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**THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF THE
RT. HON. SIR CHARLES TUPPER,
BART., K.C.M.G.**



THE RT. HON. SIR CHARLES TUPPER, BART.
P.C., K.C.M.G.

**The Life and Letters of the
Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper,
Bart., K.C.M.G.**

Edited by
E. M. SAUNDERS, D.D.

With an Introduction by
THE RT. HON. SIR R. L. BORDEN, K.C.M.G.

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INTRODUCTION

By the Rt. Hon. Sir R. L. BORDEN, K.C.M.G.

FOR Canadians the life of Sir Charles Tupper needs no introduction. His career as a public man is indissolubly associated with the history of Canada since Confederation.

He entered public life at the age of thirty-four in his native province of Nova Scotia, and during the twelve years which ensued before Confederation, his public record gave abundant evidence of the magnificent courage, the fine optimism and the breadth of vision which invariably characterised him in the wider arena in which he was destined to play so distinguished a part. When he entered the Legislature of Nova Scotia in 1855 his party was in opposition. Under the inspiration of his virtual though not nominal leadership, it came into power two years later; and, although defeated in 1859, he became Premier in 1863 with a large majority behind him.

Religious controversy was not unknown in Nova Scotia in those days, although happily no province in Canada is more entirely free from such dissensions at present. To this happy result the influence of Sir Charles Tupper contributed in no small measure.

In the field of constructive statesmanship Sir Charles Tupper directed his energies to two great questions. Clearly realising that railways were the modern highways of commerce, he advocated an advanced policy of railway construction. In this respect he foreshadowed the memorable part he was destined to take in the construction of a national highway that should bind together the scat-

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tered provinces and territories of the Greater Canada that was to be. He realised also the necessity of better opportunity for education among the people. The facilities for higher education in Nova Scotia were excellent, but there was no system of public schools. There was, of course, an ignorant impatience of the taxation which his proposals involved, but the courage which never failed him carried through the measure, against which in a few years no voice of protest was heard.

Men had been dreaming for years of a nation on the northern half of this Continent which would embrace all the British Possessions. The proposal appealed to Tupper's imagination, and, as a preliminary step, he moved and carried in the Legislature of Nova Scotia in 1864 a resolution favouring the union of the three Maritime Provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, as a prelude to a still greater union. This action acted as a spur to the activities of the Upper Province statesmen. The Maritime Province meeting was to be held at Charlottetown on September 1, 1864. The Upper Province representatives asked to be admitted to the Conference. They were cordially welcomed; and after frank discussion of the subject, the Conference was adjourned to October 10 at Quebec, where the basis was laid for the subsequent Confederation.

In that Conference Tupper played a great part, and considering the difficulties which arose in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, as well as the tremendous opposition which developed in Nova Scotia under the eloquent leadership of Howe, it is not too much to say that if he had been a man of less invincible courage and determination, the project of Confederation might have been postponed for many years.

For the sake of allaying political difficulties which Sir John A. Macdonald had encountered in forming the first Government of the new Dominion, Tupper insisted that

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his own just claims should not be considered, and he served for three years as a Member of Parliament without office. But from 1870 until he became High Commissioner in 1884 he held many important portfolios, notably those of Finance and Public Works and Railways.

His record as a statesman will always be closely associated with two great policies. The advocacy of the National Policy by Macdonald from 1876 to 1878 was largely due to Tupper's influence and inspiration. When the Liberal-Conservative Cabinet was being formed after the elections of 1878, it was anticipated that Tupper would assume the portfolio of Finance and bring down to Parliament the measure in which the National Policy was to be embodied. He chose, however, the Department of Public Works, to which the Ministry of Railways and Canals was attached, and in 1882 he initiated the proposals for building the Canadian Pacific Railway. Many men of remarkable ability and vision contributed to the achievement of that great enterprise. To none is due a greater meed of praise than to Tupper. For many years his prophecies of enormous development and production in the western territories of Canada were derided, and he was subjected to attack of a bitterness unequalled even in those days of fierce controversy. Happily for him, and fortunately for his country, he lived to see every prophecy more than doubly fulfilled.

After his retirement from public life in 1900, he followed with absorbing interest the advancement and development of Canada, and he watched with the keenest attention and comprehension every turn and phase of public affairs. Succeeding him in the leadership of the Liberal-Conservative Party, I had the good fortune to receive from him occasional counsel and suggestion which was always wise and timely. I saw him for the last time in August, 1915. He had lived to see the Empire united in a great struggle for its own preservation and for the liberties of the world. In that struggle

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he had seen Canada play the notable part which he would have willed, marching with proud and firm footsteps to the majestic fulfilment of a great destiny. Physically he was exceedingly weak, but I had never known his mind more keen and active. Every phase of the war, every detail of Canada's part therein, he had watched with passionate interest, and he spoke of the consolidation of our Empire as an accomplished fact.

Later I stood by the grave in which he was laid to rest, in a quiet churchyard near the city where his public career had begun sixty years before. As I write these lines I look out upon the Hill where a new Parliament House is rising from the ruins of that historic pile in which the splendid activities of his wider career made him for many years a conspicuous and distinguished figure. Upon that Hill there will yet be raised a stately monument to commemorate his public achievements; but no monument can be more stately or more enduring than that which will be found in the hearts of all Canadians who have just appreciation of the genius, the courage, the faith and the patriotism of Sir Charles Tupper.



R. L. Baden

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