

THE PRIME MINISTER'S TROUBLES

TWO years of office have aged Premier Borden. The noble shock of iron-grey hair which crowned his head in 1911 has turned white. The quiet and re-posed constitutional lawyer who used to be leader of the Opposition now looks harrassed and care-worn. The worries of the Premiership, the tangles of politics, the constant anxieties of place-making, place-filling and place-holding have told on his health. To prevent a nervous breakdown, to bring again sleep by nights and cheerful energy by day, he has left the Capital for another six weeks' quiet holiday. Earlier in the summer he holidayed for six weeks at St. Andrews, N.B. This time he has fled with his golf sticks to the Southern States. He will not return for a month or so, or open Parliament before January.

In the fifteen and more years of his Premiership, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, with the exception of his Imperial Conference trips, his western tour in 1910 and during election campaigns, was never away from his post at the Capital for more than a week or so at most in any one year. Twice during the present Parliamentary recess Mr. Borden has felt compelled to drop the reins for weeks at a time and "steep his senses in forgetfulness".

Why should Sir Wilfrid have stood so well the strain of fifteen years of office while Mr. Borden after only two years as Premier needs a complete respite of nearly three months in one Parliamentary recess? The reason lies clearly in the contrasted conditions of party leadership, of political outlook, of political freedom and of political bondage. Firm leadership, clear vision, loyal support, honesty and sincerity of purpose and steady achievement made for a serene mind in the case of Sir Wilfrid. The task invigorated because the fruits were good. But with Mr. Borden the inheritance of troubles has steadily multiplied. The past, the present, and the future rise continually up to plague him.

Political leadership, always a difficult and nerve-trying task has been peculiarly hard and harrassing in his case. He won office

through compromises and intrigue. On the tariff, he is pledged to the vested interests on the one hand, and confronted on the other with the consumers and the high cost of living. He is dependent for continued power upon evasion and subterfuge in maintaining the alliance of Nationalists and Conservatives; and because of that he sees no way clear for him on the issue of naval defence. He has no loyal or strong support in the Cabinet on which to lean, and no one in sight to call to his aid. The Cabinet, has been from the first a makeshift affair and he has allowed each minister to be a law unto himself; the result has been an accumulation of troubles brought back to rest on his own shoulders.

These are some of the general causes of Mr. Borden's nervous troubles. Rest and forgetfulness may temporarily alleviate, but the disease needs more drastic remedies.

Mr. Borden probably foresees what the operation will be. Perhaps none will welcome it more than he.

NEW ZEALAND ABANDONS CONTRIBUTION.

EVENTS have moved swiftly to vindicate the stand taken by Liberals on the naval issue at the last Session of Parliament. Of the alleged "emergency" there is scarce an echo left. Both Great Britain and Germany have calmly dispatched parts of their fleets on pacific cruises to the Mediterranean and to South American waters. The policy of fleet centralization in the North Sea has been mutually abandoned. In England, Tory Jingoism is devoting its energy to fighting Home Rule and Lloyd George's land reform proposals. In Germany the people are aroused by the revelations of the Krupp methods for fostering war scares and militarism.

And now New Zealand has come to show Mr. Borden the better way. On October 28th, Premier Massey of New Zealand announced that the smallest and numerically the weakest of the Sister Dominions had abandoned the policy of contribution and had decided to adopt

the policy of building a navy of her own on the same lines as the Commonwealth of Australia. An immediate order is to be placed for the construction of a cruiser of the Bristol type at a cost of \$2,000,000—the same kind of vessel planned for the Canadian naval service by the Laurier Government, and condemned offhand as being useless and obsolete by the Conservative-Nationalist allies. This is to be followed by the construction of other vessels for a complete fleet unit, the establishment of local naval bases and the organization of a local naval service under Admiralty advice, just as Australia has done, and just as Canada would be doing to-day if courage and honesty ruled the mind of the Government instead of political expediency.

Even the Tory press in Great Britain, which but a year or so ago lauded Premier Borden's centralizing policy of contribution, has now changed its tune. Says the London *Times* of October 29:

"We have long maintained that the creation of local flotillas, while they cannot completely provide for naval security, must be an essential part of any adequate and lasting system of common naval defence."

The London *Morning Post* of October 29, hitherto staunchest supporter of Mr. Borden and the Centralizers says:

"New Zealand launches herself upon the blue waters of the Pacific, like a true chip off the old block, with pluck and devotion. It is, we are more and more convinced, the right policy for our antipodean Dominions. It will help teach them the realities of life and will go to give them strength and self reliance from the Naval point of view. It will at first mean a certain loss of strength and unity, but in the end may add more to our Imperial strength than anything which could be hoped for from a cash subsidy policy."

But Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party in Canada are [forsooth, disloyal for trying to do the same thing that the loyal people of New Zealand and Australia are doing!

Surely the last has been heard of the cant Tory phrases about "separatist" and "tin-pot" navies.