

One of the political parties was the Liberal party, and for this reason alone it was maintained that Roman Catholics could not belong to the Liberal party. The Conservative press of the Province pertinaciously, systematically, bitterly maintained that doctrine, and for years, and even to this day, it remained the chief argument ever confidently resorted to, whenever every other argument was likely to fail. The experience of other Provinces than Quebec has made us aware that appeals to religious passions and prejudices are rarely made in vain. They had a powerful effect in the present instance; they depleted the ranks of the Liberal party. It was held to be a sin for a Roman Catholic to belong to that party. The Conservative party and the Government of Sir John Macdonald were forgiven all their faults, for no other reason than the men who denounced those faults were Liberals and everything was preferable to a possible accession to power of the Liberals. All those questions which chiefly compose the range of Canadian politics, trade, taxation, expenditure were presented to the Roman Catholic electors, not on their merits but always on the ground that to be a Liberal and to be a Roman Catholic were not compatible, and that the Conservative party had to be supported, no matter what its policy was or was not.

It is only fair to add that at the outset the Liberal party had in a great measure provoked the hostility which they encountered and which was maintained against them, even after whatever cause there might have been for it, had disappeared.

For some years previous to 1854, the Liberal party in Lower Canada had been, in the same manner as the Liberal party in the Upper Province, weakened by domestic quarrels, the cause in both being a demand for a more radical policy, but the demand in each being asserted according to the different character of each population.

While in Upper Canada the advanced Liberals limited their agitation to a few existing evils, in Lower Canada the advanced Liberals declared open war on the whole political and social fabric as it then existed. Their programme, published in their newspaper, *L'Avenir*, if carried out, would have been a complete revolution. Those who set up that task before the people were mere boys, enthusiastic, ardent, and affecting to be imbued with the views of French democracy. The oldest among them was not twenty-two. They had neither position, influence, nor command. But their doctrines, though coming from irresponsible men, had alarmed the people, and still more alarmed the clergy who largely controlled the opinions of the people. These fears were adroitly nurtured by the Conservative press and the Conservative party, and for years they were prominently held up in season and out of season, as the bloody shirt is still held up in the neighbouring country.

Mr. Dorion could not justly be made responsible for those extravagant doctrines. He never had been a participant in them. On the contrary it was his great merit to weed out the superfluous, the utopian, the impracticable, the wrong, from the programme of the party, and to limit it within the domain of practical politics. English history has taught us that one reform is generally the work of one generation, but when accomplished it is permanent. The French, on the other hand, never attempted a reform without a revolution, changing everything from the dynasty and the form of government, down to the name of a street, every such radical change being almost immediately followed by a reaction again sweeping away all that had been gained.

Mr. Dorion belonged to the English School of Liberalism. He endeavoured to discipline his party from speculative and doctrinal politics to a sober discussion of practical questions. But religious prejudices when aroused proved stronger than facts and arguments. The Liberal party, though purified under the guidance of a noble leader, was kept in a hopeless minority, and Mr. Dorion could never force to an issue the federative principle he had promulgated. On the other hand, Mr. Brown was commanding a powerful majority from his Province. It is true that he also, in the House and in important public papers, affirmed the principle of a federative union to be substituted for the existing legislative union. But the main idea which he set up before the people, and upon which he aroused an ever increasingly powerful agitation, was representation by population. In 1858 he eagerly and perhaps imprudently seized an opportunity of forming an administration, with that end in view. Mr. Dorion joined the Cabinet as leader of the Lower Canadian section. He had no difficulty in conceding to Mr. Brown representation by population, as Mr. Brown readily conceded him constitutional changes for the protection of Lower Canada. It is well known that Mr. Brown had too implicitly trusted in the support of the Governor-General; that, having to face a hostile House, he was refused a dissolution, and consequently forced to resign almost immediately after having been sworn into office. In the precipitation of the whole event, the constitutional changes which Mr. Dorion had contemplated were never made public, but it is safe to assume that they were in the line of the federative principle which he had enunciated before, and which was solemnly adopted by the great Liberal convention which met in Toronto the following year.

The struggle continued, becoming every day more intense and more bitter. The inherent vice of the Constitution made any change, except a constitutional change, a mere patch-work. Yet the leaders of the Conservative party obstinately opposed every attempt at reform. They had a powerful support from Lower Canada; but the

agitation was every day spreading wider and deeper in the other Province. The elections of 1861 considerably weakened the administration, though both Mr. Brown and Mr. Dorion lost their seats.

Mr. Dorion, however, soon re-entered Parliament, accepting the following year the Provincial Secretaryship in the Macdonald-Sicotte administration. He had been in office less than a year, when he resigned. The imminent threats of war, occasioned by the Trent affair in the fall of 1861, had given an impetus to the project, already old before the public, of connecting for military purposes the British Provinces by the sea to the western Provinces. That project in the course of time became the Intercolonial Railway. In 1863 the Macdonald-Sicotte administration under the strong pressure of the Imperial Government, adopted it as a ministerial measure. Mr. Dorion firmly dissented from this policy; hence his resignation. His withdrawal was a fatal blow to the administration, which was thus deprived of its strongest support from Lower Canada. Mr. J. A. Macdonald, the prime minister, had to yield to the views of Mr. Dorion and give up the project of the railway. He then applied to Mr. Dorion to reconstitute the Lower Canadian section of the Cabinet. Mr. Dorion accepted, Parliament was dissolved, but the new elections made no material changes in the complexion and strength of parties. The Government was forced to resign. Power again reverted to the Conservatives. Sir E. P. Taché was entrusted with the task of forming an administration, which, like its predecessors, was defeated a few months afterwards.

Those successive changes at last convinced the leaders of the Conservative party that they could no longer oppose constitutional changes. They entered into negotiations with Mr. Brown upon the basis of the policy which he had so long and so persistently advocated. The result was that a federative union not only of Upper and Lower Canada, but of all the British Provinces was presented as a practical question. Mr. Dorion opposed the scheme and opposed it with great vigour and power. The speech which he delivered in the debate is one of the ablest, one of the most thoughtful that was ever heard in the old Legislative Assembly of Canada; it was pregnant with observations, the truth of which have since been verified in a marked degree. It was not to the federative principle that Mr. Dorion objected. He was still in favour of a federative union for Upper and Lower Canada, but did not believe that the time was ripe for a union of all the Provinces, and the reasons which he urged in support of his views have certainly derived, from subsequent events, great cogency. Answering those who taunted him with inconsistency he defended his course in the following language:—

"There is nothing I have ever said or written that can be construed to mean that I was ever in favour of such a proposition. On the contrary, whenever the question came up, I set my face against it. I asserted that such a confederation could only bring trouble and embarrassment; that there was no social, no commercial connection between the Provinces proposed to be united—nothing to justify their union at the present juncture. Of course I do not say that I will be opposed to their confederation for all time to come. Population may extend over the wilderness that now lies between the Maritime Provinces, and ourselves and commercial intercourse may increase sufficiently to render confederation desirable."

No one who now reads these words can fail to appreciate that Mr. Dorion there touched with his finger the very point which was to prove the weak point of confederation. Confederation exists; it is the duty of all Canadians to help it onwards to the greatest future that can be dreamed for it. But the many difficulties that now beset its course, the perhaps more dangerous difficulties that threaten its future, practically illustrate the truth proclaimed by Mr. Dorion in 1865, that it is questionable wisdom, even for the most laudable object, to do violence to the laws of nature and to anticipate the actual requirements of the day.

The coalition which had been formed to carry out confederation still more weakened the Liberal party in Lower Canada. The elections of 1867 left to Mr. Dorion hardly fifteen followers in the house; this number was slightly increased in 1872. On the fall of Sir John Macdonald's Government the following year he accepted the department of justice in Mr. Mackenzie's administration. While he held the office he initiated and carried out some important measures. Our present Electoral Law is his work, as well as the controverted Elections Act. Both were passed in the session of 1874, the last which he attended.

Mr. Dorion had not been one full year in office, when the Chief Justiceship of the Court of Queen's Bench, the highest court of the Province of Quebec, became vacant. His most intimate friends and followers at once pressed him to accept the position.

Indeed, in so doing, they well knew what an irreparable loss his withdrawal from active service would prove to the Liberal party, but it was also well known that he had long desired to retire from public life. In fact, at the elections of 1872, he had actually taken that course, and formerly declining again to come forward for the County of Hochelaga, which he had represented since 1863, he had left for Europe; but in his absence the staunch Liberals of the County of Napierville had elected him against his well known wishes, against his absolute enjoinment.

It was well known that this determination of Mr. Dorion was not the result of apathy or discouragement, but dictated by personal considerations of grave moment.

At the bar of Montreal Mr. Dorion had a large and lucrative practice, but in the absorbing toils of politics he had made such heavy sacrifices of time and money that the burden had become unbearable. His friends, therefore, not only respected, but also urged upon him the considerations which impelled him at last to give to his private fortune some of the attention which he had hitherto exclusively given to the service of his country, and at their pressing solicitations he accepted the Chief Justiceship of the Court of Queen's Bench.

It was Mr. Dorion's misfortune that whilst engaged for so many years, in the active struggle of politics, he never had behind him, from his own Province, a majority which would have enabled him to enforce the clear, sound, and liberal views which he held upon the questions then affecting the destinies of Canada. Though mostly always in the minority, he always was in the House a very strong individuality, and always commanded a marked influence, derived only from the loftiness of his character and the strength of his abilities. Within the ranks of the Liberal party no man ever enjoyed a greater share of respect and affection.

Mr. Dorion as a party leader was himself. He could not be compared to any other. He was in his views absolutely democratic, but he never resorted to those tactics which are sometimes supposed to be indispensable to democratic Government. A man of exquisite courtesy of manners, he yet always was somewhat distant. He never had recourse to the easy method of winning popularity by promiscuous familiarity. He never pandered to vulgar passions, never deviated from the course which seemed to him the path of truth. He never courted success, for the sake of success, but steadily struggled for the right as he saw the right. He met defeat without weakness, and when success came success found him without exultation.

In accepting the highest judicial office of his native Province, Mr. Dorion only transferred to another sphere his great usefulness to the public. For indeed it is admitted on all sides that no more able, dignified, upright judge ever adorned the bench of any land. His high, broad and clear mind, his vast knowledge, his demeanour, at the same time courteous and firm, were well known, but in the discharge of his new functions came out in still more marked eminence. Another and still more characteristic quality, one which indeed ought hardly to be mentioned in a judge, so absolutely is it the attribute of judicial office, is his high sense of fairness. It is not a thing unseen nor unknown, that men who have spent the larger portion of their lives in the turmoils of politics have sometimes their judicial opinion unconsciously tinged by the strong convictions imbed in a more violent atmosphere. Nothing of the kind with the present Chief Justice of Quebec. A Conservative member of the Montreal bar was once heard to remark that if the career of the Chief Justice was not known, no one would suppose that he had ever been engaged in politics.

In 1877 he was created a knight by Her Majesty.

Sir Antoine Aimé Dorion is now in his seventy-third year. Time has just laid the first slight impress of its webbed foot upon his hitherto singularly juvenile face, but his active devotion to his judicial duties remains unimpaired.

A touching and charming trait in the remarkably attractive character of Sir Antoine Aimé Dorion is his strong domestic affection. He was married in 1848 to Miss Trestler, a daughter of Dr. Trestler of Vaudreuil. After a few years only of married life he was left a widower with four children, a son, who died young, and three daughters. The eldest of the daughters is the wife of Mr. C. A. Geoffrion, the eminent Q. C. The father never separated from that one, nor from any of his children. To this day he continues to live with Mr. and Madame Geoffrion, their children and his unmarried daughters.

It would look like fulsome flattery to recite the numerous qualities of mind and heart which endear this gifted man to all those who have had the privilege of close relations with him; particularly noticeable, too noticeable not to be mentioned here, is the kind sympathy which he always extends to young, struggling men. Young students, promising but still inexperienced barristers, budding politicians buoyant with hope and illusions, he always received with gracious courtesy, and often advised, helped and favoured by word and action. He who writes these lines keeps treasured in his heart the remembrance of acts of kindness and encouragement thus received at a time when kindness and encouragement were a most invaluable help.

WILFRIED LAURIER.

I AM ignorant of any one quality that is amiable in man which is not equally so in a woman. I do not except even modesty and gentleness of nature. Nor do I know one evil or folly which is not equally distasteful in both.—*Swift*.

THE Agricultural Statistics for Ireland for the present year have just been issued. The total acreage under crops in 1890 is 4,918,965, being a net increase on 1889 of 137,051, or 2.7 per cent. In the acreage under grass there is an increase of 212,877 over 1889. Of bog and marsh, barren mountain land, etc., there is a decrease of 79,725 acres. Of cereal crops there is a decrease of 18,711 acres. In green crops there is a net decrease of 5,353 acres, and in flax there is a decrease of 16,781 acres. As regards live stock, there is an increase in the number of horses and mules amounting to 11,369, and cattle 146,579.