

PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE

Subject.....

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The struggle became intense. When Strachan perceived that mere slander and untruthfulness could not shake off Ryerson and his Methodists, he drew on the resources of statecraft; he had at his command the complete apparatus of the Government: successive Lieutenant-Governors were his "amanuenses"; Beverley Robinson, the solicitor-general, and "the most brilliant mind" in the governing oligarchy, was his old pupil and devoted adherent. Strachan was in a position to create a powerful diversion in the ranks of the enemy and he did so by driving a wedge into Canadian Methodism. He spoke in complimentary language of the high spiritual qualities of the Methodist, who were united to the English Methodist conference. It was the other connection, the Methodists who had originated in the American conference, whom he regarded with such agitated shudders of alarmed repugnance. For his partiality, of course, there were ample and satisfactory reasons.

The English Methodists had no antipathy to the Episcopal Establishment. They were, on the contrary, distinctly favorable to the National church. Had not the two great founders of Methodism been Church of England priests? When Charles Wesley died in 1788 had not he been carried reverently to the grave by six Church of England clergymen in full canonicals? Was it not true that in the highest quarters of English Methodism "the denial of the principle of an establishment would meet with reprobation?" All this was most encouraging; there was, therefore, considerable grace among the English Methodists, and many estimable men. It is no wonder Strachan found much to reassure him as he studied the conditions in the Methodist camp; division, of course, was the key to the situation, and by its judicious use he

isolated Ryerson and Ryerson's party, and opened a cleavage in Canadian Methodism which might, if all went well, swallow Ryerson, and put an end for ever to his attack on the legality of the Church of England's claims, and his denunciations of the principle of religious domination.

Ryerson, however, was one of those conscientious men who are never happier than when answering misrepresentation and defending sacred principles, and although he was only twenty-three when he went out against Strachan, his brief career already contained some marvellous experiences. When twelve years old he became "deeply religious." "My consciousness of guilt and sinfulness was humbling, oppressive, distressing." One night, he says, in his bedroom with his brothers—

"As I looked up in my bed, the light appeared to my mind, and, as I thought to my bodily eye also, in the form of Oneophile-robed, who approached the bedside with a smile, and with more of the expression of Titian's Christ than of any person whom I have seen, he turned, rose to my knees, bowed my head, and covered my face, rejoined with trembling saying to a brother who was lying beside me, that the Saviour had now near us, henceforth had new views, new feelings, new joys, and new strength."

These sublime revelations induced him to "become a diligent student," and it is surely not without significance, considering the part he was later to sustain, that he "took great delight in Locke on the Human Understanding, Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, and Blackstone's Commentaries, especially the sections of the latter on the Prerogatives of the Crown, the Rights of the Subject, and the Province of Parliament." It was thus a unique temperament and mind that he brought to the attack on episcopal domination: the flowing visions of the

evangel reinforced by the conservative wisdom of Blackstone. Strachan's ruthlessness and scandalous raid into the very bosom of Methodism, gave the whole issue the appearance and the fascination of a holy crusade: the questions of religious equality, rights of the subject, liberty of conscience, had all been opened and endangered by Strachan's attitude towards the Chery Reserves. Here, then, was a mission to which a man might well devote his life. So, at least, it appeared to Ryerson.

VII.

Ryerson had to call out all his resources as the struggle went on; his Christian fortitude was sorely tried by the huge, contemptuous unvarnished of the Reverend Dr. Strachan. Truth was nothing to the doctor. Ryerson quivered with moral indignation:—"these statements," he says, excitedly, referring to some of the archdeacon's complaints and charges, "are not only incorrect, but they are for the most part the reverse of the real facts to which they refer and where they are most groundless, they are the most positive." Strachan transformed facts without effort; he was only concerned about the prize, and if a paperful of unwavering would serve, there was never a lack of paper. He drove his wedge into the bosom of Methodism, and, apparently, with success. Zealous brethren besought Ryerson to reflect seriously on the course he was so impetuously pursuing.

He was asked—admitting the sincerity of his attacks on the "arrogant pretension and proudly insolence" of "certain members" of the English church—would it not be wiser to withdraw from the contest

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