

PAST AND PRESENT.

No man who has his eyes open can fail to see that a great change for the better has come over Canada since 1896. It would not be reasonable to claim all the credit for the happy conditions which now prevail for the Liberals. Providence has smiled upon the land, and the Dominion is sharing in the prosperity which extends over the world. But this much is at least true: We would not have advanced as we have done if the advent of the Liberal party had not changed conditions, and removed obstacles which stood in the way of natural progress.

In the first place, the country was in the throes of a racial and religious controversy. The Manitoba School question menaced the peace of the entire Dominion. Who can doubt that if the Conservatives had succeeded in 1896, and had endeavored to carry out their policy of coercion, we should have been in danger of a rebellion? The triumph of Sir Wilfrid Laurier at the polls removed that burning and troublesome question at once and for ever out of the realm of practical politics. We could have no such thing as active and harmonious co-operation among the people of Canada while men of different races and creeds were at each other's throats. For that trouble and danger the Conservatives were responsible, and for their removal the country is indebted to Sir Wilfred Laurier.

There was another matter which operated directly against the commercial and industrial growth of the Dominion—the instability of the tariff. Not a session was allowed to pass without changes in the scale of duties. On one hand the Conservatives stood for protection, and yet they were undecided as to how much or how little protection would answer the needs of Canadian trade. They tinkered constantly with the scale of duties. On the other hand, the people had been taught to be suspicious of the Liberals. They were told, in language calculated to alarm, that if the Liberals once gained power they would immediately adopt free trade as it is in England; that the industries of the country would be ruined, and a commercial revolution be brought about. On another page will be found examples of these forecasts. It is not surprising that in such circumstances capital grew