

APPENDIX XIII

See p. 690

who, while wearing the Conservative label, promulgated and practised a creed of sympathetic and progressive Liberalism. It would not be wide of the truth (if it is permissible to discuss the by-gone politics of a Judge) to describe Sir William Meredith as a Radical; and there is not the least doubt that many old-fashioned Conservatives looked with more kindly eyes upon Sir Oliver Mowat than upon the official chief of the Conservative party. This preference rested wholly upon political grounds. In sterling rectitude of character, and in capacity for affairs the Conservative leader ranked with any man who has ever figured in the public life of Ontario. But his liberal and reforming tendencies sometimes distressed and even shocked the Tory element in his party. To this fact, and to the further fact that during almost the whole of Mr. Mowat's premiership the Conservatives held power at Ottawa, may be partly ascribed his exceptional strength with the more sober elements of the population. There was no doubt that his Government was thrifty in its financial management, capable in its departmental administration, and resolute in its defence of provincial interests; and with these characteristics and this quality of performance, even a great percentage of Conservatives was content so long as a Conservative administration held power at Ottawa.

'Except during the period when the two leaders were in direct conflict over provincial rights and the boundary question, Sir Oliver Mowat