

SIR SAM HUGHES AND CAMP BORDEN.

When the Conservative government was formed in September, 1911 and it was found that Mr. Sam Hughes was a member of it, the general opinion of those who knew politics and politicians well, was that he would be a trouble maker. As a private Member of Parliament he was looked upon as a pestiferous, egotistical bounder, and little beyond amused attention was paid to him, but when he became Minister of Militia, even his own political friends began to take alarm, and when War broke out the alarm gave place to quaking fear.

For a time after hostilities commenced things went well with him. His undoubted zeal, enthusiasm and capacity for work captured the imagination of the people, who when the War trumpets were blowing and the drums beating, were unsparing in their acclaim and uncritical in their judgment, of anybody who was doing things. Valcartier and the results thereof, gave him a great boost. He was given credit for everything. Matters like the chaos that prevailed in many of the branches of the Department; the wisdom of establishing Valcartier in the face of suitable existing camps; the sending of a surplus of many hundreds of officers to England, slap dash and regardless of rhythm, reason or expense; the purchase of inefficient equipment in the most extravagant way; all these matters were over-looked. Sir Sam was the hero of the day, and true to his nature he set sail for England after the First Contingent, instead of staying at his post to complete his organization and prepare properly for the additional contingents. He wanted to strike while the iron was hot, so as to get all the cheap glory coming to himself. And so we found him winned, dined and feted in England for weeks, and finally knighted by the King.

Back afterwards to Canada he came and told us himself that he was the greatest military genius commander and driving force of all time, having been so designated by no less an authority than the great Lord Roberts. Unfortunately Lord Roberts died about that time and the story could not be confirmed. That was the turn in Sam's tide. The people who had treated him with serious respect and held him in admiration commenced to laugh, and once a public man's actions arouse laughter his career may be said to be finished. From then on Sir Sam's star has waned. His strutting popinjay manners, bluster, braggadocio, self-praise and bulldozing have made him the ridicule of his opponents and the despair of his friends, and gradually as the record of his Administration has been dragged into the light his popularity and reputation have seriously diminished, notwithstanding extraordinary advertising efforts made by himself to maintain them.

Rotten boots; high-priced but poor quality binoculars; scandals in regard to the purchase of bandages, medicine, bicycles, motor trucks, revolvers, fancy shovels with a patented hole in them, fuse, cartridge cases and the sale of ammunition are only a few instances of maladministration laid at his door.

Wildest Kind of Extravagance.

Evidence accumulates that his colossal egotism has been the primary cause of the wildest kind of

extravagance. On this point the Toronto Star recently published the following information:—

Take the case of transport wagons. Canada has sent them to England by the hundreds, yet we are informed that of them only four have ever gone to France. Why? Because in the narrow roads and lanes of France the Canadian quarter-locking wagons are of little use, more particularly as they are not standardized, and if anything goes wrong with one of them no repairs are obtainable.

Take the Eaton Machine Gun Battery. This should have been a great thing, because of the wealth that was behind it and the fine type of men who joined it. Nothing came of it at all—every dollar was a waste—because nothing was standardized. The whole splendid outfit lies piled up to-day at Fulford in England, an evidence of rank bad management at Ottawa.

Or take bicycles. Thousands of wheels have been bought by the Canadian Government and sent to England. They have got no farther. They are not standardized. They would be useless at the front, because neither tires nor any other part can be replaced from stores. They should not have been bought and sent, or if bought and sent, a thorough system of supplies should have been arranged to support them in the field. They lie now in England piled up in thousands like many useless things.

Or take boots if you like. Sir Sam Hughes has stubbornly held that he knows more about army boots than anybody else, and the manufacture of these has gone on in Canada in the millions. And no Canadian boots have as yet been worn to War. They are piled up in England. Canadian boots are pronounced unfit to stand the cobbled roads of France, yet we make them and ship them and pile them up in England. Two or three months ago, we understand, a consignment of Canadian boots was sent across to France to have a test made of them. We do not know the result. These are the only Canadian boots that have reached the front. Why could not Canada have made, from the first, a boot that would have met the needs of the case? Could we not have booked orders from France and Russia once we had shown our ability to make them? But no; Sir Sam knew more about boots than any other man on earth, and he stuck to his opinions!

There are, we believe, 30,000 leather Oliver equipments stored up in England. Canada bought them; the War has no use for them. Canada has since then bought 250,000 leather equipments of another pattern, which will probably go into the discard likewise.

The patent spade, invented by a young lady in Sir Sam Hughes' Department at Ottawa—the wonderful spade which was not only to dig trenches, but to offer a shield to protect the sons of Canada—that spade, unused and useless, is piled up to the number of hundreds of thousands in England.

The Ross Rifle.

Then we have the Ross Rifle episode. In season and out of season he praised it as the best army weapon in use in the World to-day, and consigned to perdition anyone who dared to criticize it, and that, in the face of overwhelming evidence that the soldiers themselves were forced (to save their lives) to throw the weapon away. Metaphorically, Sir Sam rammed the rifle down the throats of everybody. Ultimately, however, the British Government discarded it and supplied all Canadian soldiers with the Lee-Enfield.

Camp Borden.

We come now to his latest folly and his greatest humiliation Camp Borden. Sir Sam has often been likened to a rooster, and, accepting the simile, it was a poor be-draggled rooster that returned from its visit to Borden Camp,—all its tail feathers were gone.