

Laurier kept his whole audience hanging upon his lips for more than an hour. Not for a single moment did his wondrous eloquence fail him. You should have heard him, reader !

He expounded the doctrines and elucidated the principles of legal and constitutional rights with the ease of a parliamentary veteran and the precision of a practised dialectician. He grouped his facts so skilfully, adduced his proofs and authorities with such cumulative force, reared his arguments one upon the foundation of another with such close, quick, inexorable logic, that his conclusions seemed to flash out of their own accord, unforced, but irresistible. Every part of the speech, moreover, was linked to the rest in admirably reasoned sequence, and from beginning to end it flowed freely—without hesitation, without a moment's groping for words, and, at the same time, with never one superfluous syllable. And, if the matter of it was noteworthy, no less so was the manner of its delivery : the sonorous and vibrating voice, the superb wealth and variety of intonation, the chaste simplicity and appropriateness of gesture, and finally, the attitude of the speaker, as full of natural ease and grace as it was of magisterial dignity.

The enthusiasm it evoked was indescribable. The outburst of applause which greeted Laurier as he resumed his seat continued for fully five minutes afterwards ; while Ministers of the Crown and prominent members of Parliament flocked around him, eager to shake him by the hand and offer their congratulations. For had not a future party chief proclaimed himself, and asserted his right to leadership by the "*Ego nominor leo*" that had rung through every word he had uttered ? This famous oratorical effort had but one defect, that of discouraging any further attempt on the part of others. As I heard a member of the House remark : " If that speech had been delivered at the beginning of the debate, there is no saying whether it would not have turned the scale."

At all events Laurier had gained the day as far as he personally was concerned. From that moment a place in the Cabinet was virtually assigned to him ; and he was called upon to fill it in 1877, upon the retirement of Mr. Cauchon, who had just been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

Then occurred a singular mishap, which furnishes a striking