

**1837, MY
CONNECTION
WITH IT**

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1837, My Connection with it by Thomas Storrow Brown

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1898

1837

AND MY CONNECTION WITH IT (1)

BORN in St. Andrews, Province of New Brunswick, I am a "good Tory," and not of a Revolutionary stock. My father's father, a Boston merchant, sacrificed his all for the Royal cause, and left for Halifax with General Gage, when Boston was evacuated, in 1776. My mother's mother emigrated from Portsmouth to New Brunswick, with a daughter married to Captain Storrow, of the British army, from whom my name was taken. She was a "Wentworth," cousin to John Wentworth (afterwards Sir John, Governor of Nova Scotia), the last Royal Governor of New Hampshire; niece to Sir Benning, his predecessor; and granddaughter to John Wentworth, who preceded him. These three "Wentworths"—father, son, and grandson,—having governed New Hampshire for more than forty years.

(1) This article was originally published in the *New Dominion Monthly*, vol. IV, number one, April, 1869. It is now entirely out of the reach of nearly all of our readers. We thought it proper to reprint it, as it contains some interesting particulars in relation with the Rebellion of 1837.

The *New Dominion Monthly* has been founded in 1868, and has subsisted, I think, until 1873. It contains several important historical papers by Bourinot, LeMoine, Rev. Rand, and others. The complete file is scarce and worth to be kept in record.—R. R.

common acceptation here,— the first meaning none but *French* Canadians; and the second, all who are *not* French Canadians. With the call upon the Assembly to provide for the Civil List, came the protest that culminated in 1837. The Assembly was Canadian, and, acting upon its positive right, demanded that all the revenue of the Province, should be placed at its disposal. The official body, including sinecurists and pluralists, being mostly English in numbers, and more so on the pay-list, instinctly foresaw reduction for their order. The Legislative Council, not a mere obedient appendage like the Legislative Councils of our day, or the "Senate", was a vigorous English body; and, taking part with the office-holders, put itself in direct antagonism to the Assembly. A great portion of the legislation demanded by the people through the Assembly was thrown out by the Council, till in the end there was an accumulation of over three hundred bills, passed by the Lower House, and thrown out by the Upper; and various governmental irregularities were committed, against continued remonstrances.

The constant demand of the Assembly for all the revenue, was met by tardy concessions by the British Government year after year, only to increase irritation; till in the end, as should have been in the beginning, all was surrendered. Then came the voting of supplies. The Assembly, having no other check on the Government, on the office holders, insisted on voting salaries annually and separately to each service or individual. The Governor, supported by the Council, insisted that they should be voted *en bloc*,—in a lump sum—and for a term of years, to be divided by the

Executive; and thus the conduct of public affairs became so insufferable that, in 1828, a deputation from Canadians (there had been deputations in former years) carried home a petition, signed by 87,000 people, which was laid before a Committee of the House of Commons. The Committee entered fully upon the question, gave the delegates a full hearing, and by a report sustained the House of Assembly in its allegations or grievances, but left the remedy in the hands of Government.

Promises of redress were profuse, but in the multiplicity of reforms required at that time of the British Ministry, ours were overlooked till 1835, when Lord Gosford, a good-natured Irish gentleman, of no political capacity or knowledge, was sent out as Governor, accompanied by an ex-captain of Engineers, and an excentric Indian judge to act with him as "Commissioners" to inquire into our grievances. The insult of appointing a commission to inquire into facts that had been re-echoed for fifteen years, when the Parliament of the Province could be the only inquest, was only equalled by the imbecility of selecting three men utterly incompetent for the task. The Commission was never recognized by our Parliament, nor did the British Ministry suppose it would be. It was sent out as a makeshift; and its reports, in which in turn each Commissioner differed from his colleagues, ended with the printing.

Lord Gosford, however, did something. He gave at Quebec a St. Catherine's ball, and, to the disgust of all loyal Britons, gave the chief place to a Canadian lady; which disgust was

amplified by concessions of many things, before withheld, and a judicious bestowal of offices to certain Canadian politicians. On return, a portion of the Quebec wing of what was now called the "Papineau Party" split off, and desired reconciliation. Satisfied with what they had in hand, and promises of more, they declare that the cry for reform meant revolution.

To no party in a colony does the British nation, at home and abroad, owe so much as to the "Papineau Party", to which I had the honor of being attached. To no man born in a colony does the British nation, at home and abroad, owe so much as to Louis Joseph Papineau,—one who, by that spirit that in heroic times falls upon choosen men, towered gigantically amidst his compeers. Though here the struggle was presented as a contest between the French and English, in other colonies it was distinctly between the people and the colonial oligarchy.

In 1837, there was chronic disaffection in every British colony, and each was besieging the Colonial Office for redress of grievances, having their common source in the contest of people, speaking through their Houses of Assembly, and Colonial Office holders supported by imbecile Governors, through an irresponsible Legislative Council. The unwavering determination of the Papineau Party forced questions to their ultimate decision; and the British Government, when awakened to the necessity, with a magnanimity seldom found in history, acknowledged the errors of the past, and noticed all the colonies that henceforth their own government should be in their own hands, and her authority never again be

invoked against their rights. From that time to this there has been no colonial disloyalty, discontent, disaffection, or complaint. The question in England then was, how shall we keep the colonies? The question now is, how can we shake them off?

The session of Parliament in 1836 was, like its predecessors, one of strife between its Lower and Upper House, and ended without a vote of supplies. We then owed no public debt; there were no public creditors, except the provincial officials. There was for their payment one hundred and forty thousand pounds in the provincial chest, but without the "vote" not a shilling could be paid; and, from the judges downwards, all were suffering for want of their "arrears".

Thus matters dragged till the 7th of March, 1837, when that great constitutional statesman, Lord John Russell, in the spirit of an absolute despot, introduced into the House of Commons a series of resolutions, authorizing the Governor of Lower Canada to draw from the Provincial chest this one hundred and forty thousand pounds, and pay off all arrears of salary, without waiting for a vote of our House of Assembly, which, vested so far as concerned the Province with all the powers and privileges of the House of Commons, had the sole control. Many members, who expressed the true British heart, protested against such anti-British and unwarranted resolutions, and told us we should be a disgrace to the British name and to humanity if we did not resist them to the uttermost; but they were carried by a great majority in the House; and in the Lords, Lord Brougham was the only dissident.