



OPINIONS

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OF THE

CANADIAN PRESS

OF THE

HON. SIR ALLAN NAPIER MAC NAB, BART.,

LATE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS  
IN CANADA.

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LONDON:

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## P R E F A C E.

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CONSIDERING the prominent and distinguished position so long occupied by Sir Allan MacNab in the Province of Canada, it may not be uninteresting to the public of the mother-country to be made acquainted with the career of an individual whose services have been so highly appreciated in British North America. These services, which are inseparably connected with the history of Canada for the last forty years, have been rewarded, as the following pages will show, by his fellow-subjects in the Province, who have at different periods conferred upon him the highest offices within their gift. He was Speaker for Upper Canada at the time of the Union of the Provinces, and after the union he was elected to the same high position in the Commons of United Canada. More recently he has held the office of Prime Minister. During the time of his administration many great questions which for years had

agitated the country, were finally and satisfactorily settled; and a reference to the journals of the House of Assembly will show that one of his first acts as Prime Minister was to move in the House the munificent grant of £20,000 to the Patriotic Fund—an act which has done so much to add to the good feeling already existing between the colony and the mother-country.

Sir Allan MacNab served, during the whole of the last American war, in the 100th and 49th Regiments, and was present in many engagements. Upon the occurrence of the rebellion of 1837-8, the Militia of Upper Canada, upon the first alarm, rallied round Sir Allan, then Colonel MacNab. At their head, he went to Toronto, then threatened by Mackenzie, where the rebels were defeated; he then immediately marched to the Western and London Districts, and dispersed the rebels, who were collecting in large numbers at different points, and by his prompt and vigorous action speedily suppressed the last embers of insurrection in the Province.

He acted in the same resolute manner against the sympathizers who from the United States had invaded the British territory. Under his direction the attack was made upon the *Caroline*, the capture of which utterly disconcerted the plans and hopes of

those who wished to revolutionize Canada. His conduct at this eventful crisis was appreciated by the Duke of Wellington, who in his place in Parliament spoke of the deeds of Sir Allan MacNab as having been the means of preserving British power in Canada; and Sir Archibald Alison, in his "History of Europe," says of the capture of the *Caroline*, "This bold act, which reflected equal honour on the judgment and courage of Colonel MacNab, was decisive of the present fate of British North America."

The conduct of Sir Allan MacNab during the eventful and critical period of the insurrection was as judicious and merciful as it was gallant, and obtained not only the praise and thanks of his fellow-subjects and of his Sovereign, but also called forth an expression of gratitude, in the most grateful terms, from the very men who were in arms against the Queen's Government, and whom he had defeated and dispersed.

As a son of Canada, the people of the Province are justly proud of Sir Allan MacNab; and, as his services to his native country have been equally important to the empire at large, it is but just that they should be made known to the people of England generally. With the object, then, of showing the latter the great value which the people of

Canada set upon the services of the gallant Baronet, the writer of this brief introduction has been induced to collect from the Canadian press, of all shades of party, the following remarks which have appeared upon his recent retirement from political life in that Province. In conclusion, the writer, as a well-wisher to England and Canada (whose interests and whose future glory should be based upon the indissoluble union, upon equal terms, of the two countries), ventures to express a hope that the long experience of Sir Allan MacNab in Canadian matters—and, indeed, in everything pertaining to our North American Provinces—may still be at the disposal of the British Government, and that in the mother-country he may yet be placed in a position in which he may continue to watch over and promote the interests of British North America, and thus be enabled to perform an important service to both countries.

O P I N I O N S

OF THE

C A N A D I A N P R E S S.

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RESIGNATION OF SIR A. N. MACNAB.

*(From the Hamilton SPECTATOR, Oct. 26.)*

With feelings such as must have been experienced by all who are about to be separated from an old and valued friend, we to-day record the retirement from public life of one who for upwards of twenty years has been the acknowledged leader of the party, for whose interests we have battled ever since the establishment of this journal. For nearly thirty years Sir Allan MacNab has occupied the most prominent public position of any man in Canada. During all that time he has served his country faithfully, both in the Council and the field, and now retires into private life only because he feels himself incapacitated, through ill health, to perform with justice to his constituents and satisfaction to himself the important duties devolving upon him as a mem-



ber of the Legislature. In thus yielding up the trust reposed in him by the electors of this city, Sir Alan carries with him into his retirement the respect and good will of all. His long connection with Parliamentary duties gave him a decided advantage over his brother members, and he was frequently appealed to in matters of difficulty and dispute, alike by friends and foes. His absence from the Assembly will cause a void not easily to be filled, and his loss will be equally regretted by the country and the electors of this city. As to Sir Allan MacNab Canada is indebted for its preservation as an integral portion of the British dominions, it may not be out of place here to give a brief retrospect of Sir Allan's life, which we have no doubt will be gratifying to his many friends.

Sir Allan Napier MacNab, Bart., of Dundurn, was born at Niagara in 1798, and is of Scottish extraction. His grandfather, Major Robert MacNab, of the 42nd regiment, or Black Watch, was Royal Forester in Scotland, and resided on a small property called Dundurn, at the head of Lock Hearn. His father entered the army in Her Majesty's 71st regiment and was subsequently promoted to a Dragoon regiment. He was attached to the staff of General Simcoe during the revolutionary war; after its close he accompanied General Simcoe to this country. He married the youngest daughter of Captain William Napier, Commissioner of the Port of Quebec. When the Americans attacked Toronto, Sir Allan, then a boy at school, was one of a number

of boys selected as able to carry a musket ; and after the authorities surrendered the city, he retreated with the army to Kingston, when, through the instrumentality of Sir Roger Sheaf, a friend of his father, he was rated as midshipman on board Sir James Yeo's ship, and accompanied the expedition to Sackett's Harbour, Genesee, and other places on the American side of the lake. Finding promotion rather slow, he left the Navy and joined the 100th Regiment, under Colonel Murray, and was with them when they re-occupied the Niagara frontier. He crossed with the advanced guard at the storming and taking of Fort Niagara. For his conduct in this affair he was honoured with an Ensigny in the 49th Regiment. He was with General Ryall at Fort Eric, and crossed the river with him when Black Rock and Buffalo were burned, in retaliation for the destruction of Niagara a few months previous. After the termination of this campaign, Sir Allan joined his regiment at Montreal, and shortly after marched with them to the attack of Plattsburg. On the morning of the attack, he had the honour of commanding the advanced guard at the Saranac bridge. At the reduction of the army in 1816 or 1817, he was placed on half-pay. He then commenced the study of the law, and during this time was employed as copying clerk and Clerk of the Journals in the Legislative Assembly, and when the Parliament of Upper Canada was extinguished by the Act of Union, Sir Allan was Speaker. He was subsequently elected Speaker of

the united Legislatures. He was called to the Bar in 1825, and commenced the practice of his profession in Hamilton, where he was for many years a most successful practitioner, having all the most important business in the District. He was then appointed Queen's Counsel, the first appointment of the kind in Upper Canada. He was first elected to Parliament in 1829, we believe along with the Hon. John Wilson, for the county of Wentworth, and after serving in three Parliaments, was returned for the town of Hamilton, in opposition to Mr. Harrison, the Government nominee.

Sir Allan's zeal and efficiency as a Militia officer during the troubles of 1837-8 are fresh in the memories of all. He did not wait for the insurrection to reach Hamilton, but went with the "Men of Gore" first to Toronto, afterwards to the West, and then to the Frontier, during which time he commanded the Militia. His time and means were liberally given in defence of his country; the speedy termination of the troubles in Upper Canada was due to his activity and zeal. His services were duly appreciated, not only in his native country, but by Her Majesty's Government. He received the thanks of Her Majesty, of Lord Seaton, the two Parliaments of Canada (he being Speaker of the Lower House), and also received the thanks of the Legislatures of the sister Provinces.

Sir Allan Mac Nab, though always consistent, proved himself to be more liberal than many of his opponents have been inclined to give him credit for.

He has been in the House of Assembly for nine successive Parliaments, and was never absent from his place for a week, except during the last two sessions, when illness confined him to his house. He became Prime Minister in 1854, and during his administration, the Clergy Reserves question was set at rest; the Reciprocity Act was passed; the Seigniorial Tenure difficulties were adjusted; and the Militia Act was, we believe, Sir Allan's last measure, the admirable results of which are now generally admitted. Sir Allan was knighted in 1838, and was created a Baronet on his retirement from the office of Premier in 1856. Had he exerted himself as zealously for his own interests as he has for those of the public, there is no doubt that Sir Allan would have been one of the wealthiest men in the Province.

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*(From the Toronto LEADER—Ministerial.)*

The ultimate retirement of Sir Allan MacNab from the active stage of public life has been announced in an address published by himself.

*Sir Allan leaves no post for any successor to fill; he seems literally to have completed the work assigned to him, and left no arrears for a successor to work off.*

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*(From the Kingston NEWS.)*

Our first acquaintance with the public acts of Sir Allan dates from the rebellion of 1837, and, we must

acknowledge, the favourable impression made upon our mind by his public spirit and dashing gallantry in that memorable year has not been obliterated by his subsequent career. In common with what remains of the old Conservative party, of which he was the respected and fearless leader, we sincerely wish him every comfort and happiness, and a prolonged existence among us.

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*(From the Montreal HERALD.)*

No man in Canada has played a more prominent part in public life than Sir Allan, or, upon the whole, with more credit to himself and advantage to his country. So far, we are inclined to believe, the more candid, at least, of his political opponents will be ready to concede; and we are satisfied he will carry with him into the retirement of private life the personal regard and esteem of many who have been his firmest opponents as a politician and minister of the crown.

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*(From the St. Catherine CONSTITUTIONAL.)*

The prominent part taken by Sir Allan in the affairs of this country, extending over a period of more than a quarter of a century, will secure for him a name in the future history of Canada worthy of one of her best and most devoted statesmen, and one that will live in the remembrance of a grateful people when party rancour and the jaundiced prejudices of the stormy past will have been forgotten.

*(From the Oakville SENTINEL.)*

Sir Allan Napier MacNab has taken a graceful leave of his constituents, and retired from public life.

That a Parliamentary light has gone out none will deny, and the day is far distant when his equal will be found on that floor. As a political opponent, he was a host in himself, as those who have long since passed from amongst us always bore testimony. As a "Speaker" he filled the chair with that dignity peculiar to himself; and as a Premier he brought to the discharge of that important duty the experience of a long political life, and that suavity of manner which oftentimes disarmed opposition. He came to his country's rescue in the days of her need. He led her defence against the disaffected, and restored peace and order. He carried out successfully those important measures which destroyed the demon of party by a graceful concession of opinion at the call of a free people. He united the good men and true of both parties, and thus secured the peace and prosperity of his country.

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*(From the Galt REPORTER.)*

The most prominent man in Canada has at length retired from public life, leaving a great name for the annals of this great country. That name is intimately connected with all the great events that have occurred in Canada since it reached nationality, and in every case it is found on the side of the people

and the sovereignty of Britain. Even when a lad at School, he shouldered a musket to oppose the attack on Toronto, and during all the future outbursts of restless and turbulent spirits, he was ever found the ardent friend of peace, honour, and Britain; and he has lived to see a Province, infested at one time with violent men, who hated us because we loved our country, raised by the exertions of the people to the dignity of a nation, and soon to assume an attitude of peaceful dignity on all the great movements of other countries. Sir Allan, with the great Roman in the Capitol, has ample time, we hope, to "adjust his mantle ere he fall" into obscurity. He has lived to see his native country great, flourishing, and free; its government in the hands of the people; its loyalty bursting forth on all fitting occasions; its wealth and population tenfold increased; and its mercantile honour held up as an example to all the world. To all these Sir Allan MacNab has contributed a great impetus; and he departs from public life amid the applause of all parties.

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(From the *New York* EVENING POST.)

The retirement from public life of Sir Allan MacNab, for thirty years one of the most prominent men in Canada, calls forth from the Canadian press many expressions of kindness and regret. This event possesses interest also for the people

of this country, to whom no name connected with Canadian politics is so familiar.

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*(From the New York ALBION.)*

In the fulness of years and of honours, Sir Allan MacNab has retired from the representation of Hamilton, and abandons public life, with the intention of spending his latter days in the land of his forefathers. Prominent for thirty years in the Provincial service of his country, writing, speaking, administering, and fighting, now in office and now out of it, sometimes leading a triumphant party, sometimes heading a vigorous opposition, but an adept in all that constitutes an efficient servant of the State, he has been always loyal and zealous for the well-being and well-doing of the Colony. The Colony loses a valuable man in losing him.

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(From the *Quebec CHRONICLE*.)

Sir Allan MacNab was to have taken his departure from Hamilton, for England, yesterday afternoon. It is gratifying to witness the unanimity with which the former constituents of the gallant Baronet of Dundurn have agreed in paying a well-merited tribute of respect and affection to his personal worth and his valuable services. Not only has Sir Allan MacNab deserved and received the gratitude of Hamilton, but of Canada also. Distinguished alike as a soldier and a legislator, he earned, in the first capacity, the description bestowed upon him by the Duke of Wellington, who designated him as "the right arm of British power in North America;" in the second, he carried out those wide and comprehensive measures of reform which left Canada virtually without great parties, by the extinction of every great party object, and the completion of those measures which had been the standards of political factions for almost half a century. He retires from public life as a man of whom his country at large is justly proud. It has been well said that his name is now history. To few public men has the nineteenth century awarded a career so varied, so influential, and, on the whole, so glorious; and it is but one more proof of the power of truth and integrity, even in this world, that in Canada Sir Allan MacNab carries with him the hearty good-will of men of every party in this land.

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(From the Toronto TIMES—Ministerial.)

There are many men in Canada who would have been better spared from public life than the gallant Baronet whose farewell address to his constituents, among whom he has lived so long, and by whom he has been so highly appreciated, appears below.

The great prosperity and increasing importance of Hamilton are mainly due to the influence of Sir Allan's name and *character*. The Great Western Railway, one of the best paying lines in the world, and one conducted with great intelligence, might never have been completed till this hour, but for the credit due to the name of MacNab in the old country.

Sir Allan's private residence, and his house at the seat of Government, have been always scenes of warm-hearted and genuine kindness; and scarcely any one of [position arrives from the old country without an introduction to "the stout old knight" of Dundurn, where all were received with welcome hospitality.

Sir Allan retires from public life in Canada with the good wishes of every one; and if his health should render his return hither unadvisable, he may still have opportunities of serving the country of his birth and love.

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(From the Elora BACKWOODSMAN.)

This gentleman has resigned his seat in the Provincial Parliament as member for the city of

Hamilton, and retires [into private life. For nearly thirty years the hon. Baronet has been before the public, and during that period—a very trying one for a young and growing colony—he faithfully served the Province in many capacities. True, he was not absolutely perfect—no man is; but he leaves a reputation behind him for honesty of purpose and sterling integrity that any gentleman might be proud of. He was true in friendship, and firm in danger; was often tried, and never found wanting; and now that the hon. Baronet has bidden farewell to the public, he will carry with him into private life the respect and esteem even of those to whom he was politically opposed.

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*(From the Brantford COURIER.)*

With unflinching determination he stood foremost in the ranks of those whom he believed to be fighting the battles of loyalty and Conservatism against rebellion and democracy. As a loyal man, he was admired, even by his enemies. As a politician, he was clear-headed, comprehensive, firm, and enterprising. Sir Allan was a good orator, and was always listened to with marked attention. He possessed great suavity of manners, and was personally much respected, even by his most bitter political enemies.

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*(From LE CANADIEN, Quebec.)*

Sir Allan MacNab has just resigned his seat in Parliament. We will say on this occasion what we

should have said if he were dead (which God forbid), and that is, that Sir Allan MacNab was a Patriot after the fashion of La Vendee, of Pontiac, and Tecumseh.

His retirement leaves a void which it will be impossible to fill.

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(From the JOURNAL DE QUEBEC.)

Sir A. MacNab has just announced to his electors his retirement from public life. The *Hamilton Spectator* has taken the opportunity to give a succinct account of the principal events of his life. The public acts of the Knight of Dundurn have since been differently appreciated by various papers, having been applauded by some and condemned by others. This is the way of the world, and the full measure of justice is only attained a long way on the other side of the grave. But that hour has not yet tolled for the political veteran, and perhaps we Lower Canadians are not placed in a proper position to judge him. We have before our eyes too many reminiscences of what has happened since 1837, to admit of our appreciation being very impartial.

Sir Allan and ourselves have, on many occasions, been found on opposite ranks. In 1837 and 1838 he commanded the volunteers of Upper Canada against Mackenzie, who commanded the insurgents. We then denounced MacNab and blessed Mackenzie. But since then Mackenzie has, in his turn, denounced

us often enough in the House and in his *Message*. At any rate, Sir Allan MacNab was merciful in the terrible days of 1837 and 1838; and (in striking contrast to the men whose names history has already branded) in the midst of the horrors of civil war, he pardoned where they spilled blood. Mercy, alone, makes us forget many faults.

In 1841 Sir Allan strove almost alone in Upper Canada against the Machiavelism of Mr. Poulett Thompson, who died too soon to reap the results of his infernal policy:

As Speaker of the House from 1844 to 1847, the Knight of Dundurn showed himself just and impartial, sometimes to the great discontentment of his friends; thus setting an example which it is sometimes to be desired that others would follow.

We trust that he will long enjoy in the quiet of private life that comfort which is only to be found in the bosom of one's family.

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(From LE COURIER DE CANADA—Quebec.)

Sir Allan MacNab has just resigned his seat in Parliament. He has, upon this occasion, addressed to his Hamilton constituents, whom he has represented in the last nine successive Parliaments, a letter, in which he thanks them for their confidence, and informs them that his health is no longer such as to allow him to attend to public business. Sir Allan MacNab has played an important part in Canada, and his name is now an historical name in

the annals of our country. Sir Allan closes his letter with the following words, which every one must applaud;—"One more word before we part, and that is—if, in times of trial and great excitement, I have erred, I trust you will kindly ascribe it to an error of the head, and not the heart."

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*(From Correspondence of LA GAZETTE DE SOREL.)*

The retirement of Sir Allan MacNab from the arena of politics, after having enjoyed both before and subsequent to the Union of the Province so eminent a position in the affairs of the country, is an event which may be deemed an epoch in the political history of United Canada, for with him, it may be said, died the old Tory party.

It may be said that, as Speaker of the House, Sir Allan was surrounded by none but friends; as Speaker, he materially elevated the dignity of that office. His long Parliamentary experience caused him to be looked upon as an authority in respect of Parliamentary precedents, and we are aware that his doctrines were always regarded with the greatest respect.

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*(From the BRANTFORD HERALD.)*

Sir Allan MacNab has resigned his seat in the House of Assembly, and retires from the arena of public life, carrying with him the respect and goodwill, not only of his friends, but of the majority of

those who had been in opposition to him in his political career.

Long may he live to enjoy the repose he now seeks in a retired life.

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*(From the ANGLO-SAXON.)*

The following address has been issued by Sir Allan MacNab, on the occasion of his retirement from public life. The name of the honourable and gallant Baronet will ever be held in grateful remembrance by his countrymen, as one whose career has perhaps more than any other been identified with the Parliamentary history of Canada.

