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## Sir Wilfrid Laurier

**"L**AURIER is Dead!" From Atlantic to Pacific, in the mansions of the wealthy, in the cottages of the poor, among the fisher folk on the wave-washed shores, in the humble home of the habitant and in the rude dwelling of the prairie farmer, the words pass from mouth to mouth and life takes on a sadder hue because Laurier has passed to the Great Beyond. For nearly half a century Sir Wilfrid Laurier was prominent in the public life of the Dominion, and for much of that period was one of the outstanding figures in the British Empire. As an orator in either French or English he had few peers among living men. As a statesman of vision and sagacity he was unsurpassed. As a picturesque figure in parliament or on the public platform he possessed an international reputation. Laurier the courtly, courteous, kindly gentleman is no more. Only his memory remains and the redolent influence which invariably follows a long life well spent.

Laurier was undoubtedly Canada's foremost son, not only of his own generation but of all time. A Roman Catholic in religion, a French-Canadian by birth, he nevertheless won the confidence and esteem of the Protestant English-speaking majority of the Dominion. It was a tribute to his personality and genius that Laurier was able, though belonging to the minority in race and religion, to do more to overcome and break down racial and religious differences than any other Canadian statesman. To the historian this will probably stand out as his crowning achievement. In addition to that, however, Laurier was a statesman with a vision. He was a thorough-going Canadian but at the same time did more to further the great Imperial Commonwealth of the Empire than any other man.

The late Sir Wilfrid always stood for the highest ideals. It is true that he had strong political opponents who often time bitterly assailed his policies, but as an individual he had no enemies. The "sunny smile" of the dead chieftain won many a victory while his blameless private life and his long years in public affairs untouched

by scandal are records upon which every Canadian can look with personal pride.

The "Old Chief" as he was familiarly, and lovingly called by his followers, occupied a very large place in the affections of the British people. There was something romantic about this French-Canadian Prime Minister who took the premier place at Imperial Conferences and who argued that formal treaties, and hard and fast agreements were not necessary to bind the Empire together. On the many special occasions on which he visited the Motherland such as the Queen's Jubilee, the Imperial Conference or the Coronation of the King, Laurier was the outstanding figure and appealed to the imagination not only of the Britisher but to the Overseas Dominions as well.

The secret of his great powers was not hard to find. Perhaps at the very foundation must be placed his broad tolerance and kindness. He was first of all a Christian Gentleman. Then following that must be placed his thorough mastery of the great writers in both English and French and a complete understanding of the view points of these two people. It was characteristic of the man that he should always remember with kindly feelings the influence and atmosphere of the Scottish home where he lived for a period. It was there that he got his first love for the tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, and where he made himself familiar with the struggles and achievements of Fox, Bright, Morley, Gladstone and other great Liberal leaders.

It is perhaps as an orator that Laurier will be remembered by the great mass of people. His fine presence and imposing figure would have made him a marked man on any platform, but in addition to these there was the lofty diction of the finished speaker, the poetic imagery and the fiery temperament of the Celt, combined with a mastery of the best of the classics and an intimate knowledge of the Bible, the whole making a combination which has scarcely, if ever, been excelled on this continent. No matter on what occasion or what his subject might be, his audience was always sure to be treated to some striking phrase or bit of imagery that made a lasting impression. On his return from Europe a few years ago he urged the young men of the Dominion