

The Result in Manitoba

By Our Own Correspondent

IN Manitoba the result of the Provincial Election held on March 7th has been the return of the Roblin Government by a very large majority. The Liberal Opposition will have a few more seats in the new House than in the old one, but there has been comparatively little change in the general vote of the Province. In the election of 1903 the Roblin Government secured thirty-one seats and the Opposition nine. One of the seats then won by the Opposition was afterwards lost at a bye-election, so that the parties stood thirty-two to eight before dissolution. One new constituency was created in the city of Winnipeg at the last session of the Legislature and of the forty-one seats the Opposition has this year carried eleven. In two outlying constituencies the election is postponed for a week and these constituencies are practically certain to go with the Government so that the result will be thirty Conservatives and eleven Liberals elected.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the result was the decisive defeat of the Liberal leader in Portage la Prairie. Mr. Brown has never held a seat in the Legislature. He was a candidate in 1903 but was defeated by a small majority. The Liberal Opposition has been very weak in leadership for many years and when Dr. Greenway withdrew to enter the House of Commons the Liberals realised that it was necessary to obtain a new leader who could unite the party and direct its affairs with some energy and skill. In the Legislature, Mr. Mickle alone had experience and his inclination led him to avoid the labour and responsibility of leadership. At a convention of the party held early in 1906 the Liberals chose Mr. Edward Brown as leader and he at once threw himself into the work of preparing for the campaign. Probably no man in the Liberal party could have done more than did Mr. Brown to consolidate his party and give it heart, but he made some political mistakes and failed to present a case against the Government that was sufficiently strong and convincing to overcome the great advantage any vigorous Government has in good times. His personal popularity in his home town of Portage la Prairie does not seem to have increased, for despite his added prestige he was defeated by Mr. Hugh Armstrong by a large majority of 223 votes as against a majority of only 31 in 1903. Mr. Armstrong has undoubtedly grown in popularity in the last four years and he had a splendid organisation. Another notable defeat for the Opposition was that of Mr. Horace Chevrier, the member for St. Boniface, who was the most active and trenchant Liberal member of the Legislature. The Liberals lost six out of eight seats they held in the last Legislature. But as against these losses some good gains were made, the one of the most importance being the election of Mr. Crawford Norris in Lansdown. Mr. Norris was one of the Liberal leaders in the Legislature from 1899 to 1903, but was defeated at the elections in the latter year. On the whole the Opposition is stronger in personnel, as well as in numbers, than the late Legislature.

Mr. R. L. Richardson, whose political history has been varied and turbulent, his last experience as a candidate being as the opponent of Mr. Sifton in Brandon in 1904, this year accepted Mr. Brown's leadership and stood for the constituency of Killarney. Mr. Richardson had for some months been devoting his paper to the cause of agitation against the grain dealers of Winnipeg and he made his appeal to the electors on his claim that the Government was involved and was largely responsible. He was decisively defeated.

On the Government side the most striking loss was the defeat of Dr. McFadden, the Provincial Secretary, in

Emerson. Dr. McFadden had a close run in 1903 in the three-cornered contest and in a straight fight with his Liberal opponent he has lost. Attorney-General Campbell has the very narrow majority of two in Morris. The other ministers have large majorities. The Government carried three seats out of four in Winnipeg and carried also Portage la Prairie and Brandon.

A Government with a large surplus and an administrative record against which nothing more definite than insinuations has been brought is hard to defeat in good times. The Conservatives held out the record of the past seven years and compared it with the previous conditions under Mr. Greenway's administration as a ground for a renewal of power. The Liberals criticised the various claims made and promised retrenchments and changes in method. Mr. Brown had also some constructive proposals such as Government elevators and compulsory education for the cities. The former was not made very definite and the latter threatened to bring up the old school question and was a weakness rather than a strength to the Liberals.

Some heat and even bitterness was imparted to the campaign by the manifestoes or pulpit utterances of three or four ministers who based their attacks on the Government's temperance record. But attacks of this kind and criticisms of administrative methods are not ordinarily very effective. A measure of uncertainty existed, however, owing to the dissatisfaction among the farmers because of the poor train service provided by the railways this winter and also because of the suspicion of trust methods among the grain dealers. Unrest always tells against a Government, but the result in this case shows that it could not be shown that the Roblin Government was responsible for anything that was unsatisfactory in the general conditions.

As the main issue of the campaign, Mr. Roblin put forward the boundary question. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had not extended Manitoba's boundaries when the new Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created, he had practically invited Ontario and Saskatchewan to put in claims to territory Manitoba believed should have been given to her without question, and he delayed a settlement until the rival claims had gathered strength. Mr. Brown held that the matter was not an issue in the Provincial elections because there had been no difference between the parties in Manitoba on the subject. Mr. Roblin contended that, since concurrent legislature of the Province and the Dominion was necessary to any alteration of the boundaries, it was of the utmost importance to have in power in Manitoba a government that would yield nothing of the rights of the Province. He pledged himself to stand for Manitoba's full claim and charged an understanding amounting as he termed it to a conspiracy, among the Liberal leaders to give Manitoba less than her rights. To the carrying out of such an intention it was necessary that there should be in power in Manitoba a Government willing to accept what Ottawa decreed, and it was argued that Mr. Brown's attempt to prevent the raising of an issue and the unfortunate wording in the plank in the Liberal platform dealing with the boundaries were among the evidences of a dangerous understanding with Ottawa. The case was very strongly presented and had an important effect on the result.

The Right Hon. James Bryce, British Ambassador at Washington, will visit Toronto next month. He will be the guest of Professor Goldwin Smith and will address the Canadian Club.