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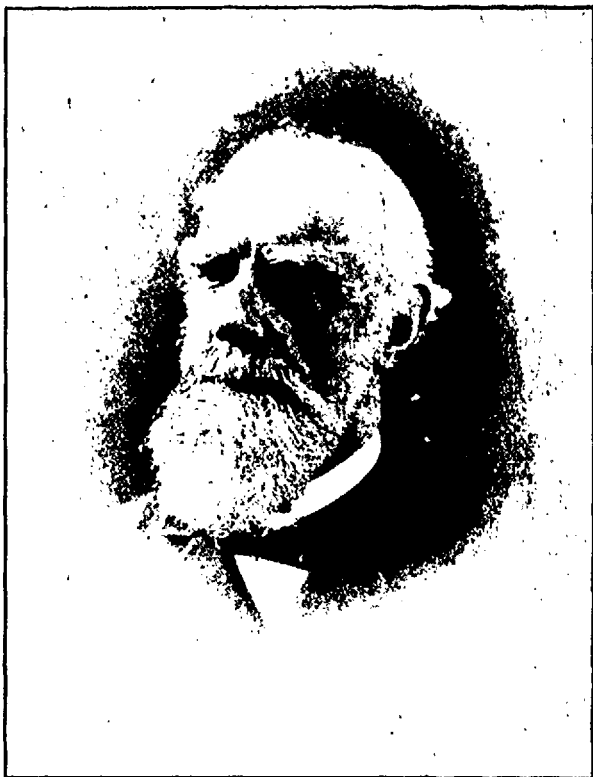
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MEN OF THE DAY



SIR DONALD A. SMITH

SIR DONALD A. SMITH

There are few names of distinguished Canadians whose mention calls up such universal expressions of admiration and gratitude as that of Sir Donald A. Smith. His long career has been full of arduous and often perilous work, more particularly in the early portion; but the abundant fruits of his labour have been spent with a lavish hand, not for the purpose of his own aggrandizement or self-glorification, but for the good of the community at large. Unlike the majority of those men who are abundant; blessed with the goods of this world, he has, with true generosity, dispensed his wealth during his life-time, thus ensuring the proper carrying out of his wishes, and has superintended the disposal of his bequests with an energy and conscientiousness which it would be well if many more would emulate.

Donald Alexander Smith was born in Morayshire, Scotland, in 1821, and received a good English and classical education, in addition to the ordinary school course, which is of an extremely thorough and solid nature in the curriculum of Scottish schools.

It has become almost a proverb that, wherever men are found, in British Empire, to have attained wealth and success, Scotchmen will always be discovered to be in the majority, and we may without doubt attribute this success to their native tenacity of purpose, combined with the thoroughness and rigor of their early training by the village "dominie" or school master, who implanted in them the seeds of knowledge.

For a time, Mr. Smith also studied medicine, and, although he did not long persevere in this branch, still the experience he then obtained served him well in after years, when stationed in the wilds of Labrador or the great prairies of the great lone land, when the Indians came to have implicit faith in his healing powers, and were

in the habit of addressing him as "father." They frequently came long distances to obtain the benefit of his advice and treatment.

It was in 1838 that Mr. Smith first entered the Hudson's Bay Company's service, and he has been so intimately connected with that powerful trading organization, that it may not be amiss, in this sketch of his life, to glance briefly over the history of this corporation. Their territory consisted of land extending over an area as large as Europe, and stretching to the north and west of Canada from the coast of Labrador on the east to the Rocky Mountains on the southwest, touching the Arctic circle on the north, and reaching to the boundary line in the forty-ninth parallel of north latitude between British North America and the United States. This immense territory, the greater portion of which was known as Prince Rupert's Land, was granted by Royal charter by Charles II, in 1670, and, in the words of the document, it is stated that "whereas our dear and entirely well-beloved cousin, Prince Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Christopher, Duke of Albermarle, and other persons therein named, had, at their own great costs and charges, undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay, in the north-west part of America, for the discovery of a new passage into the South Sea and for the finding some trade for furs, minerals, and other considerable commodities, the king granted that they should be a body corporate and politic, by the name of the Governor and Company of adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay, and have a common seal." It also granted to the company "the sole trade and commerce of all those seas, straits, bays, rivers, lakes, creeks, and sounds, in whatsoever latitude they shall be, that lie within the entrance of the straits commonly called Hudson's Straits, with the fishing of all sorts of fish, whales, sturgeons, and all other royal fishes within the said limits, and all mines royal, as well discovered as not, gold, silver, gems and precious stones." It also constituted the Governor and Company, and their successors, "the absolute lords of the same territory."

Prince Rupert's Land is abundantly supplied with water, including Lake Winnipeg to the south,—a magnificent sheet three hundred miles long, and in several places fifty broad,—Lake Winnipegosis, and Lake Manitoba. The Red River, which rises in otter-tail Lake Minnesota, flows northward to Lake Winnipeg, and that portion of the country situated between this lake and the Red River on the east,

the south branch of the Saskatchewan on the west, and the boundary line on the south, forms a parallelogram containing about 80,000 square miles, and comprises within this area 12,000,000 acres of arable land.

The soil on the banks of the Red River is rich and yields good harvests of fine wheat. It was here that the Selkirk or Red River settlement, with which Mr. Smith was prominently connected in the days of the first rebellion, was situated. At the end of the 18th century, the Earl of Selkirk visited the Highlands of Scotland and found that many of the younger generation were emigrating to the United States, and, judging that they would be desirable colonists for Britain's Dominion, he organized, in 1811, a band of settlers to come to Canada. He obtained a grant of land from the Hudson's Bay Company near the Red River, and planted a Scotch colony. In spite of the fertility of the soil, however, this colony did not thrive, being too far removed from commercial centres, and the Company bought the land back again in 1834.

In 1863, a change took place in the Hudson's Bay Company. At that time, their capital was half a million, and, by an arrangement with the International Financial Society, £1,500,000 was paid by that society to the then existing shareholders, and a new stock was created to the extent of two millions. No change was made in the charter, and all rights granted by Charles II were preserved to the Company. In the prospectus of the International Society, it was stated that the Company's territory contained an area of 1,400,000 square miles, or more than 896,000,000 acres. The average net annual profits for the previous ten years had been sixteen per cent on the old capital of half a million.

Into the service of this powerful organization Mr. Smith entered and was, shortly afterwards, sent to the desolate coast of Labrador, where the Company had some important trading posts. Even now, Labrador is, for many months, almost entirely cut off from communication with the outer world, and, in those days, its isolation was still more complete. A tribe of Indians, the *Montagnais* or Mountaineers, inhabited the country and lived on the shore from the River Saguenay downwards to the Atlantic Ocean, trading extensively with the Hudson's Bay Company. Labrador abounded in bears, wolverines, Cana-

dian lions, beavers, black and silver foxes, and other valuable fur-bearing animals.

Mingan was the post at which Mr. Smith was stationed, and, notwithstanding its importance, there were few white men in the place, and its dreariness, to an active mind like his, must have been, during the long winter months, something appalling.

Of a daring and adventurous spirit, in summer there were always many attractions to him in organizing hunting and fishing excursions into the interior, where game was found in abundance in the woods and rivers, on whose shores dwelt extensive colonies of wild geese, eider, ptarmigan and willow-grouse. But the long winter evenings would have passed slowly indeed, had it not been that Mr. Smith was strongly imbued with a love of study and an ever-increasing desire to add to his store of knowledge. With his customary perseverance, he deeply read many subjects, and in after years he had no reason to regret the forced isolation of his Labrador sojourn, for such a life gave him many opportunities of perfecting himself in branches of learning eminently useful later on, when he came to play his part in the busy centres of nineteenth century civilization. His facility in grasping a subject and quickly making himself master of every detail appertaining thereto has often been remarked by experienced business men, and no doubt his years of study in Labrador had much to do with training his mind for the more onerous duties he afterwards undertook. It was during his residence at Mingan that an incident occurred, which serves to illustrate that unflinching perseverance and unswerving adherence to duty, which has been at all times the keynote to Mr. Smith's career, and it also shows the immensity of the dangers through which the makers of Canada had to go on their arduous path to honour and success.

When stationed at Mingan, Mr. Smith was left in charge of the post, and, unfortunately, at that time, he was attacked by the terrible scourge of snow-blindness, and was in imminent danger of losing his eyesight. What such a calamity would have been to an ambitious and active young man can easily be imagined, and few will blame him for the course he took on this occasion.

There being no good oculist nearer than Montreal, he determined, after some deliberation, to set out from Mingan, accompanied by two half-breed guides, on his difficult journey up the coast. It was winter

time, the snow lay deep, and huge masses were piled one above the other in unbroken monotony of wearisome whiteness upon the rugged, barren cliffs of the great Laurentian range. On! on! through snow-storm and darkness the travellers held their way, ever encouraged by the bravery and courageous bearing of their young leader. At length, weary in mind and body, they arrived at the little straggling settlement of Lachine, then scarcely to be dignified by the name of village, for the houses were far apart and most primitive in their construction.

Mr. Smith's first duty was to report himself. He was shown into his chief's presence, where he received but a cold welcome, and was sternly reprimanded for leaving his post without permission and peremptorily ordered to return without delay.

Discouraged, as was but natural, by this treatment, and exhausted by rough travelling and lack of nourishing food, he, at that moment, half decided to throw up his appointment and leave the Hudson's Bay service then and there.

There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune, and probably this was the important tide in the young man's career, and fortunately for him and for Canada, it was taken at the flood. How it lead on to fortune is well known by all Canadians of our day.

Upon reflection, wisdom prevailed, and Mr. Smith concluded to return to Mingan and presently set out again with his two half-breed guides. Few, if any, of the younger generation of Canadians, who accomplish their travelling in luxuriantly appointed Pullman cars, can form the slightest conception of what travelling in winter then was and the difficulties and dangers it involved. In the first place soon after settling out, the weather became tempestuous and the snow fell thickly and fast, obliterating every landmark, and the track was consequently repeatedly lost.

The Indian guides grew weary and despondent from cold and sickness, and first one, and then the other succumbed and died before reaching their destination. Worn out with fatigue, Mr. Smith arrived at Mingan more dead than alive to tell the sad tale of this disastrous winter journey. Fortunately, however, it had not been entirely in vain, for he had managed to see a doctor, and soon after his eye-sight was completely restored.

This is but one of many perilous adventures in an arduous life,

instances of which were common enough amongst that hardy band of fearless pioneers, to whom Canada owes so much and who will always be held by her in grateful remembrance. To these brave spirits, her greatness is largely due, to these men who have made her what she is, a country to be proud of, to live for, and, if need be, to die for too. Perhaps, it is not merely a vain supposition, if, at this crisis, Mr. Smith had considered his own pride and comfort when so sternly reprov'd for his action in proceeding to Montreal, our great highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific would not have been opened up, the annals of our country would have been less glorious, and Canada would not have attained that high place she now holds amongst the nations of the earth.

The next important step in Mr. Smith's career is almost a matter of history and brings us face to face with the Red River Rebellion, in 1869, throughout which disturbance he took a prominent part.

It will be remembered that a council was held by the principal members of the government of Quebec, Ontario, Nova-Scotia and New-Brunswick, for the purpose of arranging the confederation of all the provinces.

This resulted, on the first of July, 1867, in the proclamation by the Imperial government of the confederation of these four provinces under the name of Dominion of Canada. It was also wished to unite the other provinces, and the preliminary negotiations were begun to include the North-West Territory. In order to effect this, the consent of the Hudson's Bay Company had to be obtained.

Now the principal inhabitants of the Red River district were descendants of the early French pioneers, who, possessed with a great love of travel and adventure, journeyed to the prairies of the North-West, and there settled down. In time they developed into a hardy people, who existed, partly by hunting, partly by agriculture, resembling, in most of their habits and customs, their compatriots of the province of Quebec.

They had also intermarried with the *métis* Indians, and, at this period, the population comprised nearly five thousand French and the same number of English and Scotch half-breeds, with a sprinkling of Canadians and Americans.

Sir Georges Cartier and the honourable William Macdougall were sent to England by the Canadian government in order to effect an

arrangement with the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company in London, and, with the assistance of the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, then Colonial Secretary, it was decided that the Hudson's Bay Company should surrender their governing powers to the crown, that their territory of Rupert's Land should be incorporated with the Dominion of Canada, the Hudson's Bay Company receiving £300,000 sterling and retaining one twentieth of all land in the "Fertile Belt," a tract of country extending from the Lake of the Woods to the summit of the Rocky Mountains.

These negotiations did not meet with the entire approval of the population of the Territory, having been effected with reference only to the shareholders of the Company in London. Consequently, when Colonel Dennis was sent by the Dominion government to survey the land, before the Imperial government had issued the proclamation of transfer, there were loud murmurings, portending an approaching storm. The honourable William Macdougall had been appointed first Governor of the new province, but, on his arrival at Pembina, in October, he received a letter from Riel, the leader of the hostile party, warning him to proceed no further. In November, 1869, Mr. Smith, owing probably to his knowledge of the country and his tact in dealing with the Indians and settlers, was asked by Sir John A. Macdonald and the Canadian government to proceed to Fort Garry, now Winnipeg, and endeavour to settle the difficulties there.

This was no easy task. Riel had entrenched himself in Fort Garry with a numerous band of followers, had seized the stores and other property of the Hudson's Bay Company, and was making use of all ammunition there, and preparing for open warfare. Mr. Smith experienced considerable difficulty in dealing with the half-breeds, as they were strongly influenced by Riel. As a commissioner from the Canadian government, the rebel leader, however, received him within the fort, but, for a time, to all intents and purposes, held him as a prisoner and allowed him to take no part in what was going on, and endeavoured by every means to secure his papers. Fortunately, he had left them behind at Pembina.

In this crisis, Mr. Smith's diplomatic powers did good service, and he showed the greatest tact and foresight in dealing with the wily Riel. During the campaign, Major Boulton was taken prisoner by

the rebels and was sentenced to death within twenty-four hours, nearly sharing the horrible fate of Scott. It was only by Mr. Smith's intercession that he got off, and on condition that the former should go to all the English settlements and induce their people to send representatives to meet Riel in council. This was at once done, and delegates were sent. In Riel's own words, transcribed in Mr. Smith's report, is found the statement that it was at Mr. Smith's instance that he spared Major Boulton's life.

During all this time, with the greatest energy, Mr. Smith was trying to induce the people of the district to elect their delegates to the Dominion government and to send them without delay to Ottawa, and to persuade them to peacefully enter Confederation; and this he accomplished shortly.

It was mainly due to his tact and zeal that the first Red River rebellion ended without greater disaster and that a comparatively amicable conclusion was attained.

Mr. Smith was, in 1870, the Resident Governor or Governor in Chief of Prince Rupert's Land, and was the last Resident Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, having been appointed for the purpose of handing over their Government and Prince Rupert's Land to the Dominion. After this period, Mr. Smith was Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company for several years. As Resident Governor of the Company, he presided over their last council as a governing body.

With Sir Francis Johnson and the honourable Mr. Brelland, he was appointed one of the first executive and legislative councillors of the North-West Territory, and, in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, in 1870, he was elected the first member for Winnipeg. In 1871, he was elected member for Selkirk, comprising Winnipeg and the adjoining counties, in the Parliament of Canada, and continued to represent that constituency till 1880, having, when dual representation was abolished, resigned, in 1874, his seat in the local House. Having taken his residence in Montreal, in the contest of 1887 he was elected member for Montreal-West, and re-elected for the same constituency by an overwhelming majority in 1891.

In 1886, Her Majesty was pleased to confer on him the title of St-Michael-and-St-George in recognition of his services when special Commissioner to the people in the Red River settlement, in 1869-70,

and not, as is popularly supposed, for his connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway.

In politics, Sir Donald A. Smith may best be described as an Independent Conservative, and it may not be amiss to quote his own words in regard to his political opinions :

“As I have no favours to ask, and nothing personal to desire from any government, I will only support such measures as are conducive to the advancement of Manitoba and the North-West Territories in the first instance, and to the general prosperity of the Dominion.”

With Sir George Stephens and two other gentlemen, Sir Donald Smith brought up the St-Paul and Pacific Railroad, now known as the “St-Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad.” This was the first railroad to connect with Manitoba in 1878. In 1880, in conjunction with Sir George Stephens and others, he undertook the construction of the Canadian Pacific Company, and, some years later, had the satisfaction of being on board the first train which ran through the Dominion of Canada from ocean to ocean.

Any sketch of Sir Donald Smith's long and distinguished career would be most inadequate without the mention of his princely gifts to the city of Montreal. Foremost amongst these stands the “Royal Victoria Hospital,” and a more appropriate and much needed one could not have been given. The old General Hospital on Dorchester street, situated in a thickly populated part of the city, and necessarily shut in from fresh and wholesome air, has long been unequal to the growing demands of Montreal.

In June, 1887, Sir George Stephens and Sir Donald Smith gave half a million dollars each for the construction of a hospital and training school for nurses, to be called the “Royal Victoria Hospital” in honour of Her Majesty's Jubilee, which occurred that year. At the same time, the city of Montreal gave for its site a portion of ground at the edge of the Mountain Park, facing Pine avenue. With somewhat hyper-critical objection, a question was raised by a few of the French doctors regarding the proximity of this situation to the city reservoir, they considering it dangerous to the health of the community at large. Sir Donald Smith and Sir George Stephens again came forward, and purchased a piece of ground adjoining that presented to the city. This is further removed from the reservoir and costs \$86.-

ooo. The ground given by the city will be used for gardens. Mr. Saxon Snell, an eminent English hospital architect, was applied to furnish designs and plans, and when they arrived, last June, the work of construction began immediately.

The buildings will accommodate about two hundred and fifty patients, and will include a training school for nurses to cost about half a million dollars.

The edifices are now well on their way towards completion, and it is expected that the hospital will be opened in May, 1893. The buildings are constructed of that solid grey limestone for which Montreal is famous, and are magnificently situated at the base of Mount Royal, commanding a fine view of the river and surrounding country, and enjoying the advantages of the salubrious air of its elevated and isolated position.

Always affording the greatest encouragement to every educational movement, Sir Donald Smith has more particularly interested himself in all matters appertaining to the higher education of women, and has done all in his power to aid and stimulate this worthy movement, which has made such progress of late years. In 1884, the Ladies Educational Society of Montreal were most desirous of further extending their sphere and of sharing in the advantages enjoyed by the students of McGill University. It happened that, in the same year, nine young ladies had gone through the High School course in Montreal, and were most anxious to continue their studies in order to take the degree of Bachelor of Arts. At this critical moment, Sir Donald Smith presented a gift of \$20,000 to enable the girl students to obtain all the lectures necessary to take the Arts examinations. This course is exactly the same as that enjoyed by the male students, and a student may take all or part of the lectures, as she feels disposed. It is known as the *Donald* special course. The following year, Sir Donald Smith supplemented his gift by \$100,000 for the purpose of founding a college for women, to be known as the "Royal Victoria College." In evidence that his generosity has not been misplaced and that it has shown good fruit, it may be stated that great numbers of women students have gone through the course, and the candidates, each year, have carried off many medals and, on one occasion, a medal prize.

With Sir George Stephens, Sir Donald Smith also has endowed a

Montreal Scholarship for Music to be competed for by natives of Montreal or the vicinity. The successful candidate receives a thorough training at the Royal College of Music at South-Kensington, London, the scholarship being sufficient to cover all expenses. This has been twice carried off since its endowment, in both cases by young ladies, one a vocalist, the other a pianist.

Sir Donald Smith is also interested in many enterprises of a commercial nature, being President of the Bank of Montreal, Chairman of the Montreal Board of the Fire Assurance Association of London, Chairman of the Montreal Board, of the London and Lancashire Life Insurance Association, of London, President of innumerable charitable and friendly societies, the First President of the St-Andrews Society, of Winnipeg, and patron of the Manitoba Rifle Association. On the occasion of the last meeting of the Royal Society of Canada, in Montreal, he was elected Chairman of the Citizens Committee, and is being continually called upon to speak at dinners, public meetings, and receptions.

Sir Donald Smith married Isabella, daughter of the late Richard Hardisty, Esquire, at one time an officer in Her Majesty's service and latter on in the Hudson's Bay Company.

As a host, Sir Donald Smith is at his best. His fine residence in Montreal, is admirably adapted for entertaining. He has had the honour of several times receiving royalty, and has extended his hospitality to most of the notabilities in the scientific, literary, and artistic worlds, who have come to Canada.

His picture gallery is one of the finest in the Dominion, and contains specimens of the works of Raphael, Rembrandt and Vandyke, besides many of the gems of Henner, Jules Breton, and other modern painters. His collection of Japanese curiosities is a very valuable one, including all the contents of a temple from that interesting island.

Continually at work and bound up with such varied interests, Sir Donald Smith's life is a changeful and laborious one, and his friends have often feared for his health and begged him to desist awhile from his labours. As Chairman of the Hudson's Bay Company in London, he is obliged to cross the Atlantic several times in the year, and is ever on the move. It would be sad indeed were overwork to injure so good and useful a life, which we trust may be spared for many a year to come.

Not only does such a career as that of Sir Donald Smith make us proud of possessing in our country such a man, but the example of his laborious, self-denying, and persevering life will endure for many a year, and show to the youth of Canada by what endurance and zeal the fortunes of our great Dominion were built up.

MAUD OGILVY.

Montreal, June, 1891.



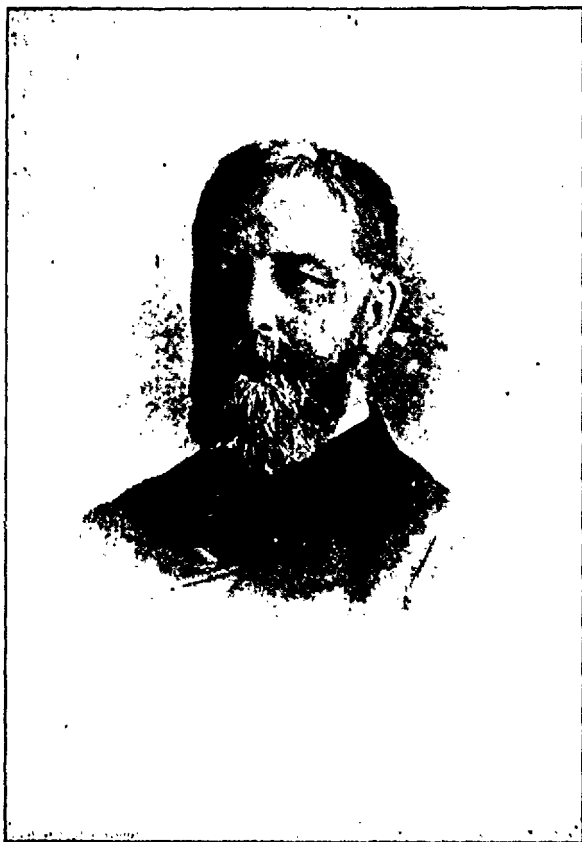
Very truly yours,

Donald Smith

P.S.

Per LaCombe calls
after I had written the
foregoing and asked me
to give you his last re-
gards. He is leaving
out town to his mission
with the Worthleys
D. S. S.

MEN OF THE DAY



WM. RALPH MEREDITH

WM. RALPH MEREDITH

The genial, popular, and eloquent leader of the Opposition in the Ontario legislature has had a long, active, and important public career. He has never held office, yet much of the best work of the Ontario legislature is due to his careful and patriotic exertions. He has never been personally ambitious, yet for twenty years he has striven resolutely and strongly, to plant the banner of Conservatism and progress upon the somewhat fossilised towers of Liberal administration in this province. He has never assumed, or apparently sought, the leadership of the Canadian Bar, yet he is to-day one of the universally recognized leaders and authorities in the land of jurisprudence of the Dominion.

Such, in a word, is the present position and personality of Wm. Ralph Meredith, Q.C., LL.D., M.P.P.. Born near London, Ontario, on March 31st, 1840, a son of John Cooke Meredith, an Irish graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, who emigrated to Upper Canada in 1834, he exhibited in early days no particular evidence of precocity or cleverness. A jolly school-boy he seems to have been, showing indeed those manly genial qualities which have since created for him so much a personal popularity. After leaving the London Grammar School, the young man entered the law office of Thomas Scatchard, a well known politician of the time and liberal in his opinions. There he acquired a thorough knowledge and experience of legal principles and practice, so far, at least, as a student could. In 1859, he entered Toronto University; in 1861, was called to the bar, and, in 1863, graduated as L.L.B., receiving, two years ago, from our great Provincial University, the honorary degree of LL.D.. Just before graduating, Mr. Meredith had married, his wife being Mary, the only daughter of Marcus Holmes, of London.

Being now fairly started upon the wide sea of professional life,

the painstaking energetic qualities of the young lawyer soon carried him into public attention and a large practice. With experience and, of course, primarily from natural aptitude, came that forceful and dignified eloquence which has created for him so high a reputation as pleader in our courts of law. Uniting a prepossessing presence, a direct and searching power of examining witnesses, with a sincerity which carried conviction to the jurors and conveyed confidence to his clients, such a result was not surprising. Needless to say Mr. Meredith has been engaged in many important trials, the chief perhaps being the famous Biddulph murder case, and that of George McCabe, who was charged with poisoning his wife. In all matters connected with his profession he has taken a keen interest. An authority upon municipal law, he was for many years City Solicitor of London.

In favour of the establishment of law schools in different parts of the province rather than their consolidation in Toronto, Mr. Meredith has followed out in legal matters the principle of decentralization, which he has so often urged upon the political platform as applicable to the government of the province of Ontario. Years ago, indeed, he endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to establish a law school in connection with the Western University, and subsequently founded the Middlesex Law Association, of which he was, for a long time, president.

The maintenance of County Law Libraries for the benefit of students was another favorite and successful scheme, which he has steadily and earnestly advocated. With them and many other evidences of a sincere desire to forward the interests of the legal profession, it is not at all surprising, though none the less complimentary, that, upon two occasions, Mr. Meredith has been selected a Bencher of the Ontario Law Society by the highest vote ever recorded by the profession. In 1875, the provincial government made him a Q.C., as did the Dominion authorities a little later.

But it is as a politician and orator that the Opposition leader in Toronto is best known. "I am a son of Ontario: I am a Canadian," summarises his political policy.

Progressing in principle and action, he thoroughly believes in carefully studied reform. Patriotic in thought and policy, he is an enthusiastic believer in the Conservative idea of a United Canada. A sincere lover of his native province with all its inherent privileges

and rights, he yet warmly sympathises in the desire for a strong federal government, rather than a weak central administrative power. In a word, he believes with the veteran poet laureate, (slightly paraphrased),

“ Though the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day,
“ Better fifty years of Canada than a cycle of Cathay.”

Indeed, Mr. Meredith has often been accused of being too radical in his ideas and policy. Many old-time Conservatives do not like, and many never will like, his advocacy of manhood suffrage, and deeply regret the success which followed his exertions in forcing the Mowat government to give it to the province of Ontario. Others dread even the wild approach to the American elective system as regards officials, which he is known to favour, and while these radical principles bring applause of extremists from the other side, they have perhaps estranged in some degree the active support of certain individual members of his own party. But there are specks upon every sun, and the career of no statesman in history is free from some ground upon which disapproval may be based.

Mr. Meredith's political career commenced in 1872, when he was elected to a seat in the legislature, on the resignation of Mr. John Carling, who preferred to sit in the Dominion House. His genial manner and popular style of oratory, his labours on behalf of the working men and keen interest in general politics, soon made the new recruit a favorite with the members and the public. The Mechanics Lien Act, the Workmen's Compensation for Injuries Act, and other similar measures were products of this period. Those interested in politics and who watched the career of the young representative from London were not therefore surprised when Mr. Meredith was chosen leader of the Opposition in 1878. Indeed, it had become almost a foregone conclusion, and no better successor could have been found to the veteran Mathew Crooks Cameron, who had just been raised to the Bench.

Mr. Meredith at once threw himself with vigour into the battle, but it was suddenly rendered a difficult one by the Boundary Award agitation, which sprang into existence during the ensuing year. The Opposition leader was placed in an unfortunate position. He was falsely made to appear as supporting the Dominion government against the claims of the province whose Premier he aspired to be.

This color was given by his opponents to every word or action in reference to the Boundary question. Nothing could have been more unjust, but it was certainly effective. Mr. Meredith claimed, after the rejection of the Award by the Dominion parliament, that the only course left was to submit the whole matter to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. Finally this was done, and the province of Ontario obtained, beyond question, the territory claimed by it, the validity of the Award being sustained in the supreme tribunal of the Empire and over the heads of the very Dominion authorities, who were said to have been unduly supported by the Ontario leader. Thus Mr. Meredith practically procured for his province the recognition of those rights which the Premier claims to have himself obtained. Yet the latter fought for years against the Conservative desire to have the decision of the arbitrators rendered valid by reference to the Privy Council.

Then came the disallowance agitation of 1882, and again Mr. Meredith seemed to be on the unpopular side. But he believes in having a strong federation through and by a strong central government. The bundle of sticks theory he evidently considers correct, and has no sympathy with the so-called Provincial Rights schemes which would seek to strengthen a province at the expense of the country. Beaten in the general election of 1883, though by a small majority, Mr. Meredith fought steadily on, but with little success. The majority against him, in 1886, was greater, and, in 1890, it was the same old story. The last provincial election, however, was an important one.

The leader of the Opposition threw himself into the contest with vigor, and, after outlining his policy in splendid speeches at London and Toronto, proceeded to stump the province. But the support accorded by all but one or two of his lieutenants was poor; the people were not sufficiently educated in the principles so eloquently enunciated; the whole province was in the power of an office-holding oligarchy pulling the wires of license laws, innumerable appointments, and other methods of retaining office, whilst sectarian charges were flung broad-cast. The newspaper discussion carried on at this time between Mr. Meredith and Archbishop Cleary attracted wide attention and was cleverly, sometimes brilliantly conducted on both sides. One extract will suffice to illustrate Mr. Meredith's views:

"In this province, the Roman Catholic minority has been treated not merely justly, but with generosity, and if, which I do not deny, prejudice exists in some quarters against the Roman Catholics, it is, in my judgment, due mainly to the policy of the Church, which forbids the youth of the country being educated together, and to a system of education which tends to separate from the rest of the community a body of its citizens by creed lines, as well as to the unjudicious and intemperate utterances of men on both sides, who do not know, or have forgotten, what civil and religious liberty means." These are strong words, as well as plain ones, and they had the effect coupled with the vigorous attitude and exertions of the Archbishop in losing to Mr. Meredith many votes from among the members of that particular Church. Several notable speeches were delivered by the Opposition leader about this time. One, in the Legislative Assembly, dealt with the Separate School law and practice, and made the walls of the old building ring with denunciation of what he believed to be the favoritism of the Mowat government towards the Roman Catholic minority in the province, and its injustice to the Protestant majority.

Subserviency to the influence which was supposed to constitute the balance of power between the two parties formed the key-note of his utterance. Every rate-payer, said Mr. Meredith, should be *primâ facie* a public school supporter. Schools aided by public money should be regulated and inspected by the State. Separate School Trustees were asserted to be under the practical coercion of their ecclesiastical authorities,—Church being first, State second. The text books used in Separate Schools were not of so high a character as they should be, were not patriotic in tone, and were too narrowly sectarian in their nature. Finally, the leader denounced the modifications introduced from time to time in the Separate School law of the province, and declared them to have been instigated by a desire to obtain and retain the support of the hierarchy of the Church for the Mowat administration. Fairness to every citizen, freedom for all, and no intolerance on the one side or favoritism on the other, was, he said, the policy of himself and of his followers. Subsequently, at the great mass meeting held in London and at Toronto under the auspices of the respective Young Men's Conservative Associations, these views were amplified, and his general policy explained.

The government was freely denounced for their depletion of the surplus left by the ministry of John Sanfield Macdonald ; for the rapidity with which that great asset of our province, the timber supply, was being frittered away to speculators, instead of being used so as to benefit the public at large ; for the gross centralization of appointments in the hands of the government by seizing the positions of division court clerks and bailiffs, of marriage license issuers, license inspectors and commissioners, and transferring the patronage and power once possessed by municipalities into the hands of a centralized bureaucracy. He dealt with the method by which the educational interests of the province had been taken from the hands of an independent impartial superintendent, and placed in control of a politician and a political department, and with the alleged wholesale manipulation of the license power and the liquor interests, in order to obtain funds and influence for carrying the different elections in favour of the Liberal party.

Not the least important subject dealt with was the question of French schools in the Eastern parts of the province, and the claims made by Mr. F. Dixon Craig, M.P.P., and others, with reference to the growth of the French language and customs, and Catholic doctrine and practices in the public schools of Eastern Ontario. Owing to the action taken in the House by the Opposition, a commission had been appointed to investigate the whole question, and its report had been recently issued. Proof was furnished as to the justice of many of the allegations made, and Mr. Meredith was given the opportunity of conferring an oratorical castigation upon the Hon. G. W. Ross, minister of Education, which that gentleman will probably never forget. The position taken by the leader of the Opposition was sufficiently plain and simple :

“ While there has been a great deal of laxity in the management of our schools in the French districts, there ought to be a good deal of forbearance exercised towards our French citizens. I say the ultimate object should be to establish, as the only language of the schools, the English tongue. Therefore I am opposed to the use of the bilingual series as proposed by Mr. Ross, because the effect of that will be to perpetuate the teaching of the French tongue in the schools, which I think is a thing not to be thought of.”

Such were the salient points of these speeches. They were elo-

quent, they were sincere, and by the time very effective, but the mass of the people did not seem to be convinced that the government of Mr. Mowat was an unworthy one. Or, putting it in another way, the combined influence of possession and its consequent power, centralization, license, education and other "wires," were too much for a not very well organized Opposition. Then Mr. Meredith had to contend with that fatal charge of bigotry. On every platform throughout the province, by the fireside and on the street, he was accused of having deliberately started a crusade against the Roman Catholic religion and of being one with Mr. D'Alton McCarthy and the Equal Rights party in their advocacy of Protestant power and opposition to religious privilege. It was useless to point out the character of the man : his utter lack of all personal fanaticism, or the admirable moderation of his private views and publicly expressed opinions. Throughout the speeches made by Mr. Meredith during the campaign were many such eloquent appeals as the following, delivered to his London audience ; but they seem to have been disregarded or disbelieved :

" Under the universe of God, men can reach that eternal home beyond the skies; men can reach that abode of rest, by roads which neither priests or presbyter have marked out. In the name, Sir, of freedom, in the name of religion, in the name of the highest duties of citizenship, I protest against looking at the faith which any of our fellow-citizens profess, and for any purpose appealing in that way, in respect of their citizenship."

But neither exertions nor eloquence availed, and Sir Oliver Mowat is Premier of Ontario to-day, instead of William R. Meredith. Mr. Meredith has stated, and very truly, that he is not ambitious for office. He has never sought the political honours which have come upon him, though always striving to deserve the confidence so cordially and implicitly placed in his ability and zeal by the great Conservative party of Ontario. But the battle has been a bitter one, and the issues complex. Victory has not been with the leader of the Opposition, but it has been laurelled with a wide and far-reaching popularity. From time to time during many years back, he has been thought of, spoken of, written of, as a Dominion Cabinet Minister. Many have urged him to transfer his abilities to a wider sphere and greater duties, but it seems as if he considered the path of obli-

gation to be on the lesser and harder road of provincial politics. At the present time, public opinion in many quarters points strongly to his acceptance of the ministry of Justice, should the possible retirement of the veteran Premier make its present occupant the leader of our government. But it may be that professional and private reasons will again prevail. If so, it will be the country's loss, the province's gain.

Aside from the strictly party principles of the day, and the dividing lines of political opinion, Mr. Meredith is known to possess very advanced ideas in many directions. He is said to believe in the election by the people of many officials now appointed by the government, and to support the principle of no tax exemptions. The following extract from his London speech, (December 16th, 1889), certainly goes to prove the latter statement :

“ I say that the property of a church or of the minister ought to
“ be subject to taxation just as that of the merchant, or of the richest
“ or poorest man carrying on any business in the country.....We
“ want a radical change in our system of taxation, for there
“ are many and many exemptions upon the Statute book, that
“ ought to be wiped out in the interests of the people of this
“ country.”

It was Mr. Meredith who really forced the Mowat government to create manhood suffrage in Ontario ; and it was the Conservative leader who has inspired, proposed, or carried nearly all the legislation in favour of the workmen enacted during the last twenty years. It goes without saying that such a man is a thorough Canadian. He believes in the country, in its future progress, and in the maintenance of its Provincial unity. Ontario is to him the brightest gem in the Canadian galaxy of States, as Canada is in the British galaxy of territorial Empires.

Personally, Mr. Meredith is regarded by his friends and followers with that feeling of affection which found its highest embodiment in the magnetism surrounding the late Sir John Macdonald, who was so long and so intimately connected in friendship and politics with the Ontario leader. He possesses a splendid delivery, a handsome and impressive appearance, and a manner which conveys conviction and proves sincerity. Unsuccessful though he has been in the battle for office, Mr. Meredith has been more than successful in making

friends, in the building up a high reputation, in doing good service to the people, and in helping to make a history which will bear his name in honour and respect through future generations.

J. CASTELL HOPKINS.

Toronto, September 15th, 1892.



Toronto

Sept 22 1892

My dear Sir,

I have my best wishes
for the success of your "Men of the
Day"

Yours faithfully,

W. B. Meredith

Louis H. Sacke Esq^r
Montreal PQ