

fare. In their worship of this goddess they turned and studied the career of her great votary, whom years before they imagined they had buried beyond resurrection. They compared the two protagonists. In their own leader they found the rugged Scotch fir that bends not to the storm but fronts it boldly until it is riven asunder. In the leader of their opponents they found the sweet suavity of the willow, bending gracefully and sufficiently to accommodate either the zephyr or the hurricane, but when either has passed still in its place, unruffled, unharmed, and ready for the next gale. This section of the Liberals saw men, who were once voters on their side, now running with the other machine. They reflected that a little spirit of concession to the doctrine of protection, a little injection of the willow into the fir might have saved the party from disaster. That spirit, that desire to copy the evil features of the victorious chieftain and his system, slew Alexander Mackenzie and unhorsed Gordon Brown. To it some people trace every disaster that has befallen the Liberal party since that time, for the counsels of the anything-to-beat-the-Tories section have been but too prominent in the course the party has taken from time to time. They sat down to play a few hands at Opportunism with a past master of the game, and, of course, were each time unmercifully beaten. One can fancy the smile of satisfaction that mantled the features of the great player, as he shuffled the cards and dealt himself four aces while the granger across the board was encouraged by enough kings to ensure his complete discomfiture.

Mr. Blake, it must be admitted, appears to have more than once listened to the voice of this element among his followers. Of course it is easy to claim that this, that, or the other has been the cause of Liberal overthrow at the polls. Later revelations appear to show that the Liberals

had at times to contend against the resources of the Dominion money-chest itself, while on the other hand it cannot be denied that a large proportion of the voting strength of the Dominion was favourable to the national enterprises and the protective policy of the Conservatives.

The writer does not expect that all will agree with him in these estimates. For the purposes of the present sketch it was necessary to refer to them to suggest a key to the unvarying defeat that characterized Mr. Blake's leadership of the party. In parliament he exhibited his unrivalled powers of debate in their most striking light. No man in parliament could cope with him in marshalling facts in telling array, in the denunciation of an opponent or in the ironical dissection of the secret and grovelling springs that move public men. As a keen observer of parliament during that period said, "Blake had all the facts and the logic on his side, but Sir John got the votes." He fought against a machine majority that were as likely to be moved by eloquence or reason as a field of cabbages would be likely to be moved by the same agencies. His opponents were in the habit, when he had delivered himself of an entirely unanswerable piece of invective, of putting up to reply to him some side-road statesman who prosed and stammered and confused the issue to an empty house. Thersites going out against Hector would not have been so ludicrous a spectacle. The House of Commons has lost its character as a deliberative assembly. No speaker hopes to change votes there. He may change convictions, but votes never. His utterances are really addressed to the electors whom he reaches through the newspapers.

Mr. Blake twice led his hosts to the polls and twice was he smitten hip and thigh. At length broken in health, wearied in spirit and probably disheartened by failure, he resigned the command after the session of 1887.