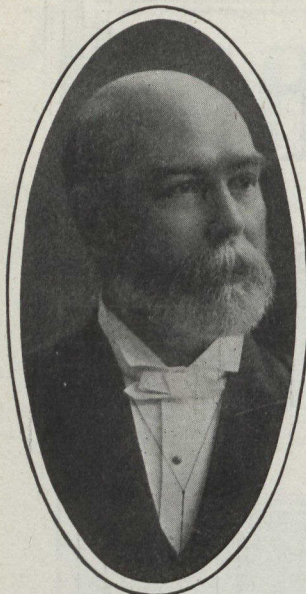


# A SOLVER OF LABOUR TROUBLES

*Something of the Early Life and Training of the Minister of Labour*

By J. SMYTH CARTER



MR. JOHN KING, K.C.  
Lecturer on Law and Father of  
the Labour Minister.



MRS. JOHN KING  
From an oil painting in possession of  
the family.

WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING did not come to his position of Minister of Labour by chance. Tradition and family history gave him a bent towards public affairs. His father, Mr. John King, K.C., lecturer in constitutional history at Osgoode Hall Law School, Toronto, was formerly a practicing barrister in Berlin, in the constituency which the son now represents in the House of Commons.

When a leading barrister in Waterloo county, the senior Mr. King was a keen politician and a constant speaker on political platforms. This must have had some effect upon the mind of the youth who heard public questions discussed at table and who occasionally attended a political gathering at which his father was one of the chief figures.

Hon. Mr. King's maternal ancestry is well known. His mother is the youngest daughter of the late William Lyon Mackenzie, and the only surviving member of a household well-known in Toronto in the thirties of last century. To-day she is a connecting link between the greatness of the grandfather and the grandson. The very mention of Mr. King's grandfather, William Lyon Mackenzie, is suggestive of those days when the sword did not remain in the scabbard. Our country was yet as "clay in the hands of the potter." Mr. Mackenzie's efforts of more than three-fourths of a century ago in crushing the family compact are as milestones in Canadian history. Between the annihilator of the old family compact and the present Minister of Labour—grandfather and grandson—there is a likeness and at the same time a most striking contrast. While the efforts of each have been in the interests of Canada, the means employed by the former were war and conquest and by the latter peace and conciliation—each fitting aptly into the spirit of the times.

## REMEMBRANCE OF HOME.

BUT although Mackenzie King is widely recognized as a rising statesman, a diplomat of repute, there is one other quality which stands well in the foreground. It is his love of home and home ties. Too often in the career of men—those strenuously engrossed in politics and commercial pursuits—there is to some extent a weakening of the love for their "own" fireside. Not so with the Minister of Labour. While his busy life does not bring him, as frequently as he might desire, in personal contact with his parental home in Toronto, yet the majesty of home affection never wanes, but finds expression in the weekly letter. This strong sense of duty is ever present. And likewise on the birthday anniversary of any member of that home the message of congratulation is not forgotten. Distance or the stress of departmental duties in Canada or abroad never prevent his attention. Once from shipboard, on the Red Sea, a cablegram to his mother brought the glad tidings of health and safety; and again, during his voyage to Europe, in the summer of 1910, a wireless message of birthday remembrance was sent to his father. These little kindnesses, especially in the career of one on whose time there are such constant and increasing demands, are indeed exemplary of real manhood—the very gold of character. Mr. King has a brother, Dr. Macdougall King, of Ottawa, and two sisters, Mrs. Lay, of Walkerton (whose husband, Mr. H. M. Lay, is manager of the Bank of Commerce at that town), and Miss King, at the family home, 4 Grange Road, Toronto.

## THE EAR MARKS OF DESTINY.

TO the student of persons and events it is obvious that, even in the youthful years of Mr. King, the finger of fate seemed to point him to just the sort of task he later entered upon. Even during his earlier years he manifested a fondness for books—innately remembering, it was apparent, that know-

ledge is power. His university course was brilliant. In 1893 he won the Blake scholarship in Arts and Law, completing his graduation course two years later.

Even as an undergraduate he manifested a deep interest in labour matters. In his study of economic and social conditions he was anxious to uncover the very kernel of those broader questions, and as a result we find him attending labour meetings, visiting the homes of the working people, and very generally showing a true interest in the welfare of those obeying the biblical mandate of "earning their bread by the sweat of their brow."

Concluding his studies at Varsity the practical task of journalism claimed his attention, first with the *Toronto Globe*, and subsequently with the *Toronto Mail and Empire*. In each instance his articles on sociological questions caught the public ear and called forth much comment.

But the "fourth estate," with all its fascination and possibilities, could not induce him to make jour-

nalism a life profession. Other impulses were beckoning him onward. But for a time he must remain a student. The interest already manifested and the efforts put forth in the line of economic research had created a thirst for further knowledge. A post-graduate course at Chicago and a residence in the Hull House Settlement, immediately afterwards, were stepping-stones to greater things. Then something else happened. Leaving Chicago Mr. King had enrolled at Harvard, where he spent two years, and finally a travelling fellowship from that institution was captured by him. This at once opened another avenue, permitting him to spend a year in Europe, during which he came in close personal contact with men of broad intellectual powers—many of whom had spent their lives in the solution of social and labour problems. He sat at the feet of the greatest political economists in Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy. While in England he resided at the Passmore Edward Settlement, in London, opposite the old home of Charles Dickens. Among those greatly interested in the success of that famous seat of learning were Mrs. Humphrey Ward, her husband and family, with whom Mr. King formed a pleasant acquaintance. While visiting Cambridge and Oxford, he had the additional honour and privilege of gaining another excellent friend and adviser in the person of Professor Marshall.

## CANADA'S CALL.

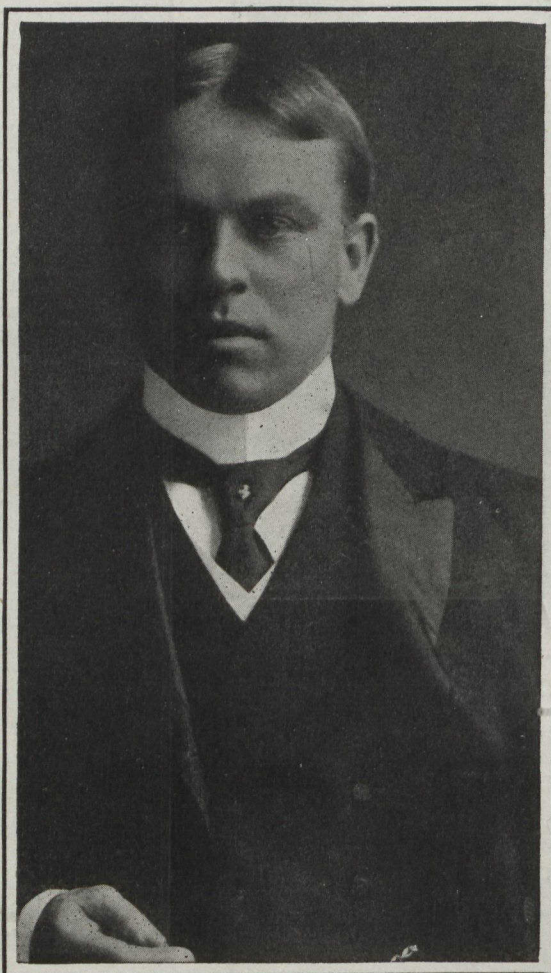
IN sunny Italy, that land of ancient power and prestige, he found much to attract. One day, while viewing the historic beauty and grandeur of the city of Rome, a cablegram reached him. It was a message from the Canadian Capital offering him the editorship of the *Labour Gazette*, as well as the head position in the Labour Department then in the alphabet of its existence. Many might think the answer to such a question quite easy. Not so Mr. King. His heart was in Harvard. The position there of lecturer in political economy, under Prof. Toussig, an economist of world-wide repute, had at that time been offered him. After very carefully weighing the several opportunities, his reply to Ottawa was a negative.

But fate, which plays a part in the career of nations, was not willing that the Dominion should be without Mr. King's services. Another message was transmitted asking him to re-consider the matter. This he did. On his return to Canada he came by way of England, to consult with his friend and adviser, Prof. Marshall, and soon thereafter came his decision to enter the government service.

## THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

IN order to get better acquainted with Mr. King and the work in which he is engaged, it is necessary to unfold something of the genesis and subsequent history of the Canadian Labour Department. The Conciliation Act, the precursor of the Lemieux Act, may be said to be its corner-stone. As is well known the Department was at first affiliated with the Post Office Department, and the then Postmaster-General, Sir William Mulock, became the first Minister of Labour. It was he who saw in Mr. King the ear-marks of a tactful organizer, a gentleman, able and scholarly, possessing those qualities of heart and life so requisite in the proper discharge of duty. Sir William was correct in his conclusions, a fact abundantly exemplified in the subsequent conduct and achievements of Mr. King.

A firm believer in the proverb, that having put his hand to the plough, he should not turn back, Mr. King buckled into the work of the Labour Department in whole-hearted fashion. Even previous to this he had experienced something of public duty,



THE MINISTER OF LABOUR.

Hon. Mackenzie King is one of the best-groomed men in the Cabinet.



Hon. Mackenzie King as a baby in his nurse's arms at the old home in Berlin, Ont.