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A MAN—AND A MOVEMENT

SIX feet three in his socks, said by those who are experts on matters to be as handsome as Laurier was thirty years ago, Premier W. M. Martin of Saskatchewan is the youngest Provincial Premier now or that ever was in this country. He is just forty. He was appointed Premier a few weeks ago. On Nov. 7th he was nominated to contest the constituency of Regina. His seconder was a woman—wife of a well-known Regina lawyer. About one-third of the audience on that occasion were women. This is worth noticing. It may have something to do with the fact that W. M. Martin is six foot three and a handsome man. But that's not the end of it. Those women were not there just to cheer an Apollo—or whatever Premier Martin may be considered by his admirers. They would have cheered pretty lustily if the candidate had been a cross between Mutt and Jeff. Because the women of Saskatchewan understand that in accepting the Premiership, and in having his nomination seconded by a woman, he was getting ready to tackle one of the most modern aggregations of problems in this or any other country.

There are movements afoot in Saskatchewan. Those women at the meeting are part of them. Premier Martin is at the apex of these movements. Saskatchewan is a very modern province. Also very lopsided politically. The present Legislature has 54 members, of whom 45 are Liberals—I was going to say Grits, but Premier Martin might repudiate that, because, according to his theory, it is the Tories in Saskatchewan who are manipulated from Ottawa, which is also the home of Grits. There should be no Grits and Tories in the West.

FOR so young a man, ex-school teacher and successful lawyer, such a preponderance in the House may look like a dangerous thing. But Martin intends to steer clear of the demoralizing entanglements of a road-rolling majority. According to his nomination speech—which strikes us as being a good one—there are bigger problems in Saskatchewan than majorities and minorities. He believes in a healthy Opposition, though at the election next year he may work tooth and nail to wipe it out. Yet one fancies from the democratic drift of his speech that the young leader of Liberalism in the West would much prefer to be elected by a popular majority with a small Legislative majority. He has not said so. But he seems democratic enough, is known to be enough of a Radical and a fighter, and a believer in popular movements and political struggles to prefer it so.

That convention of agrarians at Winnipeg a couple of weeks ago was a nut for Premier Martin to crack. And he can do it. The farmers of the West understand that W. M. Martin is a radical, a free trader in wheat and implements, an advocate of tariff reduction, and very probably a believer in woman suffrage. Let us not forget also that Martin is a lawyer; that he is the son of a Presbyterian

A short study of Premier W. Melville Martin, of Saskatchewan, the Youngest Premier in Canada

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE



He believes in the West before Ottawa.

minister right up from the Scotchmen's Bible region of Oxford and the Zorra giants, a brilliant student, a graduate in Greek and Latin and for some time a teacher of the same in a High School. It is necessary to remember that the whole bent of his youth and his college training was not towards the masses, but the classes, and that if he had taken book culture at its face value he might have become a right good snob instead of a democrat, a Socialist—of a sort—a radical, a free trader and a believer in the political education of the people.

All which is to stake out a large claim in public business. If Premier Martin hangs on to his democratizing programme for ten years he will see it shaken by a lot of contrary winds. But he has learned to punch through the ritual of a Greek and a Grit education and to look at things and people not merely as they are but as they may become.

Meanwhile we recall the fact that he was always at school and college a

first-class athlete. He was of that Scotch stock, the clansmen that grew up about the famous wrestling and fighting ground of old Zorra. Tommie Burns came from that part of the world; and it was often said that there were half a dozen farmers in Zorra who could still put Burns to sleep. There may be men in the little town of Norwich, Oxford Co., who can throw W. M. Martin or outjump him. But in the days when he was a jumping man and a foot artist there was nobody about those concession lines who could quite come up to Martin's hop-step-and-jump—forty-two feet, ten inches.

Born in Norwich, Oxford Co., it was in the Devonian town of Exeter, Huron Co., that Martin got his first vogue as a master of leg and foot work. Exeter, as I recall it, is a town of great temperament. There are more perfervid prayers in Exeter than in any other town its size in Canada. Those Devonshire folk hang on to their temperament. A large number of them are Methodists. But here

were enough Scotch folk twenty-odd years ago to find a place in the manse for the father and family of W. M. Martin. And it was at a great inter-county field day, when Martin was just at voting age, that he cleaned up everything in the jumping and running line from three counties. His nearest of jump and sprint was his own brother, Alec. Each of these parson's sons could put over a hundred yards in less than eleven seconds. Melville was a star at the Canadian game of lacrosse. He was never a plodder at school; always inclined to be a bit of a young "devil."

He got his public schooling in Exeter, went to High School at Clinton, under John Houston, brother of William Houston, of the Globe. In 1894, at the age of 18, he went to Toronto University, classics and political science with honours; graduated in 1898, went to Ontario Normal College under that famous celt, J. A. McLellan, who must have seen in young Martin one more relief from the wooden-headed monotony of which he used to complain. And in 1899 the young classicist pedagogue got a teacher's job in Harriston High School, where he doled out Greek grammar, Latin prose and English literature.

AT the age of 25, Martin started to Osgoode Hall and took a student's place in the office of T. C. Robinette, from whom he learned much. Being quite practical, he reported Osgoode for one of the Toronto newspapers. Being still more thrifty and an enthusiast in education, he helped in his board and lodgings bill by taking the practical advice of J. M. Godfrey, partner of Robinette, then a school trustee, and went into night school pedagogy. Where? Over in the old Elizabeth St. school, among the Hebrews and the Italians, to whom he taught the three R's for two winters, took his two lectures a day at Osgoode, attended to his office routine and spent his leisure whenever he got it.

This was a good Scotch turn. Martin was thrifty. He was "gey" industrious, diligent in business, ambitious to succeed in law, in education—and in human nature. Of course a good shrewd Tory detractor might allege that in teaching the three R's to the young foreigners in "the Ward" Mr. Martin was getting in practice for the art of the politician. Maybe he was. But it's not likely he knew it.

In 1903 he finished at Osgoode and went out to Regina to practise law. He passed the territorial exams in law, was called to the bar in 1904, and went into partnership with his cousin Balfour. And it was Balfour and Martin until New Year's, 1916, when it became Martin, McEwen and Martin.

From the very start Martin took a keen interest in the things he saw about him; whatever it might be. He had no hidebound programme to maintain. Born a Liberal and a Scotch-Canadian, he was eclectic enough to be more or less of either according to environment. And there was a lot of very changeable environment. Martin had been a practising lawyer