

Dim is the rumour of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names
are sunk,
But of a single combat fame speaks clear.

Once again I heard Mr. Mackenzie before the day of his strength had passed. I drove—again alone—from the home of my boyhood to Clinton to hear the Prime Minister, Honourable L. S. Huntington, Honourable Oliver Mowat, and Honourable T. B. Pardee. Two things said at that meeting have lived in my memory. Mr. Huntington, then Postmaster-General, was defending Mr. Mackenzie's purchase of steel rails on what was thought to be a rising market, and out of which transaction the Conservatives developed a "scandal", when a voice from the audience asked with rough asperity, "What about the post-office?" Mr. Huntington retorted to the confusion of the heckler and the joy of the Liberals, "The post-office is an organization for the transmission of intelligence to men who can read and write. I don't suppose you can do either". Justifiable, perhaps, but the blow that wounds is best withheld. I remember also Mr. Mackenzie's grave warning, spoken so the elect would not be misled, that "the heart of the average Tory was deceitful above all things and desperately weakened". I knew Mr. Mackenzie well when his frame was wasted by disease, and a faltering tongue could seldom give expression to the strong and restless spirit which the eye revealed. But during the years that I was in the Press Gallery he did not utter half a dozen sentences in Parliament. There was pathos in his patient, faithful, enduring attendance upon debates in which he could not engage.

Mr. Mackenzie was attacked with unrelenting vigour and often with sheer malignity. Of all the charges urged against his Government not one will command the respect of posterity or would now receive serious consideration by any dispassionate judge or jury. No matter how confident he

may have been in his own patriotism and integrity, the Prime Minister must have been deeply wounded by the tongue of slander that would not be still and the vindictive savagery of continuous attack. But the Mackenzie Government, like all other Governments in Canada, had greedy mercenaries hanging upon its skirts, bent upon pillage and crafty beyond the wit of man in devising means to get at the treasury by dubious contracts or skilful alienation of the public resources. In 1896 *The Globe* published a letter by Mr. Mackenzie, to Mr. Thomas Hodgins, master at Osgoode Hall, and the Liberal member for West Elgin in the Legislature from 1871 to 1879, whose name, however, was not disclosed, which shows how sorely he was beset by the spoilsmen and how sternly he resisted their demands.

"Friends (?) expect to be benefited by offices they are unfit for, by contracts they are not entitled to, by advances not earned. Enemies ally themselves with friends and push the friends to the front. Some attempt to storm the office. Some dig trenches at a distance and approach in regular siege form. I feel like the besieged lying on my arms night and day. I have offended at least twenty parliamentary friends by defence of the citadel. A weak minister here would ruin the party in a month and the country very soon."

Mr. Mackenzie did guard the treasury, but the struggle was unceasing and the strain beyond endurance. The fault of the Liberal party was valuable virtue. It actually believed that it was the "party of purity". All its organs and leaders pursued Sir John Macdonald as the arch-master of electoral corruption, but after 1874 twenty or thirty Liberal members who had cried to the gods against the "Pacific scandal" were unseated for improper practices. Men scoffed and forgot that the masses of the Liberal party were wholesome and sincere people and their leaders able and faithful public servants. But Mr. Mackenzie's letter reveals that in the Liberal party, as in the Conservative party,