

LAURIER AND LIBERTY.

People of Victoria Show Themselves Ready to Adopt This as Their Political Watchword.

A Splendid Gathering Greet the Liberal Leader--All British Columbia Political Meetings of the Past Outdone--Great Speeches Well Received--The Doctrine of Trade Freedom Suits the Masses.

The largest crowd that ever gathered at a political meeting in British Columbia packed the great market hall last night to hear the eloquent Wilfrid Laurier and his colleagues define their platform and explain their principles. And besides being the largest it was the most enthusiastic political gathering ever held here. The distinguished visitors were on their first appearance greeted with round after round of applause, and during all the speeches the auditors were worked up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. At 7:15 o'clock, when the gates were opened, there were several hundred people waiting to get in and from that time on until there were no seats left and every bit of standing room from which people could see or hear was taken, the people came in a steady stream. Men, and women too, stood for nearly three hours. It was a surprise to everybody the way the ladies turned out to the meeting. Originally several hundred seats were reserved for them in the front part of the hall, near the platform, but half an hour after the doors opened everyone of these seats was taken. More chairs were brought down and then the ladies and their escorts were sent to the gallery and to the general seats. There were fully 4000 people in the audience. The work of the decorating committee, the members of which succeeded in making the place extremely attractive, was a surprise to all. The platform was simply covered with flags, among which the Union Jack predominated, while along the front of it were several huge vases of flowers. Back of the platform hung flags and streamers and across the railing of the gallery hung a streamer inscribed, "Our Future Premier." Then around the sides of the hall were a variety of flags and streamers and motes while over the entrance was draped the largest Union Jack in the Dominion. It seemed an almost hopeless task to do anything with such a large building, yet the gentlemen of the committee succeeded in making it really attractive.

It was just about eight o'clock when Mr. Laurier and party arrived from the Driard. They were escorted to the platform immediately, and their appearance was the signal for a perfect storm of applause, which lasted for several minutes. Dr. G. L. Milne, chairman, and ranged on either side of him were Mr. Laurier, Hon. A. N. Richards, C. C. Senator McInnes and Secretary Bethune. Then ranged about the platform were Messrs. Hyman, Fraser, Fisher, Choquette and Gibson of the Laurier party, and Messrs. Tompleman, Munb, Burns, Powell, Martin, McMillan, Ross, Houston, Robertson, Cameron and his worship Mayor Teague.

The audience were treated to three schools of speaking. Mr. Hyman, who opened, made a clear, forcible and logical talk. It was more the argument of a business man, and cold reason and fair argument were relied on more than oratorical effect. Mr. Laurier is an orator. He is gifted with a wonderful flow of language, a graceful expression and delivery and his gestures were simply admirable. He dwelt largely with the broad principles underlying the affairs of the Canadian people, and his argument was on the line of principles. He was indisposed, and therefore not at his best, but the impression he made needs no apology or explanation. Mr. Fraser is a good stump speaker of the highest order, who could capture a crowd anywhere. He told funny stories, he ridiculed certain things and then when the occasion required it he was serious and forcible.

When Chairman Milne stepped to the front of the platform a silence fell upon the crowd. The doctor opened by expressing the greatest pleasure at presiding over such a vast crowd, and proud and happy that the meeting was gathered together to welcome and to hear the Hon. Wilfrid Laurier. (Cheers.) He knew they were all proud to welcome Mr. Laurier and Mrs. Laurier to the city of Victoria. He was pleased that the errors of the fiscal policy in operation could be clearly pointed out and their way to former prosperity shown them. They had had good times here, merchants had been prosperous, and there had been no complaint in years gone by. He did not want to go back to colonial days, but he wanted them to give the place back its good times. (Cheers.) Here we were at the gateway of the west, and on the highway to the Orient. The opportunities for trade were as boundless as the broad ocean, yet they found themselves restricted and at a standstill. He was loyal to confederation, but he wanted the good times brought back. Again welcoming Mr. Laurier and his party, he presented Mr. Hyman to the audience.

Mr. C. S. Hyman, ex-M. P. for London, said there were undoubtedly many present who would wonder at members of the Liberal party coming out west. The object of the trip was twofold. First to disseminate among the people the principles of Liberalism which he considered to be in the true interests of the people, and secondly they came so that they might know the people and the country better and become better acquainted with the legislation that would tend to the peace and prosperity of the people. There was a wide and diverging line between the policies of the Liberal and Conservative parties. It was not in the mouth of any man to explain the

policy of the party. The Liberals, a short time ago held a conference at Ottawa, which was attended by men from every part of the Dominion, and a policy was formulated that was in the best interests of the whole Dominion and each province singly. That policy had been presented to the people and he was glad to say that it differed materially from the policy they had followed since 1878. The Conservative policy meant the contraction of trade while the Liberal policy meant the freedom of trade. (Applause.) Their policy was in the interests of the few--some of the manufacturers. The Liberal policy is in the interest of the vast majority of the people. In the United States the tariff is the interest of 4.34 per cent. of the people. The same would apply here as applied there and therefore the present tariff was against 95.14 per cent. of the people of Canada. It was generally understood that the protection tariff was framed in the interest of the manufacturers, but that was not entirely so as many of the manufacturers of the older provinces were in favor of free trade. Give them their raw material without any duty and free trade for their products and they could hold their own with the world. (Applause.) The Liberals, in discussing the financial policy of the government, point to the fact that Hon. Alex. Mackenzie during his four years in office was enabled to conduct the affairs of the Dominion on twenty-four million dollars, while the Conservatives had to raise forty-three million dollars annually. The Liberals took issue with the government for the enormous increase in the debt. They took issue with them on their germicide and the evils of which were not applied here, as they were in Ontario. He explained how the county of Middlesex from which he came was divided so that a Liberal majority could not elect their candidates. The Liberals also took exception to the franchise act. He would ask anyone who had come from a glorious country England, Ireland or Scotland, whether it was fair British fair play, that the Liberals should be forced to go before the people with their hands tied. Let us go before the people and have an honest and fair trial. If that was allowed, protection would not long be on the statute books. (Applause.) In the policy of protection, admitting that the principle was right, it could be seriously attacked on the application of it. If a manufacturer was desirous of locating here and obtaining a bonus from the city, would you not first ascertain what advantages were to be gained; would you not consider what money was to be invested and how many hands were to be employed and how much it was going to cost the city and then decide whether it was in the interest of the city to bonus it. If the people declined to do so, the bonus it could not be said that they did not want the factory but it would mean that they considered they were paying too dearly for the whistle. Take for example the production of oil in the vicinity of London, Ontario. The present tariff on petroleum refiners to charge 6.15 cents per gallon more for their oil, placing four hundred thousand dollars in the treasury and six hundred thousand dollars in the pockets of the refiners. Let us see the benefits the people derived from this. Almost all the remedies are petroleum. Oil Springs. Petrolia has a population of 3500 and Oil Springs 918, and altogether there are but four hundred men employed in the refineries. The tariff made the people pay the manufacturer and the government \$2500 annually for each of these men. He contended that in that light the Liberals could attack both the principle and application of protection. The manufacturers were the masters of the government and they demanded full value from the government and receive it. The manufacturers said whether the tariff should be higher or lower. It was said that the Liberals wished to discriminate against Great Britain. The present tariff discriminated against Great Britain. Iron axes from Great Britain were taxed 61 per cent. from the United States, 41 per cent.; boiler iron from Great Britain, 41 per cent.; from the United States, 25 per cent.; cast iron from Great Britain, 52 per cent.; from the United States, 43 per cent. (Taking the whole dutiable and duties list there were imported from Great Britain, \$31,680,000 of dutiable goods, and \$11,279,000 of free goods; from the United States, \$28,562,000 dutiable goods and \$29,659,000 free goods. Goods from Great Britain paid \$9,948,000 in duties while American goods paid \$7,788,000. From Great Britain 75 per cent. paid duty and from the United States 49 per cent. were dutiable. The loyalty that the Conservatives talked so much about allowed the government to tax British imports 22 per cent. and American 13 per cent. The Conservative journals of the Northwest contended that it was impossible or difficult to obtain reciprocity as it depended upon the will of the people of the United States. He would ask the Conservatives to remember the year 1891, when they had a reciprocity treaty on their own hands which they thought important enough to go to the country upon. But the moment the house was dissolved they did not think the proposed treaty was important enough to discuss. If the people desire reciprocity they cannot get it from the Conservative members, who go to the United States determined not to accept anything that is offered to them. They are in the hands of their masters, the manufacturers, who do not want reciprocity. They have got their hands on the people's throats and intend to keep them there just as long as possible. The Liberals were called rebels and accused of disloyalty when they asked for reciprocity. The Conservatives said they wanted a treaty on the line of the treaty

of 1854, but when the Liberals discussed it, up went the cry of disloyalty. Can it be possible that all the loyalty was confined to the articles included in the treaty of '54. Could it be possible that if you went to the American market a mule which was mentioned in the treaty of '54, it was loyal, while to sell a baby carriage was disloyal? To the ladies he would say he hoped their sentiments were with the Liberals and to the Conservatives he would say: we have tried protection and have failed to persuade ourselves that it is a good policy. It has failed entirely. The government could not carry out their promises. The party brought good tidings of the progress of Liberalism in Ontario and Quebec, and in fact in all the provinces of the Dominion. It was with immediate declaration the Liberals would go into power. (Applause.) Be of good cheer. We have a policy that is in the interest of the whole Dominion, a leader you can be proud of, one who will never raise an act of war, will bring a blush of shame to the brow of any Liberal. He was more popular and more revered in Ontario than any leader the Liberals had ever had. After all the kindness the patriots they would be glad to hear on the evening following the next election that the Liberals had taken the city. (Cheers and applause.)

Dr. Milne, as president of the Liberal Association, then presented Hon. Wilfrid Laurier with the following address:

To the Hon. Wilfrid Laurier: On behalf of the Liberal party and the general public of British Columbia, Victoria tenders you a hearty welcome to this city and the province. Inasmuch as you are the first visit paid to British Columbia by a leader of the Liberal party, we feel that it is an event of no ordinary importance to the province at large as well as to that section of the party located here.

We wish to assure you of our sincere admiration for the course which you have followed and of our confidence in the future success of the party under your leadership. Your visit to the province is certain to give a marked impetus to the cause of Liberalism here, and we trust the profit will be mutual.

The pleasure of the occasion is much enhanced by the presence of Madame Laurier, whom, with you, we are delighted to welcome. As you are doubtless aware, British Columbia is blessed with great natural resources, which are ready to attack any one who comes to the province to attack any one here, and I have nothing to say against your representatives, but I repeat that in the past you have been guided more by a question of person, and as citizens of Canada you know that that is not as it should have been. (Hear, hear.) Now, sir, it is right--not only is it right, but it is the duty of every one, whether he be high or low, whether he is rich or poor, to take his share in the government of the country. An honest opinion on this question is adapted not only to this province, but to the whole of the Dominion of which this province is a part. We have been accustomed from early traditions to look with pride on the courage of the soldier on the battle field when with the air around him thick with shells and bullets he stands firmly to the post assigned to him. That was the sort of courage displayed at the time of the battle of Waterloo, when some one questioned the Duke of Wellington about a body of men and he returned the answer, "Let them die where they are." I am glad to say that a higher sort of courage has arisen in the Liberal ranks. I am glad to say that in a great many instances the courage which has been exhibited is the courage of the citizen, of the voter, whether high or low, rich or poor, to exercise the rights that God has given us. Sir, that is the kind of courage I want for the citizens of this country. (Cheers.) Let me tell you this, I don't come here to try to do violence to the conscience of any of you, to force my opinions on any one of you; I don't come here to insult the feelings of any of my fellow citizens; but I come to you as a Canadian, as a new man to the city of Victoria, to ask you to stand up for the duties of Canadian citizenship and to charge you to perform the duties of Canadian citizenship whenever an occasion offers. (Cheers.) I believe that the kind of man to the city of the province of British Columbia, or the province of Ontario, or Quebec, or any other province for that matter, realizes that Canadian citizenship is worth working for, for, and even worth dying for if it needs must be. (Cheers.) I come to you in the name of the Liberal party of Canada, and let me tell you this: I know that in other portions of Canada it has been insinuated, it has even been asserted, that the Liberal party of Canada were hostile to the Northwest Territories and British Columbia ever since the days of Mr. Mackenzie. Mr. Mackenzie is in his grave, and I do not wish to rake up the old sores, but on the day he went to his grave old mother earth, I venture to say, never received into her bosom a greater character or a bolder heart. (Cheers.) He was a Scotchman, of the kind that Scotchmen might be proud. Very often in the time of his premiership when he was blamed for not proceeding with the Canadian Pacific railway as rapidly, perhaps, as he might have done, he was all the time turning the matter over in his mind, and many now believe that if his plan with regard to bringing the railway by the Yellowhead pass had been carried out the interests of British Columbia might have been as well served as by the present route. I don't want, as I said a moment ago, to rake up old sores, but whatever may be the faults of the Liberal party, and I don't pretend that they are without any, for they are composed of flesh and blood--we don't feel that we are any better than others; we claim only we are just as good. (Laughter.) Whatever the faults of the Liberal party are, they are of the past; the faults of the Conservative party are of the present. I come here to explain to you the principles of the Liberal party; I come here now to preach to you a new gospel of freedom of trade; new, yes, new in this country, and new in the country to the south of us, but not new. I am glad to say; not new, I am proud to say, in the good old mother land. (Cheers.) Not new in the small islands which have been the cradle of every form of liberty throughout the world (cheers); the cradle of civil freedom, the cradle of religious freedom, and the cradle of commercial freedom as well. (Great cheering.) I come to you to preach this new gospel because it is derived, and we are proud to derive it, as we are proud to derive all our inspirations, from the old mother land; not like the Conservatives, borrowing their inspirations in political economy from the American republic and singing God Save the Queen over them. (Laughter.) Well, the great ground of difference between the Conservative and Liberal parties at the

present time is this question of trade. We believe in freedom of trade; the Conservative party believe in protection. We believe in expansion; the Conservative believe in restriction. But, sir, I am not by some people that it is not easy for the people of British Columbia to expect to raise an issue on this point, because the Liberals are not prepared to give them freedom of trade. I may tell you that I do not come here to preach a different doctrine to that preached everywhere else. It is not possible that at the moment after the next election (when we do not suppose that our banners will be crowned with success; if we are returned to power we do not suppose that we can give freedom of trade. As it is at the present time it is not possible, but we shall do it step by step, gradually, till we have got it. (Applause.) This is the difference in principle between the Conservative party and the Liberal party; the Conservative party believe in protection, that is their ideal; that is our ideal. And if we are to attain that freedom of trade we must encourage the battle at once. (Applause.) It would not be advantageous to create discords, we must go step by step, gradually. It is not known when the election will be; we are not in the power of the government, and I am not in the power of the false god whose home is on parliament hill in Ottawa; but some time or other they will give us an election, but when it will come, tomorrow or next month, or next year, I cannot tell. They keep their secrets well. You know it is said in the Good Book that death will come like a thief in the night. Well, that is just like the Conservative party. (Laughter.) In 1891, in 1891, the government came upon us like a thief in the night and gave us an election when we were not prepared for them. But when they do give us an election, if it please Providence and the Canadian people that we shall be in power the following day (applause), then I tell you that we shall not have freedom of trade at once as it is in England, but we will make a step towards free trade, we will have no combinations, and we will trample on the dead body of protection and better you men of British Columbia. (Cheers.) Let me tell you what is also the difference between the policy of the Conservative party and the policy of the Liberal party. The Liberal party believe that as long as we are obliged to raise our revenue by a customs tariff the duty shall be imposed so as to have the minimum of taxation for the maximum of revenue. What is the policy of the Conservative party? It is this: that they levy their taxes on the people not merely for revenue, but with a view to favoring special industries. Some one will doubtless ask what is our warrant for saying this. I have it here in the words of the Canadian minister of finance. Not know Mr. Foster, I believe. If I am not mistaken he paid you a visit last year. I don't know how he was disposed just at that time, (laughter), but Mr. Foster has his moments of weakness and frankness also. (Renewed laughter.) But we have it from his own words that the object of the minister of finance was not so much to get enough money to carry on the business of the country as to develop certain industries. What does this mean, I should like to know? It simply means that the people are to be taxed for the purpose of certain privileged classes. This may be profitable to those industries, but it is injurious to the rest of the community. (Hear, hear.) I don't believe, for my part, in this development; if an industry is not able to stand on its own legs I don't want it in this country. (Applause.) It is the old story. We must assist in developing those infant industries. It is believed generally that infants grow to manhood, but it seems these "infant industries" never grow. (Laughter.) You have to give them the feeding bottle all the time, and if you try to put them on their legs they tumble about most helplessly. Is that the kind of industry you want in British Columbia? Sir, I repudiate for my part that system. I don't come here as a demagogue to tell you not to submit to any taxation. I say taxation is necessary; it is the duty of every citizen to pay his country for the measure of protection he receives for the measure of the amount of taxation necessary for the wants of his country, and nothing more. I believe in giving to the government every cent necessary for the carrying on of the business of the country, but not a cent to a fellow citizen. If it were not for our misfortune that we were to have in this country the curse of war; or if we had to repel an invasion or stand up for the honor and integrity of our country, I believe there is not a man here who would not give every dollar necessary. Nay, more; I believe that the Canadian women, like the women of old, would give their bracelets and jewels for such a worthy object.

You will remember that in the session of 1893 there was such an outcry against protection throughout the length and breadth of the land that the government then promised to take the question in hand and devise some scheme to reduce taxation. They said they would go through the country and consult the wishes of the people. They did. They went to the people of the country at large. A commission went to the cities, and where there were manufacturers to be consulted their meetings were sent. But when they came to such countries as this, there are not many large industries in Victoria, you heard the ministers. Mr. Angers and Mr. Foster came before you, to consult you? No; but to convince you if they could that protection had been a success. But the people would not be convinced, and so the government brought down some measure of reduction. Mr. Foster came down with some measure of relief. I am bound to give him at least some credit for the attempt, as I like to be fair to an opponent. I must therefore give him credit at least for the intention; would to God I could also give him credit for the action. (Cheers and laughter.) But when this act finally passed the House of Commons Mr. Foster did not know his own child. It was white when he brought it down; it was black when he got through the house. (Laughter.) Mr. Foster was bound to do everything the powers behind him required. What was the reason? We all know the same reason, which produces the same result. The reason is that combination and monopoly which are stronger than the government, faced the government, and the government gave way. Twenty years ago Sir John Macdonald said he was prepared to give the Americans reciprocity of trade if they would give us reciprocity of trade, but if not then he would give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we

would be as well and I am bound to give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we

would be as well and I am bound to give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we

would be as well and I am bound to give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we

would be as well and I am bound to give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we

would be as well and I am bound to give them reciprocity of tariff, and he said if they would be fools not to accept, we