

CHAPTER I.

RIGHT HON. SIR WILFRED LAURIER, LL.D.

QUALITIES AS A LEADER—ANCESTRY AND EDUCATION—CHOICE OF A CAREER—HIS STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS—ADMISSION TO THE BAR—BEGINNING OF HIS PUBLIC CAREER—MEMBER OF THE DOMINION PARLIAMENT—AS A CABINET OFFICER—A POPULAR ORATOR—NATIONAL LEADERSHIP—A SKILLFUL PARLIAMENTARIAN—HIS FAR-REACHING INFLUENCE.

If it were asked what predominant quality has given Mr. Laurier his leadership, it would be difficult to name it. Those who know him best speak of the symmetry and balance of his powers. A party leader over such diverse elements must hold his judgment well in equipoise; too many points of exceptional strength and contrast would betray some related weaknesses. It is quite probable that at first the evenness of his intellectual manifestation led some to doubt his strength, because the qualities they were looking for were held in abeyance. Some who conversed with him came away delighted with his urbanity and frank unreserve, but thought he lacked the force to pull the Liberal party out of the slough of despond. To-day the same men are praising his resolute will and quick decision. All are agreed that he bore himself with admirable steadiness during a most exciting political exigency; the calm counsel, the eloquent appeal, the ringing protest, were given as they were needed, without a trace of personal animosity, and with a judgment vindicated by the result. It is fortunate for his party that he brought to its direction a capacity tried and proved during the long period of Liberal reverse.

SIR WILFRED LAURIER was born in the historic city of Quebec on the 20th of November, 1841. His father was a surveyor, a man of a positive disposition. His grandfather had a remarkable natural talent for mathematics, for geometry, and for the exact sciences in general. His mother and grandmother possessed imagination