

ROBERT LAIRD BORDEN. PREMIER ELECT.

Two years ago, the *London Times*, in an article dated from Toronto, introduced its readers to a prospective visitor from Canada, and incidentally made this prophecy:

"Sooner or later, as the gods shall order, Mr. Borden will be prime minister of Canada; and Englishmen may be certain that when the time comes no sounder British Imperialist will fashion legislation and direct opinion in the oversea dominions."

On September 21 the prophecy was fulfilled. The defeat of reciprocity and the overthrow of the Liberals under Sir Wilfrid Laurier placed the premiership of Canada in the hands of Robert Laird Borden.

The service is well familiar with Mr. Borden's career since he assumed the leadership of his party just ten years ago. But the following sketch of his earlier and apprentice years, culled from an American contemporary, may have less of the ring of every-day statement in connection with the change that has created him Prime Minister of Canada.

"Strangely enough, Mr. Borden, by all the laws and traditions of politics, should have been a Liberal. He should have inherited Liberalism. And, indeed, he did, for the Liberal affiliations of his family were his in the early days before he became a figure in Canadian politics. To-day he is the only Conservative member of a family that has always been strongly Liberal, his father and brothers all being allied with the defeated party. His cousin, Sir Frederick Borden, was minister of Militia under Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

"But the premier-elect shook off Liberal ties long before he first ran for office, which was fifteen years ago. He was then a practising lawyer, forty-two years old, with a growing reputation as a leader of the bar in Nova Scotia. He was a native Nova Scotian, having been born in Halifax in 1854, and had appeared as an Attorney in a number of important cases before the

Supreme Court at Ottawa. Thus, he was not entirely unknown throughout Canada, when in 1896, not without considerable persuasion, he consented to enter politics as the Halifax Conservative candidate for member of Parliament.

"In recent years, and more especially in the campaign just closed, Mr. Borden's ability as a speaker has often been mentioned. It was apparently an ability which he acquired with training, for he was not one of those whose entrance into Parliament was marked with a burst of oratory accompanied with floral wreaths from constituents at home. During his first term Mr. Borden spoke seldom, and only upon questions in which legal considerations were dominant. He left on the House an impression of moderate temper and solid qualities, but no one saw in the quiet, studious, capable, unassuming member for Halifax the future premier of Canada. It was apparent that his mind turned naturally to considerations of equity. There was no sign that he was greatly interested in the fervor and ferocity of the party struggle. He was more concerned with the character of legislation that with party exigency and party strategy. It came to be said, as indeed it is still said by his opponents, that he would make an ideal minister of justice, and that at least establishes the impression of capacity and integrity which he made upon the House of commons.

"The elections of 1901 left the Conservative party without a leader. It had been understood that Sir Charles Tupper, the defeated leader, would be succeeded either by G. E. Foster or Hugh John Macdonald. The unexpected defeat of both candidates, however, made it necessary to cast about for a new leader. A caucus of the Conservative minority resulted in the selection of Mr. Borden, and he reluctantly accepted."