

Mrs. W.R. Pritchard

BEVERLEY PRITCHARD

2nd Prize

35 BEVERLEY AVENUE; MONTREAL 16.

TOWN OF MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL

LORD GEORGE LAMETON; BARON DURHAM; BELIEVER IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Although Governor-General for only six months,

Lord Durham did much to improve conditions in Canada.

Being sent out in March 1838 in the name of Queen Victoria, he set down to work in earnest to learn all he could about the Canadian ills. His first job of setting up a new temporary government in Lower Canada was accomplished by selecting men from his own staff for the council. Then he began to collect all the information possible regarding disputed matters from each colony. He sent out men and traversed the country himself getting the necessary data for his report. At Quebec he held a conference with the lieutenant-governors and other important men which resulted in a plan for the confederation of all the colonies in British North America.

If Durham had not been so proud-spirited and sensitive to criticism Canada would not have lost her great leader. The trouble started when he was faced with the problem of what to do with the rebels from the rebellion in the two Canadas. Realizing it would be unwise to imprison or free ALL who had taken part in the rebellion he freed all but eight ringleaders, one of whom was Dr. Wolfred

Nelson, while in exile to Bermuda, claiming that the guilty had received justice and the misguided mercy. It was about the wisest settlement of the problem that could have been made, however, his enemies in England saw a chance to put it against him. They claimed that Durham had no authority in Bermuda and his act had been illegal. The government weakened although three weeks before it had been one hundred per cent behind Durham's suggestion. Now it turned around and carried an Act of Indemnity, the terms of which insulted him. He resigned immediately and without even waiting to be recalled or even have his resignation accepted he returned to England.

With the help of his secretary Charles Buller, Durham wrote out his famous report, one of the most masterly ever written on colonial matters. As a matter of fact it has been more often repeated and more widely read in the English speaking world than any other British state paper of the nineteenth century. In this report were all the grievances of the different provinces which ought to be removed. Durham suggested confederation of all the provinces an aim later to be achieved. As an immediate action he recommended the re-uniting of Upper and Lower Canada with responsible government to deal with Canadian matters.

He advised that only the legislature should give grants of money with the towns taxing themselves for their local needs. Another of his proposals which was carried out after his death was that a railway be built between the Maritimes and the other provinces. The Durham Report was laid before the government early in 1839, three months after Durham arrived in England. After securing the consent of both Canadas the British Parliament passed the Act of Union on February 10, 1840.

With only part of his dream for Canada come true Lord Durham passed away in his forty-eight year in 1840. The rest of his dream came true many years later, when, in 1867 four provinces joined in confederation and created the Dominion of Canada, the beginning of the great Canada of today.

Through his famous Report of 1839, Lord Durham laid down the principles by which the British colonies are now ruled. By making the home government realize that the colonies would not break away if given self-government but would become more loyal as a result, he saved Canada from what might have been political strife or independence and also led the way for the self-governing of other colonies in the Empire.

Books consulted are as follows:

Books of Knowledge (New and old editions)
World Civilization
Romance of Canada
The New Practical Reference Library
(Volume 6; Canadian Edition.)