

THE BORDEN CABINET—IV. THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

by H. F. Gadsby.



Hon. W. T. White.

OH, father, who is the tall, thin young man, with the sad, brown eyes, and the wearied Atlas stoop, who is so busy picking dollars out of the air? Is he a great juggler?

That he is, my son. They call him Tight Money Tom. He is the Government's Pet Wizard of Finance.

Why do they call him Tight Money Tom, father?

By way of a joke, my boy. Canada is suffering from tight money, the whole world is suffering from tight money. But Tight Money Tom says he doesn't believe it. He won't believe it even when they turn down one of his Canadian loans in London. He passes it off as "undigested securities" or words to that effect. His idea is to apply Christian Science to the financial stringency. If we take the faith cure for hard times there won't be any hard times. Believe you have money in your pockets and there money is even if your pockets are as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

Why does he take this cheerful view father?

Because he is very thick with the people who keep money tight, the Interests. They put him where he is. They made him a Cabinet Minister. As long as money isn't tight with his friends there's no such thing as tightness for Tight Money Tom. He sees no more than he wants to and believes as

far as he likes. He is a clever fellow at lifting himself up by his boot straps.

What do you mean, father?

Why just this, my boy. The revenue is falling but the debt keeps mounting. Some finance ministers might go in for retrenchment, but not Tight Money Tom. Bigger budgets than ever is Tom's policy. What you need, borrow. Keep on borrowing. Then borrow some more. If you haven't got it, spend it. As long as somebody else does the paying, who gives a hang? What the country clamors for is sound financing, but what Tight Money Tom purposes is an illusion of riches, the imagination of a feast, which will gloss over the Borden Government's book-keeping.

Is that honest statesmanship, father?

I won't say what sort of statesmanship it is, my boy, but it's Tight Money Tom all over. He is forever buttering his conscience with that kind of sophistry. He was a Grit as you remember, but, when a portfolio was dangled in front of him he deserted his party and became a Tory to save his country. He professes ideals but he is satisfied to be Bob Rogers' man Friday and gives that genial buccannear all he wants to spend. He yearns for pure politics and makes the cement duties "synchronize" with the Saskatchewan elections. His avowed object is to serve his country and he sits in the Cabinet as the representative of the Toronto money group of bankers, railway promoters, and food monopolizers whose occupation is squeezing the people.

But, father, couldn't they get a Finance Minister, who would be something better than an agent of the daylight robbers who steal railways and the slow murderers who starve the people by making food dear?

In that outfit, my son? I doubt it. They had to borrow a renegade Grit for two reasons. One was that they didn't have any considerable amount of brains in their own party and the other was that they wanted to give their arbitrary actions the color of patriotism. Tight Money Tom had just the sort of cant at his command that was required. And like all apostates he went the limit.

Would George Eulas Foster have done any better, father?

I think not. George is one of the Elder Statesmen, but there is reason to believe that his arithmetic is not just what it ought to be. It didn't pan out well in the Union Trust proceedings. Of course Foster doesn't like being sidetracked and he snubs White in the House. At this very moment poor old Foster is a wanderer on the face of the earth, through sheer pique, while Tight Money Tom, deals out burnished platitudes instead of reducing the tariff. Tight Money Tom is the lesser of two evils. Foster had a past like a scrambled egg.

But the high cost of living, father? Surely Tight Money Tom will do something for that? You and I can't tighten our trouser buckles much further.

He is doing something, son. You ask for cheaper meat. Tight Money Tom gives you good advice instead. According to his speech before the Canadian Club in New York sleep is an excellent substitute for breakfast. He would have the whole country sleep while his benefactors, the Interests, lay hands on what they haven't grabbed already.

But these are mere words, father. Has he done anything practical?

Oh, yes. The duty has been taken off unleavened bread, a federal bankruptcy act will be introduced this session, a High Cost of Living Commission has been appointed and the naval emergency has been put in cold storage. They are depending on the High Cost of Living Commission to get enough statistics to prevent people thinking clearly. No matter what happens the Commission is not supposed either to name or to point with alarm to the robbers who are among the best friends of the Government.

But what, father, does Tight Money Tom do in Parliament if he doesn't serve the people?

He spends his time patronizing Adam Smith who is dead and being considerably frightened of Dr. Michael Clark who is very much alive. Both these objects of Tom's attention are free traders.

But what would you say was the moral of his career?

It has no morals. He does anything to get ahead.