew from parliamentary life to accept the High Commissionership in London. The reasons which induced him to that step were never given to the public. But whatever they might have been, we who were his opponents thought that he had committed a great mistake. Undoubtedly his services in London were honorable and useful to the country, but in my opinion he was more fitted for parliamentary life, and his services to the country would have been still greater had he remained on the floor of this Parliament. Though absent from Ottawa and in far-away London, his heart never deserted the field of his former activities, and when ever there was a battle to be fought he appeared on the scene, and, with his characteristic vigor, was always in the thickest of the fray.

Next to Sir John A. Macdonald, he was undoubtedly in his time the most dramatic figure in the Conservative party. Indeed, it has always been a mystery to me and to those who have sat on my side of the House that Sir Charles Tupper was not sent for when the old chieflain died. He was sent for at last, but then it was too late. The battle was already lost, and notwithstanding the vigor and brilliancy with which he threw himself into the fray, he could not redeem the fortunes of his party.

The public life of Sir Charles Tupper ended with the elections of 1900, when he had reached the age of almost eighty years. His strong constitution had at last been shaken by a life of arduous labor, and he with-

drew to a well earned rest. But through he retired from public life and the seclusion of his family circle, he continued from day to day to follow with passionate interest the fortunes of Canada. The correctness of his estimates of resources of this country, when they were still unknown and undeveloped, has been amply justified. When at last the end came his eyes closed upon a Canada whose population had doubled, whose commerce had risen from a comparatively small figure to the billion dollar mark, and whose products in agriculture and industry

had reached figures that would have seemed fantastic in the first year of the Union—a Canada whose people were united even to the shedding of their blood in the defence and for the triumph of those principles of freedom and justice which the Fathers of Confederation had secured for us under the aegis of British institutions. It would be too much to say that the life of Sir Charles Tupper was without fault; that cannot be said of any human life. But it must be said, and should ever be remembered, that but for the life of Sir Charles Tupper Canada would not be what it is today.

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