

It may be objected—indeed, the objection has been made—that Mr. Cameron was unfortunate in his selection of a time for the delivery of his speech. Sir John Macdonald is Superintendent General of Indian affairs, and is responsible for the Government's administration in the North-west. A man desirous of placing his facts and his reasons before the official directly interested in those facts and reasons, and one desirous to be strictly fair and courteous to the official whose administration he intended to attack, would have made his speech at a time when Sir John Macdonald was present in the House to listen to the criticism and to reply to it if he so desired. The British sense of fair play demands that one come face to face with his antagonist; and it is a matter of pride among Canadians that in this respect they have lost nothing of the manliness and the fairness cherished by their British ancestors. But at the time selected by Mr. Cameron for the delivery of his assault upon the Government's administration of Indian affairs, Sir John Macdonald was not in the House. He had been seriously ill. He was so far recovered as to have been abroad; and the hope was entertained that in a few days he would be able to attend to his parliamentary duties—a hope fortunately realized. Time was not important to Mr. Cameron. His speech could wait a few days without loss to the country and even without losing any of its effect as a partisan weapon. By hastening to deliver his attack before Sir John's return, Mr. Cameron exposed himself to the unpleasant suspicion that he did not desire to be strictly fair—that he did not wish to meet his opponent face to face—that he desired to deliver his thrust at a moment when no return was possible. Such a course gives one a higher opinion of Mr. Cameron's adroitness than of his courage or his fairness, and placed that gentleman in an unfavorable light at the very outset.

It must never be forgotten that public questions should be discussed on public grounds. If it was Mr. Cameron's privilege and duty to discuss this question, it was his duty