

# PROMINENT CANADIANS.—VII.

SIR ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, K.C.M.G., LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR OF ONTARIO.

IN Sir Alexander Campbell, all who know him recognize a man so highly endowed with many of the gifts that go to constitute statesmanship, that they find themselves constantly wondering why he never took a more prominent and commanding position in Canadian politics than he has done. In one sense Sir Alexander's position has been both prominent and commanding. In the sphere in which he has chiefly moved, that of the Senate, his was always the most important and imposing personality, and that not simply by virtue of his office as Leader of the Government or else of the Opposition in the Upper Chamber, but, in an equal degree at least, by force of character and talent. To have represented the Conservative party as long as he did in that Chamber, and to have done it from first to last with distinguished success, not merely from a political point of view, but from an intellectual and moral point of view as well, constitutes a record of which even a man of high ability and considerable ambition might well be proud. Sir Alexander may be said to have approached as near as it has ever been given to any Canadian statesman to approach to the ideal type of a Senator—a man grave and strong, moderate, dignified, firm, sagacious, candid without indiscretion, politic without craft, loyal to his party, but ever mindful of his personal honour, and ever thoughtful of the public weal.

Like many other of Canada's leading statesmen, Sir Alexander Campbell was not born in Canada. He came nearer being born in it however than some of his illustrious rivals; for he was only two years old when his father, an English physician, came to Canada in the year 1823, and took up his residence at Lachine, in the Province of Quebec. Sir Alexander's birth-place was the village of Hedon, near Kingston-upon-Hull, in Yorkshire, England; and he has ever retained the warmest sentiments of loyalty and attachment to the British Empire. It might not be far wrong to say that, of all our public men, he is the strongest admirer of British institutions, and the one who is the most thoroughly English in all his feelings. Whether this has had anything to do with his holding aloof, as he has done, from popular politics, we cannot positively say; but we rather incline to think that the two things are not wholly unconnected with one another. Sir Alexander's parents gave him the best educational advantages the country afforded. They placed him first under the tuition of a Presbyterian clergyman, and afterwards sent him to St. Hyacinthe College, and still later to the Royal Grammar School at Kingston, Ontario. The youth was of a studious turn of mind; and, though he left school at what would now be considered a comparatively early age, he had imbibed all the essential elements of a liberal education. At St. Hyacinthe College he acquired a considerable knowledge of the French language and a consequent interest in French literature which has accompanied him through life. On occasion he could make a French speech in the Senate; though he rarely exercised the gift, and only perhaps to meet some playful challenge of the French members. He studied the classics also up to a certain point; but above all he acquired a knowledge and command of his own language, and a habit of using words with a peculiar force and directness. The phrase may not always be the smoothest, but it has a quality that tells—something a trifle Cæsarean in its brevity and point. However this is a good opportunity for reminding ourselves of Buffon's dictum that "*le style c'est l'homme*." Mere school education does not give this. A man may learn at school to avoid technical errors of speech; but the style he eventually acquires will be more or less the reflex of his own personality.

Young Campbell was only seventeen years of age when he entered on the study of the law at Kingston, whither his family had some years previously removed. No stories have reached us of his student days, but he seems to have applied himself earnestly to his work, seeing that he was able, on completing his course and being called to the Bar, to form a partnership immediately with Mr. John A. (now Sir John) Macdonald, whose reputation even then was rapidly growing. The partnership subsisted for many years under the name of Macdonald and Campbell; and the business, in the hands of these two exceptionally able men, was a lucrative one. Politics, however, soon began to absorb the attention of the senior partner, and the burden of the office work fell upon Mr. Campbell. The experience which the latter thus acquired, aided by his studies, made him one of the soundest lawyers at the Bar of Upper Canada; and had he not, while still a comparatively young man, diverged into politics, there is little doubt that he might long since have occupied a distinguished position on the Bench.

It was in the year 1858 that Mr. Campbell made his *début* in politics by carrying an election for the Cataraqui Division, and taking his seat in the Legislative Council of Old Canada. He very quickly familiarised himself with his new surroundings, and became an efficient and highly-esteemed member of the Upper House. No new member probably ever had less crudeness or inexperience to rub off; and no one seemed at all surprised when, in three or four years after his first election, the member for Cataraqui Division was placed in the Speaker's chair. The position was, indeed, one for which, by temperament and character, he was pre-eminently fitted, but not one in which his practical energies could find much scope; and a wider sphere of usefulness was opened up to him, while the administrative strength of the Government of 1864 received a great reinforcement when the Speaker of the Council was assigned to the position of Commissioner of Crown Lands. Here his knowledge of law and prompt business methods found ample exercise, and it was admitted on all hands that he filled the office in an admirable manner. From this time forward Mr. Campbell was looked upon as one of the strong men of his

party, though one whose strength was shown rather in council than in fight. His was the balanced judgment and sound knowledge of affairs, and one can only regret that the influence he was so fitted to exert, and must at many critical moments have exerted, in favour of sound, safe and honourable methods of party management, could not have asserted itself at all times. A very ugly chapter of Canadian political history might then never have been written.

In 1867 the first Government of the Dominion was constituted under the leadership of the then newly-knighted Sir John A. Macdonald, and Mr. Campbell was sworn in as Postmaster-General. The new position did not call, to the same extent as the previous one, for the exercise of legal acumen, but it involved dealing with large public interests and a very extended patronage. The new Postmaster-General was fortunate in finding as permanent head of the Post Office a man possessing qualities closely akin to his own. No two men indeed could have been better fitted to work together in harmony than the Hon. Mr. Campbell and Mr. W. H. Griffin, then, as now, Deputy Postmaster-General. Few who have any acquaintance with the latter will think the assertion hazardous if we say that no finer intellect than Mr. Griffin's has ever devoted itself to the public service of Canada. With fineness of intellect is linked in his case, what is not its invariable accompaniment, sterling integrity of character. But the resemblances between the Postmaster-General of 1867 and his Deputy were not confined to these general traits. Both were (happily we may also say *are*) men of peculiar dignity and reserve, and of pronounced conservative tendencies. Both had been educated partly in Lower Canada, and had acquired a certain respect and liking for its solid and well-established institutions. Both had a certain instinct for control, though here their methods diverged more or less, the Postmaster-General being rather inclined to a Bismarckian way of doing things, while in his Deputy there was a subtle blending of Talleyrand and Fabius Cunctator. The Postmaster-General soon felt that he had, in the chief officer of his Department, a man whose judgment, experience, and integrity were equally to be depended on; and, so far as the general routine of the Department was concerned, the Deputy Postmaster-General managed it very much in his own way. At the same time, during the six years that Mr. Campbell remained at the head of the Post Office much solid progress was made, in all of which he took a lively interest, and exerted a judicious control. As regards the patronage of the Department, it was administered by the Postmaster-General with a constant eye to the good of the service, and occasionally with a wholesome indifference to mere party demands. One of the chief characteristics of the subject of this sketch during his administrative career was that he was never willing to descend to the level of the mere party politician. Some have said that this was due to the fact that his position exempted him from dependence on the popular vote; but we have seen other Senators whose high position did not seem to exercise any very elevating effect on their political methods.

After a six years' tenure, exactly, of the Post Office Department Mr. Campbell accepted the portfolio of the newly constituted Department of the Interior. Here everything was to create, order had to be called out of a most discouraging chaos; but the new Minister was proceeding bravely with his task, when the Government of which he was a member met an inglorious defeat over the Pacific Scandal. The operations which led to this result had been carried on wholly without Mr. Campbell's knowledge: he was not indeed the kind of a man to whom the schemes formed at that time for creating an election fund were likely to be confided. Mr. Campbell did not, however, like Mr. Cartwright, see in the occurrences to which we are referring sufficient reason for separating himself from his party. He probably judged that he could render better service to the country in the ranks of the Conservative party than anywhere else; and he looked forward, doubtless, to the time when that party, rendered wiser by experience, would again be called to control the destinies of the country. From 1873 to 1878 Mr. Campbell acted as Leader of the Opposition in the Senate, and discharged the duties of the position with the same ability as well as with the same fairness and moderation as when he had represented the Government. To act a really factious part was, we may say, almost wholly out of his power; certainly, it would have been foreign to his nature. When the Conservative party returned to office in November, 1878, Mr. Campbell first accepted the position of Receiver-General, but in the spring of 1879 he returned to his old office of Postmaster-General. Thence he passed in the month of January, 1880, to the Department of Militia and Defence, which, during a brief term of office, he did not a little to invigorate. The end of the year saw him back in the Post Office Department, which he again left in the month of May of the year following (1881), to assume the portfolio of Justice. Meantime (24th May, 1879) he had been created by Her Majesty a Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, an honour which his eminent public services had very fully merited. Sir Alexander remained at the head of the Department of Justice until the latter part of the year 1885, when he once more returned to the Post Office Department, which he finally left last spring to accept the Lieutenant-Governorship of Ontario. His appointment to the latter office was viewed with pleasure and approval, even by his political opponents. On all hands it was felt that in Sir Alexander Campbell Her Majesty would have one of the most constitutional of representatives, such a man as she probably would herself have delighted to choose for the position. Before proceeding to Toronto, however, Sir Alexander went to England at the request of the Government, to represent Canada at the Colonial Conference. That conference was not empowered to enact any measures, or even to concert any scheme, for the modification of the relations existing between Great Britain and the Colonies; but it gave an opportunity for a confidential exchange of views between members of the English Government and leading representatives