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A Provincial Leader

SINCE 1867 there are only two, perhaps three men who have been acknowledged as national leaders. Sir John Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier earned the title, and Sir Charles Tupper came near the honour. No other man ever won the good-will and confidence of the whole of Canada. Mr. Fielding may some day be added to the roll, and so may Mr. Borden. But their time is not yet.

There have been provincial leaders, that is men who were acknowledged by even their opponents to be the political leaders of their respective provinces. Some of these have held undisputed sway for a few years, some for many years. Some have been provincial premiers and have passed on to federal honours still retaining their provincial pre-eminence. Sir Oliver Mowat, Mr. Fielding, Mr. Blair, and Mr. Sifton may be taken as provincial leaders in this broad sense. Mr. Fielding is the most notable example of the day.

Since the death of Mr. Blair, a few days ago, the Hon. Henry Robert Emmerson may be said to be the chief political representative of New Brunswick. He has been premier of that Province, and is now Minister of Railways and Canals at Ottawa. Like Mr. Fielding, his transfer to Ottawa has not affected his position as the political leader of his Province. He is undoubtedly the best known and most powerful of New Brunswick's politicians.

Mr. Emmerson has not leaped into popularity and prominence. He has won his way slowly into public respect. He is not brilliant nor is he a genius. He has built the walls of his renown, brick by brick. The public have been almost reluctant to admit him a master-workman. To gather up the respect and confidence of an entire province is almost the work of a lifetime. To gather the good-will of nine provinces is a task which only a brilliant and wonderful man may accomplish. It is hardly likely that Mr. Emmerson will go so far. Nevertheless, that is not to say that he is a man of whom little may be said in his favour.

Mr. Emmerson has courage. He gave evidence of it the other day when he went to Toronto and boldly proclaimed that the people of Ontario were not so grateful as they should be for the services which the Intercolonial had rendered in the national development. He backed up his challenge with a convincing array of facts and figures. When he returned to Ottawa, he carried back with him more of the respect of the people of the Province

of Ontario than he had previously possessed. Mr. Emmerson startled them, but he came near to convincing them. Another such speech and he might wholly succeed.

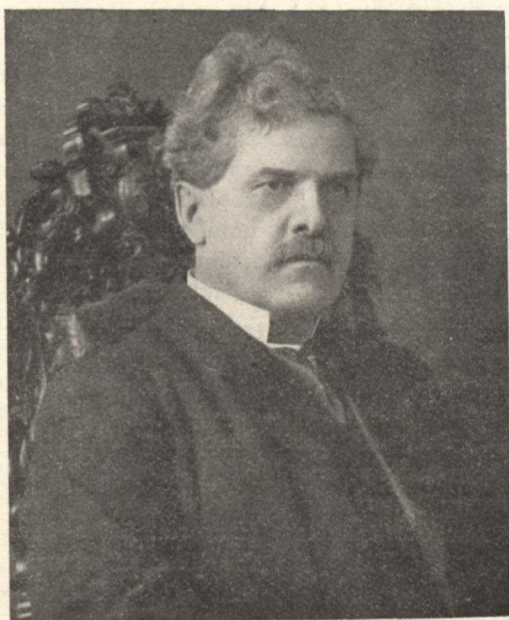
Mr. Emmerson seems to be doing well with the Intercolonial. It has been badly run in the past, no doubt. He has been in charge of it, of all the Government railways, for three years. A more brilliant man might have reached the present stage of reform more quickly, but in so doing he would probably have created more opposition. If Mr. Emmerson has moved slowly, it may partly be his own fault, but it is also partly the result of a difficult situation. No large corporation, with a multitude of ramifications, can be reformed in a day or in three hundred and sixty-five days. The public recognises that and has given Mr. Emmerson time.

The Minister of Railways must recognise, however, that the public desires to see the Intercolonial taken out of politics and put on a sound business basis. This is necessary for the good of the Government, in the interest of the road itself and for the good name of government ownership. The national interest in this subject is so great that it would be suicidal on the part of any Government or any administrator to neglect the public's wishes. Mr. Emmerson's task is to bring Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to see it as the rest of the country sees it. If he succeeds, he will have outclassed his predecessors.

A railway run by politicians for the benefit of themselves and their friends cannot compete with well-managed, privately-owned roads. When passes and free freights are more common than

tickets and revenue-producing way-bills, deficits are likely to be pronounced. This was the case some years ago. The people of Southern Quebec and of the Maritime Provinces wanted it that way. Mr. Emmerson has tried to teach them otherwise. Perhaps his predecessors did the same, but they were not always working at the job.

His work at this juncture is onerous but since the establishment of the Railway Commission, some responsibility has been lifted from his department. The whole canal system of the country, and our canal system is fairly extensive, is under his jurisdiction and requires much of his attention. On him will fall, in a general way, the looking forward in connection with our canal policy. And there is a future in this matter. Shall there be a Georgian Bay-Ottawa canal? Should there be a canal from Rainy Lake to Winnipeg? These and other questions are to the front now and there may be more to follow.



HON. H. R. EMMERSON
Minister of Railways and Canals.