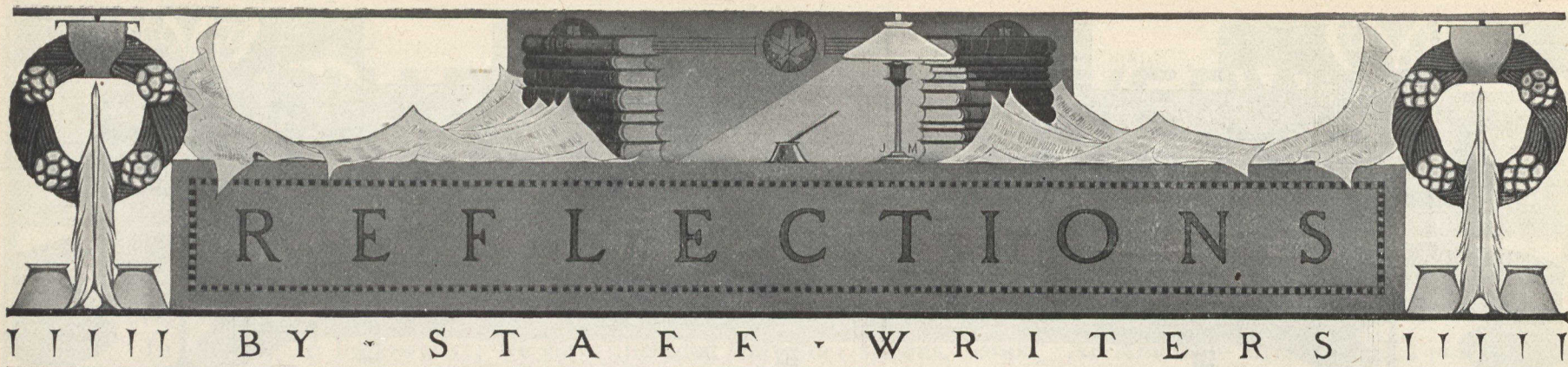




REFLECTIONS

BY STAFF WRITERS

STORIES of Sir John A. Macdonald are becoming less common. Dr. Parkin's new "Life" recalls how on one occasion when he had been violently attacked in the columns of the "Globe" for some lapse into intemperance, he went before a large audience and declared he knew that they would any day prefer "John A. drunk to George Brown sober." Dr. Parkin also prints the yarn about the late Hon. T. D'Arcy McGee. When McGee first joined his government, Sir John warned him that he (McGee) must reform his habits, since "no Cabinet could afford to carry two drunkards."

STORIES OF SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

This biographer also recalls a famous passage at arms between Sir John and Principal Grant. The late Principal was a great admirer of Sir John but could not support all his actions and measures. They met at a social gathering one day and Sir John remarked: "I wish that you would be a steady friend of mine." The Principal replied: "But, Sir John, I have always supported you when you were right." "My dear man," replied the humorous Sir John, with his usual merry twinkle of the eye, "I have no use for that species of friendship."

This excellent volume contains much that is as interesting as these stories and much that is more important. It does not over-praise and neither does it over-blame.

DR. PARKIN'S new life of Sir John A. Macdonald in the "Makers of Canada" series will attract considerable attention. The chapter on Confederation is short but brilliant. It recalls that it was during the first weeks in February, 1865, the famous debate on that subject took place in the Legislature of Canada.

A QUESTION OF ACCURACY

Strangely enough, Dr. Parkin says, "On February 3rd, 1865, he (Macdonald) introduced into parliament the resolutions adopted at the Quebec conference." In another volume published a few days ago, "Sixty Years in Upper Canada," by Charles Clarke, late clerk of Legislature of Ontario, it is stated that this event took place on the 6th of February. There is thus a difference of three days in the dates given by these two "authorities." The truth is that on February 3rd, Sir E. P. Tache, then premier, introduced into the Legislative Council, the Quebec resolutions, and moved "That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that She may be pleased to cause a measure to be submitted to the Imperial Parliament for the purpose of uniting," etc. On the same day, which by the way was Friday, Attorney-General Macdonald, in the Legislative Assembly, mentioned the Address but owing to the Speaker's request that the discussion be deferred until Monday, it was not really introduced. Therefore it was not moved until Monday, the 6th. Mr. Clarke is right and Dr. Parkin is wrong.

Dr. Parkin or his proof-reader has made a further error in not quoting the words "in conclusion" when reproducing the last paragraph from Macdonald's speech. A misplaced quotation mark and a difference of three days in a date are not always important, but in a volume of such pretensions as this they are errors which are inexcusable. It is remarkable, in this important chapter, that greater pains were not taken by the editors of the Series, who are also persons supposed to be accurate historians, to verify the dates and quotations.

It is interesting to note that Mr. Joseph Pope, in his well-known Life of Sir John, says: "Parliament met on the 19th of January, and on the 3rd of February, Mr. Macdonald introduced the resolutions adopted at the Quebec Conference." Mr. Pope says nothing about Sir E. P. Tache, nothing about the three days delay in the Assembly, and nothing about the Address to the Queen which was constituted the main portion of the motion. In a footnote, he refers to "Journals Leg. Ass., Vol. XXIV., 1865, pp. 203-209." It is a pity Mr. Pope and Dr. Parkin did not read these more carefully. They would then have been able to distinguish between parliament and legislature, between Tache and Macdonald, between Address and Resolutions, and between Friday and Monday.

If authors who write books are not to be more accurate in their references to the events of Canadian history, there is much greater excuse for the journalists who make occasional slips by reason of their necessary haste. Yet these authors are continually complaining of the inaccuracy of the Press.

THOSE two years, 1865 and 1866, must have been very trying for Sir John. In March the Address to the Queen was carried in the Assembly by a vote of ninety-one to thirty-three. Shortly afterwards, he found that his friends in New Brunswick had been defeated

SIR JOHN'S DIFFICULTIES

in a general election. This affected the situation in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. The latter two colonies finally withdrew altogether, while in Nova Scotia the anti-confederationists under Joseph Howe raised a terrific storm. In July, Sir E. P. Tache, the Premier, passed away, and the Coalition Government was temporarily broken up. The Governor-General wanted Sir John as Premier but the Hon. George Brown would not serve under him, though willing to do all he could for Confederation. Sir John suggested Cartier, but Mr. Brown could not agree. Finally they got together under the aegis of Sir Narcisse Belleau. This arrangement did not work well and in December Mr. Brown withdrew altogether. His place was taken by Hon. (afterwards Sir) W. P. Howland. A place was offered to Mr. Alexander Mackenzie and on his refusal it went to Mr. Fergusson Blair, another prominent Liberal.

Early in 1866 came the fruitless negotiations for a renewal of the Reciprocity Treaty and then the Fenian Raid troubles. In April, however, Dr. Tupper succeeded in getting through the Nova Scotia Legislature a compromise resolution on Confederation. About the same time, Sir Leonard Tilley regained power in New Brunswick, and a resolution similar to that of Nova Scotia was passed on the last day of June. The Imperial authorities, deeply interested in the scheme, exercised some influence which helped to save the day down by the sea. Lord Monck, however, grew uneasy over the delays and threatened to ask for his recall, if Sir John did not make greater haste. Then "Old To-morrow" replied that if the Governor would just keep cool, and leave the matter in his hands, he would handle it expeditiously. Towards the close of a long letter, he quietly and somewhat slyly added that when the union was completed Lord Monck would get "all the kudos and all the position which would result from being the founder of a nation."

To make the situation more difficult, there was a change in the Government of Great Britain, and it was not until December 4th that the Canadian delegates assembled in London to frame up the Act which came into force on July 1st, 1867. Even then, as Dr. Parkin points out, Sir John was far from being satisfied with the work done. The British authorities did not make much of the Imperial significance of Canada's action and their lukewarmness over the accomplishment was not pleasant. Further, Lord Derby, who feared to wound the sensibility of the United States, refused the title "Kingdom of Canada."

HON. L. P. FARRIS, Commissioner of Agriculture for the Province of New Brunswick, says that field crops and dairy products in that province in 1907 were fairly satisfactory. As all provinces are interested in the success of each, a few of his statistics may not be

NEW BRUNSWICK'S PROSPERITY

amiss here. Last year the wheat crop was just a little under ten millions of bushels, with an average of approximately twenty bushels to the acre. This is fairly good for New Brunswick, seeing that the wheat is worth about one dollar a bushel. Six million bushels of oats, one and a half million bushels of buckwheat and five million bushels of potatoes are to be added to the wheat. Butter and cheese products, so far as the factories are concerned, showed a decline as they did in