

through all the changes Mr. Blair's friendship with Sir Wilfrid Laurier remained unchanged; for he held that the Premier was too great a man to demand sacrifice of independence as an essential of support. It was in the drafting of the railway Act that Mr. Blair's greatest work was done. When a Commissioner was appointed to investigate rate grievances no instructions, written or unwritten, were given to him other than to find the facts. The ceaseless assiduity Mr. Blair showed in the framing of the legislation was no new characteristic. In his earlier days in New Brunswick he would often, after an arduous day in the legislature, remain at his desk all night; the next day would find him fresh for work. In his legal activities, after his retirement from political life, he tried the energy of younger men. In framing the railway legislation every phase of the situation was canvassed by him. He had no illusions as to the limitations of any regulative legislation. In his open-minded conferences with the railway companies he was willing to meet them on all that was of minor importance; on matters of principle he was adamant. In a generous tribute, delivered a few days before Mr. Blair's death, Mr. Killam said that all that was good in the Commission legislation came where Mr. Blair's advice had been followed: all that was defective where his advice had been disregarded. The exigencies of politics often lead to our Cabinet positions being manned rather from a political than from an administrative standpoint. Mr. Blair came to a field that was new to him. But he never permitted preconceptions to sway his judgment. Shipper and railway man who came in contact with him recognised an adjustability to new conditions which at the same time never sacrificed principle. The part that the regulative legislation, which he devised, will play in the industrial development of Canada will, as the years go on and the acrid smoke of political controversy dies down, form an abiding monument which any public servant might well envy.

**O**UT in the town of Gladstone, Manitoba, they are making an experiment which promises opposition to the city department stores. A number of the merchants have united and organised under the name of "The Merchants, Limited," with a capitalisation of \$50,000. The president has a dry goods store, the vice-president has a grocery store and the other directors are also merchants. They propose to run all the businesses in the present establishments but under the one company. There were two hardware stores, but one is to be eliminated. Goods will be sold only for cash or under the coupon system. The latter is somewhat typical of the West, where credit is very common. In this case a farmer who wants credit will go to the head office, give a note and get coupons which will be as good as cash in all of the stores under the control of the company.

The experiment begins this week and it will no doubt attract wide attention. Much will depend on the management. If it is determined and relentless in keeping down the expenses of administration and in running the business at the least possible cost, there seems little reason why goods should not be sold more cheaply than under the old system of every man for himself. The trouble usually comes from the inside, not from the outside. Some director (or his wife) interferes and the families get mixed up, and the business falls into hopeless confusion.

The small merchant in the towns and villages has certainly a hard time of it. The department store catalogue is a thing of beauty and a joy forever, with its coloured cover, its magnificent halftone illustrations and its well classified lists. The sending of money or goods by mail has come to be so common and so easy that no person takes risk of loss into account. Postage is low, the cost of money orders and postal notes is

small, the catalogue comes free and why should not the order be sent to the big city store where the "latest" is always obtainable?

It is not likely that the proprietors of the department stores are going to lie awake o' nights worrying over those enterprising merchants in Gladstone, but nevertheless the other small merchants throughout this broad Dominion will watch the experiment with interest. There may be some imitators perhaps. After all it is more a question of men than of system.

**C**OOL and self-possessed are the usual qualities of the telephone girl. During the past ten days the first of these two qualities has not been much in evidence. She has been engaged in a battle with the Telephone company over the question of the number of hours she should work. It seems a shame that Toronto could not be allowed to have this little drama on the stage without Ottawa and Montreal interfering. Girls were brought from these two cities to take the place of the strikers. That was bad enough, but with them came that authority on strikes, lock-outs and arbitrations, Mr. W. L. King, Deputy Minister of Labour. Mr. King and the Mayor tried to make peace, but the company refused to allow the dove to perch on any of its wires.

#### WOMEN ON STRIKE

At this stage, Mr. King appealed to Ottawa and his chief, Mr. Lemieux, gave him promise of a Royal Commission which is to investigate the whole subject. In the meantime most of the girls have gone back to work.

The dispute arose over the hours of labour. Formerly the girls worked five hours, but now they are asked to serve eight hours a day. They objected to the sudden increase. The company, perhaps, had the right to make the change according to the standards of service in other cities, but they seem to have handled their case rather unwisely. The change was too much of a shock.

The question arises here again, Would it not be possible to have some law which would compel all public service corporations to submit such changes to some authority before announcing them? The point has been mentioned many times but is worth re-stating. It seems foolish to have the business of a great city brought to a standstill because a few girls are dissatisfied with their wages or because a company wants its girls to work an hour or two extra. It is not in the general interest of individuals or the public, and therefore it cannot be beneficial to the company.

**F**OR the first time in the history of the Dominion, the home of the Governor-General is shadowed by the death of a beloved child. The death of Lady Victoria Grenfell has aroused throughout the country a

deep and sincere sympathy with the Vice-regal household. In her maiden days, as Lady Victoria

Grey she visited her aunt, the Countess of Minto, and made many friends at the Canadian capital. His Excellency and the Countess Grey have resided in Canada for only two years, but during that time have shown themselves so thoroughly in sympathy with whatever makes for the true advancement of the country that there is an unusually warm feeling towards the household of His Majesty's representative. It is known now that Lady Grenfell's condition last week was so serious as to give her family cause for deep anxiety; but, in spite of their private distress, His Excellency and the other members of the household attended all the events of the Dramatic and Musical competition, in order that there might be no public disappointment. In this quiet and unselfish meeting of social and civic obligations, there is a fine example of that "noblesse oblige" which, we should like to think, is typical of those chosen for Britain's positions of responsibility.