

protest against the untimely and ill-advised dissolution of the previous Parliament.—Mr. Dorion and his friends were as sensible as any Upper Canadian members of the meritorious deed of the late Speaker, but they saw that the principle of alternating the appointment of the Speaker in the two sections, would be stronger than the claim of gratitude and that they would open the new Parliament by a defeat of their party if they voted for Mr. McDonald. Mr. Dorion persisted in proposing the Hon. Mr. Sicotte in opposition both to the Ministerial candidate, the Hon. Mr. Cartier and to the Hon. J. S. McDonald, and in reality the Hon. Mr. Sicotte was elected, while Mr. McDonald would certainly have been defeated, if he had been the only opposition candidate.

However, this first success on the part of the liberal portion of the opposition, was rendered ineffectual by the coalition of the Ministry with the conservative section of the Upper Canada representation, and legislation went on hobblingly until 1857, when a crisis was near at hand. The House had become of so difficult management that a new combination or coalition was necessary to avert that crisis.

There is as much conservatism in Lower Canada as in Upper Canada, if not more—in fact but not in name. Toryism or Conservatism by name is so distasteful in Lower Canada that no one could meet a constituency under such color, without looking for a wanton defeat.

The alliance of the open and declared Conservatives of Upper Canada, with the really Conservatives but so-called, and more case Liberals of Lower Canada has enriched the political dictionary of the denomination of Liberal-Conservatives, which, in common parlance, means yes and no.

Toryism or Conservatism does not necessarily imply the idea that improvement is denied in lumine; neither does Liberalism impress the necessity of searching for changes and convulsions. Every one understands what each word means: Conservatism means an implied confidence in what exists and a distrust of any change; Liberalism means an implied confidence that everything that exists is susceptible of improvement and a welcome to any proposition of reform. But these contrary dispositions cannot exist in the same head or party; and there exists a moral necessity of an honest denomination of parties.

It is contrary to the laws of nature and of conscientious purpose to try to make one of two irreconcilable ideas.

The trial of this unnatural conciliation was still pending in 1857, when the Hon. Mr. Sicotte was offered a seat in the Executive government with power to offer the same to the Hon. Mr. Dorion. No man has a reception so emollient and amiable, for any kind of extraordinary propositions as Mr. Dorion, although the first word of it may have opened the whole ground of his ready opposition and refusal. Mr. Sicotte argued probably that his accession to power with Mr. Dorion would have the effect of giving a liberal impulse to the executive government; that the political name of the Ministerial party was of no consequence, their united influence being strong enough to realize reform. Mr. Dorion probably pointed out that the tendencies of the Lower Canadian section of the Ministry, although professedly liberal, were in effect radically conservative, and their accession to power would have no other result than to spoil the liberal party, as they would stand in a minority; that the Upper Canadian section being exclusively conservative, their position in the Ministry would be totally submerged; and finally that party being a necessity for the good working of the government, it would be a high treason of party traditions to unite with the enemies of their allies.

None could convince the other of the soundness of their respective views. Mr. Sicotte accepted an office in the government and Mr. Dorion remained in the Opposition.

The Hon. Mr. Sicotte was not long before acknowledging that he had taken a wrong track; and the experience of his short stay in the coalition Ministry should not be lost for the benefit of the country and the dignity of its public men.

Since the Union, we have had several men, both in Upper and in Lower Canada, whose accession to power was sought for to cover, under the purity of their past, the misdeeds of used up chisellers.

The Hon. Mr. Sicotte seized the first favorable opportunity for declining to serve any longer as a screen for the disreputable policy, in which he was engaged, contrary to Mr. Dorion's advice, and he withdrew from the government.

One of Mr. Dorion's arguments to prevent Mr. Sicotte from entering in the government

in 1857, must have been the decayed condition of the ministerial craft and the certitude of bringing soon, by a united action, on the part of the Opposition, the public affairs of the country in the hands of the Liberal party.

So well founded was that anticipation, that Mr. Sicotte had scarcely gone back to his seat in the Opposition, when a Ministerial crash ensued, forcing the Governor General to appeal to the leaders of the Opposition, Messrs. Brown and Dorion, to form a new Administration.

Coalitions being naturally built on the equilibrium of intrigues, there is no cause for admiring the fecundity of coalition leaders, in conceiving, planning and executing dodges, which are the essential elements of their life.

The House of Assembly, then, recently formed under the auspices of the Coalition, was well known by the leaders of parties and by the Governor General, to be hostile to Mr. Brown personally, and it was expected that by calling on Mr. Brown, to form an Administration, one of two results would follow: either Mr. Brown would not succeed in finding colleagues and forming a Ministry, or in case of success on his part, a vote of want of confidence in his Administration could easily be obtained from the House.—In the former case, the Governor General was justified by constitutional rule in calling back the defeated leaders of the coalition, to constitute a Ministry; in the latter, the Constitution imperiously obliged the Governor General to grant a general election to the new Administration.

The records of the time, August 1858, clearly show that there was an understanding between the Governor General and the coalition leaders, to violate the Constitution, if there was no other means of placing the coalition in power.

Mr. Brown succeeded in forming a government composed of select men, in all the branches of the public service; the Hon. Mr. Dorion assuming the office of Commissioner of Crown Lands.

But while his colleagues and himself were taking their oath of office, the plot, in which Sir Edmund Head had accepted the principal character, was effectually played off.

A vote of want of confidence was simultaneously proposed in the Legislative Council and in the House, when none of the Ministers could have a word to say, nor a vote to give, and the vote was hurriedly carried.

The Governor General denied to the Ministry the constitutional right of appealing to the people, and they were bound to resign and go back to their respective constituencies for re-election.

The coalition leaders were called back by the Governor General: but there stood an important break in the revolving of the wheel.

By the 20th Vict. Ch. 22, entitled 'An Act further to secure the independence of Parliament,' it was enacted that any person accepting an office of emolument from the Crown, would vacate his seat in the Assembly or in the Legislative Council, if an elected member, and could neither sit nor vote in either house until re-elected, when the office was that of a Minister of the Crown.

This was very pre-emptory; but there was another clause in the same act, which provided for a change of offices between members of the same Ministry, and which had never been contemplated to apply to ministers who had effectually withdrawn from the Administration of public affairs, and had been replaced by other ministers, sworn in and gazetted as such. That clause, (the 7th,) stated that whenever any person holding the before mentioned offices (those of Cabinet Ministers) and being at the same time a member of the Assembly, shall resign his office and within one month thereafter accept any one of the said offices, he shall not thereby vacate his seat.

This 7th clause, very innocent in itself, opened to the troubled souls a nice way of extricating themselves skillfully, if not legally. They returned into the government, each taking another office, so as to claim the exemption from re-election, and all of them with the exception of the Hon. Mr. Sicotte and the Hon. J. Ross, exchanged their respective offices, to resume their former situation, and all that within a few hours. Both on resuming and on exchanging office, they respectively took the oath prescribed by law to any person undertaking to fulfil faithfully the duties of a public office.

The Judges of Upper Canada have decided that this was legal if not moral. Be it so. A little parliamentary manual, printed in Quebec, records as follows the Ministerial

migrations of 1858, for the coalition leaders: Hon. J. A. Macdonald, Q. C. (Kingston,) Attorney General for Upper Canada, from 11th September 1854, to 1st August 1858, when as Premier, he and his colleagues resigned; held the office of Postmaster General on the 6th August of same year; was again Attorney General for Upper Canada from 7th August 1858 to 21st May 1862.

Hon. G. E. Cartier, Q. C. (Montreal,) Attorney General for Lower Canada, from May 1856 to 1st August 1858, when he resigned office with government; appointed Inspector General on the 6th August 1858, and again Attorney General for Lower Canada 7th August 1858, an office which he held until 21st May 1862.

All this may be childish and immoral, but it is legal and governmental. Our children will have their opinion about it, but it is useless for the forefathers to discuss it.

A French poet speaks of men, who, despite of glory, prefer living two days in the world than a thousand years in history.—This is, it appears, the legal and governmental view of the case.

The re-election of all the members of the Brown-Dorion Government was a palpable evidence of what would have been the result of general elections, if they had been granted.

Mr. Dorion had always represented the city of Montreal, to the great displeasure of those who had spent large sums of money to contest his seat. The electoral returns showing that a portion of the city was more accessible than the rest to bribery, but that the effects of corruption were neutralized by the other sections of the constituency, a plan was concocted to divide the city in three distinct constituencies, so as to leave corruptiondom in its autonomy.

This being done, the mighty Premier, the Hon. Mr. Cartier, who was virtually expelled from his old seat, the county of Vercheries, naturally became a candidate for the new constituency Montreal East, in opposition to the Hon. Mr. Dorion at the general election of 1861.

At the general election of 1857, Mr. Cartier and Mr. Rose, being candidates for Montreal, went round all the public offices commencing at the work houses of the Grand Trunk at Point St. Charles, congregating the officers, engineers, workmen and laborers and enjoining them to vote for the ministerial ticket, and this under the eyes of the Chief officers of each department.

In 1861, when Mr. Cartier offered himself to the Electors of Montreal East, the same cabal was resorted to with increased dictation. The guardsmen and turnkeys of the goal, the Custom-House officers, the Post office clerks, were not only enjoined to vote, but taken out of their duty and forced to work outside and bring votes to the poll. Contractors to the Ottawa buildings, jobbers from the four cardinal points, were seen moving in streets and houses where they had never been before, purchasing votes and ticketing and forwarding the purchased goods in vehicles emblazoned in ministerial cypher. The Seigniorial Commissioners subscribed money, and among them, an invalid who had done no other business but taking his salary, since three years, looking as if taken from the grave, stood at a street corner, as the statue of the commander and directing carters [that is hackney carriage drivers with voters] as a dying general would do at the end of a decisive struggle.

Mr. Cartier was elected by a majority of 251

The Hon. Mr. Dorion after seven years of an active parliamentary career, spent in a constant opposition to the ruling power, retired into private life, although several seats yet open to election, were offered to him.

One year had scarcely elapsed when the triumph so dearly bought by the coalition government ended in their defeat on the Militia Bill.

Every one still recollects how the coalition was accomplished in 1854. The Hon. Mr. Hincks vexed at the defection of his own party, excluded them from the government by calling upon the Conservative portion of the opposition to replace him and some of his friends in the government.

By the retention of office by one or two of his party and by whitewashing the shortcomings of his predecessors, Mr. Hincks saved the pieces of the wreck and turned his eyes towards the truly dominating power of our pretended self government.

The metropolitan financiers of the Province who imagined that Mr. Hincks had served them well, procured for him a petty governorship in the West Indies, and the coalition was left to live its natural life, which could not be of long duration.

In May 1862, the coalition having exhausted the public treasury, the credit of the country, and the patronage of the Crown, could no longer keep in bondage the covetous hangers-on who had approved of every kind of extravagance, for due consideration—and when the recognized leaders of the opposition (M. A. Brown and Dorion) were out of the House, the coalition fell under the condemnation of their ordinary supporters.

The Hon. J. S. McDonald was called upon by the Governor General, and Mr. McDonald in connection with the Hon. Mr. Sicotte, succeeded in forming a liberal cabinet, in which the Hon. Mr. Dorion accepted the office of Provincial Secretary. Mr. Dorion being then out of the House, several members offered their constituencies to give him a seat in Parliament, among whom was Mr. Faulkner, the member from Hochelaga, whose seat Mr. Dorion accepted. His election was made by acclamation.

In the estate of the late government (Cartier-McDonald) the new cabinet found many onerous legacies, amongst which were an empty treasury, a crowd of superfluous and useless employes, public works imprudently left as a prey to plunderers.

However these were foreseen and could be remedied, though with difficulty. At different times, we had heard of an intercolonial railroad projected between the lower end of the Grand Trunk line at River du Loup, and the city of Halifax in Nova Scotia, but no one knew that the Cartier-McDonald government were in active correspondence with the Lower Provinces to bring that scheme into realization, pledging the Province, without ever thinking of consulting Parliament.

In September, 1862, delegates from these provinces arrived in Quebec, in accordance to appointment made with the fallen ministers of Canada. A meeting took place and certain terms were agreed upon, both by our executive Council and by the delegation. According to those terms, Canada would have to spend, at the least estimation \$16,000,000 for her share of the road.

Considering the delapidated state of our finances, the permanent burden that the management of the road would impose upon our resources, the uselessness of the road, in a commercial point of view, and the imperious necessity of retrenching, to avoid direct taxation, Mr. Dorion could not accept any share of the responsibility of the measure and resigned his seat in the Cabinet.

In May 1863, the government which was formed a year previous was defeated, in the House, by a majority of five; the Lower Canada section of the Cabinet resigned: the House was prorogued and finally dissolved, and general elections ordered.

The Hon. J. S. McDonald as premier, applied to Mr. Dorion to reconstruct the Lower Canada section of the government. Mr. Dorion assuming the office of Attorney General for Lower Canada, reorganized his section on a thoroughly liberal basis.

We have now reached our own times and the only remark by which we propose to close this biography is this: the party strifes may inspire different feelings upon the public and private character of Mr. Dorion; but there are two or three leading features of it, upon which there can be but one opinion. His disinterestedness, his devotion to public interest, and his urbanity are beyond all controversy.

These qualities are not perhaps the necessary elements of success for statesmen, since we have seen the contrary deficiencies ruling us for many years,—but they will command the respect of all parties and the veneration of history.

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