

# The Standard

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ST. JOHN, N. B., TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1911.

## "THE SWINGING OF THE HEADSMAN'S AXE."

"The swinging of the headsman's axe," to borrow a phrase from the indignant and outraged Times, has resulted in the decapitation of a number of partisan Liberal employees and office holders at Ottawa and elsewhere. The phrase selected by the Times, to give picturesque expression to its complaint of injustice, is not particularly happy under the circumstances. In former times the swinging of the headsman's axe was a sign that some wrong doer, who had taken his life in his hands, had met with his just deserts. The same is true of partisan offenders today. The axe falls and justice is done.

In the political arena in this country there is a well recognized rule that any government employee or office holder who takes an active part in politics, risks his official life, and it is well that it is so. Sir Wilfrid Laurier, in that effective phraseology of which he is a past master, explained the situation when he declared on assuming office in 1896 that "if any official in the service chooses to be a politician he shall be given every opportunity by this Government of being a politician." Partisan employment in 1896, and years afterwards confirmed by Parliament by statutory provision and resolution, to apply to the inside and outside services. It is a good rule when properly and fairly carried out.

And how was the rule carried out in 1896 and after? This year of grace, 1911, might be aptly termed a year of memories, both long and short. Liberals today have no recollection of the untoward events of that former year of ruthless slaughter. But Conservatives do not forget, and to their credit be it said, the bare measure of justice, the strict observance of the rule, which is being meted out today, does not touch in numbers a title of the victims who fell beneath "the swinging of the headsman's axe" in 1896—and for years afterwards—without trial, without investigation and without recourse.

This is a year of memories. It may be well to refresh the Liberal mind with an incident or two that happened in 1896. The wholesale dismissal of employees on the Welland Canal, lock tenders, lock masters and others, 130 dismissals at once and 50 more at a later date, when the remainder had taught their successors the duties, is a case worth pondering over. No one pretended that these lock masters and lock tenders had been active partisans. The only thing against them was that they had been appointed by a Conservative Government. That was their crime. Then there was the notorious case of the postmaster of Beamsville, Ontario. This postmaster voted and did nothing amiss. But after the results in that village—in which Mr. Gibson, the Liberal candidate, resided—were known, this official innocently remarked "I guess Gibson's in the soup." That was enough. He was dismissed from office. No other reason has ever been forthcoming for dismissing him.

A supplementary return brought down to the House of Commons in 1897, a few months after the Laurier Government came into power, shows 250 officials dismissed without investigation. The original return accounted for a further 200, "fired" without an opportunity to defend themselves. In Manitoba between 1896 and 1898, some 150 officials lost their positions simply because they were Conservatives. And so the record goes and is remembered throughout the country.

Coming nearer home, there was the case of the Collector of Customs at Hillsboro, Alberta County. In 1896, during the campaign in that county, the collector attended a joint meeting where the rival candidates were present and addressed the electors. As is customary in cases of this kind a pitcher of water was needed on the platform for the convenience of the speakers. No one had sufficient thought to fill this pitcher, so the Collector of Customs took it and filled it and replaced it on the table. During the course of his speech the Conservative candidate took a drink from this pitcher. That constituted the only evidence on which this Collector of Customs was dismissed from office. Take another case. One of the first dismissals in Kings County in 1896 was that of Miss Mary Folkins, postmistress of Colville. She made a most earnest protest and was able to show that she had taken no part in politics, but she was summarily dismissed without any investigation being allowed. Many other cases could be cited. The number of dismissals on the Intercolonial Railway was notorious. The facts are well known to Conservatives. They have good cause to remember.

Partisan discrimination was the only true doctrine when the Times and its Liberal friends were in power and was carried to excess in every direction. How deeply it was impressed on the Liberal mind was emphasized very pointedly by a little incident during Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Western tour. Mr. Macdonald of Pictou, one of the party speaking at Lethbridge, Alberta, where a post-office was badly needed, blurted out the naked truth: "Of course you need a post office," was his candid remark, "but if you keep on voting for the Tories you will never get one." That was the principle that was followed, and it was practiced for 15 years through every branch and every department of the public service. Now times have changed. We commend to Mr. Pugsley's organ for long and fraternal consideration a statement of its own: "In justice reacts upon those responsible for it."

The Borden Government is displaying a spirit of moderation and fairness in this matter of dismissals never exercised by their predecessors. Flagrant cases of partisanship have been and will be dealt with. The rules governing dismissals will be carried out. An instance comes now to hand from the columns of the Chatham World which says in its last issue: "Mr. P. J. Veniot, who 'violated the customs regulations against political partisanship so flagrantly that he ought to have been dismissed by the Laurier Government, has been placed in the position of being able to devote his whole attention to 'politics.' Mr. D. J. Hachey succeeds him as Collector of Customs at Bathurst. Mr. Veniot used to go on 'stumping tours in the interests of Liberal candidates.' 'The most unreasonable Liberal on the North Shore coast' not object to his removal from office."

The course that is being followed was clearly stated to Parliament by the Prime Minister. "The desire of members of this Government," said Mr. Borden, "is not for wholesale dismissals; but certain rules have been made, both by statute and resolution of this House, and I do not see that there is any reason why those rules should not be applied. We desire, however, to apply them in a reasonable and moderate way, and not dismiss any office holder unless there be convincing evidence that he violated the rules laid down by the statute and the resolution of this House." The Government is going further. It is announced that a comprehensive plan of civil service reform is in contemplation. Complaints have been made since the passing of the Civil Service Act by the late Gov-

ernment and the establishment of a civil service commission have not rid the service of abuses growing out of personal and political favoritism. The Government proposes to improve the act and to extend its operation to the outside service.

Speaking on this point at the recent banquet in his honor at Montreal, Mr. Monk, who by the way is the particular object of Liberal spleen, outlined reforms of a far reaching character. "There is an erroneous impression," he said, "concerning the duties of a new Minister, that all he has to do is to smoke cigars and distribute placards and patronage. With all Governments this is the case, but it is a handicap of business. Recently the Rt. Hon. James Bryce explained to me that England had finally solved the problem and that all members of Parliament are absolutely free from care in connection with patronage. Among other things which we ought to return to in this country is precisely that phase of public life. The last Government has done some good things, undoubtedly. They did start a reform of the civil service which produced great good at Ottawa. It will remain for us to perfect what has been left imperfect, to extend this reform to the outside service in order that we may have a civil service, both inside and outside, free from these trammels. I would not like you to understand that I approve of the meddling of anybody connected with the public service in politics. It is a rule in England that all public servants must refrain from any interference, active or partisan, with politics. The application of that rule is absolutely essential to an efficient public service."

When this reform is accomplished in its entirety it will stand as one of the wisest and most statesmanlike acts of any Government since Confederation.

## "THE LARGER UNIONISM."

Although not a phrase-maker, Mr. Bonar Law, who first saw the light in this Province of New Brunswick, in his first speech as leader of the Unionist party in Great Britain, coined a phrase which in reference to the future of the Empire, the Winnipeg Telegram thinks, should become a watchword. The phrase was "the larger Unionism." The passage in which this happy expression was used was the close of his speech, and is worth repeating: "As probably most of you know, I was born there. Of many disqualifications for the position which I now hold—and no one feels them more strongly than myself—that is not one; it is an advantage. For twenty-five years a determination to maintain the integrity of the United Kingdom has given a name to our party. We are the Unionist party. But ours is now a larger Unionism. It is for us not only to preserve; it is for us also to create; it is for us to maintain; and we shall maintain, in spite of the lowering clouds which now threaten us, the integrity of the United Kingdom. It is for us also—it is for the men of this generation—to create the vital union of the British Empire."

These words, the "larger Unionism," give a far more just definition of what is usually called "imperialism" than that term does. The latter is burdened by associations with such forms of government as the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire, the Russian Empire, the German Empire, and the Napoleonic Empire. But "larger unionism" conveys the true idea of the British Empire as the gradual and natural and beneficent result of an evolutionary process already inaugurated in many parts of the Empire, and readily applicable to the whole of it.

Mr. Bonar Law also plainly intimated that it is Great Britain that is now "at the parting of the ways." He said "We have thrown away many opportunities. We are fortunate; we shall have one opportunity, one only at the next election." Says a commentator on the effect of his speech: "Listlessness, depression, despair and scheming have given way to energy, hope, confidence and unity" in the Unionist party in Great Britain.

## Current Comment

(Graphic, London, Eng.)  
The new scheme for a chain of British Marconi stations round the world, under the direct control of the British General Post Office, will have far-reaching consequences in knitting the Empire still more firmly together, for alone of all the nations of the world Great Britain will be independent of cable communication with any part of the globe, and, however far away they may be, her naval and merchant vessels will always be in touch with the nerve centre of the Empire. The project will require the construction of some twenty-five more wireless stations, at a cost of £1,500,000, and while the annual outlay on all the stations is placed at £200,000, the income is estimated at £600,000, on the basis of 15,000 words a day transmitted from each station.

(Toronto Mail and Empire.)  
A track-walker employed for 32 years by the Northern Pacific Railway Company, without a day off for any cause in all that time, asked for a holiday to visit his folks in Ireland. The company did not discharge him on the spot, but will pay all his expenses to Ireland and back again, and let him have a pocketful of spending money for the trip. As the Rochester Union and Advertiser says, this seems like pretty fair conduct for a soulless corporation.

(Winnipeg Tribune.)  
At a wedding feast recently the bridegroom was called upon, as usual, to respond to the given toast; in spite of the fact that he had previously pledged to be excused. Blushing to the roots of his hair, he rose to his feet. He intended to imply that he was unprepared for speech-making, but, unfortunately, placed his hand upon the bride's shoulder, and looked down at her as she shimmered under his opening (and concluding) words: "This—er—thing has been thrust upon me."

(London Free Press.)  
Sir Wilfrid Laurier's allies in the French-Canadian press seem to have selected Col. Sam Hughes as a target for their racial and religious appeals. It is a policy upon which the ex-Premier thrived for fifteen years.

(Beamsville Express.)  
The Duke of Connaught says that he hopes the newspapers will stop using slang. We hope so, too. The way Jim Livingstone throws the kibosh into Ab Tufford is a holy fright.

(Cincinnati Commercial-Tribune.)  
A Boston man has deposited \$1,000 in a bank in the Hub for anyone who can prove to his satisfaction that the world is round. How can a man like that accumulate \$1,000?

(Ottawa Free Press.)  
These are the days when the furnace is doing business in the cellar, while the electric fans and the refrigerator are both busy at their usual vocations.

(Regina Province.)  
With the disappearance of Sir Wilfrid's "sunny smile" has come the resurrection of Sir Richard Cartwright's "blue rain."

(Washington Star.)  
Early shopping is all that is needed to insure the position of Christmas as a safe and sane holiday.

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