

## LIBERAL BLUNDERING.

WHAT THE PARTY NEEDS BEFORE IT CAN ACHIEVE SUCCESS.

Plain Words Which Voice the Sentiment of Men Who Hope for a Better State of Things—Mistakes of the Past and Their Remedies in the Future.

The liberal party has been out of power in Canada since the verdict of the people on the 17th day of September, 1878, and there are no indications of its early return to its former high estate. Year after year, the conservatives have run the affairs of the country in the interests of the politicians and their friends. The maritime provinces have not prospered, and New Brunswick in particular has failed to hold its own as regards population and prosperity. The golden predictions of Sir Charles Tupper and others, who have grown wealthy in the trade of politics, have not been fulfilled. They have prospered, it is true, but the people have not. Yet again and again the conservatives have been returned to power, until they have begun to feel that they have seen but the beginning of their success. In the last general election, the lower provinces, which seemed to have the most reason for desiring a change, did the most to contribute to the conservative success. There must be a reason for this. What is it?

Progress is not a party paper. It can, and when needed, does, give praise or blame to either of the contending factions. It would be difficult for anyone who has read it week by week to decide which side of politics it favors. It can afford to speak dispassionately and frankly. It does so in this instance, though the points which it brings out are the result of an interview with a liberal who is thoroughly informed on the questions at issue, and who has faith that, in time, his party will win its way to success.

The opinion is gaining ground in Canada, and especially among the young men of the party, that the chief reason for the want of success by the liberals is that the right men are not at the helm. The party is drifting, because its destinies are in the hands of those whose usefulness as leaders is no longer apparent.

There is a feeling, and it is growing, that such undoubtedly able men as Cartwright, Mills, Jones and Weldon, have nothing in common with the people, yet the majority feel that these men have been true to the party and have done all that could be expected of them. They are becoming bad numbers in the politics of today. It is not the men who fought confederation that are best qualified to be at the front now. Confederation, whether for good or ill, is a definite and permanent fact. A generation has nearly passed away, and the spirit of politics today is very different from what it was a quarter of a century ago. The times have changed, but have the liberal leaders changed with them?

The real trouble, however, appears to be that the men who are looked up to in the liberal party are not men who have had experience in governing. Blake, with all his ability and genius, is not a man of the people. He has nothing which attracts men to him. Should he enter into imperial politics, his loss to Canada will not be irreparable. For the last five years he has ceased to be a powerful factor in the affairs of the Dominion.

In the local politics of some of the provinces are liberal leaders who are living apart with the times, who have shown that they possess not only ability but generalship. They have, in their limited spheres, accomplished much and won for themselves honorable reputations. Is it not reasonable to suppose that in a broader field the same ability and generalship would mark their course? Has not the time arrived when such men as Mowatt, Greenway, Fielding and Blair, should be called upon to enter Dominion politics? There are those who say that such a time has come.

During and after every election, a wail is raised by the liberal press that the conservatives have gained their victory by corrupt methods. Such a cry is degrading and unmanly, and it is only partly true. There is, of course, a great advantage to the party in power, and it may be that the conservatives spend more money than the liberals, but the difference in the amounts is not so great as to account for all the defeats of the last 14 years. One party is as corrupt as the other, and both will spend money to debase the electors when the money is to be had. It is all nonsense to ascribe the success of the conservatives to their corrupt methods. When that allegation is made, it is simply a pitiful whine.

The national policy is far less popular than the results of the elections would seem to prove. Thousands of men who would be glad to see the conservatives adopt a platform of free trade relations with the United States, vote and will vote for that party with a high protective tariff. Had Sir John Macdonald favored unrestricted reciprocity the men who most vigorously denounced it would have held it up as the best possible thing for Canada. As regards the mass of the voters, it matters little what the conservative policy is. Whatever it may be, it has less to do with the elections than have the appeals to the religious, race and sentimental prejudices of the people, and this is

especially true in the case of bye elections. Absurd cries are raised, but, absurd as they are, they have their effect on more than the densely ignorant voters, and the liberals seem powerless to counteract them. The leaders lack capacity to meet emergencies, or what would be better still, to anticipate them.

The conservative leaders are all things to all men. One of their most easily manipulated toys is the Loyal Orange Association, which is as easily led by blind, unreasoning prejudices as any body on the face of the earth. To point out Laurier to those men, as a liberal leader, is enough of itself in some districts, without the need of a dollar of corruption funds.

But it is another story when the votes of an Irish catholic district are wanted, and when it is pointed out that Abbott is only a figurehead, while Sir John Thompson is the real power behind the throne, a certain percentage of the catholic vote is likely to be secured. To the Quebec French the question is put, "Will you defeat Langevin, Caron and Chapleau?" while in Ontario the protestants are asked, "Are you going to support a party whose leader, Laurier, works with Mercier, a man who is under Rome rule and is a public plunderer?"

The liberals, having a Roman catholic leader in Laurier, have depended on that fact too much in counting on the catholic vote. In the selection of candidates they have ignored catholics in districts where good men were available. In the last general election the conservatives had several Roman catholics in the field in this province, while the liberals had only one, and that was in the county of Kent, where he could not be elected.

The conservatives of New Brunswick do not discuss the appointment of R. J. Ritchie as police magistrate, but they point out that defections have occurred in the liberal ranks because of that appointment. From this they argue that leading protestant liberals have not been animated by the true spirit of liberalism.

It is not too much to say that the liberals of Canada are badly handicapped by having Laurier as a leader. It may be very well to claim that the selection of him showed a liberality that was the reverse of bigotry, yet it is undeniable that he stands in the way of votes. In close constituencies there is a percentage enough of protestant votes lost, through the anti-catholic idea, to decide the contest. It is no reflection on Laurier to say that his leadership is an element of weakness to his party, because of the hold it gives to the conservatives to appeal to sectarian prejudice.

The advent of such men as Mowatt, Greenway, Fielding and Blair into Dominion politics could have only the most beneficial effect on the liberal party. With these men elected to parliament, the first duty would be to discuss the question of a policy on which all could agree. This done, there could be unity and effective work.

The liberal platform in the last election was unrestricted reciprocity, but the most noticeable thing about it was the want of understanding as to what it meant. The newspapers differed from each other and so did the campaign speakers. In some cases, there were flat contradictions on vital points. The whole thing was a muddle, of which it was very easy for the conservatives to take advantage, and to raise a thoroughly hollow but very effective loyalty cry. The liberals had a poor organization and the young men—"the boys" were not with them. The writer had opportunities of seeing a good deal of the alleged management of things in St. John, and was not surprised at the result. Had the ability of the men who undertook to engineer things been commensurate with their conceit, there might have been, it is not a victory, at least a great deal better showing on the liberal side. The campaign was marked by blunders from first to last.

Erastus Wiman has been an old man of the sea to the liberal party. There is no question that the party never intended to adopt the policy of unrestricted reciprocity as declared by him. Laurier, Cartwright and others, felt compelled to repudiate him, but the country would not accept the repudiation. What really seems to have been meant by the sensible men of the party was a reciprocity less restricted than that proposed in 1878, and consistent with the requirements of revenue. Some wise-acre invented the phrase of unrestricted reciprocity, and others based their arguments on the sweeping significance of the name.

Another thing in which the liberal party has been lacking has been campaign literature, and this is one of the points on which the conservatives have always been strong. They are prepared with it at the outset of the campaign, when alone it can accomplish any good.

Many other matters of detail would necessarily be considered on the introduction of new blood into Dominion politics. One of these would be the idea of paid leaders from each province, whose duty it would be to represent those provinces in the true sense of the word. As a preliminary to all there should be a convention to give an idea of what the lower provinces are prepared to do, and how they are prepared to do it. There must be a sound basis to secure an effective organization. As it is, the party is drifting now, it is not on the road to success. Something should be done, say those who have the best interests of the liberals at heart.

## THEY RUN DARTMOUTH.

WATER OR NO WATER FOR THE TOWN? THAT'S THE QUESTION.

What is thought of the way the Commissioners do Business—The Reports do not Tell How Matters Stand—It's Interesting for the People Who Have to Pay the Bills.

DARTMOUTH, June 22.—Dartmouth is still wrestling with the question of water or no water. The climax is about to come. All sorts of rumors are afloat. Some say the commissioners are heaven-born financiers and engineers, and that they will come well within the \$100,000 voted for water purpose a year or more ago. Others say, and they are the great majority, that the \$100,000 is gone, and the ratepayer will be soon called upon to vote, at least, \$50,000 more in order to complete the works. It is quite impossible, just at present, to get definite information as to just how matters stand. The star chamber, in the good old days of Henry VIII, was never so secret as the workings of our water and ferry commissioners. They are built on such lines that they can, or rather they think they can, defy the public, who, in a majority of cases, put them where they are.

They are bound to work their own sweat with the people's money without so much as saying by their leave. The barest and most meagre reports are only vouchsafed to the public. In the annual report for 1890 quite a full report was given by the mayor as to the standing of the ferry commission, but no statement of receipts and expenditures was given by the commission itself. The report for the past year, like former ones, gives a full report of all receipts, etc., and the full report of the chairman of the school board, which is not a close corporation like the others, but no statement is given by the ferry commission, although they had been in existence eighteen months. The bald fact is recorded by the mayor that at the end of their fiscal year they were \$5,870.09 behind, but owing to a change of rates, which is as fully onerous as the rates charged by the old company, they had in six months reduced this to \$4,249.10. And still they tell us that it is none of our business how they conduct affairs.

It is a rumor which they have increased the salaries of the head officials, who are requiring fifteen hours of labor from men who are working the boats; these being men too who only receive a bare pittance. This also is a rumor which will shortly be confirmed. Let a full report of the various commissions be published with the Mayor's report each year. Have less of this secrecy and the public will be more contented and have far greater confidence in its public men!

Before a meeting is called the water commission will do well to put their house in order and have facts and figures in full so as to be prepared for all sorts of questions. The commission must be prepared to make a good showing before the rate payers or they will get a bad hack. The way the school board got left should be a lesson to the men on the water commission. Now the gentlemen aforesaid might as well expect to see the water in those trenches on O'Leary street run out of its own accord without the friendly aid of the second hand Italians as to get money out of the Dartmouth rate payers without first satisfying them that the money they have put into their hands has been properly and economically expended. There never was a case of such looting since the days when the early settlers broke sod on their heights, as has gone on unchecked for weeks in the trenches along the chief streets.

It is true that some improvement has taken place of late, some ten or so, of the most prominent idlers were asked to resign and they have done so, but still the horn, which resounds with such frequency along the street to warn the passer by, sends forth a crowd of laborers who, while quick to leave, are slow.

Portland street is breathing forth the terrible denunciations on those in authority for the way they are being neglected. Cross streets and by streets are being plied, while they have been neglected. The new season is now coming on and places of business will be obstructed for several weeks. Of course this will cause a large diversion of business to other parts of the town and consequent loss. The street being narrow will be almost completely blocked, and that is to put on a quick to leave, are slow.

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