

HISTORY OF CANADA.

kenzie suggested it in 1825, and Lord Durham had given it his consideration, but was led to believe it was impracticable at the time. The idea was taken up and strongly advocated by the British American League, a short-lived political organization of a Conservative character formed at Montreal in 1849, with branches in other cities. In 1851 the question was brought before the Legislature, but a motion for an address to the Queen on the subject only secured seven votes. In 1858 however a strong speech in its favour was made by Mr. (afterwards Sir) A. T. Galt. In the summer of that year the Government led by Mr. J. A. Macdonald was defeated on the seat of government question, but resumed power after a two days' interval, during which Mr. Brown had formed a Government, but had immediately resigned on being refused a dissolution of Parliament by the Governor, Sir Edmund Head. In the Government as reconstructed Mr. Cartier replaced Mr. Macdonald as premier, while Mr. Galt, who had not previously held office, became Inspector General, the understanding being that the policy of the Government would embrace the advocacy and promotion of a union of the colonies. The political situation in Great Britain however was not favourable to any decisive action at the time, and some years elapsed before the question was taken up in a practical manner.

Towards the close of the year 1861 the country had been greatly excited over the Trent difficulty with the United States. At one moment war between Great Britain and the Republic seemed imminent. It was doubtless under the influence of the national feeling, not to say the apprehensions, thus aroused, that the Government led by Mr. Cartier introduced a Militia Bill of very wide scope. The Government at this time was receiving an extremely precarious support; and on their Militia Bill they sustained a decisive defeat, largely owing to the unpopularity of the measure in Lower Canada. Upon the resignation of Mr. Cartier and his colleagues Mr. J. S. Macdonald was entrusted with the task of forming a Government. Two short-lived Administrations followed, when it became apparent that parliamentary government in Canada as then constituted had come to a dead stop. On several fundamental questions there was an antagonism of views between Eastern and Western Canada which made it impossible for any Government that could be formed to receive adequate support. Then it was that the idea of a larger union, with a relaxation of the bonds in which Upper and Lower Canada were struggling, forced itself on the attention of the leading men of both parties. The leader in this new path was undoubtedly Mr. George Brown, who early in the session had been appointed chairman of a committee to consider the best means of remedying the political difficulties referred to. The committee had expressed themselves as in favour of a federative system, either as between Upper and Lower Canada or as between all the British North American colonies. Mr. Brown having consented to co-operate, if necessary, with his political opponents to that end, a Coalition Government was formed under the leadership of Mr. J. A. Macdonald, Mr. Brown accepting the position of President of the Council.

At this very time the three Maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island were considering the question of a federal union amongst themselves, and had arranged a