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## Amazing Career of the Late Mr. David Russell

**Mr. J. Lambert Payne, Who Was Private Secretary to the Late Hon. A. G. Blair Contributes an Interesting Chapter to Canada's Political History—Tells How Russell Became Owner of Saint John Telegraph—A Tribute to Mr. Blair.**

(J. Lambert Payne in Montreal Star.)

David Russell died the other day in Toronto. During recent years his life had been marked by almost complete obscurity and a good deal of what to him must have been poverty; but there was a time when he was much in the public eye and when he made and spent money on a lavish scale. I knew him with great intimacy in the days when he was prosperous, and can therefore tell the story of a life which had more of adventure in it than falls to the lot of most men.

David Russell was born in St. John, New Brunswick. Of his school days he told me nothing; but I should judge from my close contact with him that his education was limited to the elements. It always seemed to me that he had never read a book in his

He Comes to Montreal.

I cannot fix the exact year young Russell left St. John and came to Montreal; but it was in either 1897 or 1898. He made this move at the instance of Hon. A. G. Blair, then Minister of Railways, whose private secretary I was from early in 1897 to the end of his public career. To explain how this pivotal event in the lives of both these men came about I am obliged to turn back for a year or so. In connection with this organization of one or the other of the two companies to which allusion has just been made, Russell had occasion to visit England. While in London he dropped in one morning at the shop of a chemist for a laxative. The old gentleman, whose name was Taylor, gave him a bottle of what he called

ever in Russell's judgment in anything apart from the making of money; but in that regard he looked upon him as having rare capacity. Of course, Mr. Blair was himself a substantial beneficiary in these operations, as he richly deserved to be, and I have no hesitation in saying that I myself shared to the extent of a few thousand dollars in return for writing advertising matter. Russell always told me that he was going to make Blair a very rich man, and I am confident he meant it and would have kept his word. Incidentally, he held out a more modest hope for me.

When the Abbey's Salt companies were moving along smoothly, and with at least a superficial show of prosperity, Russell cast about for some new object upon which to bring his money-making gifts to bear. For a time he gave considerable attention to a big new hotel scheme; but it hung fire at the American end. He finally selected the Lake of the Woods Milling Company. He succeeded in putting that business on a new and larger capital footing, and emerged with something over half a million dollars in cash as his reward. This triumph, however, indirectly led to his undoing.

With the proceeds of the Lake of the Woods deal in hand, David Russell now embarked in an enterprise that proved in the long run to be his last. He bought the extensive land holdings in the west of the Qu'Appelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railway. In association with him were two friends. A disagreement arose later, and the final result was that Russell lost his land. He sued his associates several times for sums running up to three or four millions, and was non-suited on every occasion. A power of attorney he had given turned out, I was informed, to be a ploy in the matter. The last letter I had

from him was a year ago, when he offered me \$50,000 to take up his case and carry it through. I declined.

He Takes the Political Field.

Before the western lands case had reached the disastrous stage, David Russell suddenly turned up as the chief operator in one of the most sensational episodes in our political history. It was in the federal campaign of 1904. The Grand Trunk Pacific scheme had been put through Parliament the year before, and Mr. Blair, as the sole opponent of that measure in the Cabinet, had resigned. A little later he was made chairman of the new Railway Commission, under the Railway Act, which he had put through in 1903, and which was the crowning work of his useful life. The Laurier Government was still firmly entrenched, and Sir Robert Borden was leading the Opposition. When the general election was brought on I was private secretary to Mr. Blair's successor, Hon. H. R. Emmerson.

My first knowledge of Russell's operations came when I was on my way to St. John with my chief. At McAdam Junction a very luxurious Pullman private car was hooked on behind our official car. In it was David Russell, and his secretary, Ned Dowling. I went in to see him, when he told me that if I lived for another three weeks I was going to see political history made in Canada. He was on his way, he said, to meet Sir Robert Borden by appointment.

He Reaches Out Too Far.

Russell was now a man of large means. He had a suite of rooms at the Windsor Hotel, where he entertained in princely style. Yet he seemed to place no value on money. He liked to make it; but he was the freest spender I ever knew in my life. His generosity was unbounded. There was in the service of the Standard Oil Company at that time a New Yorker named Lichtenhein, well known in Montreal, who had charge of the railway lubrication contracts. He, too, was noted for his free spending and entertainments, although he was much more of an artist at it than Russell. On one occasion, when I was in New York with Mr. Blair, these two met in what became such a contest in

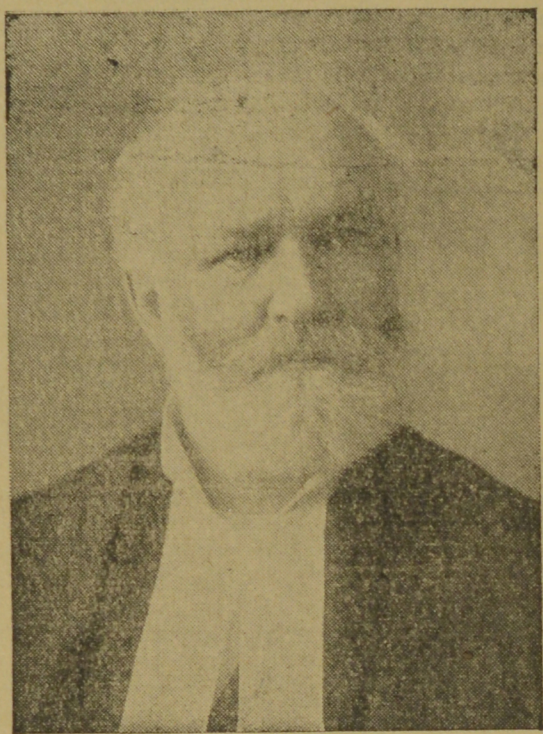
spending that I shall never forget it. Russell won out by presenting Mr. Blair with the finest billiard table money could buy; but afterward my minister had the order cancelled.

It seems that Sir Robert, who was then engaged in touring the province, had received a wire intimating that "an important man" wanted to meet him in his Pullman. It turned out to be Russell, with whom Sir Robert had no more than a bowing acquaintance. From what will be disclosed in succeeding paragraphs the nature of Russell's proposal is more or less obvious; but whatever it was, the Conservative leader turned it down cold. A very suggestive announcement appeared in a Montreal paper a day or two later, to the effect that the Conservative party would not be bound by any pledges given by irresponsible parties. Those who were in "the know" interpreted this as having reference to Russell's campaign. It was not surprising, therefore, that when Sir Robert's friends obtained an inkling of what had transpired they were loud in their praises of Sir Robert's attitude.

Just about the time of this meeting the startling story was given out to the press that Mr. Blair was going to resign the chairmanship of the Railway Commission and take the platform against the Government. The political pot began to boil furiously. Russell moved freely from point to point in the Maritime Provinces, and stories commenced to float about that millions of dollars were to be thrown into the campaign against Laurier. Certainly there was abundance of evidence of money in New Brunswick, and down there, where no secret is made of election methods, it was always spoken of as "Russell money." The private Pullman car was much sought; for they are a greedy lot during an election fight down by the sea.

Russell's Big Scheme.

It took me some time to get together all the links in this amazing performance, and even now I am not free to tell all I know. A private secretary must never reveal what has come to him in confidence. This, however, is the substance of the matter as it can (Continued on Page Three.)



THE LATE HON. A. G. BLAIR  
Minister of Railways and Canals From 1896 Until 1904.

life. I never saw him even glance at a newspaper. The world of literature made no appeal to him. He was simply a man to whom business was everything; and in that regard he was a genius. He was not a Max Aikens, in the sense that he lacked the organizing skill of that eminent Canadian; but he had the same capacity to think in big terms, to plan on a huge scale, and to execute daringly and confidently.

His business career began when he was in his teens. In St. John there was a man named Hawker, who had built up a small trade in medicines which bore his name—Hawker's Pills and so on. Young Russell's first adventure on the broad sea of commerce was to organize the Hawker Medicine Company. It was on a comparatively small scale, however, and yet it yielded a fair return to the youthful Napoleon of finance. Then he organized the Canadian Drug Company as a joint stock concern, and it is still doing business in St. John. Once again he earned a modest dividend for himself.

By this time his qualities had been developed and hardened. The basis of these natural endowments was enthusiasm. He had a sunny nature, an infectious laugh, and a hearty and attractive manner. His whole being expressed alertness and sureness. He talked in a quick and nervous way, and, while he was usually jaunty and bubbling over with boyish good humor, like most men with a purpose in view he could suddenly become intensely serious. Whether his method was calculated or instructive I could never make out; but his success at every stage was the result of his ability to inoculate other people with his own hopefulness. His power in that regard was hypnotic. That is the only word that describes it. Perhaps I should add that he always dressed well and radiated prosperity.

"effervescent saline," which the young Canadian was quick to recognize as resembling the famous Enos.

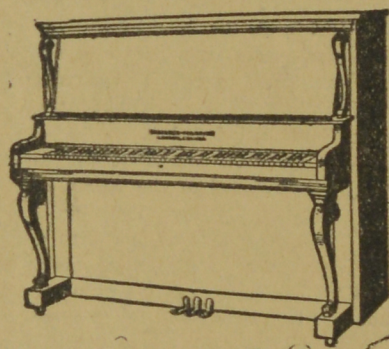
Russell told me that he at once had a hunch. He returned to the shop and ascertained that the preparation was not covered by either patent or copyright, but was merely a side line for the old man who sold it. Without going into details, it must suffice to say that Russell obtained the formula. My recollection is that he got it for nothing. On returning to Canada he got into touch with Mr. Blair; but the time was not then propitious for the exploitation of this saline, as Mr. Blair had just been invited to enter the new Cabinet of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. A year or so later Russell came to Ottawa to talk matters over with his friend Blair.

Whether or not the Minister of Railways had any faith in this English medicine I cannot say; but he had a firm belief in the genius of young Russell, who was then 25 or 26 years of age. He gave Russell letters to six of his friends in Montreal, and within two weeks they had each taken a \$5,000 interest in the company which was to be organized. With this \$30,000 Russell started the Abbey's Effervescent Salt Company, Limited, in Montreal, and within a few months he was launched upon his adventurous career. Within the next year or so he went down to New York and got together an American company, with a capitalization of \$1,000,000. Money was rolling in. Then he went to London, England, and floated a company for a million pounds. Thus within three or four years his operations had taken on huge proportions. They were in terms of millions.

Wins Fresh Victories.

During all this time Hon. A. G. Blair was David Russell's constant counsellor. Their meetings were frequent, and their associations of the most intimate nature. I know that Mr. Blair placed no confidence what-

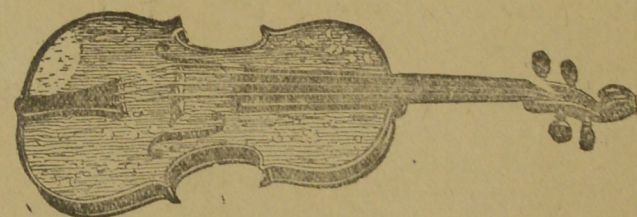
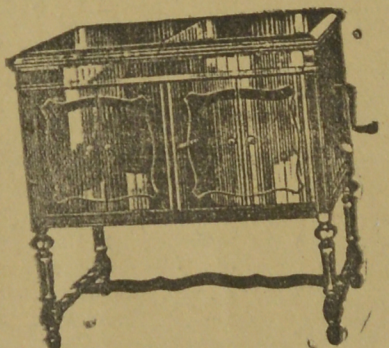
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