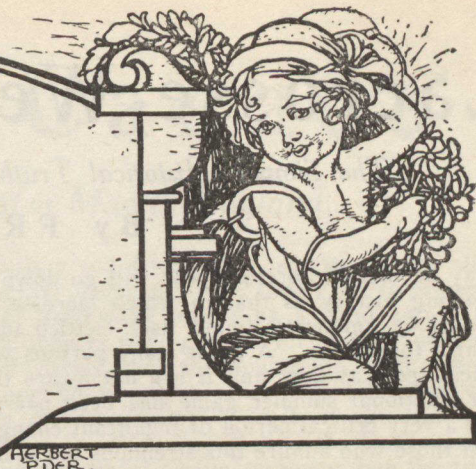




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Back to Old London at Ninety - Two

IN an old school reader you will recall an eloquent extract from a great speech by Joseph Howe, known to be the greatest orator ever born in Nova Scotia. The words came from the misty ages before Confederation. The school-boy grew up, became a modern Canadian and remembered Joseph Howe somewhat as he did D'Arcy McGee and other fabulous characters.

A few days ago in the busy smoke-stack town of Amherst, N. S., there was a public holiday to welcome—on his last journey back to England—a very old man, to whom many a quavering veteran felt like saying:

"Ay, I was a lad of ten, Sir Charles, when you defeated Joseph Howe in 1855. And you had my father's vote, sir."

And the old man in the midst of the crowd, eleven months younger than Strathecona, the Canadian marvel of Englishmen, will be 92 years old this July. Sir Charles Turner, Bart., was visiting Amherst, N. S., his native town, for the last time, on his way back from Victoria, B. C., to England, where he will spend his old age. Busy Amherst never had such a holiday. And it is a man's lifetime now since any Bluenose lived so remarkable as Sir Charles Tupper.

There never has been any real Amherst without a Tupper. There never could have been a real Nova Scotia without a Charles Tupper, a Joseph Howe, a Leonard Tilley, a John Thompson, a Robert Laird Borden, a W. S. Fielding, a George Foster and a "Sam Slick." Nova Scotia has been the cradle of great and near-great statesmen. Sir Charles Tupper is the most remarkable of them all.

As a young man, graduated from Horton Academy and Edinburgh University, he was a busy doctor in Amherst with a large country practice. In fact, he is the only doctor that ever became historically famous in a Canadian Parliament. Dr. Tupper was 34 years old when he first became a celebrity. In 1855 he defeated the eloquent statesman, Joseph Howe, leader of the Liberal party in Nova Scotia, and became member for Cumberland, including Amherst, in the Nova Scotia Assembly. That was twelve years before Confederation. The young doctor had a very strong opponent in Howe, and he had the grip of a master hand on the disrupted Conservatives whom in one year he changed from a mere camp into a real party. In 1856 Howe and his Liberals were put out of power by Tupper and his reconstructed Tories. The young doctor became Provincial Secretary. In 1864 he was Premier.

CONFEDERATION was now the great issue. Howe opposed it. Tupper was a member of the conference in Charlottetown in 1864, and of the Quebec Conference in 1865 that made Confederation a possibility. With Sir John Macdonald he was at the Westminster Palace Hotel conference when Confederation was no longer a dream but a reality. He became a C.B., the first of a long line of titles of which the full list in the working out of a great life became Sir Charles Tupper, Bart., M.D., D.C.L., LL.D., C.B., G.C.M.G., P.C., F.R.S.G.S. And he could have worn a hundred more.

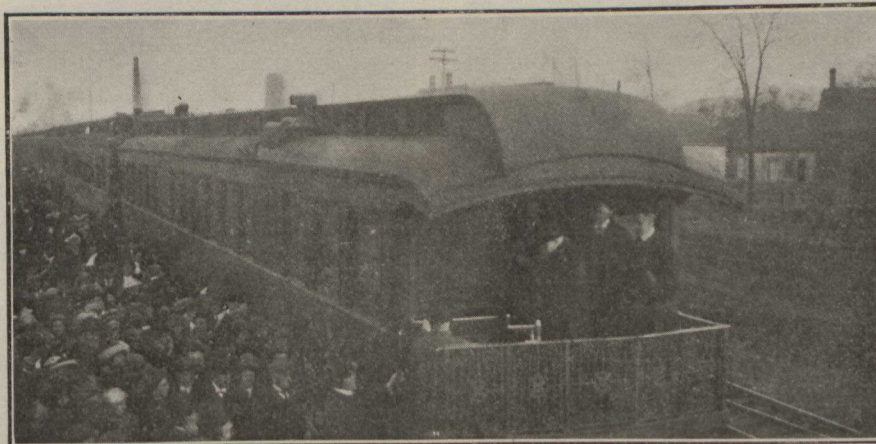
In the first Canadian Cabinet he was



Sir Charles Tupper, Guest of Honour at a Meeting of 3,000 People in Amherst, N.S., His Native Town, on April 23; Mr. H. J. Logan, Ex-M.P., Presiding.



Reception Committee to Sir Charles Waiting at the Station, April 23.



Sir Charles Getting off the Train at Amherst, His Old Home Town.

offered a portfolio which, with great modesty, he declined. In 1873 he became Minister of Customs. Then came the Pacific Scandal and the defeat of the Conservatives. For five years Dr. Tupper was the great consolidating worker and eminent counsel to John A. Macdonald behind the scenes, developing the National Policy as once he had reconstructed the Conservative party in Nova Scotia and helped to achieve a united Canada. When the N. P. became a Government policy Dr. Tupper was made Minister of Public Works, out of which he created the department of Railways and Canals, of which he was the first Minister. He enlarged the Welland Canal, deepened the St. Lawrence waterway, improved the Intercolonial to a point of getting a four-years surplus, and was a prime mover in the creation of the private company that built the C. P. R., which was completed to the Pacific a year after Dr. Tupper became the first Canadian High Commissioner to England.

In 1887, when Commercial Union was being tampered with by the Liberals, Dr. Tupper saw that he would be needed in Canada again. He helped to defeat the Commercial Unionists, just as in 1911 he threw the weight of his long life against Reciprocity. For a year he was Minister of Finance. He returned to the High Commissionership in London. He was made a Baronet. Three years later his chief, Macdonald, died. Then came the panorama of Premiers: Sir John Thompson, who in 1893 died in London; Sir John Abbott and Sir Mackenzie Bowell—and to help him Sir Charles Tupper came back again to Canada as Secretary of State.

IN all this lifetime of superb creative effort the "young doctor" of Amherst had never reached the pinnacle of political ambition in Canada. But in 1896 he was for a few months Premier—up to the time when Sir Wilfrid Laurier led his solid Opposition against him and the Liberals into power. Did he retire to his comfortable High Commissionership in London, beaten and disheartened? Not yet. He stayed in the Canadian Parliament, and as able leader of the Opposition, a man of 75, faced the music, till 1900, when, at the age of 79, he retired from public life. He was never again seen in Parliament. But whenever an election came round—somehow the great Bluenose veteran had the knack of always being in the front of battle where the smoke was thickest. At 90 years of age he had fire enough left to go against reciprocity in any way, shape or manner whatsoever. That was his last public concern. The old antagonist of Joseph Howe, never too old to keep pace with a swift young country, had done his work. After a year in Victoria, B. C., he now goes back to London and to that other near-centenarian youth Lord Strathecona. And it will be set down by the historian that in all the annals of Canadian politics there never was such a long life well spent as that of Sir Charles Tupper, Bart.

He never was an orator and never a politician. He can lay claim to being as nearly as possible what people understand in a constructive statesman. He has seen and taken part in more changes in Canadian public life than any other man alive.