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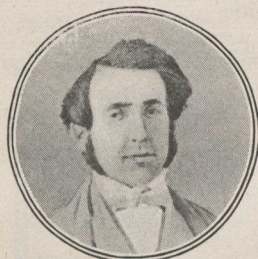
A Remarkable Ninetieth Birthday

Premier of Canada, 1895-96 at the Age of 73, he saw Lord Elgin Burned in Effigy in Belleville Streets in 1837

Sir Mackenzie Bowell, No. 33, "Personalities and Problems."

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

ON Saturday of this week Sir Mackenzie Bowell will be ninety years old. He will have lived just eighty years in the town of Belleville; he will have been 78 years either directly or indirectly connected with the *Belleville Intelligencer*; and he was from 1867 until



Taken in Belleville, Ont., at the Age of 25, Nineteen Years Before Confederation.

1896 continuously a member of the House of Commons, was for several years a Cabinet Minister, and from 1895 until April, 1896, was Premier of Canada, succeeding Sir John Thompson, and directly concerned with the "nest of traitors," when Sir Charles Tupper was cabled to come over and go up against Laurier.

From this sketch outline you expect a doddering old man, deaf, devoted to his spectacles and as crotchety as an old family chair. He would carry a thick stick, hobble a bit, and be addicted to rambling in his speech. But the old man that swung into the office of the *Belleville Intelligencer* a few days ago, came in like a March breeze and banged his way up a long staircase into a front office. He was just about the youngest thing in the old man category that it's possible to see. On his way through he stopped to ask a wizened old chap at some monkey thing in the printing plant,

"Got it tinkered yet?"
The old chap was one of the old *Intelligencers*. He had known Sir Mackenzie from the time he was a young man.

Sir Mackenzie had no cane. He slung off his overcoat and flung himself into a desk chair under battlements of books, most of them about Canada. And he looked as though for two cents he would start and read them all over again. It was Cato at the age of 90 who started to learn Greek. This man was as vigorous as Cato.

"You look to be—about sixty-five," I said.
He laughed.

"Smoke up," he said. "I don't smoke myself. Never did. But as to that sixty-five, I'll tell you a joke. Three years ago I was in Victoria, B.C., visiting a son of mine. Three ladies in a company were curious about my age. One asked me how old I was—and did I mind being asked such a question."

NO, said I. "Why should I mind? Years don't embarrass me. But you guess my age."

"Sixty-five," she said.
"The other two guessed ages up to seventy.
"You're the nearest right," I said to the first. "Sixty-five is the nearest. Yes, if my eldest daughter were here now she could tell you she is sixty-three."

"And, by Jove," he added, "when I got back home they told me I was a year out. She was sixty-four."

Casually he picked off the desk a folded newspaper. Tearing off the wrapper,

"Oh—hum! Compliments of Z. A. Lash, eh? Please read page 6. Now let's see what my friend Lash has on page six to entertain me. Lash—yes, I knew him when he was a young Deputy Minister of Justice in the Mackenzie regime; not so very

long ago as the world wags, either. Page six—yes, here we are. 'The Mystery of Edward Blake.' Well, that should be interesting."

"You knew Blake, of course?"
"I rather did. Yes, I suppose I'm the only man ever lived that took Edward Blake down, once on the floor of the House and once in the lobby."

"Metaphorically speaking, eh?"
"Not by a jugful. No, flopped him fair on his back. Yes, Edward got jibing me a bit one night after the House adjourned, and I said,

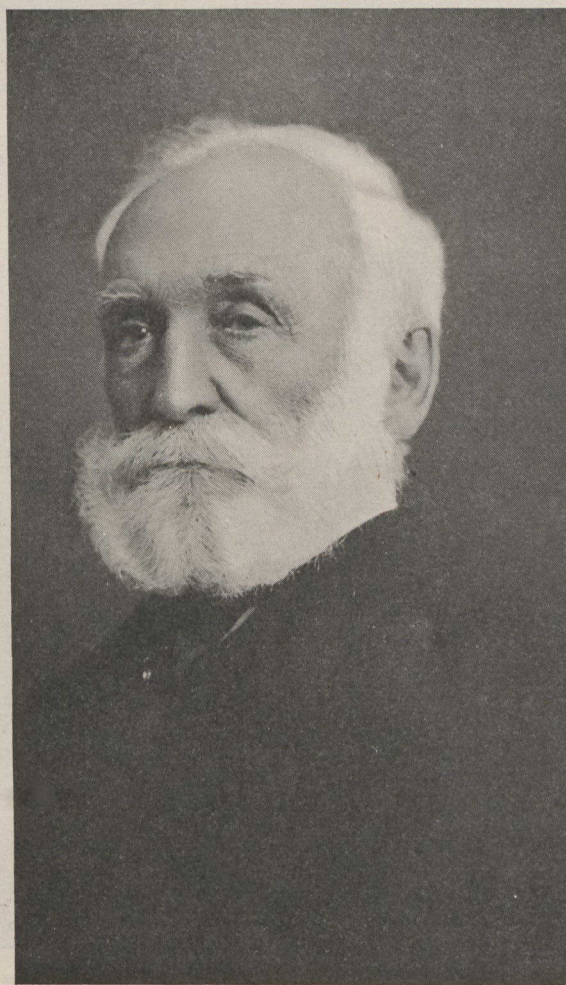
"Now a little more of that and I'll take you down right here."

"He allowed that I couldn't do that. I insisted that I could. And the big elephant came at me. Oh, I never was a very big man, but what there was of me was hard as nails."

As a matter of fact, Mackenzie Bowell has a pair of shoulders the breadth of a common door, and his action was always of the wildcat sort.

"Well, I downed him, but it wasn't exactly easy. He chased me round the table, but Blake never could run in anything but an election. A few days afterwards I met him in the lobby. He started to come at me like a bull at a toreador. 'Now look out old fellow,' I said. 'I'll down you again.'"

"You can't do it," said he, crisply.



As Glad of His Ninety Years as a Moose at the Smell of the Bush in the Morning.

"But by jingo, I will."

"I ducked and grabbed him affectionately under the hips somewhere. I heaved him as high as I could and came down on top of him. George! I cracked a rib, nearly broke a finger, and didn't get over that flop for a month."

Sir Mackenzie admitted that his bouts with Edward Blake were not all physical. There was one speech that Bowell was making—I've forgotten the subject—when it was necessary to quote a long passage from a speech of Blake. The House adjourned before the quotation began.

"The hon. gentleman will be compelled to omit the best part of his speech," said the member for Durham, with dry humour.

Bowell made no reply. When he resumed speaking after the adjournment he paid a very hefty and studious compliment to the quotation he was about to read, and added,

"But even the greatest characters in history had their faults. Orators are not exempt. My hon. friend has one weakness. It is his vanity."

After which little pleasantries Blake and Bowell were never very chummy.

THESE reminiscences of a sprightly, exuberant old man are but yesterday happenings compared to the great bulk of things that in the lifetime of Mackenzie Bowell have made Canadian history. The life of Bowell is a great web of circumstance and evolution. It reaches back in this country to the very beginnings of modern things. Confederation, now ancient history, came fair in the middle of his life or a trifle before. He remembers things that happened before 1867 with even more vim than he does modern Canada. He talks about George Brown and John A. Macdonald as though they had died last week. On his desk there is a scrapbook full of clippings, many of them the work of George Brown, especially his fulminations against the Catholics. Sir Mackenzie thumbs them over and chuckles as he reads. 1858 is the date on many of them. Pgh! That's not hard to remember. In fact it's all alive. This man lives three generations at once. He is the perennial; not merely the kind you see in wayback pictures of four and five generations; but a man who in the deeds of his life and the strange continuity of his work sums up the forces of three periods in Canadian development; a man to whom the Victorian era was the main part of his life, but who is as much interested in 1913 as he ever was in 1837, which he remembers very vividly.

Young Bowell was fourteen years old when Victoria came to the throne. He came as a lad of nine past from the cornfields of West England. There, his father being a joiner in the village, he was engaged by a farmer across the road to shoo the sparrows off the corn with a "clapper." For this he got twopence a day and fourpence on Sunday. The Bowell family left home on a Monday to come to Canada. Young Mackenzie didn't get his last fourpence, which he very much regretted, because the family needed the money.

He already had some relations in Belleville, which was the reason why the elder folk set their imaginations on the Bay of Quinte. They were eight weeks and some days getting from Yarmouth to Quebec; another week getting from Montreal up to the Bay of Quinte; up by the pony barges and the rapids, the route of horses' bones and of red