CONTRASTS AND REFLECTIONS.

A Review of the Year 1913 in Federal Politics.

1913 in political circles was a year of contradictions. Restriction and excess, excess and restriction jostled each other in constant rivalry through the whole of its course. In part the conflict was due to circumstances beyond the power of the Government. In the main it was owing to want of vision and foresight, and the lack of a controlling hand. Incoherency in legislation, instability in administration, alternate plunging and inaction are the constantly recurring features of the Government's record in and out of Parliament. The consequences of combined incapacity and recklessness are now being revealed to no uncertain degree.

The year opened with a continuance of the prosperity which marked the development of the country during the whole of the Laurier regime. The momentum left by fifteen years of constructive statesmanship had not spent its force. Clouds, however, there were on the horizon, which the Government through want of perception and the paralyzing influence of entangling alliances, either failed to see or ignored. The clouds continued to gather through the year, and its close was marked by a reduced revenue, a declining trade, increased expenditure, increased borrowing and a growing national debt.

Decline in Credit, Trade and Employment.

The appropriations voted by Parliament totalled a quarter of a billion dollars as compared with $122,861,250 expended during the last year of the Liberal administration. During the year the Government raised by loan in the British market $45,000,000. Hon. Mr. White's last appeal in London for more money to the extent of $20,000,000 met with a somewhat frigid reception, although it was a 4½ per cent loan issued at 97. The last time Hon. Mr. Fielding appealed for funds in London, a 3½ per cent loan was obtained at a fraction below par. In other words, the present Administration has been compelled to pledge the country's credit at a rate of interest greater by practically 1 per cent than was necessary three years ago. During October and November alone the public debt was increased by $3,527,920. During the first eight months of the fiscal year the expenditures increased by nearly $25,000,000, compared with the corresponding period of the preceding year.

A contrast not less marked has been apparent in the standard of well-being of the masses of the people. With a gradual falling off in employment there has gone hand in hand a considerable increase in the cost of the necessaries of life. Not since the closing years of the old Conservative Administration have operating staffs been as extensively reduced, or as many working people thrown out of employment, as is the case this winter, though the year opened with an abundance of work and a scarcity of labour in many of the national industries. The cost of living has risen to a point never before reached in the history of the Dominion. Nemesis has followed swift and sure upon the rejection of a policy which would have given Canadian producers wider markets in which to sell, and Canadian consumers wider markets in which to buy.

Continued Increase in the Cost of Living.

The United States, during the year, let down the tariff barriers on food stuffs, and other commodities of general use. Whilst this has helped American consumers the result to Canada has been a prompt outflow of cattle, dairy produce and other foodstuffs draining the home supply, with no return flow to re-establish the equilibrium of supply and demand. The out-flow, unfortunately, has not been of those commodities of which there is a surplus over and above what is needed to adequately supply the home market. Whilst for those products of the farm of which Canada produces a superabundance, and which are the very basis of her export trade, restriction of trade, rather than freedom, has been the watchword of the Administration. Canadian producers and Canadian consumers alike have been obliged to suffer. The increase in the high cost of living and the increase in unemployment, tell a part of the tale.

The one piece of constructive policy of the year likely to afford a measure of relief to this unfortunate situation was Sir Wilfrid Laurier's suggestion of the removal of the duty on food, as part of the more comprehensive policy of wider markets in which to buy and sell. The Government which has the control of policies, either cannot or will not effect any remedy whatever. Premier Borden has taken refuge in the favorite subterfuge of vacillating politicians, and has appointed a Commission of investigation with circumscribed powers and restricted scope.

Military and Naval Fiascos.

In defence, as in trade, the year has revealed excess and incapacity on the part of the Administration. It opened with the Government staging an alleged naval "emergency" and demanding an immediate contribution of $35,000,000 to the Admiralty for the building of three Dreadnoughts as a first step in a policy of centralization fostered by the ultra-Imperialists of Canada and Great Britain, and as a compromise with the Nationalist allies in Quebec. The fight of Liberalism against reactionary Tory centralization of power in London was the outstanding feature of the parliamentary session. The year closed with the "emergency" dead and buried, with Germany and Great Britain on more cordial relations than for years past, with a world-wide sentiment developed demanding restrictions of armaments, with the international outlook more than ever for peace and with Canadian public sentiment overwhelmingly in favour of proceeding steadily along the lines of co-operation adhered to in the past by Canada and now permanently adopted by the other over-seas Dominions.

A ludicrous contrast in the jingo programme of the year was the spectacle of Canada's Finance Minister, opening the year by informing the world that he proposed to save the British Empire by a contribution of $35,000,000 from the Dominion Treasury and going ere its close to the British Isles to beg from British