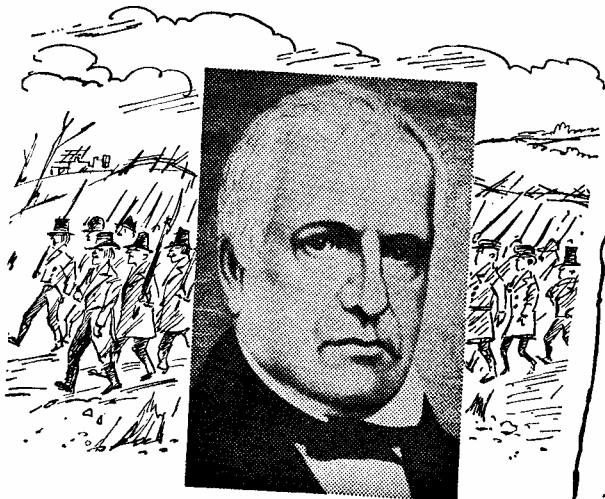


Famous Letters in Canadian History—Lafontaine

FAMOUS LETTERS IN CANADIAN HISTORY



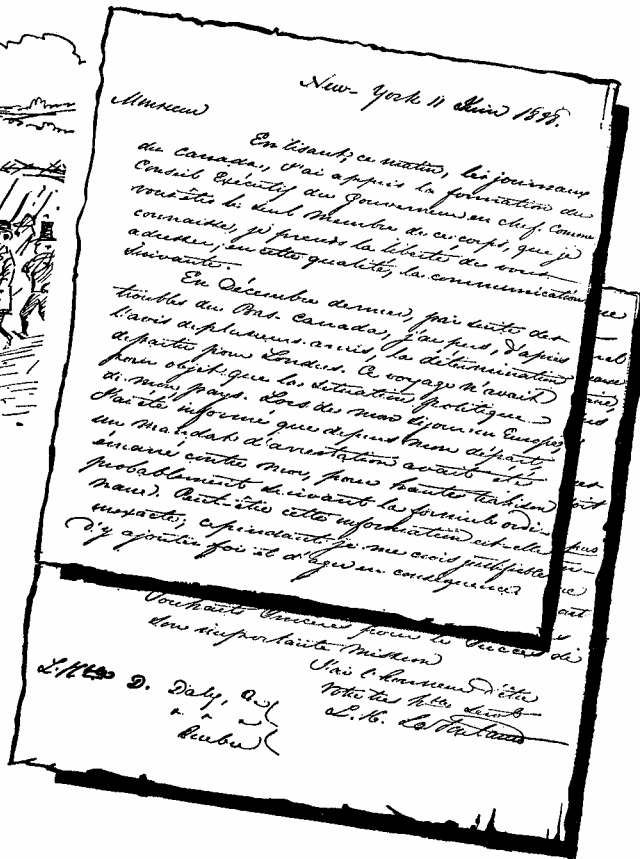
Exile to Premier

From the shadow of a treason charge Sir Louis Hippolyte LaFontaine emerged to become one of the giants of Canadian constitutional history.

He had fled Canada just before the rebellion of 1837 because he was afraid of being involved in the violence his fellow "patriots" were fomenting.

In this letter to Mr. Daly, a member of the executive council, he tells of his reluctance to return until he is assured of a fair trial. He was eventually charged with complicity in the rebellion but the charges were dropped before his trial.

Sir Louis became with Robert Baldwin one of the joint premiers of the United Canadas, the first responsible ministry in the country, and later became chief justice of Lower Canada.



Passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill he introduced marked a milestone in the history of responsible government in Canada although it touched off at the time opposition which led to a raid on his home and the burning of the Parliament Buildings.

LaFontaine Ready to Stand Trial

New York, 11 June, 1838.

Sir:

On reading this morning's newspapers from Canada I learned of the formation of an Executive Council to the Governor in Chief. As you are the only member of this corps I happen to know, I take the liberty of addressing to you, as a member, the following communication.

Last December, following the troubles in Lower Canada I took upon myself, following the advice of many friends, the decision of leaving for London. The only reason for this voyage was the political situation in my country.

While in Europe I was told that since my leaving the country a warrant had been issued for my arrest for high treason following the normal

procedure. This information may be inaccurate but I feel justified in believing it to be true and to act accordingly . . .

If any charge is lodged against me I am ready to stand trial before any competent court. Far from me to run from the normal course of justice. On the contrary I demand and with pleasure, its most extended application, come what may.

True, if this charge, the main reason of which I am aware, is rejected I may be without any legal recourse based on morals and justice against its instigators . . . In this I shall be forced to share the fate of many of my countrymen . . .

I have the honor to be your most honorable servant,

L. H. LAFONTAINE.