

The Weekly Ontario

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1917.

SIR MACKENZIE BOWELL

"Of no distemper, of no blast he died,
 But fell the autumn fruit that mellow'd long,
 Till like a clock worn out with eating time,
 The wheels of weary life at last stood still."
 Yesterday evening Sir Mackenzie Bowell entered into final rest. Like a tired child, at the end of a long afternoon of play, he fell asleep and sleeping passed peacefully on. The span of his life covered almost a century. They were busy years, filled with arduous labors and events that have gone to make history.

Entering upon his active parliamentary career with the dawn of Confederation, he saw a group of previously disintegrated provinces and territories weld themselves into a virile young nation, stretching three thousand miles from ocean to ocean. And now at the end of fifty years it is vibrant with the hope of vast possibilities for the future.

Governments, administrations—he saw half-a-dozen of them come in to guide the destinies of the young nation and then give way to successors. The mighty men of pre-confederation days, Sir John A. Macdonald, Hon. Geo. Brown, Sir George Etienne Cartier, Sir Oliver Mowat, Sir Leonard Tilley, Hon. Joseph Howe, Hon. Antoine A. Dorion, Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Sir Charles Tupper and a later group in which figured Hon. Edward Blake, Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, Sir John Abbott and Sir John Thompson—he saw them all enter the political arena.

Reared in the political atmosphere of 1837 and the bitter animosities of the formative period, he fought and fought hard for what he conceived to be right. He neither asked nor gave quarter. He always spoke plainly and there was no mistaking his meaning. But even his opponents respected his sincerity and often admired the straightforward bluntness of his speech. With him will be buried the rancor and bitterness of the past. He will be remembered as a militant Canadian who wrought vigorously for the welfare of his adopted land, as it was given him to see. For the greater part of a century he lived and worked for Canada and the Empire, according to his lights.

"He has fought a lifelong battle, boldly as a soldier may,
 Fought with valiant heart and noble, saw his leaders go before,
 And stayed on to die in harness bright as ever knighthood bore,
 Old, he kept his weapons burnished; tired, he held his place away."
 Sir Mackenzie was not a great law-maker. There are no important statutes on the books that owe their origin to his craftsmanship. He was not a great parliamentarian or debater. He was in no sense a crusader or a great reformer. He was not independent in his way of thinking or cast of mind. He had no remarkable gifts in the way of writing or of authorship. But yet, notwithstanding all his limitations, he arose from the most humble beginning of bare-footed printer's devil to become proprietor of a newspaper, member of the House of Commons, head of the great Orange order throughout the world, member of the Dominion cabinet, prime minister of Canada, a knight in favor of his sovereign, and, in his declining years, filling with honor a seat in the Canadian senate.

Mere mediocrity, no matter how ambitious or determined, could never have gone so far or risen so high.
 Sir Mackenzie's genius for public life was administrative, rather than constructive. As head, for so many years, of the department of customs, he administered the affairs of that department honestly, fearlessly, efficiently. He left to others the long speeches and the framing of the statutes, while he kept the machinery of the government in motion.

He was that noblest work of God—an honest man. Through all the long years of questionable political practices, when the public conscience was far less sensitive than it is today, he kept himself clean. The elections that

he used to contest in North Hastings were marveled in Canadian politics for their freedom from all corrupt methods. One hundred dollars or thereabouts would be the total of expenditure for each election. And yet, by approaching his goal, in a straight, direct route, without great reptile funds or elaborate organization, he came out victorious in seven successive and hard-fought battles.

We are standing too near the work of Sir Mackenzie Bowell's life to see it in its true perspective. Yet, it may not be without profit even now to inquire what are the most important lessons taught by such a career. First it shows the superlative opportunities in this young land of promise. A boy, without any early advantages in the way of education, wealth, or social influence, arose from the obscurity of a little country print shop to the first position in a land more populous and vastly more potential than the England of George the Third.

Opportunity, they say, is the guiding-star of genius. But genius also creates its own opportunities. Genuine ability when combined with force of character, honorable convictions, determination, ambition to rise and succeed, is bound, sooner or later, to single the possessor out from the throng and mark him for promotion.

Sir Mackenzie Bowell arose because he was not content to be merely one of the crowd. He determined to use his faculties to the full and to grasp opportunities as they appeared and to create opportunities of his own if they did not appear soon enough to suit him.

He kept himself young, mentally as well as physically. Most men die at the top before they are old enough to vote. Sir Mackenzie kept on growing intellectually right up to the time of his last illness.

As one biographer has said, Sir Mackenzie Bowell was without "side." He rose to the highest position in the land but that fact did not cause him to possess his soul with arrogance and pomposity. He was always the same to his old friends, no matter how humble they might be. He did not take himself too seriously but went on his way, plain, unpretentious, unassuming, just an honest work-a-day man.

It was in the circle of his congenial friends that Sir Mackenzie found his truest expression. Here the occasional brusqueness and severity of his public life gave way to abounding good humor and cheerful pleasantness.

The story of Sir Mackenzie's rise and public promotion is absolutely unique in the annals of journalism in the English-speaking world. Between the job of printer's devil to the premiership there is a great gap but Sir Mackenzie successfully bridged it over.

"Marse" Henry Watterson of the Louisville Courier-Journal, the dean of American journalism, attended the annual meeting of the Canadian Press Association at Toronto in 1912 and met Sir Mackenzie for the first time. After meeting a brief resume of the career of the over-time minister, Col. Watterson exclaimed that he himself was only a boy and a woman dabbler by comparison.

"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?" These are the words of Holy Writ that come home today with an especial force to our friends in this community who differ from the Ontario in their political faith. For three-quarters of a century a familiar figure on our streets, and from his position of preeminence naturally becoming the most respected and influential member of his party he has by his death caused them to sustain a loss that cannot be repaired.

For this unique career the words of Edmund Vance Cooke seem especially appropriate.
 "A Man is fallen. Nay, no demigod,
 But a plain man, close to the common sod
 Whence springs the grass of our humanity."

THE SOLDIER VOTE AND WEST HASTINGS

Those in charge of the campaign of the Conservative candidate in West Hastings assume that Mr. Porter will get an almost solid soldier vote from overseas. We think their confidence is scarcely justified. The soldiers overseas, as well as the soldiers at home, are sick to the point of nausea with the old-line politicians who have handled this war and the affairs of the Canadian Militia Department as if they were all a piece of the gearing of the ward machinery.

The soldiers overseas, who went from this district, know Mr. Porter's record quite as well as the people at home. Knowledge of his record will be a very poor vote-getter.

A recent cable from F. A. McKenzie, the special correspondent in England of The Toronto Daily Star, tells in unmistakable terms how the soldiers see through the oily professions and promises of the old politicians. Mr. McKenzie is an ardent supporter of the Union Government and his words will, on that account, carry additional weight. Mr. McKenzie says:

"I have carefully investigated the election prospects here. The Union electioneers, after widespread inquiries, believe 75 per cent. of the men will vote; 85 per cent. of those voting to support the Government. This is over-optimistic. The Union estimates are largely based on reports from politicians, and for once the old-time party politicians play little part in business with the army.

"A vast amount of indifference still exists among the soldiers, due partly to their absorption in the war, and partly to their suspicion of the politicians. The soldiers are sick of politics. The army has suffered too much from it. The average soldier, officer and private-alike, would

not use the whole machinery of intrigue, wire-pulling and jerryandering right out of public life if he could. Innumerable soldiers from general downwards curse the politicians to me.

"I suggest the campaign here needs two things: first, a big rally of prominent Canadians wholly outside the old-time party ranks. The army is not composed of fools. The soldiers know the records and suspect the performances of men believed having axes to grind; secondly, the Government should enter into a solemn undertaking not to seek directly or indirectly to influence promotions or transfers in the army. The commander of the army corps should be given an absolutely free hand, apart from the civilian heads in the Militia Department, in the promotions and appointments. The Minister of Militia overseas still claims the right to supervise all corps commanders' recommendations. Every fighting soldier knows and resents this. Nothing could do more to convince the army of the Government's sincerity than this one step.

"The Union cause is greatly hampered by indifference. It is necessary that the Government push the campaign unceasingly and also prove still further by convincing action the genuineness of its now partisan appeal to the soldiers. The soldiers themselves are suffering today great hardships fighting for the Dominion and look for an evolution now in Canada. The old party calls mean nothing to them. They feel they have paid the price and blazed the trail for a new road to the higher levels of public life."

One cannot help but wonder what must be the impressions of the readers of our local contemporary as they peruse the dull, cheap, turgid, bowery abuse that appears nightly, spread over several pages. Surely they must be inquiring with considerable unanimity: "Has the journalistic defender of the Conservative candidate a better missile at his command than sewage?" Mr. Porter would do well to adopt for one of the prominent planks in his platform the establishment of a plant for sewage disposal at Belleville.

GROWING OLD.

Softly, oh, softly! the years have swept by thee,
 Touching thee lightly with tender care;
 Sorrow and death have they often brought nigh thee,
 Yet have they left thee but beauty to mar.
 Growing old gracefully
 Gracefully fair.

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Other Editors' Opinions

THE LIBERAL PARTY

There is an idea abroad that the Liberal party consists of those who are opposed to Union Government, and that those Liberals who are in favor of Union Government have deserted the party. Those people would rule out of the party all those who believe in conscription and in a coalition of the parties for governmental purposes. We do not see it in that way. In Great Britain there is Union Government. This Union Government has been in existence for over two years. Yet the Liberal party is still in existence there. Mr. Asquith is the leader of the Liberal party in the House not Lloyd George. The Liberals who are in the Coalition Government, some of them in that holy of holies, the War Council—have not deserted their party nor their principles. Lloyd George is still the Radical of old. He will, when the war is over again arrange himself on the side of the masses against the classes. He has not cast aside the social reforms he had in view when the war put a period to his activities. Although both parties in the Imperial Parliament are more or less in favor of Union Government, and have no desire to upset it, still the parties are distinct and separate in our own Parliament should be sustained at the polls. The House will give a general support to the Government, with perhaps the exception of the French-Canadians. Yet each side will contend for its own principles. The Liberals who have joined the Union Government are still Liberals. They have not given up their principles. Nor will they. The Hon. Newton Rowell has publicly stated that when the war is over he will drop back into the Liberal ranks. He is no less a Liberal now than he was last year. The same may be said of all the other Liberals who have joined the Government. One man, even a leader does not make a party. Outside of Quebec we are satisfied that the number of Liberal Unionists far exceed the number of Liberals opposed to Union Government.

The Halifax Chronicle, whose printing office is now, alas! a mass of ruins, elaborates this idea when it says:

Coming down to the Maritime Provinces, does anybody of average intelligence assert that Hon. G. H. Murray, the Provincial Leader of the Liberal party is less a Liberal today than when, a year ago he received an overwhelming endorsement from the Liberals of Nova Scotia. He is supporting Union Government. Is Hon. W. S. Fielding, who was for fourteen years the Liberal premier of Nova Scotia and for fifteen years the Liberal Finance Minister of Canada, less a Liberal today than he was a month ago? He is supporting Union Government. Is Hon. W. E. Foster, the Liberal Premier of New Brunswick, less a Liberal to day than when a few months ago, the people of New Brunswick turned a Tory administration out of office to put him in power? He is supporting Union Government.

The Union Government is not the Borden Government. The men who are backing the present Government did not back the Borden outfit. All the Provincial Premiers but one are back of the present Government. Were they back of the old Government? Give the Union Government a chance. It is only a few weeks old, yet it has abolished patronage, has curbed the food profiteers, and when the elections are over it will settle down to see justice done to our soldiers, to see that Labor gets its proper reward, and to see that everything is done that can be done to win this war.—Hamilton Times (Lib. Unionist).

CANADA'S SHARE

A subscription of \$200,000,000 this time will bring the Dominion's war loans up to \$850,000,000. The proportional total for the United States would be \$8,125,000,000; so we shall have to overtake her and pass her. However, Canada has lent the mother country some \$600,000,000, which is, relatively to her population, about equal to the \$7,500,000,000 we shall lend all our allies in the first year of the war. It must be considered also that the Dominion has been fighting for three years and has contributed a great proportion of her men—and there are no better fighters on any of the battle fronts.—New York Sun.

A WORD TO FARMERS

Farmers who grumble at the operations of the Selective Draft Tribunals might well have something more to grumble about. Generally speaking they have been notoriously

dealt with, and the father with one son and a hundred acres of land to cultivate has been left alone. Those who tried to stretch that latitude to other sons had no good claim for exemption, and they were properly denied. In any event it is the cities that are feeling the strain of warfare and it is from the centres that the vast majority of recruits have come and are coming. The rural sections have got off lightly—too lightly in the estimation of a great many.
 —Guelph Herald.

LAD DROWNED

Kenneth Plews Meets Death by Breaking Through Ice on Canal

T. A. Northey, diver for the Trans Valley Canal, has returned from Cobocook where he recovered the body of Kenneth Plews, aged six years, who broke through thin ice on the canal at Cobocook and was drowned.

PRESENTATION TO FRANK LANN

Stirling.—Representatives of the Men's Bible Class of the Methodist Church and also representatives of the Stirling village council called at the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Linn on Wednesday evening to bid fare well and Godspeed to their son, Pte. Frank Linn, of the Light Battery, Kingston, who was to leave for overseas, Thursday morning.

Rev. F. H. Howard acted as chairman. Mr. G. G. Thrasher presented a Safety Razor on behalf of the A. B. C. and Mr. Melklohn a Wrist Watch on behalf of the council. Principal Williams, Messrs. J. S. Morton, J. L. Ashley, W. S. Martin, and T. A. Eggleton were among those who spoke appreciatively of Frank and Lieut. G. E. Howard of the Naval Air Service welcomed him into the great fraternity of fellowship and service found in the army and navy.

MARMORA

Mrs. Sanford Hubble of Blairton, was severely injured on Saturday night when Mr. Hubble's team ran away throwing her out.

Reeve R. T. Gray is in Belleville, this week, attending the final session of Hastings County Council for 1917.

Reeve T. E. Laycock of Marmora and Luke, is also in attendance. A very happy event took place at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John N. Hamilton, Marmora township, yesterday, when their eldest daughter, Eliza, was united in marriage to Rev. Claude Hutchings. Over one hundred guests were present. A more extended report will appear in our next issue.—Herald.

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