

who desire the House of Commons to maintain its high character as a parliamentary institution. Whatever might be said of the ex-Premier none could deny that he was a great parliamentarian. The House of Commons was much the poorer from his absence. Many a time members on both sides have had occasion to regret that he was not there to give the country the benefit of his matured wisdom.

Several times he has been mentioned as a probable candidate for seats in which the Liberals stood to win, but up to the present he has preferred to remain out. Now that he is entering the field again he will have no easy contest. The late Liberal member for Paisley had not a large majority. The present contest, as it is, will mark a further expression of the determination of the Labor party to play its own hand. In the recent Spen Valley election Labor was strong enough to elect its candidate, Mr. Myers, against such a leading Liberal as Sir John Simon and against the forces of the Lloyd George Government. The election of Sir John probably would have been less objectionable to the Government than that of Mr. Myers, for the Labor party, at one time closely associated with Mr. Lloyd George, has now become distinctly hostile to him, as it has also to the recognized Liberal party. There is a growing fear that the Laborites are pressing their views too far, and consequently there is a disposition to unite other forces to resist Labor's demands. The controllers of the Coalition party in London, fearing a repetition in Paisley of the Spen Valley contest, have been unwilling to nominate a candidate in the Scottish constituency. They would be glad to leave Mr. Asquith to fight the battle against the Labor candidate, and might even rejoice at the election of the ex-Premier as the lesser of the two evils. But the local Unionists, probably all or nearly all Conservatives, rebelling against the authority of the party in London, have nominated a candidate. There will thus be three candidates in the field, Liberal, Unionist and Labor. In ordinary circumstances such a situation in a constituency like Paisley would make the election of the Labor candidate pretty certain. But in the present instance this result is by no means certain. The alarm that is spreading in consequence of the rapid growth of the Labor party may lead to a new alignment in Paisley. The Coalition ministers in London, seeing the improbability of a Coalition candidate winning, may endeavor to procure the withdrawal of the man who has been nominated by the local Unionists. If they fail in this, they may have to give a nominal approval of his candidature, but they will really prefer to have their friends support Mr. Asquith as the only way of preventing another Spen Valley disaster. Apart from all political controversy, the return of Mr. Asquith to the parliamentary life of the Empire is much to be desired.

Mr. Gompers Rebuked

MR. SAMUEL GOMPERS is having an experience that has occasionally come to other eminent leaders of the labor organizations. No other leader of American labor has done so much as Mr. Gompers to place before the world the claims of the working classes. Standing firmly for labor's interests, sometimes to a degree that to some has seemed extreme, he has by his ability, his sincerity and his zeal secured for organized labor a recognition and a respect beyond what were known in earlier times. During the great war Mr. Gompers played an important part in bringing organized labor into harmony with all efforts for the prosecution of the fight against Germany. In Canada as well as in the United States. Mr. Gompers' influence for good was felt. When he visited Ottawa he was deservedly honored by being invited to address the Canadian Parliament, and the speech which he made was worthy of a statesman. With his unswerving loyalty to the real interests of labor, he blends loyalty to his country and to the duties of citizenship. But these qualities, which win for him and his cause the respect of most fair-minded people, do not win the admiration of all sections of labor. The labor leader who manifests such qualities must expect to be regarded by many as too conservative. So it is not surprising to hear that the particular trade union to which he belongs has dropped his name from the list of delegates to a convention to which he had been elected during a very long period of years. He is not the first labor leader who has thus been thus set aside. Too often it has happened that sections of organized labor have condemned leaders whose only offence was that they wished the interests of labor to be interwoven with the larger interests of the nation. Mr. Gompers' position, as the head of the American Federation of Labor, is too strong to be affected by this ungenerous act of his own union. But the fact that so eminent a leader is so shabbily treated is an indication of the forces that are at work.

The Hard Times Cure

AT the Dominion Bank meeting in Toronto last week, the President, Sir Edmund Osler, referred to the numerous warnings that had been given as to the need for economy, and remarked that these had not had any substantial effect. "Extravagance," he said, "is the order of the day, and in my opinion will continue to be the order of the day until conditions change and hard times come upon us."

Sir Edmund has presented to the public a disagreeable forecast, but one for which, unfortunately, there is too much ground. To many people the period of hard times has already come. To the people of the salaried

class, who have had little or no advance in their income while the cost of living has more than doubled, times are hard now. The people drawing modest returns from moderate investments have in most cases found no increase in their income, which in purchasing power is worth less than half of what it was before the war. Hard times have already come to them. But there is a very large portion of the people who are sharing in a kind of prosperity which tempts them to all kinds of extravagance. The rich in too many cases display their riches in a way that is not likely to have a wholesome effect on the poorer masses. Many who are not rich are led into following the bad example. Among the so-called working classes wages have advanced so much that many of the workers easily persuade themselves that they are prosperous and act accordingly. The retail merchants testify that, notwithstanding the very high prices, it is easier to sell expensive goods than those that cost less. In most lines of business there is abundance of employment. Workers, in too many cases, are indifferent as to whether they work or not. Service, in too many cases, is inefficient; the zeal, the conscientiousness, the courtesy of former times are no longer found. In the atmosphere created by these conditions the advice to economise, to work hard and save money where that is possible, is not welcome and is too frequently disregarded.

Improvement in these respects may not come soon. The inflated condition of things—inflated currency, inflated prices, inflated wages—will probably continue for some time—so long as the world's demand for foodstuffs and other commodities is so much greater than the supply. But a relapse will surely come one of these days, and then we must expect, for many who spend so freely now, the period of hard times which the Toronto banker thinks will be the only cure for extravagance. The lesson may be a severe one, but it will have to be learned.

The Middle Class

IT has been our boast in Canada hitherto that, in the management of our public affairs at all events, we know nothing of "class". In the old country class distinctions not only exist, but they are frankly recognized in public discussion in a way that would not be tolerated on this side of the ocean. It is therefore not surprising to hear that a strong movement is afoot in England for the organization of a "Middle Class Union," intended to bring into concerted action the people of moderate means and the salaried folk such as clerks, bookkeepers, etc. Such an organization if effected broadly may play a considerable part in the new order of things. Labor, however, has an eye on the movement and hopes to make it an adjunct of the Labor party.