

THE PLUM-PUDDING AT OTTAWA

By A. POLLIE TISHUN



Hon.
W. S. Fielding.

than any other plum pudding!"

"But don't you have any trouble in making the plums go round?"

"Naturally. But that is where the *chef's* truly artistic skill is shown. Sometimes I am obliged to give a member of my family a slice with merely a suggestion of plum flavour—a *soupcou*, as it were.

However, he is satisfied with the helping and usually has a liberal supply of sauce."

"Hard sauce?"

"According to taste. Now my friend, Hon. R. W. Scott, would never have even a teaspoonful of brandy sauce with his; so, I had to give him really, truly plums—and some to take home to his boy."

At this point, a sleek secretary presented a card which Sir Wilfrid scanned thoughtfully. "You will excuse me," he said graciously. "I promised to see Mr. John Horner at this hour. He likes to ask about his Christmas plum before the other boys get here."

Hon.
Frank Oliver.

The Wizard of the Tariff was in a happy frame of mind as he absently toyed with a bronze paper weight inscribed: "Væ victis." He broke into almost Laurier benignity at the mention of plum pudding. "It is the *piece de resistance* of the political *menu*," he said positively. "No Ottawa season is complete without it. As for myself, I partake of it sparingly, because I have a somewhat delicate digestion. This year there will be *Liberal* helpings for all and I should not be surprised if some would pass their plates for a second supply of plums. Now there's Oliver! Like his famous namesake in Dickens, he always wants more."

"But it was porridge *Oliver Twist* asked for."

"Porridge or plums, it's all the same—and I'm not saying that Frank doesn't deserve them. But he ought to say 'thank you' for them and sometimes he forgets that plum pudding comes but once a year."

Hon. Wm. Paterson.

"How about the duty on plums?"

"That's not exactly in my department. Perhaps you had better see my friend, Hon. William Paterson."

As Mr. Paterson was suffering from a severe cold and had mislaid the deeper notes of his magnificent voice, he was forced to reply in a whisper which could be heard only two corridors away. "I've no special fondness for plums," he gasped hoarsely.

"I've never favoured anything but simple fare—biscuits are more in my line. But there's a lot of nourishment in a slice of plum pudding. But here's our friend, the Postmaster-General. You might ask him for an opinion. These Frenchmen are epicures all right."

The Honourable Rodolphe looked thoughtful, over the gastronomic proposition. "I've eaten a good deal of it in my time," he admitted. "However, I wouldn't call it one of



Sir
Richard Cartwright.

the bulwarks of the constitution, or the palladium of our liberties if I may be permitted to fall into several metaphors. There is no doubt that it gives a flavour to political life. Ask Murphy about it."

The very latest thing in Cabinet Ministers smiled reservedly. "I really don't know whether I can say much in its favour. It is too thoroughly Saxon for my palate."

"It's an acquired taste with some," interrupted Sir Richard Cartwright, "but I have never known a member of the Dominion Cabinet to remain indifferent to plums. He begins with just a taste, and, before you know it, he is getting most of the fruit and leaving the mere currants and spices for the rest of us."

"I believe Sir John Macdonald had a nice taste in the matter of plums." Sir Richard scowled darkly and replied with exceeding stiffness:

"So far as I remember, his plum pudding invariably turned out a lemon pie."

Sir Frederick Borden's affability was in keeping with the season of peace on earth. "The plum pudding," he said cheerfully, "is a dish of which I partake sparingly, for my digestion is not what it used to be. Still its disappearance would create a panic, for many members look forward to a plum diet as a dish for a good boy. Really, I prefer something simpler—dried plums are not bad—and Nova Scotia packs them in neat layers. Then I am also very fond of Peaches."

"Speaking of plums," said Hon. William Pugsley dreamily, "reminds me of St. John harbour. Ah!



Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

St. John is the place to spend Christmas. And—would you believe it? My special brand of pudding is advertised in everyone of the daily papers. Then, the first thing you know, some chap in Toronto raises a howl about the slice I'm getting. You won't tell if I let you know something?"

"Never!" was the ready answer.

"Well, this year my helping is to be mostly currants and lemon peel—precious few plums. You see I got into the plum jar last summer and I'm on short rations now."

"No," said Hon. A. B. Aylesworth with decision, "I find the plum pudding disagrees with me."

"Didn't you have any, at the banquet of 1903?"

"I might have had a ton of it then," said the Minister with a frown, "but I'm not fond of lavish supplies. However, Fisher knows something of plums. They're a juicy feature in the agricultural department, you know."

"The plum is simply invaluable, in either puddings or politics," said the Minister of Agriculture gravely, as he toyed with a blue book. "You may be pleased to know that I have offered prizes for essays on the plum."

"No grafting in connection with it?" was the innocent query.

"Not the slightest. Now, I tried to introduce a little of the flavour into the militia fare about the spring of 1904 but that impossible Dundonald made such a riot about the experiment that I felt horribly discouraged about plum-culture for a while. However, it's a poor government orchard that won't furnish the ingredients for a really 'filling' pudding, at

least once during the year."

"I'm not especially keen on plum pudding," said Hon. G. P. Graham, as he produced a smile which was an Ontario imitation of Sir Wilfrid's sunny ways. "Down in Toronto I didn't get much chance at it, for G. W. Ross and Gibson kept most of it all to themselves. When Whitney finally overturned their fruit-stand, and all the little Tories began to scramble for the plums, I saw it was time for Your Uncle George to move to Ottawa if he ever wanted anything like a plateful of the real thing. But I'm not one of those who *profess* to like it," he concluded vaguely.

"Plum pudding," echoed Hon. L. P. Brodeur, as he drew down the corners of his oratorical mouth. "I assure you, I am sick of the very name of it. Plums! Mention them not in my presence."

"Then you prefer a simple diet?"

"Of the plainest I assure you. The plum pudding is the politician's tragedy and yet he will not—what does my friend in Toronto, the *News*, say?—cut it out. The very worst attack of nervous prostration I have known came from an overdose of plum pudding. I'd like you to mention that I find it nauseating, for some of my best friends persist in asking me to have some. It may be a safe enough dish in other climates—but in Ottawa, plum pudding has proved the curse of many a constitution."

"You seem to have had an unusually severe attack of dyspepsia," I said in surprise, for the Honourable Louis Philippe was throwing bits of the *Toronto News* into the waste-paper basket. "I know that some politicians dislike the ingredients of the plum pudding but I had no idea you had gone so far in aversion to it."

"I'm the first man to abolish the list of select plums," said the Minister of Marine and Fisheries, "future generations of Canadians will know me as the man who put his veto on this plethora of plums. No man," he added magnificently, "is appreciated in his lifetime. But I shall be remembered as the Anti-Plum Politician. What nobler epithet could any man desire?"

"And epitaphery is always so true," I murmured pleasantly. "I'm sorry you don't like plums, because, after all, they lend a little colour to the year's diet. Our daily bread is what we pray for; but secretly every one of us hopes for plum pudding before the year is over."

"Nevertheless," croaked the Honourable Louis Philippe in raven tones, "shall I partake of even the smallest slice and, as for foamy sauce, I detest it. The stuff reminds me of the sea. Plums have been my pit-fall."

"The pits *are* rather awkward," I agreed genially, "but the plum pudding is sometimes abused more than it deserves."

"I tell you," reiterated the Member of the Mournful Countenance, "I feel like the twenty-sixth of December every day. If you have any friends in politics, just tell them from me that plums are sure to turn out lemons. But—it's nearly six o'clock and—a Merry Christmas!"

The season's greeting was warmly echoed.



Sir F. Borden.



Hon.
Wm. Pugsley.



Hon. A. B.
Aylesworth.



Hon. L. P. Brodeur.