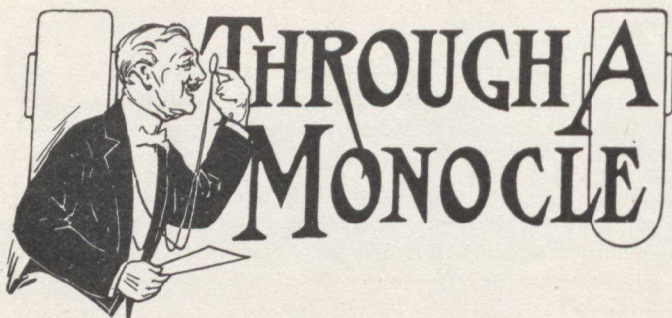




WHAT constitutes a political leader? This is a live question for most of us in Canada these piping times of political peace; for most of us—no matter what our brand of party serfdom may be—are engaged in trying a new political leader. If we are Conservatives, we are wondering whether Mr. Borden will do; and, if we are Ontario Liberals, we are wondering how Mr. George Graham will make out. In Quebec, both parties are in a quandary, the Liberals still in doubt about Mr. Gouin, and the Conservatives in still greater doubt about whom they can get to face him. In New Brunswick, they change leaders so quickly that he is a wise New Brunswicker who knows his own leader on any given day until after he has seen the news of the latest shuffle; while in Nova Scotia—well, who are the local leaders in Nova Scotia anyway? Take us generally, we are in a state of political flux; and a leader who has been in the saddle as long as Mr. Whitney looks like an old-timer. As for Sir Wilfrid, we cannot remember when he did not lead the Liberal party and carry Quebec in his pocket.

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Now, what are the essential qualities in a good leader? We look at Sir Wilfrid and say that he must be eloquent. But Sir John Macdonald was not eloquent—at least, not in his later days. He was then one of the worst speakers on the front benches of the Commons. Nor could anyone accuse Sir Oliver Mowat of being eloquent; and yet Macdonald and Mowat are probably the two most successful political leaders whom our history embalms. This is more apparent when we consider their opponents. When it came to eloquence, Sir William Meredith was immeasurably better than Mowat, and Hon. Edward Blake was a far finer speaker than Sir John. Sir Wilfrid has probably more of the fire of genuine eloquence than any Canadian public man of this generation, and this power has been of great assistance to him; but Alexander Mackenzie joins with Macdonald and Mowat to show that a man may be a great leader without this charming gift. Sir Charles Tupper is a capital public speaker; but he was the Conservative leader who went to disaster in '96 and 1900. Mr. Foster has a sort of lecture-platform eloquence; but that does not endear him perceptibly to the country.

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Very well, we will say, let eloquence go; but, in the name of Sir John and Sir Wilfrid, a leader must have personal magnetism. Most of our leaders in this country have had it; so it is harder to rule against the necessity of this quality by the citing of examples to the contrary. Still we have some. Sir John Thompson promised to be a great leader, and yet he was totally without personal magnetism. Mr. Fielding has done well both in the Provincial and the Federal field; still this is hardly one of his conspicuous qualities. If Mowat had it, he did not overwork it in public; while Sir William Meredith has it to a marked degree. But if we permit ourselves a glimpse into the British arena, we find that many of the greatest were wholly without it. Lord Salisbury was a grandee with airs of aloofness. Mr. Chamberlain is cold as ice. Mr. Gladstone had little of personal magnetism apart from his commanding and persuasive eloquence. Peel was notoriously without it; and Parnell was the coldest man the Irish party ever

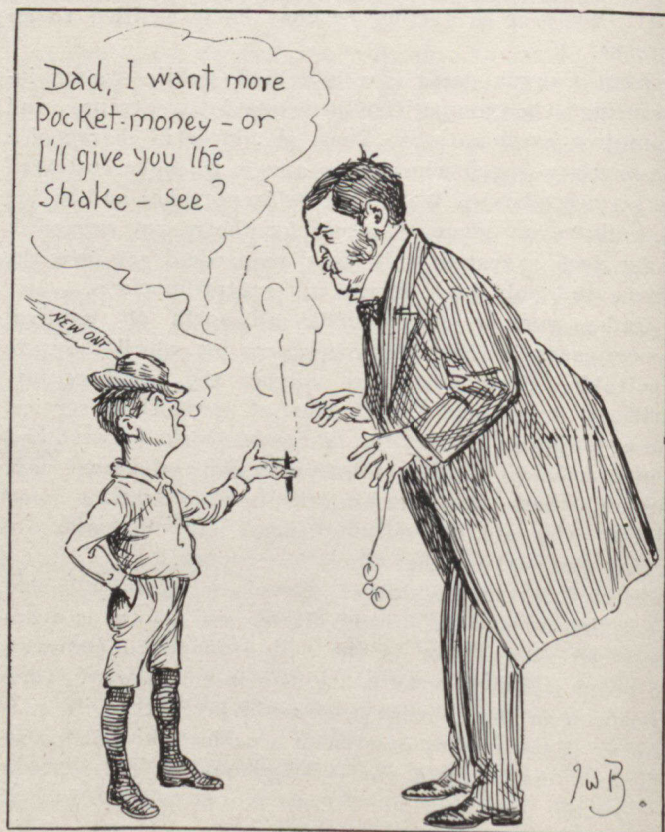
produced. Politics is a different matter to a certain degree in the British Isles from the article as we know it in Canada; yet the similarity is great enough to make these examples worth quoting on the importance of personal magnetism.

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Now, then, are there any qualities necessary for a leader? If he need not have eloquence or magnetism, is there anything that he cannot do without? I venture to think that there is. For one thing, he must have initiative. We have never had a great leader without it—not one. Baldwin had it; so had Brown, Macdonald, Mackenzie, Mowat and Laurier. They were all creative men. They were not afraid to break new ground. They met new conditions with new policies. They were not echoes or copyists. In two words, they were not followers but leaders. It is when a man fails to meet new conditions with the right policy that he goes down, as witness the case of Hon. George W. Ross. This power of initiative—this creative power—makes men, who otherwise would hardly be spoken of as popular leaders, look very dangerous to their rivals, as witness the case of "Billy" Maclean. Mr. Maclean has probably no other single quality that makes a leader; but he has initiative. And he is a leader. Mr. Bourassa has initiative; and he, too, is a leader.

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Thus those of us who want a test to try our political leaders by, have one here. Have they initiative? Do they create new policies? Are they leaders, or are they followers? If they are not leaders, no amount of eloquence or personal magnetism or parliamentary adroitness will carry them far. Chauncey Depew was a capital "mixer"; but he never could have been a leader. Hearst is said to be a poor "mixer," but he is a genuine leader. The hesitation with which the Republican party is receiving the name of Taft to-day, is due to the fact that they fear he may be nothing more than a follower; though a follower of the greatest American leader of modern times, Roosevelt. Bryan is a genuine leader, and the Democracy had apparently rather follow a leader who is occasionally mistaken, than the most ornamental follower, dressed up as a figure-head, whom the party can produce. Is Mr. Borden a leader? Is Mr. George Graham a leader? These are delicate questions. They are the sort that, in a community of fierce politicians, it is better to answer in a non-committal fashion. But the test is easily applied. Are they breaking new ground? Are they meeting changed conditions with policies that fit? Are they speaking out what the general public has only thus far been turning over in its mind? Are they leading?



New Ontario speaks to Mr. Whitney.