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The Liberal.

RICHMOND HILL, Thursday, May 15, '84

A DEFENCE.

The moral aspects of the now celebrated Conspiracy have been discussed in almost every journal of Canada. As is wont to be the case in political causes, the evident object of these discussions has not been to arrive at the right or wrong of the matter, but rather to thrust all the blame that attaches to it on the shoulders of political opponents. Those who have engaged in the argument have been keen and, indeed, fierce advocates, not cool and even-tempered judges. The inevitable result is that, up to the present, no position, tenable by all alike, has been reached, and once more comes home to us that as "we wax hot in faction in battle we wax cold."

The exultation of a certain part of the Reform press, on the discovery of the plot, is certainly deserving of strong censure, but is not altogether astonishing or inexcusable. The rage of the Conservative press is perfectly natural, because nothing tends more to make men exasperated than to be caught in the very act of crime. It will be seen that we hold Conservatives, as a party, responsible for the Conspiracy, while we fully exonerate them generally as individuals. If there be guilt, and we are convinced that there is, it is absurd to contend that that guilt is limited to the four men formally and legally charged with it. This would be to assume that they were acting solely on their own behalf, and that the fruits of success were to be limited solely to themselves. In whose interest were they acting? Undoubtedly, in that of the Conservative party. Who furnished the sinews of war? Beyond dispute, prominent members of the Conservative Association. Had they crowned their efforts, who would have worn its wreaths? Assuredly, Mr. Meredith. Were then Messrs. B., W., M., and K. working out of pure devotion to Ontario conservatism? By no means. They worked to obtain a reward, to them a great reward, but one so shameful, we venture to say, that even they would blush to name it. So much for the share of Conservatives in the plot. Let us now turn our attention to the attitude of Reformers.

It is undeniable that the members of the Ontario Government were, from the very beginning, fully posted as to the intentions of their opponents. It seems to us that they had grave doubts as to the political firmness of some of their supporters, and we regret that the evidence, so far elicited, goes to show that certain members elected as Reformers would probably have succumbed to the temptation held out to them. But there were others of that party whom nothing could have induced to betray their trust. Now, to convert a majority of fourteen (and this was the Government's majority during the last month of the session,) into a minority, many members must be approached, and it was the very largeness of the number that proved the rock on which the Conspirators were wrecked. How far they were successful is not known, but it is known, at least in part, in what degree they made mistakes. In one case, we mean that of Mr. Laidlaw, they were so miserably and unmistakably astray, that they were forced to flee in precipitate dread. In at least four other cases, they were just as far astray, although they were in complete ignorance of their

mistake. In these four cases, their overtures were, without the least delay, made known to the Government. What was that government to do? It is easy here to strike a high moral attitude and in tones of awful indignation, to say that the parties approached should have spurned all base proposals by giving them the greatest publicity, or, on their failure to do so, the Government itself should have openly denounced them in their very inception. This lofty posture simply assumes man to be an utterly different creature from that which he really is. That Conservatives themselves would never dream of acting thus, witness Mr. Bunting's reception, as described by himself, of Dr. Dowling. However laudable and right in itself, the path direct is not always followed in practice, and least of all is it the favorite one among politicians. That such should be the case is lamentable, but, as we have said before in these columns, so far as politicians are concerned, the electorate itself is solely to blame. After a terrible struggle, Mr. Mowat had been returned with a this majority, he discovers, is to be destroyed, not by fair and open warfare, but by means the foulest that can be employed. He is to be defeated not through his policy, but by working on the lowest weakness of man, that hideous love of self which strangles as a noxious weed the fairest flowers of the human soul and mind. All this he knows, and yet from amidst the seething foam of corruption comes the cry to do more than could be expected of the greatest saint. "We have sinned horribly against you," they in effect say, "and intend to sin again, but you must at most stop us in our crimes, but never catch us or punish us." Scorn and disgust must be the feelings excited here. Yes, these men ought to be cured, not in sugar, forsooth, but in salt. We are not afraid to affirm Mr. Mowat would have been guilty of shameful weakness, had he acted otherwise than he did, and it is quite beyond our comprehension that any man, not more than human, would lose the opportunity of punishing a foe the destitute of every principal of honor as is evinced by the weapons they used. What robber, surprised in plundering a strong box, ever excuse himself by pleading that the fault lies in the opening of such a valuable box? Such an excuse is even worse than that of Adam when he said, "The woman thou gavest me." Who believes the preposterous, idiotic assertion of the conspirators that Mr. Mowat originated the plot? If he did, why did not Messrs. Bunting, &c., at once denounce him? In this case, they must have been the tempters and detectives. Of course, Right is mighty and shall prevail, but it does not, therefore, follow that Wrong, however slippery and dishonest, must go unpunished, or at most be rebuked with a few scathing words. The conspirators played for enormous stakes; they were unscrupulous in the means employed to win; detected in their knavery and cheating, they have now nothing better to say in their extenuation than that the parties whom they were endeavoring to rob ought to have warned them the moment they became aware of what they, the cheaters, had in contemplation.

This would excuse robbery in the highwayman, death in the murderer, violence in the ravisher, for not the act of sin alone is wrong, but the proposal and intention.

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