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THE ONTARIO BY-ELECTIONS.

THE month of October 1913 will long be remembered in Conservative circles. The Government selected it as the time to bring on two pending by-elections which were to test the feeling of the Ontario electorate on the record of the Borden Administration and its policies. One by-election, that of East Middlesex, was held on the 21st of the month; the other, the by-election in South Bruce on the 30th. Both ridings prior to the vacancies were represented in Parliament by Conservatives; East Middlesex by the late Mr. Peter Elson, who was returned in September 1911, by a majority of 661, and South Bruce by Mr. J. J. Donnelly who was returned by a majority of 103. East Middlesex has been Conservative since Confederation. South Bruce returned a Conservative in 1908 and again in 1911. The election in South Bruce was of the Government's own choosing, the seat having been opened by the appointment to the Senate of Mr. Donnelly, the sitting member. There can be but one explanation of Mr. Donnelly's appointment, namely, that the Government, having carried the Province of Ontario by so large a majority in the general elections, was confident of continued support, and hoped to make in a single constituency a demonstration of its supposed strength.

The Nature of the Appeal.

The Conservative party contested these ridings with all the talent and resources at its command. Its forces, provincial as well as federal, were concentrated upon them. The prestige of power and the value of patronage were set forth, and such influences as were possible from these sources were exerted to the full. Seven Cabinet Ministers supplemented the efforts of a dozen or more Conservative Members of Parliament who busied themselves on the stump and in personal canvass. Yet with the control of the electoral machinery and an elaborate and generously financed campaign, these many agencies were unable to stem a tide running so strongly against the Government.

In Middlesex, Conservative Cabinet Ministers asked that the constituency should return the Government candidate with a majority of 1,000, as a vindication of the Borden policy of contribution to an Imperial Navy. In South Bruce, the electors were told that the Government had earned their goodwill by its

record and policies, and by the double representation in Parliament, which with Mr. Donnelly in the Senate would result from the return of a Government supporter to the Commons. East Middlesex answered the appeal by reducing the Conservative majority of 661 in 1911 to 368. South Bruce answered by defeating the Government candidate and returning a member to the Opposition. Had it been a general election, where the Government's energies would necessarily have been scattered, and the complexion of the new parliament uncertain, the Liberal figures would have been increased by hundreds.

Significance of the Results.

There is no mistaking the significance of these results. The electorate has begun to realize that the campaign of 1911 was one of misrepresentation and is beginning to resent the deception. The Government has failed to inspire confidence and has lost ground. Its appeal was on its administrative record and its tariff and defence policies and as respects all it stands condemned.

Allowing fully for the splendid work of the Liberal candidates, Mr. R. E. Fisher in East Middlesex, and Mr. Reuben Truax in South Bruce, and too much credit cannot be given in this connection, the results have a significance much greater than that of any question of personality. The Conservative press has sought to attribute the result in Bruce to the personal popularity of Mr. Truax and to racial elements in the riding. But this obviously does not account for the falling off of the Conservative vote in East Middlesex, where the total change in votes was even greater than in South Bruce. It is true that Mr. Truax was indefatigable in his canvass, but it is also true that Mr. Truax was not less popular in 1911 at which time he was the Liberal candidate and was defeated. Ordinarily a defeated candidate is not regarded as the best choice of a Convention. It all depends on how the electorate comes to view the causes and consequences of a defeat. Mr. Truax in the South Bruce campaign personified for the time-being the Liberal cause. Defeated on Reciprocity in 1911, he has won in opposition to the Borden government's trade and naval policies in 1913. South Bruce is typical of Ontario. The electors of South Bruce represent in descent, education and intelligence, the typical characteristics of the electors of the whole province. Their deliberate and reasoned judgment has been against the Government and in favour of the Liberal policies and record in Parliament. In the returns of East Middlesex and South Bruce is discernable the hand-writing upon the wall which speaks of the future. Were the same test applied with similar results to the rest of the Province and an equal turn-over of votes obtained in each instance the following seats now held by Conservatives would be won by Liberal candidates: East Algoma, Brant, Brockville, North Bruce, North Essex, South Grey, East Huron, South Huron, West Huron, North Lanark, North Middlesex, Northumberland, South Oxford, South Perth, West Peterborough, North Simcoe, Stormont, North Wellington, and North York—a total with South Bruce of 20 seats. That is enough in the province of Ontario alone to drive the Government out of power.