

The Life of Lord Strathcona

By "IRONQUILL"

Concluded from April 14 Issue

Next came the deal with the Macdonald Government at Ottawa by which the Canadian Pacific Railway Corporation was created. Donald A. Smith and his associates in that deal, writes Mr. Preston, "secured the most stupendous contract ever made under responsible government in the history of the world." The future Lord Strathcona again became a noted figure in Parliament, this time as a supporter of the Macdonald Government.

A whole series of articles would be necessary, as already remarked, to tell the story of the C.P.R. Mr. Preston, at the outset of the fifteenth chapter of his book, in which we see the C.P.R. corporation created, in 1881, writes:

Demoralization of Parliament

"The point has now been reached from which dates the open demoralization of the Canadian Parliament. Year after year the Syndicate came back for additional legislation. The favors already received showed how easily they could clamor for more. Members of Parliament were publicly retained in the interests of the company. The corridors of the Senate and the House of Commons swarmed with their lobbyists. Parliament awakened to the fact that private fortunes were being created by the votes in the House. The prevalence of that idea in the minds of public men could have but one result. If the power which they exercised could distribute wealth, or its equivalent, in the way of charters that might be sold to the great corporation, the natural inquiry was, 'Where do I come in?' The canker-worm had reached the vitals of the body politic.

"To bask in the favor of the local Canadian Pacific magnates meant everything. In the purchase of supplies, in the awarding of contracts, in options on proposed town sites along the line of railway, in obtaining inside information about the prospective route of branch-lines for speculative purposes, in allowing special terms and prices in purchasing railway lands, in the free distribution of paid-up stock of the company's subsidiary corporations, members of the House of Commons were not forgotten.

"A saturnalia of corruption on other lines also took possession of Parliamentary life. The fundamental article of faith under the new conditions was that public men should use their representative positions for purposes of personal gain. The arrangement with the Syndicate provided for early completion of the line of the railway across the prairies, and opened the door of unlimited possibilities to those having access to the charmed circle

at Ottawa. Colonization companies were granted enormous areas of the public domain within the fertile belt."

Knighthood and Peerage

But the quotation has already grown to an unwieldy length. Mr. Preston passes on to deal with Donald A. Smith's plans of acquiring control of newspapers, the scheme to have the Intercolonial turned over to the C.P.R. which was not successful, the fight to maintain the railway monopoly clause in the C.P.R. charter, which failed, after Manitoba was driven to the verge of armed resistance, and eventually the knighting of Donald A. Smith, and later his becoming High Commissioner for Canada and his entrance into the House of Lords. It was in 1896, a few months before the end of the eighteen years' tenure of power at Ottawa by one party and the accession of the other party to office that he was appointed High Commissioner. With the change of Government, he and the new regime found it mutually desirable to be on good terms with each other. The next year, 1897, he entered the House of Lords. And at this point the opening paragraph of Mr. Preston's eighteenth chapter may fittingly be quoted:

"The romance of Lord Strathcona's life between the Western prairies and the House of Lords would be incomplete without a reference to gifts that will cause his name to be remembered. The Queen Victoria Jubilee Hospital at Montreal, in co-operation with another Pacific syndicate magnate, his cousin, Lord Mounstephen, was erected at an enormous cost, and in its appointments is one of the best institutions on the continent of America. The King's Hospital Fund, London, in which he was also joined by the nobleman referred to, established a record in subscriptions of that character; McGill University, Montreal, in the equipment of which Lord Strathcona and Sir William Macdonald expended several millions; the Strathcona Horse, a contribution to the Empire during the South African War, has no precedent in the history of any country."

During Lord Strathcona's tenure of the High Commissionership the C.P.R. established steamship connection between Liverpool and Montreal. Mr. Preston figures it out that by the combine with the C.P.R. formed with J. Pierpont Morgan, the Hamburg-American, North German Lloyds and other foreign companies there has been levied upon immigrants to this country, over and above what was regarded as a fair rate before the shipping combine was formed, a total of \$32,500,000 on emigrants from Great Britain and \$11,500,

000 on emigrants from continental Europe. "How far this enormous sum might have assisted the emigrants in getting a start in a new country, or what suffering and hardship it might have provided against, may be left to the imagination."

Lord Strathcona lived to see the C.P.R. grow to truly colossal proportions. That corporation now owns 16,000 miles of railway in operation, including several thousand miles in the United States; two great steamship lines traversing the Atlantic and the Pacific, cable and telegraph systems, a hotel system, and many other subsidiary enterprises. The capital of the C.P.R. is stated to be \$475,000,000; its annual revenues have exceeded \$150,000,000.

Cartwright and Foster Indebted

There are many points in Mr. Preston's remarkable book which there is not room to touch upon here. But space must be made for mention of one fact which Mr. Preston sets forth, namely, in a clause in his will (which document Mr. Preston prints in full) Lord Strathcona says, "I remit and cancel the debts owing to me by the estate of the late Rt. Hon. Richard Cartwright and by Hon. George Foster." The former was Minister of Finance in the Mackenzie Government, and Minister of Trade and Commerce in the Laurier Cabinet formed in 1896; the latter was Minister of Finance in the Macdonald government, and is now Minister of Trade and Commerce in the Borden Government. This clause in Lord Strathcona's will, writes Mr. Preston (his book, be it remembered, was written and published in England, and is addressed primarily to readers in the United Kingdom), "aroused a mingled feeling of surprise and dismay in Canada." A public man who could not be bought by a bribe may sometimes have his necessity taken advantage of by an adroit financial magnate.

This review of the most notable book ever published concerning Canadian public life cannot close better than with the reproduction of a couple of its most remarkable pages, in which Mr. Preston sums up Lord Strathcona's personality and his career:

Charming Personality

"Few men had more personal charm than Lord Strathcona. In his relations with the public and as a host nothing could exceed his grace and courtesy. He might have belonged to the ancient regime. The official position of his later years threw him into association with lifelong opponents, but to the most extreme of these he never lacked politeness and friendliness. Whatever his feelings might be, and he was only human, his mastery over himself was complete. This was a strong characteristic. Nothing could disturb his equanimity. Many who affect this manner of life succumb to nervous exhaustion by suppression of the natural emotions. Lord Strathcona's lengthened years proved his heritage. No one will say that he carried his heart on his sleeve—few men do. Almost everyone has some secret that the world has no right to know. His fine natural manner gave all the impression that he was as free and open as the sun.

"Let us be open as the day,"
quoth he who doth the deeper hide."

Certainly there was great natural kindness in his character—his splendid gifts to universities and hospitals proved this. No one could so support institutions for the intellectual and physical betterment of his fellow-men without deep human sympathies. For friends, too, he would do anything, and strangers in need rarely appealed to him in vain. He gave not grudgingly, but bestowed generously. With opponents, or those who crossed his will, his method was to try first to win them over without any of the appearance of the mailed fist. Courtesy and gold were pressed into service to make rough places smooth and overcome opposition.

"But if the subjects of his consideration remained obdurate, then he crushed without delay, taking pains, however, that Strathcona's hand was never seen in the matter. There were always others willing to accept the responsibility. He developed his power in this direction into a science. He never allowed himself to show resentment. So far as possible he avoided arousing thoughts of reprisals in the hearts of his opponents. However the end might justify the means, the reason for the means was not in evidence—his hand was never visible. In fact, he more often than not tempered the wind to the shorn lamb, with an appearance of personal sympathy.

"Lord Strathcona had great qualities—his foresight and his perseverance amounted to genius. He could have succeeded in any walk of life. He had some bent towards religion, and if circumstances had led him in that direction, in the opinion of the writer, he might have been a great power, leaving a name not less venerated than Wesley or Booth. He might, too, have been a great statesman, history giving him a place with Clive or Rhodes. The opportunity was there for one who had the diviner dreams and larger loves of the altruist for his country. But he chose per-

sonal power and wealth for Donald A. Smith. That opportunity also was there in a large degree only possible in the western United States and Canada forty years ago. He took the chance Fortune offered him, played for enormous stakes with the weapons that the circumstances of the time permitted him to forge. And he won. He deserved to win.

"He gained enormous fortune, immense power, high honors for himself—exceeding in all these particulars any romantic dreams that he might have indulged in. But just in the degree that Lord Strathcona succeeded for himself, it is a question for history to finally decide, whether he did not fall in the larger test—that of true and noble patriotism."

So plain that he who cares to give the matter thought can read them for himself are the lessons set forth by the contrast of the two careers we have been considering. The two men, John Bright and Donald Alexander Smith, when they came to the ending of their years on earth, had remarkable careers and achievements to look back upon. Can any human being with a true sense of the values of life have any doubt as to which of the two lives was the better worth living?

FLAX PRICES HIGH

The following letter is just to hand from the president of G. F. Stephens and Co., paint manufacturers, and will prove of interest to farmers generally:

"In looking over market prices as quoted in today's papers, I notice that October wheat is quoted at \$1.24 and October flax \$1.87½, a spread of more than 63 cents per bushel, and this in face of the fact that the consumption of flaxseed this year is not much more than half normal. This would indicate that farmers thruout Canada and the United States are putting everything into wheat and almost entirely eliminating flax.

"Whether the war ends this year or not, business men are preparing for a great revival of trade in 1916. This will create a large demand for all building material and especially for oils made from Western flaxseed, and if there is no flaxseed grown here, where will the supplies come from? Linseed oil today is worth almost double the average price and the tendency is still upwards.

"I think if the state of things were plainly put before our farmers, many of them would switch some land intended for wheat into flax, which can be safely sown up to June 1—as it is always wisdom for a man to sow flax when everybody is putting in wheat and to keep out of flax when everybody else is putting it in."

G. F. STEPHENS.

BRINGING OUT FAMILIES

The Salvation Army Transportation Department, of Winnipeg, is busy at present with arrangements for the transporting of a large party of mothers and children who are coming thru to various points in the West to join their husbands and fathers. The latter have, during the last year or so, emigrated to Canada under the auspices of the Army and have done well since their arrival in the positions in which they were placed by the Army and they are now able to send for their families.

CANADIANS WIN FAME

Brilliant work of Canadian Soldiers Saves the day in Flanders

The first Canadian contingent, after weeks of weary trench warfare, had its first chance to meet the enemy in the open last week and won glory for the Dominion in a fierce and bloody battle. Official dispatches state that the Germans concentrating an enormous force north-east of Ypres made a determined attack upon the Allied lines using bombs containing asphyxiating gases. The French were forced to give way, and the Canadian division on the flank of their allies were compelled to retire in order to keep in touch. In the retreat four 60-pound guns were lost, but a counter attack was immediately launched in which the lost ground was recovered at the point of the bayonet, the guns were recaptured and thousands of Germans were taken prisoners. The official report states that the Canadians behaved with great gallantry and undoubtedly saved the day.

As might be expected the casualties in the ranks of the Canadian forces were severe. On Sunday it was announced that 21 Canadian officers had been killed in action and 96 officers wounded. No word has yet been received of the casualties among non-commissioned officers and privates, but judging from experience it is likely that if this is the total casualties among officers the loss in the ranks will number about 700 men.

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