

By-Elections and a Visit to the West

was the opening of West Northumberland, in Ontario, by the resignation of Mr. Cockburn, a Conservative. In these circumstances, it became evident that Mr. Blake had not accepted the loss of the two elections in Nova Scotia as a sign of a general defeat. A few days before the election in West Northumberland, by selecting Coburg for another battle, Mr. Blake showed his hand in the political game. The gauntlet was defiantly thrown down. At no time in his life was Sir Charles in better spirits, in finer fettle, with his health perfectly restored, physical vigour at its best, and the ring of victory in all the shoutings from the Maritime Provinces to British Columbia. Sir Charles accepted the challenge publicly given by Mr. Blake in the arrangement to speak at Coburg just before the election was to take place. The eyes of the entire Dominion were upon this contest. The place was comparatively unimportant, and the pending battle was only a by-election, and that for but one year. Sir Charles Tupper was on the ground. His friends said, let there be a free and full discussion between the two leaders. Let Mr. Blake speak first, Sir Charles follow, and Mr. Blake close. That was refused. Sir Charles could have an hour, to be followed by Mr. Blake with unlimited time. This was the best that could be done.

Sir Charles knew that he was not speaking to an audience in Coburg alone. The whole Dominion was before him. The significance of the battle was fully realised. He knew his hearers. He knew his readers, all of whom were tensely expectant. The result would have much to do with the general election, only one year in the future. Speakers and hearers were keenly alive to these conditions.

After Sir Charles's address, Mr. Blake followed with a speech two hours and a half long.

The *Toronto Mail* of December 22 contained a full report of Sir Charles Tupper's speech, given the evening after Blake's meeting, in reply to that of Mr. Blake.