

tively engaged. Those controversies divided and some of them still divide the people and public men of this country. That is the natural and inevitable result of opposing views, opinions and convictions strongly and honourably held in a self-governing community such as ours. It is not my purpose to attempt to pass judgment upon the attitude of the dead leader towards these great questions. Even if it would be fitting and proper to do so, which it is not, we are too close to the events to make any contemporary opinion conclusive. The ultimate place and fame of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, will, like that of other statesmen, be determined by the impartial and dispassionate judgment of history.

What were the foundations of this man's political creed, the principles which guided his political action? Without pretending to be exhaustive, two or three outstanding facts emerge. Firstly, the man was strongly attached and devoted to the ideals of freedom and liberty, personal, civil and religious. He believed in freedom of opinion, liberty in its expression,—that is to say, free speech, freedom of conscience—that is to say, religious liberty. That these were his views may be gathered not only from his own speeches but from the names of those whom he most admired, Fox, Gladstone, Bright, Lincoln. These names were often on his lips and he had diligently studied their careers and utterances.

From this starting point of attachment to these ideals of liberty and freedom, to which I think most in this country and all in this House now subscribe, he was led to greatly admire the British political system and the security and guarantees for liberty which it embodies and affords. Owing to the influences surrounding him in that troubled period Sir Wilfrid Laurier, then but a young man, appears not to have realized, at least in its fulness, the vision of Confederation. It is, however, to his great and lasting credit that once it was accomplished he accepted the new conditions with whole-heartedness, and in his subsequent career did much in collaboration with other political leaders to develop its structure, interpret its meaning and mould it to the purposes for which it was designed.

He became a strong Federationist, a great admirer, exponent and champion of the Confederation pact and no question interested him quite so much as one relating to or affecting the Constitution. He was a great constitutionalist, an ardent upholder of the principles of free government with all that it involves. As nearly

[Sir Thomas White.]

all questions arising out of our constitution have long since been settled and acquiesced in by all political parties it seemed to me at times that in his character of constitutionalist and in his continued interest in the constitution he was the dignified and solitary survivor of that great group of statesmen, giants in their day, who after prolonged and fiery discussion and controversy laid broad and deep the constitutional foundation of Canada's national life. In this connection, and as again emphasizing the part played by Sir Wilfrid Laurier in Canadian affairs and the length of years spanned by his career, let us recall that he was minister in the government of Alexander Mackenzie, served as lieutenant to Edward Blake, succeeded him as leader of the Liberal party, and became the opponent of Sir John A. Macdonald, with whom he contended politically for many years.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier was an intense and ardent Canadian. He was a firm believer in Canada and its destiny, which he did much to mould. Particularly did he desire to harmonize the various nationalities of Canada with their conflicting ideals and aspirations. National unity he regarded as of paramount importance in a country of mixed races and diverse creeds such as Canada. He was regardful of the rights of minorities and a strong advocate of tolerance towards the opinions and convictions of others upon all questions whether civil racial or religious. He was a believer in democracy but there was always in him a moderating and restraining influence, a pragmatical respect for experience and for the past which disinclined him to sudden or violent change and exercised a steady influence in the determination of his policies.

For the British constitution and for the autonomy, freedom and security which it affords to all within the range of its beneficent sway, he had the greatest regard and admiration. In my last conversation with him he spoke in terms of highest eulogy of British administration in Egypt and said that he would have no fear for the mandatory system proposed at the Peace Conference if it would be carried out in accordance with the British mode of government in protectorates.

I am glad that he lived to see the end of the war and the triumph of the Allies—particularly Britain and France.

Coming now to the man himself and the sources of his personal power, we find less difficulty in reaching conclusions. He was endowed by nature with a singularly graceful, picturesque and commanding personal-