

It was said of him by some: "A man may be a charming speaker, a powerful reasoner and even an incomparable parliamentary debater, and still lack the essentials for party leadership. A brilliant record in the service, and the courage of a very hero, do not necessarily imply that their possessor has all the qualities required in a general. An excellent private may make but a poor captain. Will Laurier *lead* as well as he has followed?"

And what is the answer? So firmly and ably has the young leader kept his footing, even on this treacherous ground, that the choice of the party has been more than justified, the expectations of his admirers more than realized. He has maintained an attitude which has amazed—I should even say disconcerted them,—were it not for the ambiguity of that expression.

Only recently one of the most influential of the English Liberals said to me: "He is marvellous!" and the exclamation expresses no more than the exact truth. For Laurier is no ordinary leader. Thoroughly equipped with information on every subject, always ready at repartee, never to be caught off his guard, displaying matchless prudence at every step, leaving nothing to chance; charming his friends by his calm self-confidence and boldness,—disarming his opponents by his courteous fairness, no less than he confounds them by his sudden and brilliant attacks: he is never guilty of a false move, never permits himself to be taken by surprise, and, though he may not inflict a crushing defeat upon the enemy at every encounter, it is rarely, indeed, that he is driven from the field. It is, however, on occasions when some vital question has to be disposed of, when the application of some important economical or humanitarian principle has to be pressed home, when the supreme and critical blow which is to decide the fate of a campaign must be dealt,—that Laurier rises to the full height of his moral stature, and is able to spread the wings of his genius to their fullest stretch.

At such times let the news be whispered abroad—let it be known that "Laurier is to speak"—and the public will at once throng to the House; the galleries will be packed with eager listeners, all in full expectation of witnessing a brilliant display and of hearing a specimen of oratory worthy of figuring among the noblest records