

Nevertheless, so far as the scheme encourages the industries of other Colonies, and serves to draw closer the bonds of union between the different sections of the Empire, it will, we believe, have Canadian sympathy and support.

The question of food duties, however, is not the only one calculated to create difficulty in the application of the preferential system. In the brief discussion that took place in the British House of Commons—necessarily brief because the subject was not at the moment open to debate—a member asked if the adoption of such a policy as had been mentioned would not be a barrier to the formation of the League of Nations which, it is hoped, may be formed after the war. Mr. Law replied that he did not think so. But the possible bearing of the question on the new international relations is not to be overlooked. The "Overseas" edition of Lord Northcliffe's Daily Mail contained a few days ago a special article by a writer who seemed to be in close relations with members of the Imperial Conference, and to speak with some authority on Imperial affairs. In referring to the business of the Conference, he says:

"The question of trade preference, particularly as regards raw products, is a further development of the policy laid down some years ago by Canada when Sir Wilfrid Laurier made his noted and splendid offer to England. We are going to have an effective commercial union throughout the British Empire. We will admit our friends and Allies into our union. We will shut our enemies out."

The passage respecting "our friends and allies" deserves attention. If it has emanated from members of the Imperial Conference, or from official quarters in London, it foreshadows an entirely new form of preference. In Canada we have confined the preferential advantage to British countries. The Daily Mail writer gives us to understand that, in the new order of things, it is contemplated that these advantages shall be given to the United States, France, Italy and the numerous smaller nations that are our allies in the war. That is a large order, possibly a good one, but one requiring new lines of thought and study.

Perhaps the best lesson that can be learned from these varied opinions is that, in the midst of the war, it will be just as well for those in authority not to be in a hurry to make declarations of future commercial policy. Better "wait and see."

The Casualties

THE Canadian casualty lists from the seat of war are distressingly long now. This was to be expected. The Canadian army has been taking a considerable part in the recent hard fighting, and, it is hardly necessary to add, has been acquitting itself with high honor. It is not too much to say that, in a great war in which the armies of Britain and her allies have everywhere done nobly, there are no better soldiers than those who went over from Canada. The very active share of battle that has lately fallen to the Canadians is naturally accompanied by long casualty lists. In some of the lists the number of fatalities is comparatively small. That all the wounded will recover is too much to expect. But one of the brightest sides of the war story is the splendid service that is being rendered by the Army Medical Corps and their assistants, on the battlefield and in the French and English hospitals to which the wounded are taken. If the war has produced new death-dealing devices, it has also produced medical

and surgical skill and facilities for prompt hospital treatment such as were not found in any previous war. The great progress made in these things, the improved sanitary arrangements, the noble service of the army doctors and nurses, give assurance that whatever is possible will be done for these many hundred wounded men, and that in the great majority of cases they will be nursed back to health and strength.

The Thing that Matters

TORONTO and its vicinity is a section of Canada which usually is somewhat noted for keen and active interest in the political affairs of the day. In ordinary times one can find in that quarter about as much politics to the square foot as can be observed in any other part of Canada. Two elections, however, that took place last week seem to indicate that even Toronto is not interested now in political battles. The elections were caused by the appointment of two Ministers in the Ontario Government. Rev. Dr. Cody, appointed Minister of Education and requiring a seat in the Legislature, appealed to the electors of North-East Toronto, and was opposed by a "soldier-labor" candidate. Mr. Henry, appointed Minister of Agriculture and asking re-election in the near-by constituency of East York, was opposed by an "independent Conservative." In both cases the Ministers won their seats by very large majorities. This was not surprising. Ministers in most cases, of such by-elections are successful. The remarkable thing, however, is the comparatively small interest which the people manifested in the contests. In very large constituencies, including now thousands of women, the total vote was small. In North-East Toronto, where the qualified electors are said to number 65,000, the total vote for Dr. Cody and his opponent was only 11,333. In East York, with 32,000 voters, only 4,000 went to the polls. Possibly the electors regarded the result as a foregone conclusion, the Ontario Government being strongly entrenched in the favor of the people. But the voting seems to indicate that at this time the mind of the people is not interested in ordinary political questions. The war is the matter that engages attention now. The winning of the war is, in the mind of the Canadian people at this time, the greatest thing in the world.

Prince Albert

AS might have been expected, the default of the city of Prince Albert, as respects interest on its bonds held in London, is the subject of much comment in the financial circles of London, and there is a disposition to look closely into the financial situation of other Canadian municipalities. The London Financier says:

"A comparatively obscure Canadian municipality, to wit, the City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, has recently defaulted, and the question has naturally been asked whether any other Canadian municipalities are likely to follow its example. To that question it is impossible to give a definite answer, as the amount of information available in this country concerning the financial position of other small Canadian 'cities' is not sufficient to enable us to express a decided judgment. This much we do know, however, that there are several Canadian municipalities which in respect of indebtedness, population and assessable value are little better off than ill-

fated Prince Albert. We can only hope that, whatever their difficulties, they will avoid taking a course which could not but adversely affect Canadian credit in this country.

We earnestly hope that some such solution of its difficulties will be found practicable, and that the British investors who lent it money will not have to write off as a loss what appeared to be quite a safe and promising investment."

If these inquiries into Canadian municipal finance tend to check the disposition to indulge in extravagance that has been too often manifested they will do good. For the moment municipal securities of all kinds are practically excluded from the London market. When the war conditions no longer exist, and the doors of the lenders are again opened, the applicants from Canadian municipalities will find that the misfortune of Prince Albert has had a wide reaching effect on the money market.

Street Begging

THE Montreal Herald calls attention to the continued practice of allowing begging in the principal streets of the city. When some months ago the matter was under public discussion, the fact transpired that the Mayor of the city regarded the licensing of beggars as one of his prerogatives, which he was not willing to give up. Presumably the present revival of the practice is authorized by the Mayor. The practice is a bad one, and one calculated to give strangers a very unfavorable impression of Canada's greatest city. Montreal is rich enough and generous enough to take care of its poor people. For the unfortunates who are using the Mayor's license—all who are found worthy—there will be deep sympathy, and provision must be made for them, so that there may be no need of soliciting in the street. The charity organizations, it is stated, are able and willing to make such provision. That being the case, the Mayor and the city authorities should quickly put an end to the licensing system.

Labor for the Harvest

WE noted in our last issue a statement emanating from Premier Stewart, of Alberta, that owing to a shortage of crop, due to frost and drought, the labor available for harvest in that province was ample, and there would be no need of the outside help that had previously been sought. A later and contrary report now comes from Mr. Higginbotham, Secretary of the United Farmers of Alberta. The crops have developed much better than was expected and there is a scarcity of labor at many points. Evidently the harvesters who went west, in response to the general demand for help will have no difficulty in finding employment in any of the Prairie Provinces.

Useful Co-Operation

DOMINION and Provincial Governments have so often found occasion to differ that when they are able to act cordially in co-operation for the promotion of good objects the improved situation is worthy of notice. It is very gratifying to find the Dominion Government and the Governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan agreeing upon joint action for the carrying on of important experiments in the treatment of lignite coal, with a view of making it useful as household fuel.