

Mr. Blake's political career has not been so distinctly crowned with success. In his efforts at the bar his appeals were addressed to ears that could be moved by facts and precedents and the cold, unavoidable missiles of a pitiless logic. In stepping into the political arena he faced a new auditory. He encountered a multitudinous bench of judges "pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw," to whom his postulates and axioms, premises and conclusions were so much Greek. They were used to the methods of a political Grimaldi, whose creed might be expressed by the doggerel:

Tickle the public and make them grin,
The more you tickle the more you win;
Teach the public, you'll never grow rich,
You'll live like a beggar and die in the ditch.

Mr. Blake believed he could teach them. His first call was to the local stage. There was no slow and painful toiling to the top with him. He was, under the dual representation system, elected to both the Ontario House and the Dominion parliament in Confederation year. In the former he quickly assumed the leadership of the Opposition and in the duration of one parliament battered down the defences of John Sandfield Macdonald, the first premier of Ontario. Soon after his succession to the premiership dual representation was abolished by law and Mr. Blake chose to remain a member of the Federal parliament. He had been so successful in demolishing the local government that his political supporters were anxious to get his full services at the task of assailing the seemingly impregnable fortress held in the larger arena at Ottawa by Sir John Macdonald. Mr. Blake applied himself to the task with considerable vigor. It must be confessed, however, that he has never appeared to advantage in a secondary position. In Ontario he was always in command. Mr. Mackenzie was his lieutenant

there. In the Dominion House the positions were reversed and many students of his career at that period find a distinct abatement of the torrential force that distinguished his course in driving from the treasury benches the administration of John Sandfield Macdonald. Nevertheless his assaults on the strong administration that then held power in the Dominion were powerful, culminating as they did in that thunderous arraignment of the heroes of the Pacific scandal, that not only laid the Conservative party in ruins but seemed to put a period to the career of the greatest politician of this century. How singularly that expectation was upset by the re-animation of the political corpse need not be adverted to here.

The history of Mr. Blake's connection with the government of Mr. Mackenzie is a fitful one. At that time we first began to hear that his health was being affected by the severe mental toil to which he had for years subjected himself, and in 1878 he resigned from the government for that cause. He was out of parliament for a year but returned to that sphere whose charm for him he does not dissemble, with his health in a great measure restored. In 1880 he was elected to the leadership of the Liberals in the room of Mr. Mackenzie.

A great deal has been made of this incident by Mr. Blake's enemies. But little need be said of it here. It was an unpleasant incident. It left the party open to the charge of ingratitude towards the stern, uncompromising, unbending old Spartan who had given the best days of his life, his health, his strength, his all to the service of Liberalism. It was a very unpleasant incident and in sharp contrast to the measure meted out to Mr. Mackenzie's rival by the rival organization. But there was a spirit abroad in the Liberal ranks in that day as it is abroad in the party to-day. It is composed of that section which puts success as the end-all and be-all of party war-