



The Canadian Courier

A National Weekly



Subscription : \$2.50 a Year.

Vol. I

Toronto, January 26th, 1907

No. 9

Ontario's Premiers

SIR JOHN MACDONALD chose Ontario's first Premier in 1867, and his choice fell upon John Sandfield Macdonald, a Liberal, a federalist and a safe man. For four years he ruled the province in a most economical manner, conserving its resources and its revenue and piling up a useless surplus. He fell because of his parsimony and because of his lack of vision.

Hon. Edward Blake succeeded him and held the office for scarcely a twelve-month. He legislated himself out of power. He carried through a measure abolishing dual representation, and thereafter no man could be both a member at Toronto and a member at Ottawa. After the Act was passed, he decided to remain with the Ottawa House and ceased to be Premier. Had he remained in Ontario he might have been more successful as a leader, but in the succeeding fight at Ottawa over the Pacific Scandal he played a part which entitles him to the respect of all good Canadians.

Mr. Blake nominated the Hon. (afterwards Sir) Oliver Mowat as his successor, and for nearly twenty-five years Mowat remained in office. He was never defeated. He resigned to join the new Laurier Government in 1896. His career was a distinguished one and Ontario owes him much. He was progressive without being radical; he was conservative without being reactionary. If the people desired him to move, he moved—not otherwise. He was not a great leader, but he always managed to keep his forces well in hand and to head off the enemy when the latter appeared dangerous.

The Hon. Arthur S. Hardy, long Attorney-General of the Province, succeeded him. Abrupt, progressive and frank, he had little of the wily managing power which marked his predecessor and his reign was brief. He did one thing which distinguishes his tenure of office—he prohibited the export of Ontario logs and forced the Michigan saw-mills to move across the lakes. For this he must always be remembered.

Mr. Hardy's successor, the Hon. G. W. Ross, had a stormy reign. Thirty years of rule by the leaders of one party was too much for any province, no matter how able the leaders. Mr. Ross remained in power only by

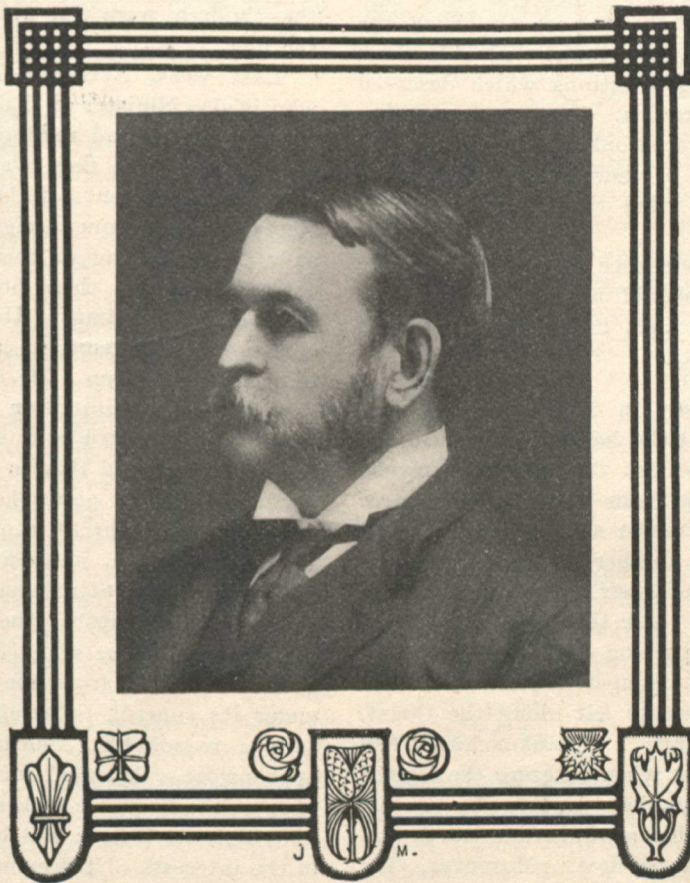
superlative oratorical efforts, by wonderful, if at times doubtful, tactics. Had he gone into opposition sooner, he might still be the honoured leader of the Ontario Liberals. His tenacity in clinging to office, after the people showed an inclination to change, was fatal.

Mr. Whitney, the first Conservative Premier since Confederation, won his place by negative rather than positive qualities. Since his accession to power, the positive qualities have asserted themselves and to-day he is regarded as a wise, honest and constructive statesman. He has set out bravely to bring order out of chaos, to initiate a more progressive policy along various lines, and to give the people the reforms for which they had been clamouring for years. All that was good in the policy of his predecessors he has maintained; all that he thought was bad, he has discarded. He has apparently

made an honest effort to maintain clean and efficient government. Abuses had grown up. When possible, he eradicated these and instituted ordinary business administration. Of working for party advantage, he knows very little; and in this he resembles Mr. Hardy more than any other of his predecessors.

In some ways he has pleased the people mightily; in others he has not pleased them at all. Whether pleased or displeased, they regard him as an honest man, actuated only by a desire to do what to him seems best. If they find him stubborn and at times unyielding, they recognise that these are characteristics of the man and they bear with him patiently. It is a question whether they admire his plain and unadorned statements, coloured and inspired as they

are by a decided honesty of purpose, more than the adroit and skilful phrasings of his predecessor. Barnum said that the people love to be humbugged, and it seems true even of Ontario. Mr. Whitney has no power in the humbugging line nor has he associated with him any colleague who can play that part for him. Hence it is a question how he will fare in the next general election. That he will be defeated is not to be expected. That he will maintain his great majority is hardly likely, if the Liberals select a leader who will arouse the party's enthusiasm and devotion. An abnormal majority is always in danger of being reduced at a general election.



HON. J. P. WHITNEY,
Premier of Ontario.