

RECOLLECTIONS OF W. S. FIELDING

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MY personal recollections of the Right Honourable William Stevens Fielding go back to a date some years previous to his becoming editor of the *Chronicle*. He there succeeded a number of able writers such as William Walsh, a barrister practising in Halifax; Professor Sumichrast, who had been a teacher of modern languages at King's College; James Foley, described by J. Castell Hopkins as "a brilliant young Catholic littérateur and controversialist"; Thomas Chalmers Garvie, a younger brother of William A. Garvie, who was a co-founder with the late E. M. McDonald, M.P., of the *Halifax Citizen* which afterwards became an evening edition of the *Chronicle* under the name of the *Evening Echo*, and at a later date—in fact, quite recently—adopted the title of the *Halifax Daily Star*.

Such writers as I have named were rather editorial contributors to the *Chronicle* than editors in the narrower and more exact meaning of the term. The owner of the newspaper, Mr. William Annand, was a somewhat masterful sort of person, who would have been reluctant to commit to anyone the direction of his newspaper's policy. In fact, no one within my recollection, with the exception of Mr. Fielding, was ever allowed such freedom, and I doubt if even he enjoyed any controlling authority until Mr. Annand accepted an agency for the province that kept him permanently in London.

Mr. Fielding did not enjoy the assumed advantages of a collegiate education. Like his contemporary, the late John S. D. Thompson, he ended his scholastic preparation for life in the common schools of the city. The late Mayor McIntosh once informed me that he had been a fellow-pupil with him at the old Acadian School, the home of which it has always interested me to identify as the stone building on the east side of Argyle street, a little north of the City Hall. One would give something to know what sort of teachers were available to the citizens in the days before the Free-School Act, and what were the courses of study. I have an impression that such schoolmasters as the Rev. Dr. Edwin Gilpin, of the Halifax Grammar School, were few and far between. But

Mr. Fielding did not depend entirely on the teaching of his masters. He informed me that he had read "Dean Alford's English," and I have no doubt that he was greatly indebted to this authority for the vigorous and faultless English that appeared in his daily editorials and, in later years, in his speeches in the provincial legislature and the parliament of Canada. Like Sir John Thompson, he was keenly impressed with a sense of what he assumed that he had missed in not going to college. But, in view of recent discussions that have been going on in England and America, and more especially in view of the disquieting statement of Edison that he had "never found a college graduate that was worth a damn in his business", it may be that both Thompson and Fielding wasted some of their moments in idle regrets over their want of a university education. If the judgment of the late Mr. Justice Longley, who was for ten or twelve years closely associated with Mr. Fielding in the government of the province, is worth anything, neither Thompson nor Fielding need ever have regretted this particular loss. Judge Longley used to say that his three years at Acadia College would have been an absolute waste of time if he had not been able to read the daily editorials of the *Morning Chronicle*. He was also prepared to part with all the knowledge of Latin he had acquired for a dollar and a half, which would certainly have been an excessive price if he was correct in summing up what remained of his classical acquirements in the words *Balbus murum aedificat*.

Mr. Fielding's position on the *Chronicle* staff was preceded by a term of service in reporting, and it was probably because of this fact that I became so familiarly acquainted with him. Having become an assistant to Mr. Thompson, the official reporter to the House of Assembly, I was in daily association with Mr. Fielding while the session lasted, and for some weeks after its close. In a former number of the DALHOUSIE REVIEW¹ will be found an account of a series of attacks by a member of the House of Assembly on the Hon. Martin I. Wilkins, who was Attorney-General of the province in the first administration formed under the Union. The campaign of the member referred to, whose name was Amos Purdy, was renewed day after day, and on one occasion led to the discovery of "strangers in the gallery" and the closing of the doors of the House to those representative strangers, the reporters, official as well as unofficial. As Mr. Fielding and myself were waiting patiently in the ante-room for the doors to open, another stranger entered, and, noting the fact that the House was still in secret session, innocently asked the question "What's up"? "Purdy's up", was the quick reply of Mr. Fielding.

1. Vol. III, p. 14.

His duties when he was reporter and afterwards editor, which were always accompanied by a degree of responsibility for the proof-reading and general make-up of the paper, frequently occupied him to and through the "wee sma' hours ayont the twal". Many another under such pressure would yield, as one of Mr. Fielding's assistants did, to the temptation to relieve the strain by a resort to stimulants. Once I heard him complain that the emergencies in which it was especially desirable that his assistant should be on hand and efficient to the utmost of his capacity were the very occasions on which he yielded to the temptation to excess and became utterly useless. The patience and good nature with which these trials were borne was more than remarkable. He was too kind-hearted to call for the dismissal of the assistant, and continued to endure and suffer from his infirmities.

Years afterwards, his kindness of heart and reluctance to inflict pain were illustrated in a case that occurred while I was a member of the House of Commons for Halifax County. A son-in-law of a Liberal voter of long standing had to be dismissed for malversation in office. I came in due course to Mr. Fielding as Minister to make a proposal as to the successor to the defaulting official, and encountered what seemed almost a rebuke for my apparent failure to sympathize with the sufferings of the family and relatives of the offender. My sympathies were indeed as lively as those of the Minister himself, but—as the Duke of Wellington used to remark—the king's government had to be carried on, and hence the vacancy had to be filled.

During the political campaign which led to the downfall of the MacKenzie Government in 1878 and the formation of the Holmes-Thompson Government in Nova Scotia (1878-1882), Mr. Fielding had been the principal, though not the only, editorial writer on the *Chronicle*. The situation was one that called for the help of philosophy. Liberals had been routed "horse, foot and artillery". The campaign had stretched over an unusually long period, and the spirits of the defeated combatants were in a correspondingly frayed condition. It was Mr. Fielding that discovered the only sunbeam, if there was one at all, that could be extracted from such a cucumber. It gave him some small comfort to reflect that the victory of the enemy was so overwhelming that none of the unsuccessful combatants could reproach himself with anything left undone which might have averted the result. There was a momentary question as to whose pen should undertake the rather dismal task of recording the event, but in the end the duty of commenting on the results of the election was loyally assumed by the editor-in-chief.

As a critic of the Holmes-Thompson Government, Mr. Fielding was exceptionally forcible. Among the measures of this Government there was one, introduced by Mr. Holmes in an unusually long speech, providing for the consolidation of the provincial railways under the control of an English Syndicate. I can recall the glee with which Mr. Fielding discovered, or believed that he had discovered, in the speech of Mr. Thompson on this measure an error amounting to a million dollars in the assumed financial basis on which it was founded. Of course, I would not at this late date undertake, even if I were able, what would be obviously unprofitable from every point of view,—a detailed justification of the criticism. In the *Life and Work of the Rt. Hon. Sir John Thompson* Mr. J. Castell Hopkins refers to the “stinging criticism”, and “the ability with which Mr. W. S. Fielding, then editor of the *Halifax Morning Chronicle*, handled the question”, adding that this criticism not only affected the public mind injuriously to the Government, but helped to place Mr. Fielding “in the prominent position which he afterwards attained of Prime Minister of Nova Scotia”. The author just cited, on a subsequent page, makes a more ungenerous reference to his attacks upon the Government as “unscrupulous” as well as able, but no justification has been attempted for the use of this adjective, and the truth is that Mr. Fielding was always scrupulously accurate and fair in his comments on the policy and conduct of his opponents.

One of my personal recollections will bring into striking contrast the methods of transportation of the present day and those that existed during the greater part of his political career. The occasion was an election contest in the county of Halifax. Whether it was a contest between candidates for the House of Commons or for the provincial legislature, I do not clearly remember; but whatever the occasion, it was desired that Mr. Fielding and myself should visit the principal districts along the eastern shore of Halifax and address the electors in those remote settlements. There was no automobile in those days to carry us over the ground, and this was before the construction of the Eastern railway. We were supplied with two one-horse teams. Squire David Archibald, of Upper Musquodoboit, drove Mr. Fielding, and Mr. D. W. B. Reid of Elmsvale had me for his passenger. We drove to what was then known as Reid's Corner in Upper Musquodoboit, and thence to Sheet Harbor. The settlement last named was the home of the Hall family, all I believe staunch Liberals, one of whom now worthily occupies the high position of Sheriff of Halifax. Thence we proceeded to Salmon River, the home of the Balcoms, one of whom,

Henry Balcom, was a member of the House of Assembly in the days of Joseph Howe. On the return journey we reached Mr. Reid's home in Elmsvale, Middle Musquodoboit, on Saturday night. This place used to be called "The Flats", and Dr. Sedgewick, the father of the Supreme Court judge, then resident pastor of Musquodoboit, always refused to call it, so Mr. Reid informed me, by any other name. The question arose whether we should spend the following day with Mr. Reid, who was only too willing to entertain us, or take the early train on Sunday morning for Halifax. Neither Mr. Fielding nor myself would have had any scruples in pursuing the last mentioned course. Both of our conductors had sincere scruples, which it would have gone greatly against the grain of either of us to offend. But apart altogether from any religious difficulty, both of our advisers were strongly of the opinion that it would be expedient from a prudential point of view to refrain from continuing our journey on Sunday. To this we cheerfully assented.

The incident that I have just described reminds me of another. While Mr. Fielding would have regarded the journey to Halifax by the early Sunday morning train as an allowable departure from the terms of the fourth commandment, he made it a matter of religious principle not to play cards after 12 o'clock on Saturday night. One evening, when a small group of us were passing the time in conversation, Mr. Fielding told us of an occasion when he was engaged at the club in a friendly game of poker for small points. It was Saturday evening, and they were all aware of his scruple about playing after mid-night. When the clock struck "twelve", he was well ahead of the game; but if the shoe had been on the other foot, he would have declined another hand all the same. "So," said I, "you blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

When the legislature was dissolved at the end of the first and only term of the Holmes-Thompson Government, and candidates were being chosen for the election of a new House of Assembly, Mr. Fielding and I were strolling together on the Hollis street sidewalk below the Provincial Building. He broached the subject of the approaching election, and suggested that if I had any political ambitions, the time had come when it would be easy to gratify them. A convention was about to be held, and he believed I could without difficulty secure a nomination. I shrank from taking the plunge, and assured him that I could not think of it. While I am confident that the suggestion was made in good faith, I believe that I gave him the answer which chimed in with his own desires. It was not many days after this that the convention took place, and Mr.

Fielding was nominated, with James G. Foster, of the law firm of James and Foster, and Michael J. Power, a Halifax shopkeeper, as his colleagues. The election was closely contested. The ballots were subjected to a recount by the Sheriff, Mr. Joseph Bell, an upright and thoroughly honourable public servant. He "counted in" Mr. W. D. Harrington, a Conservative, Mr. M. J. Power and Mr. W. S. Fielding, Liberals. Mr. Fielding, I assume, from the order in which the names appear on the Journal of the House, had the smallest vote of those elected. The Liberals had a majority in the new House of Assembly, but neither Fielding nor Longley, who had been elected for Annapolis, was in the Government. The members of Government were selected not for their ability but for their availability. Fielding had been elected by a small majority. If appointed to a salaried office in the Government, he might lose his seat. Longley was in a similar plight. Either one of these would have been preferable to any of those chosen for the executive departments, which seems to show that the law which obliges a member of the House to resign his seat and run another election before he can be accepted as a paid servant of the public is a bad law. It gives the electors of one single and perhaps relatively unimportant county a veto upon the act of the majority of the House representing the whole province. The paid members of the Government were Charles Edward Church, Provincial Secretary; Alonzo White, Attorney-General; and Albert Gayton, Minister of Works and Mines. Mr. Pipes was selected as Head of the Government without portfolio and without pay. In conversation with one of the members from Cape Breton Island, who shall be nameless, I was assured that my friend Mr. Fielding was "a little tyrant". I can well believe that, with his abundant knowledge of constitutional principles and political precedents, he would show some signs of impatience with the relative ignorance of the great majority of the men that had been returned as members. A distinguished leader of the Bar of those days used seldom to refer to these representative gentlemen except under the designation of "the caribou".

The Government constituted as just described proceeded to business. They very soon discovered that they suffered a great disadvantage in not having the knowledge and political insight of Mr. Fielding at their service, and in fact they practically adopted him as a sort of associate member. Very few things of any importance were done without consulting him. It was not that if things were done of which he did not approve, the Government might find the power and prestige of a great organ of opinion against them.

No such conditions ever presented themselves. The members of the Government only wanted his political wisdom and knowledge to be placed at their disposal, and they enjoyed that favour for quite a considerable period, until Mr. Fielding made the discovery that it was beyond his physical power to edit satisfactorily a daily paper and at the same time be the directing force in the conduct of a responsible Government. The consequence was that one of the members resigned, Mr. Albert Gayton, who, in the exalted language of a newspaper item of the time, entered upon his "career" as Registrar of Deeds for the county of Yarmouth. Whether the use of this expression was meant for a bit of harmless satire or not, must be left to the judgment of the reader. Mr. Fielding had before this event become a member of the Government,—just how long before, I am unable to say, but the manner of his appointment he fully described to me in one of our frequent conversations. The Honourable A. G. Jones was at that time the recognized leader of the Liberal party in Nova Scotia. The Prime Minister, Mr. Pipes, and Mr. Fielding accompanied him in a walk to Bloomingdale, his home on the North West Arm, where the whole subject was discussed, and it was arranged that Mr. Fielding should become a member of the Government and eventually the leader. He had been accustomed to sit in with the members at the Council-table, whenever any important measure or appointment was under consideration. Although he had been sworn in as a member of the Government, no announcement of the fact was yet made; and on the day on which he first sat at the table as a member, the hour had passed when the business of the Council should be formally taken up. Mr. White, the Attorney-General, suggested that the Council should proceed with its work. Mr. Pipes assented. The Attorney-General then, with a side-long glance at Mr. Fielding, suggested that it was not usual to have strangers present when the Council was in session. Mr. Pipes affected surprise at this suggestion, and informed the Attorney-General that Mr. Fielding was no "stranger", but had been sworn in. Mr. Pipes was fond of a joke, and he seldom allowed an opportunity to enjoy one to pass away unimproved. The make-up of the Government as originally formed is said to have afforded him many occasions for amusement.

At length the time came for Mr. Fielding to take the cold plunge of an election to ratify his appointment to the Provincial Secretaryship. He was opposed by Mr. John Y. Payzant. The result of the coming contest seemed to be somewhat doubtful. The defeat of Mr. Fielding at this stage would have inflicted a deadly wound

upon the Provincial Government, and the opposition was, therefore, an experiment worth trying. With the Conservatives enthroned at Ottawa under Sir John A. Macdonald, a bye-election in Halifax, already represented by one Conservative in the House of Assembly and by the Conservatives Kenny and Stairs at Ottawa, was no slight undertaking. But it was now or never for Mr. Fielding, and his courage proved equal to the occasion. Happily for him, his opponent indulged in an infelicitous anecdote in the course of his speech in Dartmouth, which in itself must have gone far in the way of accounting for the majority given for him in the election. He told a story at which sensitive believers in the doctrine of Purgatory might easily be led to take offence. *The Acadian Recorder* nicknamed him "Purgatory Payzant", and skilfully harped upon the offensive anecdote at the expense of the Conservative candidate night after night until the election was over. The majority for Mr. Fielding was 183 in a total vote of 5,121. An average change of three votes in the seventy odd polling districts of the county would have left him in a minority, and those votes in his favour could very easily be attributed to the infelicitous humour of his opponent.

To what causes, apart from his distinguished ability and industry, must we attribute the popularity that sustained him and his Government through all the years from the beginning of his premiership in 1884 to the date of his resignation in 1896? A valued correspondent, himself in his day an active political worker, has called my attention to Mr. Fielding's "Guelph-like memory for faces", and I recall that on one of our canvassing tours we met at a country hotel a voter with whom we had a very promising conversation. After we had parted company with him, and proceeded a mile or more on our tour, we were overtaken by him. Mr. Fielding at once recognized him, though I did not. This faculty is invaluable in a canvasser, and in its absence the ambitious candidate will do well to recognize everyone he meets in the constituency. But it is possible thus to get into trouble. Mr. Fielding had a story he was fond of telling about the late Hiram Blanchard, whose election had been nullified by a committee of the House. In friendly conversation with one of his voters, he enquired after the health of the voter's father. The reply was that his father was dead. In a second campaign, a year or more later, the candidate met and talked with the same voter, asking once more about his father's health. "He is still dead, sir," was the embarrassing reply. It is safe to guess that Mr. Fielding never fell into a like blunder. The faculty that saved him was no small factor in his

success on a political campaign for himself or for a colleague in whom he was interested.

At one of the many meetings in which I assisted after his first nomination, an old gentleman in a country district, who was one of my clients, in conversation with me after the close of the meeting, said "That man Fielding is going to get in". I was anxious to know on what it was that my old friend based his assured conviction. The reply was, "he speaks so easy". I understood at once that the suffrages of my client had been captivated by what Matthew Arnold would have called the "sweet reasonableness" of Mr. Fielding's manner and matter. He had, whether in the House or on the stump, the manner that Macaulay has pronounced the one favoured by the British House of Commons. His speeches were always clear and luminous, seldom aspiring to eloquence or oratory, but convincing in their simplicity and obvious sincerity. The word that seemed to be most frequently on his tongue was the adjective "reasonable". A final test of any dispute as to a course to be pursued or avoided was its reasonableness.

The history of the premiership of Mr. Fielding ought to be written, but it would be the work of a biographer, not of an essayist. There was one measure of similar design to that of the previous Government for the consolidation and extension of our provincial railways. Mr. Fielding felt keenly sensible of the burden of this undertaking. He had been accustomed to the late hours called for in the consideration of the long and elaborate contract prepared by the late Sir Wallace Graham as counsel for the Government, but there were other trials to be borne at that time that need not be dwelt upon, and he used frequently to fall asleep at the table while the details of the measure were being laboriously criticized with the assistance of the provincial engineer and counsel for the promoters. Nothing came of this proposition except weariness for all concerned, and doubtless some expenses for the Government and fees to the promoters' counsel. The last mentioned item is the only one as to which I can speak with certainty.

When the Dominion election was approaching, after the dissolution of parliament in 1896, it was well understood that in the event of Mr. Laurier being called upon to form a Government, Mr. Fielding would be his Finance Minister; but he could not, in justice to his family and his creditors, accept a nomination for the House of Commons in the absence of certainty as to the fate of the Conservative Government at Ottawa. He was obliged to retain, for the time being, his premiership in Nova Scotia, a bird in the hand being preferable to an even more brilliant

bird in the bush. Mr. Longley was heroic enough to resign and accept a nomination for Annapolis County, in which he was defeated by the Conservative, Mr. Mills. He had no claims on Mr. Fielding, so far as I am aware. They were in fact rivals for political preferment. I recall an occasion when Mr. Longley challenged me to name ten men in Canada who had a better chance of being Prime Minister than he had. I at once named Fielding. "Fielding!" said he. "Fielding is one of your great Little Men". Of course, this remark was never repeated where it could affect the ostensibly amiable relations between the members of the provincial cabinet. But I fancy that Mr. Fielding could not be wholly unaware of Mr. Longley's feelings towards him. Notwithstanding this, however, on Mr. Longley's defeat in the Dominion election, the provincial Premier put forth his full power to secure his restoration to the position of Attorney-General, which he had resigned in order to become a candidate for the House of Commons. Of course, there were others in the House of Assembly who would have been glad to enjoy the eminence and the emoluments of the office. Without the assistance of Mr. Fielding, Mr. Longley could not have resumed the position.

It must have caused some wonder to many members of the Liberal party that the Honourable A. G. Jones was not a candidate for the county of Halifax. The explanation is that, as Mr. Fielding informed me, Mr. Jones had, some months before the election, called him aside in the Halifax Club and assured him that he could not and must not be asked to undertake another election, and that the party must choose another in his place. They acted on his advice, and it was the understanding of everyone that Mr. William Roche was to be his successor as candidate for Halifax County. As the election drew nearer, the old war-horse began to sniff the battle afar, and doubtless regretted his counsel to Mr. Fielding. He wished to be nominated as a candidate; and a faithful member of the party, who need not be named, undertook the not too agreeable task of securing Mr. Roche's consent to retire in his favour. Mr. Jones had been the leader of the party in Nova Scotia for many years, and quite a number of the younger members were frankly tired of him. They desired a candidate that would be a little more approachable, and imagined that they would find one in the person of the present writer.

These events, it may be suggested, have nothing to do with Mr. Fielding. Possibly not. But, on the other hand, if the faction that opposed my nomination had succeeded in its endeavour to undo the work of the Convention by which I was nominated, and if

Mr. Jones had been returned as member of the House of Commons for Halifax, it would have been difficult for Mr. Laurier to resist his claim to a seat in the Cabinet. The claim would have had to be resisted, and would have been refused. Mr. Jones might have been placated with a promise of the governorship which he at a later date received; but, in the meantime, for three or four years he would have been terribly in the way, for there could be no governorship available until the term of office of Governor Daly expired, and he had been appointed for a second term only in 1895. It had been fully determined that Mr. Fielding was to be the Minister of Finance. The *intransigence* of Sir Richard Cartwright was objectionable to the manufacturers in the Liberal party, who had become quite numerous. Mr. Fielding had sometime in the winter before the election delivered a speech in Montreal that trimmed so skilfully between the cry of "Free trade as they have it in England" and the other cry soon to be renewed of "Adequate protection to our industries", as Mr. Borden framed it, or the more ringing and soul-stirring equivalent formulated by Israel Tarte of "Canada for Canadians", that there was a strong desire in the Liberal party at large that he should enter the Government as Minister of Finance.

Should any of my readers consider the term "Trimmer" objectionable as applied to Mr. Fielding, I must ask him to read Macaulay's description of Lord Halifax whose vindication he quotes:

Instead of quarrelling with the nick-name, he assumed it as a title of honour, and vindicated with great vivacity the dignity of the appellation. Everything good, he said, trims between extremes. The temperate zones trim between the climate in which men are roasted and the climate in which they are frozen. The English Church trims between the Anabaptist madness and the Papist lethargy. The English constitution trims between Turkish despotism and Polish anarchy. Virtue is nothing but a just temper between propensities any one of which, if indulged to excess, becomes vice. Nay, the perfection of the Supreme Being himself consists in the exact equilibrium of attributes none of which could preponderate without disturbing the whole moral and physical order of the world.

Mr. Fielding was not, like Lord Halifax, "a Trimmer on principle". The real truth is that the Liberal party was at this time a Trimmer on the subject of the tariff. It had, in fact, no mandate to deal with the subject. The election had not turned on the question of Free trade *versus* Protection. It was a contest on the proposal to frustrate the school policy of Manitoba, and overrule the decision of the province by the passage of the Remedial Bill. Sir Oliver Mowat, months before the election, had asserted

the principle that it would be an injustice to those citizens who had invested their money in manufacturing to destroy their industries by summarily reversing the policy on which they had been induced to establish them.

On the question on which the election had really been contested, Mr. Fielding was a convinced and out and out opponent of any interference with the educational policy of the province. It was as such that he was about to enter the Government of Mr. Laurier. There was at the moment no vacancy in the House of Commons; but if the county court judge DesBrisay could be decently got out of the way, Mr. Frank Forbes, M. P. for Queens-Shelburne, was willing to accept the position and create a vacancy in the House. All this was explained to Sir Oliver Mowat, then Laurier's Minister of Justice, who wrote to Judge DesBrisay, I am not sure that it was not at my own suggestion, a sweet little note saying that if he should be desirous of retiring from the Bench, a suitable pension would be provided. The whole operation went through like a charm, and Mr. Fielding entered the Ministry as Finance Minister without opposition, Sir Richard Cartwright being, or having already been, solaced with the position of Minister of Trade and Commerce.

A short session was called in August, 1896, to provide for the immediate needs of the Government, but Mr. Fielding's real work began in the regular session later on, and it was a sufficiently difficult piece of work. The tariff was to be readjusted so as to placate as far as possible the advocates of "Free trade", and not imperil beyond what was fair the industries that had been established on the faith of protective duties imposed by the previous Government. Mr. Fielding, it was said, sat up all night before the day appointed for the introduction of the budget, receiving delegates favouring increases and possibly fewer calling for reduction in the "tariff of abominations". His door was not barred until five o'clock in the morning of the day on which the measure was to be introduced.

The newly adjusted tariff was brought down some considerable time after the opening of the House, on the eve of St. George's Day, 1897. There was great curiosity as to the probable provisions of the Act about to be passed, and great expectations as to the speech to be delivered by the new Minister of Finance. The writer of these lines had had the honour conferred upon him of moving the reply to the Address from the Throne at the beginning of the session, and of course gave out some vague hints as to the coming tariff, but his vaticinations as to the financial policy to be adopted were necessarily and properly very misty and indefinite.

Mr. Fielding spoke for a couple of hours, between four and six o'clock. He must have been weary, and I suppose he was nervous, though I cannot be in the least degree certain on that point, but this part of his speech was necessarily by way of clearing the ground, and was not particularly entertaining. I have often said, and have no hesitation in here repeating, that if his ability in office but more particularly his reputation as a parliamentary speaker had been appraised by his performance up to the 6 o'clock recess, it would have gone down several points and perhaps alarmingly. His friends in the gallery from Nova Scotia, Liberals and Tories alike, wished him great success. The late Mr. Justice Sedgewick was one of these, and was genuinely disappointed that he had not made a better impression on the House and galleries. In fact, he pronounced the Minister's effort a failure.

When the House resumed after the recess, the exposition of the new policy proceeded. Mr. Fielding had been refreshed by his dinner, if not by an after dinner siesta. He appeared to be physically in much better form than when he began his speech. Mr. Patterson, the Minister of Customs, relieved him of part of his task by reading the long schedules of duties for more than an hour. Then Mr. Fielding resumed his speech with the exposition of the preferential feature of his policy. At once his spirit seemed to be kindled by an afflatus of Imperial patriotism. His speech became luminously and beautifully eloquent, and thus drew to its close in a splendid peroration. The whole performance constituted a magnificent St. George's Day celebration, concluding with the National Anthem sung by the members on the Government side of the House, in breach of all rules of order, of course, but with the assured conviction that His Honour The Speaker would not interfere. Mr. Fielding had been through all his life a member of St. George's Society. There was once an occasion when all the national societies of the city united to do honour to a Governor General, and he was chosen to preside. Members of St. George's Society present on that occasion who are no longer living have assured me of the great distinction with which he discharged his functions as president. It was indeed a red-letter day for the man who had begun his career as news-gatherer for the *Chronicle*. But the St. George's Day celebration of which he was the centre in 1897 was one that never could be surpassed in his life time.

From this illustrious moment he went "from strength to strength". It was interesting to his friends to observe the progress by which he won first place in the confidence of Laurier, not yet Sir Wilfrid, which all the older members of the House were

assuming that another member would retain. One of these older members, who was under no such illusion on this subject, called my attention to the supersession that was taking place, and made the curious remark that he had never known a man with a head like a pine-apple to amount to anything. Mr. Fielding's growing ascendancy was due to the strength of his intellect, the clearness of his perceptions, the reasonableness and moderation of his views, his ingenuity in overcoming the obstacles presented from time to time in the course of practical administration, the kindness of his heart, and last, but by no means least, the deep and strong religious faith in which he unostentatiously but consciously and constantly lived and moved and had his being.

"There are spots on the sun". If Mr. Fielding had a fault as an administrator, it was his tendency to procrastinate. Judge Longley attributed to him such a fault, and gave me an instance in which, according to my recollection, he considered that it had resulted in actual harm. I may here notice a case in my own experience in which he seemed to wait an unnecessarily long time before making an appointment which it was well understood must take place one day or other, and might as well be made at once as deferred to any later day. It was my own appointment to a seat on the Bench of the Supreme Court. The date was approaching when I must determine whether I should send my boys to Mount Allison College. I could not do so unless I was assured of my appointment. If I should send them, and the appointment should for any reason fail to come about, I should be obliged to recall them. When I could wait no longer, I wired him substantially in the terms just presented. The answer came without further delay, "Send the boys to College". That was the last event in which we were mutually concerned, and his cordial telegram to me was the last communication that I had with him. After my acceptance of a seat on the Bench of the Supreme Court, the nature of our relations underwent a necessary change. I could feel the same interest that I had always felt in his career, and look forward as I had always done to the day when in the natural course of events a successor might be required to take the place of the leader that we had both revered. I could continue to hope that when that day should arrive, the well-earned promotion to the leadership that I had spoken of in the conversation with Judge Longley, narrated on a previous page, would come to crown the career of my old friend. *Dis aliter visum.* Three years after I parted from him in Ottawa, came the undeserved defeat of the Ministry, which I must be allowed to attribute to the *civium ardor prava jubentium.*

Soon after the corporate defeat, came the personal defeat, equally undeserved. Then, after a few years of struggle, a restoration to his seat in the House of Commons, with the opportunity to vindicate the policy on which he had been defeated; followed all too soon by physical prostration due to his intense and lifelong devotion to the service of his country, first to the people of his province, and afterwards to those of the wide Dominion. To these trials must be added the pain of crushing bereavements, the loss of his daughter and his wife, and the long years of protracted and incurable illness. It is to be hoped that he knew how greatly he was missed from his accustomed place in the House of Commons, and how the whole people of Canada, without distinction of party, were sympathetic watchers at his bedside. When the ineluctable moment of his passing came, the predominant feeling among those who had loved him longest and best must have been that of the Earl of Kent upon the passing of King Lear:

Vex not his ghost: O let him pass! He hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.