

Sir John Macdonald is a type of politician which has never failed to delight the English people—the man who, like Palmerston, can work hard, do strong things, hold his purpose, never lose sight for a moment of the honour and welfare of his country, and yet crack his joke and have his laugh, full of courage and good spirits and kindly fun. I am not going to talk politics here. The place forbids it, if my own quasi-judicial position had not been before-hand with a veto. But I apprehend there is nothing to prevent me criticising the ability of our public men; praising their admirable qualities clearly distinguishable from opinions, and from prejudices in the nature of opinions, and animadverting on their defects in mental endowments, their faults of method, or their errors in tactics, not as politicians or party leaders, but as orators. To return. Sir John Macdonald in the English House of Commons would have been equal, in my opinion, to Mr. Disraeli in finesse, in the art of forming combinations and managing men. He never could have equalled him in invective, or in epigram, or in force as an orator. Sir John Macdonald brings up his artillery with more ease. He is always human, even in his attacks. Lord Beaconsfield, as Mr. Disraeli, in the House of Commons, approached his opponent like some serpentine monster, coiled himself ruthlessly round him, fascinated with his gaze, and struck out with venomous fang. But Sir John is probably the better debater of the two. His delivery is lively, natural, mercurial; Lord Beaconsfield's is laboured. The power of making a statement is not the forte of the author of 'Endymion.' Sir John Macdonald makes a luminous statement, and his reasoning faculty is at least as high as Lord Beaconsfield's. He has very little, comparatively, of the latter's *curiosa felicitas* in coining phrases, but his humour is more spontaneous. Lord Beaconsfield has the charm which is

inseparable from genius, but it may well be doubted if his power of conciliating men and fixing their affections surpasses that of the Prime Minister of the Dominion. I am sure that in sober, strong sense the balance is in favour of the Canadian statesman. There is nothing viewy about Sir John Macdonald. Though a man of imagination, reason is lord every time.

Sir John Macdonald is perhaps the only man in the House whose speaking combines all the qualities necessary to complete effectiveness as a debater, and whose speeches could be pointed to with justice as useful models. They combine clearness and fulness of statement, vigorous reasoning, ample information, the play of fancy, the light of wit; and they have what no other speeches heard in that House since Thomas D'Arcy McGee and Joseph Howe were there have had, the flavour of literary culture. In the old world gentlemen are accustomed to put their whiskey in a wine cask to improve the flavour. Everything flowery is offensive in oratory. Literary culture is not necessary to make a great orator. Nevertheless the ideal oratory will always come, as it were, from a vessel which has often been filled at Pierian founts—will betray a nature saturated with the thoughts and language of the great teachers of the world. 'We remember,' says an able writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, speaking of Lord Beaconsfield, 'to have heard him say in one of his felicitous after-dinner speeches, that the reason the Hebrews and the Greeks were by far the most powerful races in history is, that they had a literature. The same remark might apply to statesmen: no oratory, no diplomacy, no legislative ingenuity, confers so great and lasting an influence on a ruler of men as that which he derives from a combination of literary excellence with political power.'

There was one other man, indeed, in that House since the time of D'Arcy McGee and Howe all the movements

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