

## AMAZING CAREER OF THE LATE MR. DAVID RUSSELL

(Continued from page two) He told: The building of the National Transcontinental, as the Government's contribution to the Grand Trunk Pacific scheme, meant an expenditure of \$165,000,000. There were big American operators who wanted a finger in that rich pie. The only way they could make sure of the contract was to get control of the Government by winning the election. Russell's plan to do this was in the last degree daring, and it seemed to some of my far-seeing friends doomed to failure unless he succeeded in getting an understanding with the Conservative party, or at least with Sir Robert Borden (which he failed to do.)

Be that as it may, his scheme was as follows: Hon. A. G. Blair was to resign from the Railway Commission and stump the country. Certain influential and independent French Canadian newspapers in Montreal and elsewhere were to be bought up and others of the Liberal faith were also to be acquired. A chain of papers was to be formed from coast to coast, and at a given signal were to turn their guns against Laurier. A number of Liberal candidates were to be bought to throw up their hands on nomination day when it would be too late to prevent Conservative acclamations. Campaign funds were to be on an unprecedented scale and it was assumed that this suggestion of a Liberal debacle would stampede the country. From the very start this was a wild

and fantastic plan; but Russell believed he could carry it through. Certainly he started off with lots of money, as I can say from personal observation.

As a matter of fact, just a few days before the resignation of Hon. A. G. Blair was given out to the press by Russell, the purchase of the La Presse newspaper in Montreal had actually taken place. This was done by Russell; but it was clearly understood by Mr. Treffe Berthiaume, the owner, that the paper should remain independent. The price was \$750,000. The negotiations were carried out by Mr. Arthur Dansereau, who received a commission of \$25,000. Mr. Berthiaume received the first payment of \$250,000, but before the second instalment came due, Sir William Mackenzie bought La Presse and sold it back to Mr. Berthiaume.

### What Actually Happened.

Hon. A. G. Blair did resign; but he never took the platform. David Russell wrote out Mr. Blair's resignation in his own hand, and gave out the announcement to the press. Mr. Blair, however, remained silent and in seclusion. Why he did not repudiate the statement given out remained a mystery to many of Mr. Blair's friends; but I can throw light on the matter, and in justice to a really great and honorable man, my old and esteemed chief, I take this, my first opportunity of doing so. I could not while David Russell was alive.

Mr. Blair was afraid of Russell. And for very good reasons. While big-hearted and kindly, Russell was capable of being exceedingly vindictive; and in such a mood he had no scruples. The story of the St. John Telegraph will make that plain. After Mr. Blair had come to Ottawa he felt the need of an adequate political organ in New Brunswick. His friends came to know of this, and among them they made up a sufficient sum to purchase the St. John Telegraph. There was nothing unusual or improper about this. David Russell was made the trustee of the stock in his own name. He had Mr. Blair's confidence. One day the manager telegraphed Mr. Blair that Russell had taken possession of the paper. At first Mr. Blair thought it was a mere prank; but when he sent for Russell that gentleman showed his teeth. He produced a statement of claim equalling the capital stock of the company, every item of which was made up of the contributions from Mr. Blair's political friends, and of which he was the trustee. Of course, the Minister could not fight, and he threw up his hands. Russell kept the stock, and ultimately sold the paper.

This explains Mr. Blair's silence. It was through fear; and my own impression is that keeping his mouth shut, then and subsequently, had a great deal to do with his death a few years later. Mr. Blair knew Russell, and it must have been the supreme humiliation of his life to read the daily announcements in 1904 of what he was going to do without being able to open his lips. I am convinced that he would have thrown personal considerations to the wind and told the truth; but he had to think of his loyal political friends and how Russell's disclosures would affect them. Mr. Blair therefore stands out as a self-sacrificing hero and my chief object in writing this sketch is to clear his name of the suspicions which may have arisen in 1904 because of his silence.

### Something Went Wrong.

Moreover, something happened at the American end of this audacious scheme to capture the National Transcontinental contract. It was said that the New York syndicate was to put up several million dollars, apart from the money necessary for the purchase of the newspapers; but

when Russell was unable to obtain the required political assurance from the man, or men, who alone could give it, the American schemers quite naturally held back the cash. They must have put up a lot before reaching that decision; for the general election of 1904 is still talked about in New Brunswick as the most expensive in the history of the province. As a matter of fact, the so-called "Russell money" was both stolen and wasted right and left. I was on the spot, and in a favorable position to know.

What happened in Kent County is an illustration. A well-known St. John man was sent up by Russell with \$7,000. Two or three days before the election the long distance wire grew hot with calls to know when the promised money was coming. The go-between swore he had delivered it, to the Tory leader in Kent; but this was rigorously denied. The cash had therefore to be sent up a second time, and to this day the matter of what became of the first payment has not been cleared up.

There were other reasons why my old chief remained silent. In the first place, he was always exceedingly sensitive as to the feelings of his family. He did not want a scandal. Russell knew this and traded upon it. Furthermore, Mr. Blair had given Russell a purely friendly and non-committal letter to aid him in selling Abbey's Salt stock. The letter had been misused, and there again the factor of fear came in. Mr. Blair wished to avoid any unpleasant revelations. Everything could have been quite easily explained, but Mr. Blair had political enemies. Finally, he was much attached to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and exposures by Russell would have operated adversely to the Liberal chieftain in the political sense.

I have said that Mr. Blair had given Russell a perfectly innocent general letter of introduction in connection with the sale of Abbey stock. I have also said that Russell was a business wizard. A little story will illustrate his skill. There were two brothers who had tendered on a large government contract. Russell went to see them, and found that one of them was in Montreal. He convinced the brother at home that the fate of the tender hung on his taking a generous allotment of stock, and sold him a block of \$10,000 worth. Then he hurried back to Montreal, looked up the other brother, without saying anything about what had already been done, and sold him another \$10,000 worth. Russell told me this himself, and was very proud of it.

These things came to Mr. Blair's ears and he was naturally timid, especially after the St. John Telegraph episode. It was in that state of mind he had to face Russell's high-handed tactics in 1904, and to such a man, thinking first of his family and next of his friends, silence was the only course to take.

### Success and Failure.

Soon after Russell had begun his operation in Abbey's Salt, Mr. Blair said to me one day. "Within ten years Dave will be either one of Canada's big moneyed men or a pauper." I asked him which he thought it would be. He paused, and then said: "Applying the standard tests, I fear it will be the latter." He was both right and wrong. Russell died in comparative poverty; but he had reached a big place in the business scheme, and had made a lot of money. His Waterloo came when he was on the road to new heights. Somewhere in his make-up there was a defective part.

He did not love money, as I have said. He threw it about as if it had no value. He was generous to a fault. But he loved the game. He was intoxicated by success, although success did not change his nature. It merely intensified his fatal confidence in himself. And in the final issue his weak spot brought about his ruin. Once down, he seems to have lacked the heart to try a comeback. Yet in some of his recent letters to me he revealed all that acuteness of mind which had enabled him to master big problems and carry out large undertakings.

### Went to Smash.

He never told me why he left Montreal and settled down in Toronto; but I think I know. The Abbey's Salt business had gone to pieces, and, in other hands than Russell's, was reorganized by wiping out 95 per cent of the old stock. Russell had had large transactions with Messrs. MacKenzie & Mann, and when he fell on evil times I fancy his old friends took care of him. If so, the fact explains

other incidents in his meteoric life. He undoubtedly had the genius of being able to make money, and that is a considerable gift. What he seems to have lacked with the genius of being able to keep it. I should say without hesitation that between 1898 and 1908, the ten fatal years to which Mr. Blair had alluded in his prognosis, more than a million of money had passed through his hands which he could have called his own.

Yet David Russell died poor. During that busy decade he had emerged from obscurity into national prominence. He had hobnobbed with big men here and elsewhere. He had achieved what the world would call success. How he did it was always a mystery to me; for outside of sharp business ideas he had the mind of a fifteen year old schoolboy. One forgot that, however, in his sunny presence and in contact with his good-heartedness. He was one of the most likeable men I ever knew. I think his weak spot should be identified as his lack of loyalty; for it was Mr. Blair who made him, and it was Mr. Blair's heart he ruthlessly broke in the end. The cynic will be disposed to say he paid for it. Poor Dave! While he lived I could not tell this story, even though I yearned to do it in vindication of my old chief.

## LAST REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL

(Continued on page seven)

Chestnut, city clerk and treasurer who was a very painstaking official. The city had been fortunate in securing in Messrs. Haviland and Colter efficient men to take his place. He wanted the retiring aldermen Messrs Davidson and Richards to accept his best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year.

Ald. Currier.

Ald. Currier regretted that Ald Davidson had found it necessary to retire from the ranks. As a member of the roads and streets committee Ald Davidson had always stood for what was best in the interests of the city. He (Currier) had confidence in the new men who had been chosen and felt sure that they would take their places in the family, with reference to the roads and streets department he would say that while the assessment had been reduced by \$8,000 they had found it impossible because of conditions over which they had no control to carry on without incurring a deficit of between \$4000 and \$5000. A report from the city engineer on what had been done would soon be available to the citizens. He hoped that the city would be able to carry on without further bond issues and believed that it could be done by adopting a policy of pay as you go.

Ald. Goodspeed.

Ald. Goodspeed endorsed the sentiments expressed in regard to the retiring aldermen. They were both good men and would be greatly missed at the board. The street lighting service had been improved at a reduced cost, good work had been done on the roads and streets and no citizen would find fault if there were an overdraft in that department. He thought that conditions were much better than was the case two years ago and Ald. Currier and the city engineer were deserving of much credit for the change.

Ald. Thompson.

Ald. Thompson said that he was sorry that two aldermen were retiring but good men had been chosen to succeed them. In his opinion a lot of credit for the improvement brought about in the administration of civic affairs was due to His Worship the Mayor, the man at the helm. He believed the citizens appreciated the work of His Worship.

Ald Hay also regretted the retirement of Aids. Richards and Davidson whom he thought had done good work. He wished to congratulate His Worship the Mayor and the aldermen who had been returned by acclamation. He was inclined to think that it had been a surprise to his colleague, Ald. Mitchell who had expected to be opposed. On his motion a vote of thanks was extended to the retiring aldermen.

His Worship in putting the motion remarked that thanks was the only remuneration that the aldermen received for their services.

## She Coughed Night and Day Could Not Sleep

Mrs. Leonard Haywood, Victoria Corner, N.B., writes:—"Last fall I took an awful cold which I caught while driving in an open car on a cold day."

"I coughed night and day, could not sleep at night, and my eyes ran water so that I could hardly see a thing."

"My husband got me a bottle of

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and before I had taken the whole of it my cold had disappeared."

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### Ald. Davidson.

Ald. Davidson in acknowledging the vote of thanks stated that the reduction in the cost of street lighting brought about by the late council would mean a saving of \$1800 per year.

It was decided that the new council should meet on Monday evening next to be shown in and elect the standing committees for the ensuing year.

On motion of Ald. Mitchell the council adjourned sine die.

Prior to the regular meeting the council met in committee and passed the monthly accounts.

## J. L. FOSTER OF NORTH LAKE PASSES AWAY

Canterbury, Jan. 1.—The death of John L. Foster, son of the late Elias and Anne Foster, occurred at his home at North Lake, York County, Friday. Mr. Foster was 76 years of age and had been a resident of North Lake about fifty years. He had conducted a blacksmith and repair shop. For many years he was connected with the school board, and also was justice of the peace for that parish.

He is survived by six daughters, Mrs. Joseph Whitcomb, Boston; Mrs. Harve Boone, Mrs. William Boone, Mrs. Frank Wood, Mrs. Emery Farrell, of North Lake, and Mrs. Harry Lounder, Vanceboro, Maine, also two sons, Sedence and Elias, at home.

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