



I NOTICE that a lot of people want the Ontario Liberals to import the American system of choosing a leader—the nominating convention. This is probably not so much a vote of want of confidence in the British system as in the personnel of the Liberal “front bench” in the Ontario Legislature. These innovators would in all likelihood be disappointed if the Convention were to meet and solemnly nominate one of the four gentlemen who now sit in the Legislature and presumably “In the running.” Yet if the Convention nominates anybody else, and attempts to seat this new man in the Legislature to lead the veterans who are now there, he will do well in my opinion to dodge the doubtful honour. Leading a legislative party is like almost any other business—it has to be learned. Put a greenhorn at the task; and you will get the common result of amateur effort. And in this case, the amateur will be endeavouring to work with a lot of envious and semi-hostile critics who know the ropes which are all a puzzle to him, and who—if they are human—will take unholy delight in watching him blunder. He will be the good little boy sent out by the Sunday School superintendent to teach the bad little boys how to play “leap frog.”

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The Americans have great faith in a Convention, but they do not try to choose Congressional or Legislative leaders with one. They know that what they call “floor leaders” are made, not born, nor picked out for some popular action. They will choose a man in the public eye to run for President or Governor, offices in which he need not tangle himself up in rules of order nor conduct a parliamentary debate full of explosive surprises. But their Reeds, their Dingleys, their Cannons, their Blaines, fight their way to the front in Congress. A Hughes may be made Governor, but he is not leading the New York Legislature by a large majority. A convention-appointed leader from the outside would be a picnic to the nice little boys at Westminster. If all a man has to do is to look pleasant, shake hands, write messages and deliver set speeches, a convention could pick him out by his conduct at an “afternoon tea” and an “evening meeting” where resolutions were moved. But a “floor leader” must “rattle” with Whitney, cross rapiers with Foy, avoid Hanna’s lance point and Dr. Pyne’s points of order, all in a quarter of an hour.

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The Monocle thinks that the Liberals have some good material for local leaders. George Graham is capital for a popular audience—a speaker of the type of Sir John Macdonald. McKay is a spirited fighter. Preston commands not a little respect. Harcourt had better be the old uncle of the party in an arm chair. If the Liberals were relatively as well led at Ottawa they would be happy, indeed. The fact is that any one of these three men would strengthen the Federal Ministry, while it would be hard to name a Federal Minister from Ontario at this time—except Mr. Aylesworth—who could bring strength to the local leadership. The Conservatives are well led in the Legislature, too. Whitney is a Premier who enjoys the confidence of the plain people. Foy is a capital legal adviser. Beck and Hanna have the public ear. Dr. Pyne seems to be showing backbone

in the Educational Department; and our Uncle Mathe-son is not doing so badly with the Treasury.

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In view of the poverty in leaders at Ottawa, it is astonishing how many leaders are out at grass. Sir Charles Hibbert, for instance, is the sort of stuff out of which leaders are made; but he is left practicing law and organising schisms in British Columbia. Blair is a natural leader; and yet he is humbly begging for a seat in New Brunswick. Tarte is a natural leader, but he is not doing any leading. The late E. F. Clarke was a great leader of men, but his party never knew how to use him. Hugh John Macdonald would be an inspiration if he were brought to the front and kept there. But we seem to have fallen upon times when the parties choose their leaders from the “discard.”

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The Quebec Legislature has got to work with its great annual demonstration of how well a political body can get along without an Opposition. If Premier Gouin keeps his eye on the Parent Liberals, who still form a group within his ranks, he need not worry about the occasional cross remarks he hears from the few lonesome Conservatives who escaped the great flood. Just how good legislating he is doing, it is hard to say; for there is no one to point out the faults. Those who talk about him “fighting Laurier,” however, are merely betraying a beautiful lack of acquaintance with the situation. Gouin—with all his tactical skill—is not a popular leader. He utilised the forces which existed about him to unhorse Parent, and he is an adroit manager of the men he can come in contact with. But he could never head a popular revolt against an idol of the people like Laurier. Bourassa would make a much better fist at that.

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Two men of whom Ontario has hardly become aware as yet are Marechal and Turgeon; yet these men may be the Chapleau and the Laurier of the future. Marechal is a Conservative lawyer in the city of Montreal who is in great demand as a popular speaker and is expected to make his mark in politics before very long. Turgeon is a member of the Gouin Cabinet from Quebec, and is the best orator in the combination. Sir Wilfrid has been trying to coax him to Ottawa for quite a while now; and he is probably the best platform speaker in the province next to the Federal Premier himself. Marechal possesses the magnetism which Monk lacks, and can fire an audience as easily as Monk can depress it. Turgeon is a heavier weight than either Bourassa or Lemieux. Stranger things have happened than that these two men should fight for the leadership of the French Canadians on the retirement of Laurier.

Modern Proverbs

It’s a long lane that has no ash-barrel.

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Fine feathers make presentation cigars.

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When in Rome do as the High Church does.

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Care killed the cat: ‘Rah for care!

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Don’t put all your eggs in one basket. Put ‘em in the safety deposit vaults. They’re worth fifty cents a dozen.

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Mind the pennies, and your son will spend the pounds.

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All men are liars; even Truth lies at the bottom of a well.

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Time and Tide have got jobs in a local restaurant.

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There’s no fool like the fool that’s on the other side of politics.

McAree.