

THE BAR AND ITS NATIONAL INFLUENCE.¹

When the Honourable the Minister of Justice, a few days ago, asked me to represent him at this gathering, I at once made introspective examination of my past views in respect to the Canadian Bar Association, and I came to the conclusion that I ought to make, on this occasion, a full and public confession of my utter lack of faith not only in the usefulness but also in the life prospects of the Association, in the early days of its existence.

Indeed, I was then among a group of none too modest and sceptical bystanders who frowned upon its cradle and predicted for its parents hopes disappointed, labour in vain and early sorrow.

Nor shall I conceal the reasons for these fears if only to palliate the offence, and, in terms of 'assizes,' justify a suspended sentence. We were vaguely apprehensive of a gentle and mild-mannered invasion, which, in due course of time and by degrees almost imperceptible, might offer a sacrifice of our magnificent system of codified Civil Laws upon the altar of uniform legislation.

But I hasten to proclaim it; these fears were unfounded and they have long ago vanished. Today, the most distinguished Judges on the Bench and the leaders of our Bar, in a Province which you know to have been traditional by necessity and conservative in the real sense by instinct, have become the ardent missionaries, as well as the enthusiastic collaborators, of those who formed and organised the Association, and who by constant endeavour and at great sacrifice to themselves, have not only maintained the Association to a mature life, but, with that inspiration which always comes to broadminded and patriotic men, enlarged its action far beyond and above the range of our ordinary professional pursuits.

The Association was born of a generous and truly Canadian idea. It will live; time will only add to its influence for the profession of law and to its importance throughout the country at large.

That is why the sceptics and the false prophets of the early hour have become the converts of the eleventh; and let me, on behalf of these repenting sinners *ex eorum pars magna fui* offer here and on this solemn occasion a tardy, but none the less sincere, homage to him whose name is at this moment in everyone's thought, and who with un-

¹ Address delivered by Mr. N. K. Laflamme, K.C., Bâtonnier-General of the Bar of the Province of Quebec, at the Annual Dinner of the Canadian Bar Association held in Winnipeg on August 27th, 1925.

tiring effort achieved this great success because he worked for it with the spirit of an apostle and with the persevering courage of a crusader.

But let the Association be Canadian in name and in truth; and may it become a bond of unity which might appear to-day delicate as a silk thread to become in time as solid as a steel bar, and also a strong armature in the complete structure of Canadian nationhood.

It is a truism to observe that Canada is a great country. It is not so often recalled that Canada is a difficult country to govern. Both geographically and ethnically, we meet with obstacles not easy to remove and with problems difficult to conquer. You may glance at the map for a moment and it will tell its own story.

Look to the West, at the gem of this Dominion, the Province of British Columbia, breathing on the Pacific Ocean, its face towards the Far East, rich in products and in hopes, enjoying a magnificent climate, self-contained and almost self-supporting and separated from the prairies by the gigantic wall of the Rockies.

Then central Canada, of which this City is the metropolis, the land of hard wheat and the land of strong men, isolated from the oceans and endeavouring to solve the many problems arising from short summers and long distances; and far beyond the desolate stretch of land over which we easterners have to travel to reach you, you find the two parent Provinces, one resting on the Great Lakes and the other leaning on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, like two dowagers looking out from the piazza of prosperous homes, with a variety of agricultural products, water powers in abundance, but with great industries which draw too many toilers of the soil to the great centres.

Then, our three sister Provinces on the Atlantic, with coal mines inexhaustible, rich in lumber and fisheries and yet far distant from the great markets; Nova Scotia extends both arms far out to sea, as if calling for assistance from the Mother Country, or beckoning to the New England States.

Nearly fifty or sixty years ago, Statesmen decided to confederate the Canadian Provinces and they signed a solemn parchment; but no contract ever created a nation. Later, great captains of enterprise tied up the interests of these Provinces by constructing three belts of steel rails, but juxtaposing the interests of men does not necessarily unite men themselves.

The object which we all pursue can only come to life by the creation of a true national spirit born of the notion that we have a common country, of the attachment to a native land, of personal sacrifice for the common good and above all, of the willingness of every Canadian to labour with certainty of no reward for himself, provided those

who follow may reap a plentiful harvest of increased happiness in this land of Canada, blessed by Providence and consecrated by the heroism of the early pioneers, not only of those who found historians to record their deeds, poets and orators to recall them and artists to transmit their names to posterity, but chiefly of those whose names are unknown, who lived anonymous lives and died in the wilderness, unknown soldiers, over the remains of whom shall never spread the shadow of an Arch of Triumph.

Let the Canadian Bar Association be a symbol and a living example of how a true national spirit can be created and fostered; then, but only then, may the members of the Canadian Bar have the right to proclaim their pride in our glorious past and look to future days with that optimism born of the sense of duty performed to themselves, their fellows and to the Country.

LIMERICKS OF THE LAW.

1. *The Unjust Judge.*

A Judge without honour or pity
Who feared neither Moses nor Chitty
Was forced to decide
For a lady who cried
With unusual pertinacity.

2. *An Ancient Partition Action.*

King Solomon's keen erudition
Condemned the poor baby to scission:
"They cannot agree
On *per tout et per mie*,
So it's plainly a case of partition."

3. *The First Ejectment, B.C. 4004.*

There was a sad couple, bereft
Of Eden because of their theft;
Sighed Adam to Eve,
"Come, my dear, we must leave"—
So they both took their leaves and they left.

J. D. S.