EVENTS WHICH LED TO CONFEDERATION.

Confederation was the fourth attempt to give Canada a workable constitution and it was adopted after a century of internal strife caused by racial dissensions, abusive authority and the lack of an effective parliamentary system. In 1862, 63 and 64, four ministries had been defeated and two general elections had failed to break the deadlock which threatened to make all government in Canada impossible. At the root of the evils which oppressed the state lay the feeling of mutual distrust and antagonism between Upper and Lower Canada. There does not seem to be any doubt to-day that national union was held back by the errors committed in the first years that followed the Treaty of 1763. The French-Canadians—or the Canadians, as my ancestors were then called—were misjudged and undervalued by the gentlemen placed at the head of affairs. They were also very ambitious.

The instructions issued to General Murray, the first Governor, gave him power to form a government which was to consist of the Governors of Montreal and Trois-Rivières, the Chief Justice, the Surveyor-General, and eight persons chosen by the Governor-General. Although the French-Canadians had co-operated with Murray in the interim government from 1760 to 1763 and they had given entire satisfaction, not one of them was included in the new council. That was a bad beginning. Had Murray been allowed to continue his own policy, there is no doubt that the French-Canadians would have easily adapted themselves to the new régime and we might have avoided the sea of troubles in which we drowned our energies for a whole century.

We, of French descent, look back to that period without the least acrimony, because we have succeeded, thanks to the co-operation of Great Britain's statesmen, in thwarting the efforts of the men who sought our destruction. In a life and death fight we won, because the best element of the British nation was on our side. We always had good friends among English-speaking people.

The 60,000 Frenchmen who became British subjects in 1763 were not an inferior population. It is a mistake to believe that their best men had returned to France. It has been proven that, apart from the regiments which went back to the old country, only 279 persons all told left Canada. They were ruined by the war, but they had carried on an extensive trade with Europe, and at the

time of the change of allegiance, they held bills of exchange on France for $8,200,000, which were paid in part through the good offices of the British Government.

Between these new subjects and an unbending oligarchy the fight went merrily on until 1864. In 1774, fifteen years after the battle of the Plains of Abraham, the Quebec Act was passed authorizing the appointment of an advisory council without a Legislative Assembly. The Councillors proved to be inexperienced, tactless and as pompous as incompetence can be.

From 1775 to 1783, as you know, the American colonies fought Great Britain and became independent. The Maritime Provinces remained loyal, but they were far from having a satisfactory government.

The first suggestion of a federation of all the British-American colonies was made by Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts, and Benjamin Franklin a few years before the American revolution.

When the United States came into existence, William Smith, a loyalist who migrated from New York to Canada, and became Chief Justice of Quebec in 1786, made the suggestion that all the colonies which had remained faithful to Great Britain should unite in one great Confederation. The population of Canada, in 1784, was 123,012 and there were about 10,000 U.E.L. in Upper Canada; the British population of Nova Scotia was estimated at 32,000 people, having been increased by 20,000 U.E.L.; New Brunswick had a population of about 35,000; Cape Breton, about 2,000; Prince Edward Island 4,500; and Newfoundland about 10,250. The total population of a Confederation would then have been 226,000 souls.

In 1789, Judge Smith took up the matter with Lord Dorchester who, on the 8th of February, 1790, wrote Grenville, Secretary of the Home Department, a letter in which he said:

> Before I conclude, I have to submit to the wisdom of His Majesty's Council, whether it may not be advisable to establish a General Government for His Majesty's Dominions upon this Continent, as well as a Governor-General, whereby the united exertions of His Majesty's North American Provinces may more effectually be directed to the general interest, and to the preservation of the Unity of the Empire.

The Constitutional Act of 1791 which was introduced in the House of Commons by the great William Pitt established the parliamentary system and divided the country into two provinces: Upper and Lower Canada; but it did not make the government responsible to the Legislatures. Although it seemed to please everybody at the outset, it subsequently developed into a source of racial,

religious and political animosities which culminated in the Rebellion of 1837. When the two provinces were making an honest effort to live together for fifty years, some people seemed to think that the best way to have peace was to separate them. Others favoured the union of all the British Provinces.

In 1800, Robert Uniacke moved in the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia that all the Canadian colonies be united under one government. We find that Chief Justice Jonathan Sewell, of Quebec, wrote a letter in 1814 to the Duke of Kent, father of Queen Victoria, on the same lines. The Duke's answer promising to hint the matter to Lord Bathurst is included in Lord Durham's report which also discussed the question at length.

The Fathers of Confederation who met in Charlottetown and Quebec to discuss the matter were not the originators of the present constitution, which does not detract in the least from their merit in giving it form and putting it through at a time when the political situation was in an alarming state of disorder.

When the abortive Union Bill was introduced in 1822, Chief Justice Sewell, Rev. Dr. John Strachan and John Beverley Robinson took that opportunity to forward a proposition for a more comprehensive measure. Mr. Robinson, who was then in England pressed for consideration of a wider union, but the Government did not believe that all the colonies would welcome the proposal. In 1826, John Uniacke, Attorney-General of Nova Scotia, submitted a paper to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in which he urged the necessity of a union of the Provinces if their absorption by the United States was to be prevented. He suggested the name as "The United Provinces of British North America" with provision for the remaining territory being received later on the same basis. The Colonial Secretary advised not to agitate the question, as things were "tranquil" at the time.

There were many good reasons why British-Canadians felt the need to strengthen their country. First, of course, was the fear of the French element becoming too influential, then the danger of Canada falling a prey to United States; and the necessity of having a winter port for Upper and Lower Canada which were then shipping their goods to Europe from Boston, New York or Philadelphia. With a new Confederation, they had the harbours of Halifax and St. John, N.B., which could be given railroad communication. Then, these British-Canadians being all of the same creed and nationality, saw no reason why they should live separated in different sections of our large British territory.

The fact of the matter was that everybody was dissatisfied. The administration of affairs was in the hands of incompetent men. Crown lands, for instance, had been given by the thousand acres with scandalous lavishness and without the least sense of proportion. In Upper Canada, 730,000 acres had been granted to militiamen, 450,000 acres to discharged soldiers and sailors, 255,000 acres to magistrates and barristers, 136,000 acres to executive councillors and their families, 50,000 acres to five legislative councillors and their families, 36,900 acres, besides the clergy reserves, to clergymen as private property, 264,000 acres to persons contracting to make surveys, 92,526 acres to officers of the army and navy, 50,000 acres for endowment for schools, 48,520 acres to Col. Talbot, the brave officer who gave his name to Port Talbot, 12,000 acres to General Brock and 12,000 to Doctor Mountain, former Anglican Bishop of Quebec, in addition to the 3,200,000 acres granted to the U.E.L. who settled in the Province before 1787; making altogether, with the clergy reserves, nearly half of all the surveyed land in the Province.

The same conditions existed in Lower Canada.

In Prince Edward Island, the whole of the Crown lands were, with the exception of 3,000 acres, granted in one day, in the year 1767. The lands were allotted to 67 proprietors, chiefly Scotch.

There were no immigration laws, and exploitation of the worst kind was rampant through that branch of the service. Immigrants were attracted to this country, but they soon re-emigrated to United States. Dr. Morrin, Inspecting Physician of the Port of Quebec said:

> I am almost at a loss for words to describe the state in which the emigrants frequently arrive: with a few exceptions, the state of the ships was quite abominable: so much so that the harbour-master's boatmen had no difficulty, at the distance of gun-shot, either when the wind was favourable or in dead calm in distinguishing by the odour alone a crowded emigrant ship. . . . Within six weeks after the arrival of some vessels, and the landing of the passengers at Quebec, the hospital has received upwards of 100 patients at different times from among them.

Dr. Morrin's testimony was confirmed by that of Dr. Skey, Deputy Inspector General of Hospitals, and President of the Quebec Emigrants Society.

A Passengers Act was passed in Great Britain in 1835 which brought some improvement, but then we were in the throes of near rebellion and emigration almost ceased in consequence of the political state in the Province. Shortly after 1837, this country began to have the sad experience of depopulation and impoverishment. The family compact reigned supreme and monopolized the whole

government. The rebellion of 1837 which originated in Upper as well as Lower Canada was not a general insurrection but it was an explosion of indignation stirred up by radical politicians.

Lord Durham was sent to investigate and report. He came to the conclusion that Upper and Lower Canada should be united into one province. This noble lord, who was only five months in Canada, openly and officially recommended the annihilation of the French-Canadian nationality. He said:

> The only power that can be effectual at once in coercing the present disaffection, and hereafter obliterating the nationality of the French-Canadians, is that of a numerical majority of a loyal and English population. . . . I believe that tranquility can only be restored by subjecting the Province to the vigorous rule of an English majority; and that the only efficacious government would be that formed by a legislative union.

As the population of Upper Canada was estimated at 400,000, and that of Lower Canada was 600,000, Lord Durham recommended equal representation in the legislature, and as Upper Canada had a larger debt than Lower Canada he proposed that the debts be pooled and paid by the future union government. He said: "The surplus revenue of Lower Canada would supply the deficiency of that part of Upper Canada."

The Union Act 1840 was passed by the British Parliament and the first cabinet formed under its provision was without a single French-Canadian. The new ministers were Messrs. Sullivan, Dunn, Harrison, Draper, Baldwin, Daly, Ogden and Day. There were then over half a million French-Canadians in the Province. Imagine what their feeling must have been. They protested so vehemently that, in 1848, the British House passed an Amendment Act authorizing the use of the French language in the Legislature. They were given representation in the Executive Council in 1842.

The situation went from bad to worse and it soon became evident that the Union Act could not last. It was at best a mere makeshift which after all might as well have been resorted to because it brought old acrimonies to a head before the country finally settled down to business as a well organized Dominion.

In 1844, John A. Macdonald appeared on the scene. Men of first calibre were then in the Legislature. Baldwin, Hinks, Draper, Lafontaine, Cartier, Taché, Sicotte, Dorion, MacNab, and A. Campbell had to solve such questions as the abolition of the seignorial tenure, the regulation of the clergy reserves, representation by population, the organization of a militia, the construction of the Intercolonial Railway, etc.

A bitter fight took place on the question of providing payment of

losses sustained by the inhabitants of Lower Canada during the Rebellion. In the session of 1849, Mr. Lafontaine, Attorney-General for Lower Canada, introduced a Bill for the indemnification of persons in Lower Canada whose property had been destroyed in the battles of St. Eustache, St. Denis, etc. The proposal produced a bitter feeling among those who looked upon rebellion as the most grievous of crimes. Despite the protests of the Opposition, the Bill passed its third reading on the 9th of March by a vote of 47 to 18. Petitions poured in to the Governor-General praying that the measure might not become law. The Reform leaders were burned in effigy. In spite of that, Lord Elgin, the Governor-General, proceeded to the Parliament Buildings, then in Montreal, and gave the Royal Assent to the Bill. His Excellency, when returning to his residence, was insulted by the mob, and he narrowly escaped bodily injury at the hands of the populace. An indignation meeting was held that night on the Champ de Mars and the cry arose "To the Parliament Buildings," and soon the flames mounting on the night air told the people of Montreal that anarchy was in their midst. The whole building including the legislative libraries, which contained many priceless records, was destroyed. Lord Elgin was removed from the presidency of St. Andrews' Society in Montreal. Sir Allan MacNab and Mr. Cayley repaired to England to protest, whilst Sir Francis Hinks followed them representing the Government. In the House of Commons the Bill was vigorously attacked by Mr. Gladstone and defended by Lord John Russell. Lord Elgin's course in following the advice of his Ministers was finally approved by the Home Government. As a consequence, the seat of Government was removed from Montréal and the Legislature adopted the system of having the Capital alternately at Quebec and Toronto, which prevailed until the removal to Ottawa in 1865.

We then saw the strange spectacle of several hundreds of the leading citizens of Montreal affix their names to an Annexation manifesto advocating separation from British connection as a prelude to union with the United States. Men subsequently known as Sir John Rose, Sir John C. Abbott, Sir Francis Johnson, Sir David McPherson, together with the Redpaths, Molsons, Torrances and Workmans were among the number. John A. Macdonald was pressed to sign but he refused and advocated the formation of a *British America League* as a more sensible procedure. This was done and the new league passed resolutions to maintain inviolate the connection with the Mother Country and to form a Confederation of all the provinces. The annexation sentiment gradually disappeared.

From a political viewpoint, the Rebellion Losses Bill was one of the cleverest moves ever made in a British Legislature as it forced the members who opposed it to take a stand against the Queen's representative and it made them the disloyal party seeking annexation with United States. It took all the skill and strategy of John A. Macdonald to bring the tories back to their senses, but it gave the Reformers a big *tu quoque* argument whenever they were charged with disloyalty. .

From 1850, the idea of Confederation was in the mind of every public man in Canada. Lord Durham had said in his report that the objects sought by the Act of 1841 would perhaps be better attained by extending this legislative union over all the British Provinces in North America. / He clearly advocated Confederation in the following words:

> The Bill (meaning the prospective Union Act 1841) should contain provisions by which any or all of the other North American colonies may, on the application of the Legislature, be, with the consent of the two Canadas, or their united Legislature, admitted into the union on such terms as may be agreed on between them.
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> Such a Confederation [he added] would form a great and powerful people, possessing the means of securing good and responsible government for itself, and which, under the protection of the British Empire, might in some measure counterbalance the preponderant and increasing influence of the United States on the American Continent. I do not anticipate, he said, that a colonial Legislature thus strong and thus self-governing, would desire to abandon the connexion with Great Britain. On the contrary, I believe that the practical relief from undue interference, which would be the result of such a change, would strengthen the present bond of feelings and interests; and that the connexion would only become more durable and advantageous by having more of equality, of freedom and of local independence.

When we consider that this passage was written in 1838, we must admit that Durham, in spite of his peculiarities and prejudices, was certainly a great statesman.

George Brown made his entry in the Legislature in 1851 and he soon distinguished himself by his fierce attacks on French-Canadians. On the questions of secularizing the clergy reserves and making the Legislative Council elective, he was so insulting to Lower Canada that the French-Canadian radicals had to leave him. John A. Macdonald adopted a policy of moderation, and with Taché and Cartier he easily won the favour of French-Canadians. In 1854 the MacNab-Morin Ministry was formed with moderate men of both sides and took office as a Liberal-Conservative Government, leaving the Rouges and Clear-Grits in a somewhat difficult situation.

When the Macdonald-Cartier Government was defeated on the choice of Ottawa as the Capital, in 1858, Brown formed with Dorion a Ministry which only lasted one hour as it resigned on August 4th because the Governor-General declined to dissolve Parliament.

A Cartier-Macdonald Ministry was formed with the members of the Macdonald-Cartier Ministry who did not have to be re-elected.

The net result was that Brown and his colleagues, by accepting office had all lost their seats and found themselves in private life whilst Macdonald had a majority in the House. The operation is known as the "double shuffle."

In 1864, the Government introduced a Bill to promote the more efficient organization of the militia of Canada. The measure proposed the establishment of an organization whereby 50,000 men would be at all times available for active service, with 50,000 men in reserve. The annual cost of maintaining this force was estimated at $1,110,000. On the 20th of May the vote on the second reading which was taken without debate, resulted in the rejection of the Bill by a majority of seven. The defeat was entirely due to the defection among Lower Canadians. The Government had a majority of seven votes from the Upper Canadian Members. Three days later the Ministry resigned. John Sandfield Macdonald and L. V. Sicotte formed a Government on the 24th of May.

Until then a ministry did not remain in power if it failed to secure the majority of the members of each of the united provinces. The new government did not recognize that principle when Mr. R. W. Scott introduced a Separate School Act in April, 1863, which was passed by the votes of Lower Canada, and of John A. Macdonald and his friends. A large number of Upper Canadian supporters of the Government had voted against the Bill. A few days later, Mr. Macdonald, true to form, brought forward a motion of want of confidence in the administration calling loudly for the immediate application of the principle of representation by population—a principle on which opinions had changed since Lower Canada was in minority. The amendment carried by a majority of 5 votes. Another resignation and another new ministry, that of Taché-Macdonald, followed.. The parties were then evenly divided and there was little prospect of a workable legislature. The agitation for Confederation became more active, not only in Canada but also in the Maritime Provinces.

In 1858, the Cartier-Macdonald Government had issued a programme stating, *inter alia*, that the Administration did not consider themselves warranted in incurring any expenditure for public build-

ings until Parliament had the opportunity of considering the expediency of a federal Union of the British North American Provinces. At the close of the session of 1858, Sir Edmund Head in his speech proroguing Parliament had said:

> I propose, in the course of the recess, to communicate with Her Majesty's Government, and with the Government of the sister colonies, on another matter of very great importance. I am desirous of inviting them to discuss with us the principles on which a bond of a federal character, uniting the Provinces of British North America may perhaps hereafter be practicable.

In accordance with that announcement a delegation was sent to England composed of Messrs. Galt, Ross and Cartier. In 1859, the Reform Party passed a Resolution in favour of Confederation.

In 1860, Dr. Tupper (later Sir Charles) in a speech at St. John, N.B., declared for Confederation unreservedly. In the session of 1861, Premier Joseph Howe, who afterwards opposed the scheme, submitted to the Nova Scotia Assembly a resolution in favour of Confederation, which was seconded by Dr. Tupper and unanimously adopted.

The Government of Canada was at a deadlock in 1864 when George Brown took the initiative in the great scheme. He offered to join John A. Macdonald for the purpose of carrying out the Confederation of all the British American Provinces. Sir John said at a banquet in Montreal 1875:

> If we are now a Dominion, we must not forget that it was owing in great measure to Mr. Brown's momentary feeling of patriotism of which, however, he soon repented.

However that may be, Brown proved a good politician when he headed off his crafty opponent in taking the first steps towards a measure of unity for the welfare of Canada. John A. agreed, made the scheme his own and steered it through Parliament succeeding at times to trip George Brown on the questions of separate schools and provincial rights.

A coalition Government had to be formed in 1864. Shortly after its formation word came that a conference of representatives of the Maritime Provinces had been called to meet in Charlottetown to discuss the union of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. A delegation of Canadian Ministers went down to Charlottetown to invite representatives from the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland to attend a conference at Quebec to discuss the question of the larger union. The invitation was accepted; and on October 10th, 1864, the historical Quebec Conference opened its sessions.

At last Confederation came into existence and Canada is now a country with a population of 10,000,000 souls. We seem to have eliminated all causes of friction.

On the 27th of December, 1867, the City of Quebec was splendidly decorated. The Union Jack was waving its graceful folds and the guns roared in glory from the Plains of Abraham where Wolfe and Montcalm had fought and died. A stage coach passed through the narrow streets preceded by officers of the British cavalry; in front of the Legislative Buildings a regiment of British soldiers stood at attention. An elderly man dressed in Windsor uniform alighted and the militiamen presented arms. He was the representative of Queen Victoria, Sir N. F. Belleau, a French-Canadian. He walked up the stairs, passed through the corridor and ascended the throne where he read the royal speech in English and then in French, opening the first session of the Province of Quebec in the Dominion of Canada. In his heart every French-Canadian then sang "God Save the Queen." No higher tribute could have been paid to the political genius of the British race.

ARTHUR BEAUCHESNE.

House of Commons,
Ottawa.