



[Transcription: Sir John A. Macdonald Fonds. Family Papers, Baroness Macdonald, MG 26 A, Volume 59A, July 1867 (Reel C-1447)]

Agnes MacDonald

Ottawa

July 6th

1867

July 1867

Friday 5th

My beautiful new Diary Book!

I am ever so pleased with it and have been examining and admiring it for full two minutes! The lock too! My diaries as Miss Bernard did not need such precautions but then I was an insignificant young spinster & what I might write did not matter. Now I am a Great Premier's wife & Lady Macdonald & "cabinet secrets and mysteries" might drop or slip off unwittingly from the nib of my pen.

That is- they might do so- if my pen had any nib or if I knew any Cabinet secrets, which I certainly don't- but then a Locked Diary looks consequential & just now, I am rather in that line myself- I mean the consequential line, of course. My Husband's new title is just five days old, so for a short time longer I may be excused for some little bumptiousness.

It has been a hot [unreadable] day, but these are [unreadable] times. This new dominion of ours came noisily into existence on the 1 & 2. The very newspapers look hot & tired with the weight of announcements and Cabinet lists.

Here-in this house- the atmosphere is so awfully political that sometimes I think the very flies hold Parliament on the kitchen table cloths! In theory I regard my husband with much awe, in practice I tease the life out of him, by talking of dress & compliments when he comes home to rest! Today he rebelled- poor man, & ordered me out of the room. I went at once

but he relented, the good old boy & after he called me back- he got the worst of it!

I went with Marjery & Fannie Easton & Marion to Spencer Wood for flowers wherewith to beautify my dining table for this evening we give a little dinner to the Kennys of Nova Scotia, the new Minister in the Confederate Parliament. He was sworn in last night. He is a large staid, sensible looking Irishman. Elderly & with a fine looking comfortable life. He is. [McLeans's?] general, the Macdougalls & Col. Macdougall were here. M. Cartier and Mr. Lowe. My Lord never talks politics out of season so only passing allusions were made to the subject all evening. I thought his colleague Mr. Macdougall, our Comr. Of Public Works would gladly have discoursed on that line- but he had no chance. Sandfield came in the evening & was very loving. Rumor says he is to get "something" but then rumor is very busy these days & sometimes runs wrong.

July 6th

Hewitt left early for Toronto on some mission connected with General Stisted's swearing in as Lt. Governor of Ontario. Dear! Dear what novelty all this is! And all this new constitution has been framed in my blessed old Husband's brain. Sometimes I look at him in vague wonderment, and ponder over all I know or can collect touching his career! Thank God he has been very successful

In this [unreadable] scheme of the confederation of all the British North American Provinces & all Canada is singing his praises. He is a powerful and popular man today; & [unreadable] the humblest, least assuming, most gently judging of all mankind.

Hot today, very hot- a blazing summer sun [unreadable] for hours in a cloudless heaven [beating?] full down on the unsheltered house. In the wide, dusty ugly streets of this our capital. I lay on my sofa, panting half asleep, dreaming of the cool, flowery, shady lanes in the Channel Islands where I spent last summer or of lazy moonlight strolls on the heather covered [steep?]; picturesque cliffs above the sweet wide color blue sea. Was I regretting? Ah! No! Life was only "half" then. I enjoyed but alone. Now the dust & heat & dullness is nothing to me, for I have found something worth living for- living in my Husband's heart & love.

Fanny & Margery Nash lunched with me- but John came home early & Mar. went out walking after dinner- so we had such a jolly resting evening. No visitors or telegrams or letters or fuss. My Husband devoted himself for a time to "Patience", his well beloved game. I shall ever think of him sitting absorbed in his cards, leaning on the large green table in my dressing-room. He lays to rest his mind & changes the current of his thoughts more than anything else.

Sunday July 7th

I do so wish there could be a law passed forbidding Sunday politics! And tho I complain tonight, this has been a quiet day.

We went to morning service at 11. I had been to the Holy Communion earlier & then I went with John to see the Kennys & his sister in law Mrs. Macpherson. The Kenny's we missed- but they called afterwards to say "good b'ye) & then I read sermons while John dictated letters & then [unreadable] went to church and we strolled up the Macdougalls.

I do so like to identify myself with all my Husband's pursuits & occupations he is so busy & so much older than I that I would soon fall out of his life if I went my own way- as I might do- disregarding him. On the whole I think he likes me near him. He is so agreeable & so good-natured that being with him is always refreshing.

I tell him his good heart and amiable temper are the great secrets of his success. He is so thoroughly patient & gentle in spirit. It is quite remarkable in so hardworked, so busy & so thoughtful a man. He can throw off a weight of business in a wonderfully short space of time, oftentimes he comes in with a very moody brow, tired & oppressed- his voice weak, his step slow & ten minutes after he is making clever jokes & laughing like any school boy, with his hands in his pockets & his head thrown back. At this very moment, he has gone to see some emissary for tomorrow who is here for Instruction- it is near midnight too.

The cool weather today has been refreshing. A fresh light breeze- from the South East & a glittery moonlight. I sat for a short time on the McDougall's verandah with them. I watched the moon traveling slowly up near the little new church tower, with the yellow rays shining thro' the scaffolding.

Today from my seat in the courthouse during service (it is held there until the church is ready) I could not help watching the Prisoners sitting close to the barred windows, eating their coarse dinners & looking out into the yard. There was one a boy- a brown-haired child almost- & I pondered over the strangeness of the [unreadable] discipline that could allow that young criminal to associate with the villainous looking old Blackguard- who talked with him for half an hour.

John says he is going West on Thursday so our traveling begins again soon. I like it very much. Everybody pets us up & runs after us delightfully, only sometimes I get tired of being flattered & toasted & feted & I long to be alone with him somewhere- nobody knowing or needing us for a while.

July 8th

The Aurora last night was very fine. A great crescent of brilliant yellow light with great white feathers [spreading?] up into the dark starry sky. I called my John to look at it. Lovely this morning- cool and [...let?]. I saw the [unreadable] and read "Gabrielle".

July 9 Tuesday

Cool and breezy. The Aurora certainly indicated change of weather. Eternal letters of congratulations- how ungrateful I am to hate the sight of the long delicate envelopes addressed in various styles of very [pointed?] feminine hands. I don't think I could ever make a friend of a woman who wrote a pointed hand. Answering these effusions takes up so much time. Mr. Chapman dined here tonight & John says the dinner was a failure- perhaps my having ordered it to be ready an hour too soon might have had something to do with it. A great ["Conv"?] being organized- now a [unreadable] - John as asked Sandfield Macdonald to be Premier of the local Parliament for Ontario. If he takes it, it will be what politicians here call "a Bombshell in the enemy's camp". Brown [unreadable] on his holding aloof- at worst- but I am pretty sure he expected a decided support from Sandfield, but Sandfield doesn't like him & thinks him extreme & I thoroughly suspect he will accept office. In the meantime, there is a great howl thro' the Grit papers. Brown is [unreadable] & tries with might & main to turn the Ontario electors agaisny John & his party. John manages this- his Coalition Government- so cleverly that I don't think B will effect much- tho' he is very strong West.

The queerest thing of all seems he's trying for Roman Catholic support after vilifying them & their religion & their Institutions for years past. He called a Grand convention in Toronto for today, but John telegraphed and wrote & so managed matters that he sent a counter movement up there & Brown's big guns did not do much more than [snap?]. Meantime John is tired and looking pale. I do earnestly wish wish the excitement would lull. No more Cabinet councils for a time- however, everybody is turning their attention to Election matters.

July 10 Wednesday

Started at 6 this morning with Sir John Prescott. Mr. Macdougall & his son Joe with us. [Letters] & Sandfield met us at Spencerville. I came into our car- smiling and shaking hands. I saw his mind was made up- he said "Well I am going in for it Lady Macdonald" & I answered "I am heartily glad to hear it & trust & ~~hope~~^{expect} too it will be all right & for the best". We all breakfasted together at the Junction at Prescott. I then went with John in the Private car with an Engine & [unreadable.] to the Telegraph office where John sent off no end of telegrams about Sandfield with his own hand.

We lunched at Prescott and John held interviews with no end of people. Col. [unreadable] and Mr. Jones were in attendance on me- by turns all day & several people called. It was a busy time and I was right glad when we could go into the cool, quiet Private car alone together. We locked both doors and John lay on the sofa & fell fast asleep in two minutes & so we raced homeward thro' the green forest.

July 12

Friday- Ditto Ditto of yesterday- with the coolness increased. My Husband made up his mind to go off to Toronto early tomorrow & I began a vigorous packing with Mary.

Visitors as usual- on business crowding & jostling with anxious faces. Sandfield's acceptance of the Ontario Premiership has astonished or rather taken everybody by surprise.

July 13

Left Ottawa by early train. John & I & Mr. {Drinkwater?}, the Secretary and Mary, as my maid. Visitors in the Private car all the way to Prescott. Talking! Talking! Forever, smilingly receiving congratulations & saying the same things. Flattered and caressed ad lib all ready to fall down &

worship the rising star. One sturdy old man was presented to me. He looked at the delicate glove on my proffered hand and said he was "not fit to touch it"- but I took the rough stalwart fingers in my own & I felt my hand almost crushed in his honest grasp. He said a few bluff words & ended with "good welcome to you young lady, your husband is a good man". I felt pleased. He went on to say, "he is no political friend of mine, but I respect him!" We left Prescott by Boat, paid 3 hours visit to Kingston, and came up by river to Toronto. A lovely moonlight night- wonderfully still & yet cool. We went ploughing on thro' the calm water, cutting into the white moonbeams & listening to the ripple under our good steamer's bows. I fell asleep & dreamed I was going to Quebec- as I had gone a year before- a stranger.

July 14

Reached Toronto early- tired & headachy. It was a [unreadable] yesterday in the Boat, all day people introduced- people to be talked to, ladies calling at Kingston, while we lay in Harbor & exciting political talk. John is in great spirits & as long as I can help him- by being cheery & smiling- I am quite satisfied.