

and was one of the few Canadian legislative experiments which have awakened world-wide interest and investigation."

The labor department established by Laurier and so brilliantly inaugurated, has been an extinct volcano since 1911, except for the payment of the salaries. Does it appear that Canada prospered merely by chance between 1896 and 1911? Sir Charles Tupper and other prophets of woe were sure that the British preference and such things were going to ruin Canada, as though we weren't about ruined already under the pre-Laurier botchers and loafers. Is it likely that now Laurier is promising to mitigate the cost of living, he will not be as good as his word? He promised before 1896 to make the people of Canada sure of their prosperity by feeling in their pockets. Did he not keep his word? And why? Because he governed for Canada, not for a horde of grafters and leeches. He was not the pilot-fish of the profiteering shark. His record is clear from first to last, in a country used to crooked politics. In word and action, he has always been vigorous, frank, moderate, consistent and square. He has always "told Toronto exactly what he told Montreal."

One thing that at the very outset of his administration showed his wonderful skill in negotiation, his value as a harmonizer of our racial and religious life, and greatly helped to smoothe the way to prosperity through the upbuilding of the West, was the settlement of the perilous Manitoba school question. In this issue were involved "his deepest feelings, his passion for liberty and straightforward justice, his keen realization of the need of harmony between French and English, a harmony that must be rooted in sympathy and understanding." The attempt of the Conservative Government to coerce Manitoba and force separate schools on a rebellious province made a difficult situation for the leader of the opposition. As a Roman Catholic he sympathized with the religious school. But Laurier had always been a zealous champion of provincial rights of harmony and conciliation, of the Liberal idea. He had earlier braved the wrath of Quebec in supporting Ontario in her boundary dispute with Manitoba and the Dominion Government. "The Conservative party had pandered to religious prejudices in both provinces with a rigid Protestant face turning towards the west and a devout Catholic face turning towards the east; it had at the same time proclaimed the right to disallow any provincial act." Laurier "took in Ontario and Quebec alike the firm, moderate position he had taken in the House of Commons."

He believed that the constitutional rights of the Catholics of Manitoba had been violated by the provincial legislation and that the Dominion Government had the constitutional power to maintain those rights "yet he kept a close grip on fact. He saw clearly that any attempt by the Dominion to set up a separate school system which would have to be operated by a sullen and hostile province, was doomed to failure." "The issue was: Could these rights be restored by coercion? The Conservatives and the Quebec church said Yes. True to his political faith, Mr. Laurier said No. Up and down the province of Quebec he was denounced by the ultramontane leaders. Bishop La Fleche declared that "no Catholic could without sin vote for the chief of a party who had formulated publicly such error."

So Laurier fought his old enemies in Quebec over again as he had to fight them once more in the Armageddon of 1911. Some absurd people pretend to believe that the hierarchs were or are secretly with Laurier while openly opposing him! But elections of Conservatives were voided in Quebec, because of improper interference by the anti-Liberal clergy. Laurier knows his foes, the extremes that meet in dislike of his moderate, British principles, the bigot of Ontario and the ultramontane Nationalist whose leader is Mr. Bourassa. Strange bed-fellows are these against whom Laurier must fight.

He was challenged in the campaign of 1896 to say how the "situation in Manitoba could be cleared up except by "remedial legislation." "Conciliation" was his answer, and he stuck to this, refusing to enter into details of the settlement he proposed, if returned to power to negotiate with Manitoba. In the same way at the present time it is alleged that Laurier's proposal to reinforce the armies in France without recourse to coercion can end