



ECCLES JAMES GOTT

IN THE constituency of South Essex he is familiarly known as "Eck," and the people there pronounce the cognomen as it is spelled. They don't say "by heck," but they swear "by Eck." He is also known as "Pep," and that is no more a misnomer than "Eck." He has pep and plenty of it; it is because of the superabundance of pep in him that he popularized the abbreviated "Eck."

All this is true of Eccles James Gott. But there is something else just as true about him. It is, in the first place, that he is Member in the House of Commons for South Essex, and that, secondly, he "got" there by defeating at the polls one of the most prominent men in Canadian politics, Right Hon. George P. Graham. That was in the general elections of 1925, and

it took "pep" to do it; but not all of Eck's pep, for he had plenty left for the elections of 1926, when he was returned over Thomas Rowley, who ran as a Liberal-Protectionist-Farmer.

"Eck" Gott won his seat in the House of Commons, October 29, 1925. But he had started to win months before that eventful day. Months? No, years 27 of them. How come?

It is like this. It was in the federal elections of 1900. "Eck" was then sixteen, and a student in the Essex Centre High School, where he was showing considerable aptness for public discussion of public affairs. One evening Lewis Wigle invited him to speak on his behalf at a meeting called in his interests. "Eck" accepted

and delivered a spirited address. What the subject of his address was I do not know, but one thing is certain: that meeting aroused in his soul a hope, the laudable hope of some day representing South Essex in the House of Commons. As he grew older that hope became his ambition; he nurtured that ambition and it, in turn, became his objective. Meanwhile years passed by. Mr. Gott was no longer "the apt student" in Essex High School. He had become an employee of the Buffalo Dredging Company, which was deepening the channel at Amherstburg, and after a few months in the employ of that concern, had been selected as foreman of the Drill Boat crew. Later he had accepted an appointment in the Dominion Immigration Service at Windsor, and later again (1916) had opened a Real Estate office, in company with his brother Stanley, in Windsor.

Whether at one task or another, Eccles James Gott, who had early graduated to be the full-fledged "Eck," always kept in mind the passion of his young days become the M. P. for South Essex. It was not to that end that he had, for many years been active in the promotion of sports, that he had in 1919, fathered the organization of the Essex County Amateur Baseball League, which through his personal efforts has been maintained as a strictly amateur organization, that he had, in all his activities, shown enthusiasm, ardour and pep, and that he had continued to take a leading part in political campaigns. But all this had helped to make him a popular figure in South Essex—where he could call every person by his or her first name, and where he was regarded as a square-shooter. But what had been in direct pursuit of his design was his continuous study of political and economic questions, his mastering of the technique of political campaign organization, and his preaching the gospel of "An Essex South man for South Essex." And when the time arrived to bring to realization the dream of his youth, Mr. Gott was ready.

I am inclined to consider Mr. Gott's political successes in South Essex as entirely personal ones. South Essex is traditionally Liberal—Mr. Gott put it in the Conservative column against barriers that seemed unbreakable, and against a man who seemed unbeatable. Only the capitalization of his personal popularity, aided by a systematical and methodical organization could have "done the trick." But "Eck" does not give himself the credit for his two victories—he says that his friends did it. Quite so, but who

made the friends? Who made the bonds of friendship so strong as to break down political passions, tear down party affiliations, and disrupt years-long party associations? "Eck," alias "Pep" Gott.

Mr. Gott lives in Amherstburg, where he was also born September 4, 1884, the son of Eccles J. Gott and Cecelia Brett. His father died when he was very young, and he has since lived with his mother, caring for her, causing her to share his triumphs, taking her to Ottawa during sessions, bestowing upon her a filial affection that is exemplary.

Educated in the Public Schools of Amherstburg and Gesto, he finished his education in the High School at Essex. When a high school student he enlisted with the 21st Mounted Rifles, of Windsor, for service in the South African War, but his application was refused on account of being under age. That desire to fight was not an outburst of spasmodic enthusiasm; it was pep, that North of Ireland century-old heritage which was manifesting itself. During the Great War Mr. Gott was prevented from service by his responsibilities at home. But he took revenge for his inability to tramp the veldts of South Africa or face the enemy in Flanders by giving to the "boys" all that was in him. Red Cross work, Patriotic Fund work, Victory Loan work, he had a hand in everything. He was "Gott" through and through.

Mr. Gott is a celibate. His mother shares his happy home, a short distance south of historic Fort Malden. To her he ascribes the major portion of the success he has attained; he claims, and rightfully, that the greatest asset any public man can have is the blessings of a Christian mother. Mr. Gott and his mother are a wonderful inspiration to each other; they join in the general activities of the community both in joy and sorrow, and are examples of genuine humanitarians. Yes, "Eck" Gott is a bachelor, and you may guess why. It is really inspiring to hear him relate his "thousands of reasons" for remaining in celibacy. He becomes actually eloquent then.

He is an all-round goodfellow, never loses an opportunity to perform an act of charity or kindness, fights to win but fights squarely, likes it when things are hotsy-totsy, tackles tasks with the assurance of a Hercules, laughs heartily, and is all full of gusto. What he would do if he lost in a fight I do not know, for he has never lost one.