

THE PROGRESSION OF LOYALTIES.*

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ON St. Andrew's Day, at the annual dinner of the North British Society of Halifax, a company of Scotsmen by descent and Nova Scotians by domicile have honoured the toast to Canada as their native land. No words could serve better than this simple ceremony to reveal the mysterious processes which lie behind the birth and growth of nations. Here, in this very room, in the mind and heart of each of us, may be discovered a trinity of loyalties whose influence and interaction have determined the course of Canadian history, and now in the fulness of time have brought forth a Canadian nation. The first is loyalty to race and tradition. The second is loyalty to province. The third is loyalty to nationality.

It would be difficult to find a better illustration of loyalty to race and tradition than the celebration of St. Andrew's Day by Scotsmen in all parts of the world. In New Zealand, South Africa, the United States, and many another country, Scottish songs are being sung, Scottish stories are being told far into the night, and Scottish toasts are being drunk, in honour of the patron saint of Scotland and in proud recollection of the glorious history of Caledonia. In the case of many of those who commemorate St. Andrew's Day on this occasion, there is no longer a living link with Scotland. Many years, yes, perhaps several generations have passed since our forefathers left the Highlands to play their part in the building of a greater Britain beyond the seas. But our affection for Scotland does not depend upon a personal recollection of the banks and braes o' Bonnie Doon. We may never have seen Ben Nevis or the Western Isles. Our eyes may not have looked with wonder on the magic beauty of Loch Lomond. Our steps may not have lingered on the storied street that runs from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood. These and other images of Scotland may have come to us only through the immortal works of the Scottish bards. We may even know little of the history of Scotland, of the epic struggles of Bruce and Wallace, of the romantic wanderings of Bonnie Prince

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Charlie in the Highlands. Our love of Scotland has been passed down to us as a goodly inheritance, which we in turn will pass on to our children. There is something in the name of Scotland to which our hearts give an instant response; and if a kind fortune should bring us to its shores, we know we should feel that we were not far from home.

This attachment to the homeland and traditions of their fathers is, of course, not confined to those of us who claim Scottish descent. What St. Andrew's Day is to Scotsmen, St. George's Day is to Englishmen and St. Patrick's Day to the absent sons and daughters of Ireland. Our compatriots of French descent look back with pride to the history of Old France, and retain their affection for the land from which their ancestors sailed to found an Empire on the banks of the St. Lawrence. Indeed, there is hardly a section of our population which does not treasure memories that bridge the barriers of time and space, and bind us by the strongest of associations to lands we may never have seen, but for which we cherish an abiding love. If this bond of origin and tradition is strong in us to-day, however, it was infinitely stronger in those Scotsmen, Englishmen and Irishmen who first established homes on this continent. With us an affection for the land of our fathers is but one of several which share the hearthfire of our hearts. With them it was all-absorbing and complete. The very names given to the new colonies, New England, New Scotland, and New France, were symbols, so to speak, of an attachment which looked back to the country of origin. The soil upon which they settled was in name and in political association but a remote outpost, a disjointed fragment, of the lands from which they had sailed to found new homes in the far country which lay beyond the western ocean. Thus, during the earlier period of colonial history, the people of Nova Scotia and of other British colonies in America were united by an undivided affection to the lands of the Rose, the Shamrock and the Thistle.

But the years moved on. A generation of Nova Scotians came upon the scene who had no living connection with the old world. To them the old affection was more remote. The old traditions still lingered, but the intensity of the sentiment they engendered was dimmed a little by transmission. And with this relaxing of the bonds of origin, slight though it was, there came a natural attachment to the hills and valleys, the rugged shores and sylvan lakes of the province where first they saw the light of day. A consciousness of a Nova Scotian community was superimposed on a patriotism which drew its sustenance from origin and tradition.

Self-government strengthened this community spirit by creating interests which were essentially Nova Scotian. The people of this province began to feel that they differed in important respects from the people of other colonies. Nova Scotians began to cherish their own traditions. They looked with delight on their own landscapes, and with unconcealed pride on the white sails of their ships as they set out from their ports to do business in great waters. This feeling of attachment to Nova Scotia reached its height, I think, in the years just before Confederation. No one can doubt that a growing pride in their native province was the creative impulse behind the histories of Haliburton and Murdoch, and the speeches and poems of Joseph Howe. Small though it was in area, and sparse in population, Nova Scotia was not unworthy of the affection of its citizens. Its mariners were known on the seven seas. It was the pioneer in colonial self-government. Its judges and advocates could hold their heads high in any court. Its schoolmasters were men of learning and wisdom. In short, this province was slowly acquiring its own traditions and its own loyalty. If anyone should doubt the existence and intensity of this feeling in the period before Confederation, I would recommend the reading of Howe's speech to the Mechanics' Institute of Halifax in 1834. "Has Nova Scotia," he said, "received the power to attach her children to her bosom, and make them prouder and fonder of her bleak hills and sylvan valleys than even of the fairer and more cultivated lands from which their parents came? I pause for no reply. . . . You who owe your origin to other lands cannot resist the conviction that as you loved them, so will your children love this: and that though the second place in their hearts may be filled by merry England, romantic Scotland, or the verdant fields of Erin, the first and highest will be occupied by the little province where they drew their earliest breath, and which claims from them filial reverence and care."

Had Nova Scotia continued on her separate way, there can be no doubt that this feeling of provincial loyalty would have become even more articulate with the passing years. But just when it was beginning to strike firm root in the consciousness of her people, there arose in the minds of a few far-sighted men an ideal of a Canadian nation which should come into existence as the result of a union of the provinces of British North America. Sometimes we are tempted to think that this ideal was confined in the main to the old provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, or perhaps to adopt the view of Goldwin Smith that Confederation had little to do with idealism, and was in fact but an expedient

adopted by MacDonalld and Cartier to escape from a precarious political situation. To my own mind, both of these views must be rejected. It would be difficult to find a more eloquent expression of the ideal of a united British North America than that revealed in a speech delivered by the Hon. J. W. Johnstone of Nova Scotia more than twenty years before Confederation was an accomplished fact. Moreover, no one can read the speeches of the Confederation period, notably those of McGee, MacDonalld, Cartier and Tupper, without a deep conviction that these men had a high sense of their responsibility to future generations of Canadians, basing their support of Canadian unity on no narrow ground of immediate political expediency, but upon a profound faith in the future greatness of our country, and a keen appreciation of the fact that they were laying the foundation of a great northern nation under the British Crown which one day must extend as an unbroken territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

And so, in the course of another span of years, the Dominion of Canada came into being, and began at once to demand from the people of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec, a portion of that loyalty and affection which hitherto had been bestowed on homeland and province. With the creation of a united Canada, the trinity of loyalties was potentially complete, and the stage was set for a rivalry of sentiments which has continued without cessation to the present day. Indeed, it is not too much to say that this competition of loyalties supplies the undercurrent of Canadian history since Confederation. In a sense, Confederation was artificial. It created the body of a nation, but it was a body without a soul, a temple without an altar. The attachment to race and birthplace was natural and spontaneous. But the cold, legal formalism of the *British North America Act*, and the external evidence of unity in a Canadian currency and Canadian postage, were but feeble magnets for the patriotism of the scattered communities which were brought together under a federal constitution more than sixty years ago. To weld these scattered communities and different racial elements into a united Canadian nation has been the task of the past sixty years. It was a long task. It was a hard task. It was our fathers' task. It has been our task. And if we have succeeded, we have written a new page in world history, for in no country has nation-building been faced with greater or more persistent obstacles.

There is not time this evening to deal with the various influences which made us a nation instead of a colony or a collection of provinces, further than to suggest that the growth of a Canadian

consciousness was powerfully assisted by the expansion of our transportation systems, the development of Western Canada, and the education of succeeding generations of Canadian children in the joint inheritance of Canadian traditions through the medium of Canadian history and literature. Even with the aid of these influences, Canadian nationalism was a plant of slow growth. One cannot look back over the years and say that at this or that point in our development Canada became a nation and its people acquired a sentiment of national patriotism. But while we cannot fix the arrival of nationhood with historical accuracy, it is possible for each of us to recall the remarkable surge of national feeling which enveloped us during the period of the late war. Sometimes it needs an unexpected test or crisis to give reality and concrete expression to forces which have been working quietly beneath the surface of things. However this may be, when I think of Canada as a nation my mind goes back to two events far different in character which reveal, I think, both the true nature and the direction of national sentiment.

The first occurred in France in the summer of 1916. It was not spectacular. To the casual onlooker it was probably devoid of any significance; yet to me it seemed to symbolize a new era in our history. From a hilltop near Poperinghe, I saw a Canadian division begin its march to the Somme. In that division there were men from every province, representatives of every racial element in our population; yet as they filed past, their regimental bands played Canadian songs, and they marched with a proud consciousness that they belonged to the Canadian Corps. There in France, under the stimulus of a great emergency, the unity of Canada meant something it had never meant before. And here at home, during those anxious years, Canadian unity meant something it had never meant before. From this time forward, one could never doubt the existence or potential strength of a Canadian national sentiment. Five years later, I sat in the gallery of the Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva, and looked down upon the seats of the Canadian delegates who took their places in that world assembly on terms of equality with other nations, and by their presence announced that Canada had become a nation in a political sense and was willing and eager to assume its full share of responsibility in international affairs. May we not say, then, that our progress towards national unity has been like the journey of a traveller upon a winding mountain road which suddenly ends in a steep ascent? For many years we had been slowly developing a national sentiment within the structure of our federal institutions; but it was the short, steep

path of war which brought us finally to the table land of unity, and gave us that sense of national responsibility which has been the propelling force behind the great constitutional development of the past decade.

So much for the past. But what of the future? Upon the earlier foundations of racial tradition and provincial loyalty we have developed a national consciousness, and upon the basis of a national consciousness we have secured the recognition of a national status in the field of intra-imperial and international affairs. Can we say, then, that the task of Confederation has been accomplished, and that this national unity we have won is secure for all time against assault and disintegration?

Upon this point the teaching of history is clear and unmistakable. When a national sentiment is developed under the shelter of a federal constitution, it is never safe from the corroding effects of racial, religious or economic antagonisms. The labour of nation-building is no sooner accomplished than there arises the equally important task of preservation. It follows that if we are to preserve a Canadian nation, we must know the strength and weakness of its materials. We must know that this thing we call national unity in a federal state is a fragile product, and that it has been brought into existence, so to speak, by artificial methods. "Ask me not," said Carlyle, "where is the Government. In vain wilt thou go to Downing Street; thou findest nothing there but brick and stone houses, and some bundles of papers tied with tape. Government is everywhere, yet nowhere; seen only in its works, invisible, mystic and miraculous." So it is with a Canadian nation. It is not to be found in customs houses and post-offices, in Dominion statutes and Dominion taxes. In the last analysis it depends upon a sentiment of Canadian unity, and upon our attachment to Canada as a symbol of Canadian unity. It is only as we give Canada the first place in the order of our loyalties that a Canadian nation can be said really to exist; and in the proportion that this sentiment is weakened, so are the legal bonds of Confederation less likely to prevail against the forces which make for disruption.

I have never forgotten a curious conversation I once had while travelling between Windsor and Truro. At one of the little stations not far from Windsor, a passenger took a seat beside me and immediately opened a conversation by asking me where I was going. Having supplied this information, I returned the compliment by asking the same question of him. His reply was that he was looking for work in the woods as a lumberman, and

as there was not much timber being cut in Nova Scotia that season, he thought he would go to Canada. "But where are you now?" I asked. "Why, in Nova Scotia," he said. "And where is Canada?" was my next question. "Oh, somewhere beyond New Brunswick," he replied, and there was a lull in the conversation while I tried to explain this curious survival of political boundaries which had disappeared with Confederation.

I do not suggest for a moment that this attitude is typical of even a small section of our population, but it is interesting because it illustrates a point of view from which one regards Canada as something outside of familiar provincial boundaries. Canada to that man meant nothing but remoteness. He could not adjust his mind to the thought of Nova Scotia as a part of Canada. While he was within the boundaries of his province, he felt that he was not in Canada, when the truth of the matter was that Canada was not in him; his mind had never attempted to reconcile provincial loyalty with an attachment to the larger unity of which Nova Scotia was a part. We may say that such a notion was born in ignorance, but it emphasizes the very profound truth that apart from the northern wilderness there is no part of Canada which is not also a province, and if Canada were to disappear to-morrow, our external surroundings would be much the same, except that the provinces individually would assume powers which some of them had once exercised before Confederation. Is it not clear, then, that the maintenance of Canada rests finally on the idea of unity? If we do not cherish this idea of unity, there is no permanent support for a Canadian nation, and our federal institutions are but a frail scaffolding for mutual protection and convenience.

May I leave this final thought with you before I close? The greatest danger to national unity lies in the fact that in periods of economic depression the claims of sectional interest and provincial loyalty are sometimes placed in opposition to the continuance of the federal union out of which a Canadian nation has sprung. In a country of vast extent and varied resources, it is inevitable that these differences should come to the surface. They arose in the United States under a federal constitution, and were prominent among the causes which led to the Civil War. They have caused several political crises in the federal union of Australia. They have arisen already in Canada, and may be expected to do so again. If we recognize such sectional claims and differences as normal incidents in our growth, we are more likely to approach them in a spirit which will not weaken the essential foundations of our national life. It is also well to remember that the problem of maintaining

a just balance of economic advantage as between the sections and provinces of a federation is one of the most difficult tasks of statesmanship, and that more often than not the fault of maladjustment lies not in the fact of union but in the failure of policies to meet adequately the requirements of national unity. At the present time we are passing through a period of depression which is likely to put a severe stress upon the economic supports of our federal system, and test the enduring quality of Canadian unity. I do not fear this test, because I believe a Canadian nation is rooted not only in sentiment but in interest, and that there are no problems which we may not solve if they are approached in the spirit which came to our aid in the emergency of war. Above all, let us remember that Canada is not something outside of us, but within us, that the development of a Canadian nation has been a great co-operative enterprise, and that if we are true to our trust, its future cannot fail to be even more splendid than its past.