

One realizes better the magnitude of what has happened by recalling the position of exceptional strength in which the Liberal administration stood twelve months ago. It had enjoyed some fourteen years in office. Its lavish and increasing expenditures on public works had driven its roots deep into the soil. Its picturesque leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and his more commonplace followers had managed to surround themselves with an air of invincibility that was becoming a legend. A sort of mythology had sprung up. The leader with his white plumes, typified as it were purity and chivalry: his bi-lingual eloquence recalled the union of the two races on which the Canadian Commonwealth is built. Beside him was Sir Richard Cartwright, the Nestor of the Senate, whose views on Free Trade were known to be so profound that they figured, without further utterance, for fifteen years as the solid asset of a Protectionist Government. Here, too, was Mr. Fielding, the magician of the legend who could spin you a yearly surplus out of the palm of an empty hand as easily as a juggler twirls a billiard-ball out of nothingness. Near him, lest the reproach of senility might be brought against a Government growing grey in office, was Mr. Mackenzie King, a sometime economist now "gone to the bad" in politics, whose boyish countenance was useful as typifying the fire of youth and in its gentle moments was supposed to beam with all the roguishness of political childhood. The debonair Mr. Fisher presided over Agriculture and the Weather, becoming, in the Liberal mythology, the God of the Harvest, just as Mr. Pugsley had become the God of Wharves and Bridges and Sir Frederick Borden, from his repulse of the Fenians of 1866, the God of Scientific Warfare. Around the whole group, and especially around the person of their leader, there had grown up, in the soft Indian summer of prosperity in which Canada has basked of late, an atmosphere of exaggerated credence on the part of the electorate scarcely believable in retrospect. The Liberal Government was seen through the refracting prism of the national prosperity—an illusion which its members were in no haste to dispel.

Against this combination, or rather against this favoured environment, the Conservative Party had three times striven, and might again have striven, in vain. Their defeat in 1908