

PREMIER COLONIAL AT THE CONFERENCE

Is Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's Prime Minister--T. P. O'Connor's Pen Portrait of Him--The Most Distinguished of Them all.

The preparations are complete for the reception of the Colonial statesmen who are coming over to attend the great Colonial Conference, writes T. P. O'Connor in his Weekly. They will be entertained by all sorts and conditions of men, of societies, of clubs; in short, everybody is working to show these representatives of the Colonies that they have nothing but warm and enthusiastic friends in the Motherland.

A Great Statesman.
I choose, out of the numerous Colonial statements which will come here, for description the one I know best, and who also is best known to the British public. Other statements there will be who will recommend themselves to the respect and popularity of people of England; but there is none of them who can compare with the Prime Minister of Canada in the position he has already attained. It is partly, of course, because the Canadian Premier has been so much longer before the public; partly because he has been in England more than once before, and partly, of course, because he embodies one of the greatest triumphs of British Colonial statesmanship, and one of those fusions of races and creeds under the protecting aegis of the Empire which marks an Empire's greatest achievement.

Cosmopolitanism of Canada.
It is difficult today to realize that it is not much more than half a century ago since Canada was one of the most disturbed, and in some respects, one of the most discontented portions of the British Empire. And yet that is the fact. The Frenchman who occupied the greater part of Eastern Canada was intensely Catholic in faith, strongly Conservative in principle, and was for the most part a small farmer quite content with the narrow life of his village--except when he grew audacious, and emigrated over to better wages and wider conditions in the United States.

In Western Canada, on the other hand, there were peculiarly strenuous specimens of the races that inhabit these islands--dour hard-working and ambitious Scotchmen; Englishmen with their push, their tremendous national pride, and their scorn for the ideas and habits of other nationalities and creeds; and even the Irishman, who belonged to the same religious creed as the French-Canadian, looked down on the Frenchman's lack of enterprise and "reactionary ideas."

Advantages and Disadvantages.
To solve all these different elements into an amalgam was a feat that very few statesmen could achieve; it is to the everlasting honor of Sir Wilfrid Laurier that he has succeeded in doing so. He started, it is true, with some advantages. He was French by birth and by creed, and that gave him a certain advantage, in dealing with that recalcitrant element of the Canadian population. But, on the other hand, it also gained for him a certain instinctive distrust on the part of the other provinces and the other races. The one thing which I did not like in Canada--which I found a delightful country--was that there still persisted there some of the accursed old feuds of the world of Europe--strong religious divisions, strong political diversities and antagonisms. And in such an atmosphere of religious hatred and political animosity it was impossible to hope that a French-Catholic could find himself accepted without a protest. And thus one has honestly--in estimating the career of Sir Wilfrid Laurier--to say that his advantages of birth and creed were about counter-balanced by the disadvantages.

Influences His Opponents.
But he has triumphed over all these "obstacles"--including some which have been put in his way by his own people. He is a strong Liberal in politics, and many of the French-Canadians are adherents of a Conservative creed which is almost an ancient as the Tories of the eighteenth century. This success is largely due to his own commanding, winning, and powerful personality. He is, in the first place, a man of very splendid oratorical powers. I have been told that he could go to a meeting of Orangemen in Toronto--which is the headquarters of men of these views--and after he had spoken for some minutes, succeed in rousing enthusiastic plaudits from even those political opponents. In the Canadian

House of Commons there is no man who can sway the assembly as he can, and when he has to address big crowds at election time he is master of all their moods; of their laughter, their arts, their anger.

Prosperity for Canada.
But mere oratorical power would not account for a reign prolonged over ten years. Unbacked by genuine political gifts, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's oratory would long since have found him out, and he would have been thrown aside with that fickleness which is characteristic of democracies. He is a man who has thought out political problems, and brings to them all a broad and well-stocked mind. You could not be in his society for more than a few hours without feeling that you were in the presence of one of the great masters of statecraft.

A Master of Statecraft.
And it does require a vast amount of statecraft to deal with the many and complex problems of Canadian life. I do not know that even yet we appreciate in England the extraordinary country that Canada is. How many people, for instance, realize that Canada actually covers a larger amount of space of the American continent than the United States? They have within the last two or three years created two new parliaments in two new territories--Alberta and Saskatchewan--and each of these territories is bigger than most of the big countries of Europe. One little fact, within my personal knowledge, brought home to me the change in the conditions of Canada more than scores of things I have read. When I was in the United States, some seventeen years ago, all New England was talking of the huge immigration from Canada to the New England States. I remember people telling me that some towns of Massachusetts and Connecticut were almost overrun by French-Canadians. And, in fact, people of all nationalities were rushing over to the States, even some of those emigrants who had been brought from Europe to Canada at great cost to Canada.

Americans Emigrate.
And now the process is reversed. It is the United States which is sending the immigrants into Canada, not Canada into the United States. In the far Western States, like Dakota, American farmers who have been there for generations are selling their farms, packing up their goods and chattels, and are emigrating into the richer and more fertile lands of Western Canada. No fewer than a quarter of a million of Americans are expected to reach Canada from these regions within the present year. And all the people who do go to the West of Canada are enthusiastic in their praise of the resources, the possibilities, the climate of the country. The old legend that you could find nothing there but arctic cold is exploded; you find, on the contrary, one of the most beautiful and temperate climates in the world, and people are growing rich almost overnight. Such is the demand for land; such is the immense immigration.

Our Premier.
And now, what manner of man is he who bears upon his shoulders this Atlantic burden? The best description I ever heard of Sir Wilfrid Laurier was given to me by a very interesting Canadian personality, Mr. Ross, who was for many years Prime Minister of the Province of Ontario. "Sir Wilfrid Laurier," said this dour, grizzled, kindly, shrewd old Scotch-Canadian, "is a picture gallery in his self." This praise--which will always remember as witty and picturesque--gives you some idea of the impression which the appearance of Sir Wilfrid Laurier makes upon you. He is like some splendid portrait that has walked down from the walls of a mediæval French chateau, and is again stalking the earth. You could never mistake him for anything but a man of French blood. Nor could you, at the same time, ever take him for a modern Frenchman. With all his intensely progressive and broad spirit, Sir Wilfrid looks the man of the chateau and of the eighteenth century; the Frenchman born before the French Revolution; one who had exchanged repartees with Voltaire; who had smiled benignly at some of Talleyrand's jokes on the gullibility of mankind.

An Interesting Personality.
Imagine a very tall, a very slight,

almost a bony figure; imagine a face exactly the same--that is to say, long, narrow, and bony--and you will have some idea of what Sir Wilfrid Laurier is like in the flesh. There is not a spare ounce on that body, which, nevertheless, seems so alert, active, and enduring as that of some death-bound. The face seems to concentrate itself in the mouth, which is large--as is the mouth usually of the orator--mobile, slightly pursed. The face is clean-shaven, which also gives a certain look at once of academic distinction and of eighteenth century character. You could take him, if you did not know him, for a great scientific scholar, for a Professor of Letters, for a high ecclesiastic; or you might fancy that he was a brilliant wit and encyclopaedist--one of the band that prepared the French Revolution. You could take him for many things, but never for anything that was not intellectual, distinguished, and well born.

Character in His Dress.
And there is about the whole man a certain trimness and precision which are almost suggestive of France and of the eighteenth century. He dresses with a perfect appropriateness to his figure, his face, and even his position. The coat is usually a frock coat with spacious tails; the waistcoat--if I remember rightly--is somewhat low cut; and his collars are, in their way, as prominent and remarkable as those of Mr. Gladstone. Like Mr. Gladstone's, Sir Wilfrid's collars are stand-up, immense, slightly old-fashioned in cut and suggestion. These collars are so much a part of the man and of his dress, they seem to fit in so splendidly, that everybody remarks them and remembers them, and they form as much a part of the stock-in-trade of the caricaturist of Canada as the collars of Gladstone did of "Punch." The accentuate the length, the narrowness, and the distinction of the long, thin, intellectual, somewhat ascetic face; they increase your sense of looking at the man who--as Mr. Ross put it to me--is a whole picture gallery in himself.

As an Orator.
The English is perfect; but at the same time there is just a remnant of the French accent of his boyhood. He speaks--in this respect being unlike the typical Frenchman--somewhat slowly and deliberately; but he is also French in the clearness and carefulness of utterance. He does not gobble his words, and thus English when spoken by him sounds a little like French; every syllable gets full justice; you have something of the feeling you experience when you are listening to Coquelin or some other great artist trained in the Comedie Francaise, of listening even in private conversation to the melodious and poised cadence of the Alexandrine.

The Life He Prefers.
Finally, I should put among the qualities that have gained for Sir Wilfrid Laurier his tremendous hold over Canada the stainless and beautiful private character of the man. This great ruler lives with the simplicity of a professional man with a modest income. I slept during my recent visit to Canada in the house of a friend of mine--who has since been elected to the Mayoralty of Ottawa--and as I walked down from his modest and comfortable dwelling in the morning, he pointed out to me the house of the Prime Minister--which was exactly like his own, the typical modest Canadian house--with its two or three stories, its long verandah, its general impression of lightness, airiness and comfort.

The Canadian Home.
Here it was--in this small and modest house--that there dwelt a man who rules some millions of men and one of the vastest and most powerful countries in the world. Such a habitations bespeaks the character and also the career of the man. I dare not talk of the temptations that were open to a man in his position, for nothing could tempt him to defect by a hair's breadth from the straight path of perfect integrity; but everybody will know that a man who lives in a country growing from hour to hour with gigantic rapidity and size, might easily become a multi-millionaire if he so desired. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has renounced the man with modest tastes, a modest house, a modest income. He has preferred in life the greater and purer glory of serving his country and his countrymen, with no other reward than the modest remuneration of his Ministerial salary and the immeasurable extent of their affection and respect.

Sharetti Will Not Return.
Associated Press Dispatch.
Rome, April 19--It is reported here that Mgr. Sharetti, the apostolic delegate in Canada who is now here, will not return to Ottawa owing to family reasons.

CHINA IS IN SORE STRAITS

As Result of Famine--Many are Dying--Must Have Relief.

Shanghai, April 19.--The following are extracts from the reports just received of foreigners in the four famine centres:
Xosman.--"The famine is growing worse. Chinese in great numbers are dying."
Suchien.--"Almost out of supplies. Need large amounts immediately. Relief commences."
Sing Kiang Pa.--"Many dying. Must increase relief."
Luhaiwiese.--"The whole country is in the deepest distress. Refugees who went south hoping to find relief are returning empty handed. There are processions of great numbers of people with wheelbarrows, transporting their doors, tables, beds and cupboards to market to be sold for almost nothing. Hundreds of women and children are seen in the fields, searching out roots and scanty blades of grass. Hundreds of trees have been stripped of their bark from the roots to the tips of the highest branches for use as food. The majority of the population are living on wild roots, etc., which is causing disease."

TO ASSASSINATE ROOSEVELT.
Secret Service Men Are Investigating Alleged Plot.

Newark, N. J., April 19.--An alleged plot by Pennsylvania anarchists, with headquarters at Hazleton, to assassinate President Roosevelt is being investigated by secret service men. Information which led to the investigation was given by Chief of Police Adams just before he killed himself. The men told the secret service officers that he obtained his information from Jan Bartol, of Auderwick, Pa., and who claimed to be a member of the band. He said they had gone back on him. He gave Chief Adams the names of several persons who, he said, were implicated and further said Cookosz, who assassinated President McKinley, had been a member of the band.

MONTREAL BRUTE JAILED.
French Canadian on Trial for Barbarous Treatment of Infant Son.

Montreal, April 18.--A frightful story of cruelty was told today in the magistrate's court, when George Blanchette was brought up charged with cruelty to his five months' old infant. The charge was preferred by the man's mother-in-law, who asserted that Blanchette had on one occasion placed the child in a basket and had then put it in the oven of a lighted stove. The man's wife, a weak woman, and evidently afraid of the brute, explained that on one occasion Blanchette had put the infant in a basket and held it over the stove, but only for a minute. The man, who went to arrest Blanchette found the man barricaded and he refused to admit them. They broke down the door and took their man. The Blanchettes live in a two room hovel a very unhealthy place.

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Toronto, April 18.--At Port Elgin a frame block was destroyed by fire last night causing \$20,000 loss. Wells, grocery, Mull's music store, J. W. Dougherty's drug store, and Partington's furniture store are a complete loss. The cause is unknown, The

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