

CHAPTER XII

THE LAST RECOVERY

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THE half dozen years which followed the collapse of the rebellion and the advent of Lord Durham were years of reorganization and recovery. The establishment of the long-desired union, the flotation of the indispensable loan, the work of a few men of constructive genius and a brief burst of material prosperity, all combined to reinvigorate the prostrated colonies. For the first time—and also for the last time—in its history under the régime of the new staples, the commercial state acquired a measure of inward harmony and outward adjustment. The interlocking commercial and political ideas, which made up the doctrine of the second British Empire as it was understood on the St. Lawrence by the possessing classes, were worked out more fully and applied more completely than they had ever been before. For a few years, under favouring conditions which a quarter-century before might have altered its whole existence, the commercial state progressed. It was a brilliant period, as full of energy and accomplishment as it was brief in duration. For the forces which were inimical to the success and to the very existence of the old Canadian system continued to develop in the Canadas, the United States and England; and before a half dozen years were out, the entire, newly repaired structure was exposed once more to strains from within and from without.

In 1838, when the rebellions had failed, and the reforming party lay prostrate in both provinces, all these repairs were still to be made. The country had passed through an emotional as well as a material upheaval. The air was heavy with a sullen sense of defeat and a feeling of vindictive triumph; and the emotions engendered by the crisis were kept alive by the hope, or the fear, that the defeated rebels, with the aid of the Americans, would invade the country from the south. Mackenzie, Duncombe, Rolph, Papineau, Brown, Lafontaine and the other leaders of the popular party had fled the country. Bidwell, who had had nothing to do with the