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THE LIFE OF
RICHARD
JOHN SEDDON



RICHARD JOHN SEDDON.

Born, June 22nd, 1845: died, June 10th, 1906.

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THE LIFE AND WORK
OF
RICHARD JOHN SEDDON

PREMIER OF NEW ZEALAND, 1893-1906

WITH A HISTORY OF THE LIBERAL
PARTY IN NEW ZEALAND

BY
JAMES DRUMMOND



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PREFACE.

THIS work was commenced two years ago, when Mr. Seddon was taking a very active part in New Zealand's politics; and the intention was that he should contribute largely to the material, so that the work should be, to some extent, autobiographical.

Having had many opportunities as a journalist of studying the political history of this colony, and having watched the rise and progress of the Liberal Party, I became well acquainted with Mr. Seddon's career from the time he entered Parliament, in 1879. Besides that, in writing and conversation, he sometimes expressed his opinions on political situations and public men, and spoke of his early battles, giving me a further insight into the view he took of past events and of those that were passing rapidly in front of him.

It was early in July, 1904, that I first asked him to allow me to write his biography. He fell in with the proposal at once, and telegraphed his hearty consent in the following message:—

Re your communication of the 21st ultimo., I shall be pleased to give you every reasonable assistance. Kind regards and best wishes.

R. J. SEDDON.

I immediately prepared a scheme for the work, and submitted to him a list of questions, which I asked him to answer at his leisure. He replied as follows:—

Prime Minister's Office,
Wellington, 13th November, 1904.

DEAR SIR,—

I duly received your letter, and have time and again tried to get an opportunity to comply with your request, but pressure of parliamentary business has prevented it. However, in the absence of direct replies to the questions you ask me to answer, I do not think I can do better than send you the Souvenir of my Silver

PREFACE

Jubilee and a short account of my career. From these you will be able to gather a good deal of the information you seek.

Apologising for allowing your communication to remain unanswered so long,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

R. J. SEDDON.

I did not wish to give him any more trouble than was absolutely necessary, and worked without further assistance from him. In May, 1906, Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs informed me that they desired to have the work brought to a conclusion, and I found that I would have to appeal to him for further information. He was then arranging to go for a holiday trip to Australia. I suggested to him that I might accompany him on the voyage back to New Zealand, but he said that he would rather regard the time spent at sea as a real holiday, so I decided to wait until he was in New Zealand again. Shortly after leaving Sydney in the "Oswestry Grange" to return to New Zealand, he passed away.

At the request of the publishers, the work has now been completed. The lines followed are those that Mr. Seddon approved of, and a suggestion made by him in the course of conversation, that the work should sketch the history of the Liberal Party in New Zealand, has been carried out.

To avoid confusion, I have given statesmen throughout the work titles they received in later years. In the early part of their careers, for instance, Sir Harry Atkinson was Major Atkinson, Sir John Hall the Hon. J. Hall, Sir Joseph Ward the Hon. J. G. Ward, and so on. Dr. J. Hight undertook to read over the proofs. I am specially indebted to Mr. James Cowan, of the New Zealand Government Tourist Department, for the description of the Maori ceremonies on the occasion of Mr. Seddon's funeral, and for translations of the Maori songs and laments.

J. D.

*Christchurch, New Zealand,
September, 1906.*

INTRODUCTION.

BY THE HON. SIR JOSEPH G. WARD, K.C.M.G., PRIME MINISTER
OF NEW ZEALAND.

My acquaintance and friendship with my late chief and colleague, Richard John Seddon, extended over a period of twenty-one years. For nearly thirteen years of that period I was a member of the Ministry with him, and was naturally constantly and closely associated with him. I had probably better opportunities than most men for gauging his qualities of head and heart, and observing his peculiarly vigorous methods of work, and I am pleased to have this chance of briefly recording my personal impressions of the strong man and good friend who has gone.

Probably no colonial statesman was more praised or more abused than was Richard Seddon during his long term of office as Premier of New Zealand—idolised by his friends and made the target of unreservedly frank criticism by his political opponents. Probably this very criticism, to use a mild term, was the most convincing proof of his energy, ability, and courage. No weak man makes enemies. But Seddon had very few personal antagonists; what opponents he had—and they were many—based their dislike on political grounds. Politics aside, there were few who could not like and love him. His hearty, bluff manner, his loud cheery laugh and kindly greeting, his unfailing memory for names and faces, his readiness to adapt himself to his company, won him friendship where many a man a trifle more reserved would have failed. “He never forgot a friend,” might well have been his epitaph. No man was ever less ashamed of his humble friends of early days; to the last the democrat whom kings delighted to honour was unspoiled by the praises showered upon him, and to his old old mates of the digging-days he was to the last plain “Dick.”

It is probably unnecessary for me to write much concerning my late chief's political achievements; Mr. Drummond in his excellent work tells in detail the story of Mr. Seddon's legislative triumphs. It will be sufficient to remark that for twenty-seven years he sat in the Parliament of this country, returned again and again by his staunch West Coast friends, though any constituency in the colony would probably have returned him. For fifteen years he was a Minister of the Crown, and for thirteen years, as Premier, he practically ruled New Zealand. To chronicle the measures which he has been mainly instrumental in passing into law during those thirteen years would be to write our public history for that period. Humanitarianism was his political creed. "I believe," he wrote in his famous manifesto issued just prior to the last general election, which resulted in such an overwhelming victory for the Liberal party, "that the cardinal aim of government is to provide the conditions which will reduce want, and permit the very largest possible number of its people to be healthy, happy human beings. The life, the health, the intelligence, and the morals of a nation count for more than riches, and I would rather have this country free from want and squalor and unemployed than the home of multi-millionaires." This was the keynote of Mr. Seddon's political life-work. It was a lofty and noble ideal. Long ago a philosopher laid down the axiom that "ideals can never be completely realised," but Richard Seddon did his strenuous best, and the truly happy State which he had in his mind's eye is more nearly approached in New Zealand than in any other country on the globe.

It was often said of the late Premier that with all his insight and keenness of judgment he was too impulsive, too apt to be led away by a wave of public opinion. But he had the true democratic conviction that it was his duty to give effect to what he believed to be the will of the people. Indeed, one of the great secrets of his success was that he possessed the gift, or knack, or whatever it may be called, of anticipating the trend of popular feeling; the happy gift of intuition. This was particularly emphasized during the Boer War, when Mr. Seddon's offer of New Zealand contingents for service in South Africa not

only gave definite and hugely popular expression to the rising feeling of patriotic sympathy with the Old Land, but anticipated similar offers from the other British colonies, to the unbounded delight of New Zealanders and the liberal advertisement of their country in lands where the very name of New Zealand was hardly known.

The fact that Mr. Seddon was the first, after the campaign, to protest against the flooding of South Africa with Chinese coolies by the men in whose interests the grievous war had unwittingly been waged, in no wise detracted from the merit of the promptitude of his offer of troops. Indeed, to the Boer War and Mr. Seddon's share therein, New Zealand owes more than perhaps most of us readily grasp. It was really to his big-hearted impulse, his initiative, that we owe the new and broader Imperialism, and when the great Council of the Empire, as yet *in nubibus* is fully realised, let us remember that it is through Mr. Seddon that it has been made possible. Perhaps we were too close to him to see him in the true perspective. Half a world away they sized the big man up more accurately than even New Zealanders could. What New Zealander's heart but beat with pride when he read, the day after the tragic news of the Prime Minister's end, the sorrowful panegyrics cabled from all parts of the world, the eulogies of the most famous English journals! "A man of noble ideals and generous sentiments;" "a great servant of the Empire;" "the most effective labour politician of his day;" "a man whose death deprived the Empire of a powerful driving force;" "a man who largely taught the British worker to grasp the value of Empire"—these were the verdicts passed on Richard Seddon by the great voices of public opinion at the other end of the world. His strenuous and earnest advocacy of the maintenance of racial purity, too, and his efforts in the direction of the extension of British rule and New Zealand's influence in the Pacific, were all the outcome of his splendid and far-seeing patriotism.

But again it is on the attractive personality, the very human side, of the late Premier, that one wants to dwell. His very foibles, his boisterous impulses, his little eccentricities, all

went to make him the loveable man that he was. Instances of his tender-heartedness, his overflowing good-nature, even to those with whom he had at one time or other "differences," will occur to everyone who knew him. Above all, the children loved the old man, and this love of the children is perhaps a finer testimony of worth than the esteem of older people. In his life-work, Mr. Seddon, it is scarcely necessary to tell New Zealanders, toiled like a very horse. He never gave himself a rest, nor did he allow others to rest. His love of work, of action, of public speaking, killed him in his prime, but it could not have been otherwise. A life of leisured and luxurious inactivity he could never have endured.

Physically powerful, vigorous, and imposing, with a keen and fearless eye, Mr. Seddon was a man who compelled respect and attention whenever and wherever he spoke. There was a stern and fighting glint in his clear straight eyes that said, as Carlyle said of the Abbot Samson, "Let all sluggards and cowards, remiss, false-spoken, unjust, and otherwise diabolic persons, have a care; this is a dangerous man for them." And as the sage has written elsewhere of that same grave old Abbot, it could with exactitude be said here of my old chief, that he was "a skilful man; full of cunning insight, lively interests; always discerning the road to his object, be it circuit, be it short-cut, and victoriously travelling forward thereon."

Probably the best monument to a departed statesman is a faithful, sympathetic record of his life and works. In this book Mr. Drummond has given such a record, and it is one that I trust will be widely read, and that will faithfully preserve for those who come after us the memory of a truly great man, and a man whose influence has irrevocably moulded for good the fortunes of our country, New Zealand.

JOSEPH GEORGE WARD.

WELLINGTON,

29th December, 1906.

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RICHARD JOHN SEDDON.

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CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE AND LIFE ON THE GOLDFIELDS.

for it has stood on Ecclestone Hill, in storm and sunshine, for over 200 years. Some of the old residents of the town, indeed, say that it has seen exactly 300 summers, but in this there seems to be more surmise than evidence.

The cottage has a history. It could hardly help having one at its time of life. Its past, however, can only be partly guessed at. In the pretty little garden, curious stones, bearing signs of the work of some craftsman, have been found in fairly large numbers. There was once a large collection of these stones, some of which have been elaborately carved, and others bear inscriptions that nobody can decipher. An old cross was in the collection, but it has been missing for many years, and has

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ERRATA.

On page 178, third line from the bottom, read "Minister for Marine" instead of "Minister for Mines."

On page 264, read "Judge Backhouse, of New South Wales," instead of "Judge Backhouse, of Victoria."

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THE LIFE AND WORK
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CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE AND LIFE ON THE GOLDFIELDS.

On Eccleston Hill, near the outskirts of St. Helens, Lancashire, England, there stands an old-fashioned, two-storey, stone cottage, with small latticed windows, a wooden porch, and a picturesque aspect.

A tidy pathway leads from a rustic gate to the porch. In the spring and summer the garden is gay with flowers; at one end of the house an old tree almost shades an upstairs window from view; and ivy and other creeping plants cling to the wall and strive to peep into the windows and doors.

The cottage is very weather-beaten; and well it might be, for it has stood on Eccleston Hill, in storm and sunshine, for over 200 years. Some of the old residents of the town, indeed, say that it has seen exactly 300 summers, but in this there seems to be more surmise than evidence.

The cottage has a history. It could hardly help having one at its time of life. Its past, however, can only be partly guessed at. In the pretty little garden, curious stones, bearing signs of the work of some craftsman, have been found in fairly large numbers. There was once a large collection of these stones, some of which have been elaborately carved, and others bear inscriptions that nobody can decipher. An old cross was in the collection, but it has been missing for many years, and has

probably found its way into the private museum of an antiquarian.

The presence of these relics, although supplying no direct evidence, supports a belief held in the district that the garden was once a burial ground, connected with a Roman Catholic Mission that carried on its good work at Scholes Farm, close by. Colour is given to this story by the tradition that long underground passages once extended from Scholes Farm to the garden, and that the passage was used in those bad old days when Merry England was torn with religious persecutions.

At any rate, there the cottage stands to this day, wrapped in its glamour of a lost history, looking pleasantly out into the world, and caring very little for the attacks of its enemies, old Time and the elements.

It is about 65 years since the cottage took part in an important series of events connected with the story of a man's life related in this book.

Mr. Thomas Seddon, a member of one of the oldest farming Lancashire families, was headmaster of the Eccleston Hill Grammar School. Miss Jean Lindsay, a native of Annan, a town in Dumfrieshire, also the descendant of farming people, was mistress of the denominational school. There was not room for two establishments of that kind at Eccleston, and it was not long before very keen rivalry sprang up, the bachelor master competing with the maiden mistress. The heads of the establishments met at public functions in the town, and were often called upon to act together, and even work together, when movements were on foot for charitable purposes, or for the advancement of the community's interests. By and by, the rivals found that they met more frequently. More occasions seemed to arise, somehow, for consultations. Circumstances over which, of course, they had absolutely no control whatever, threw them together, led them to take pleasant walks along country lanes, brought about mutual confidences, and forged a bond of sympathy. The old folk of the village smiled and nodded and looked wise, because it was the old, old story again; and when it was announced that the master and the "school-m'am" had decided not only to roam the lanes and roads



Mr. Seddon's Birthplace, at Eccleston, near St. Helens, Lancashire, England.

together but also to walk hand-in-hand through life, everybody said that it was just what ought to have happened.

In that happy way, rivalry lapsed into love. Miss Lindsay closed her school, and Mr. and Mrs. Seddon took up their residence in the stone cottage on Eccleston Hill, which has just been described.

In that cottage Richard John Seddon was born on June 22nd, 1845, and there he passed his babyhood and his boyhood.

Richard, who was the second child, had three brothers and three sisters. He was a healthy, robust, muscular, and boisterous young lad, and he gave plenty of evidence at an early age of the wilfulness that became one of his characteristics when he entered the battlefield of colonial politics.

The most definite impression left upon him by his early childhood was that made by the funeral of the thirteenth Earl of Derby, when Richard was a sturdy infant six years old. The Earl was a great patron of science, having been president of both the Linnean Society and the Zoological Society of London, and he kept at Knowsley Hall a splendid natural history collection, which had an attraction for the boy, who often made visits to the park. When he heard of the Earl's death, his first thought was that those happy outings would now have to come to an end, and he was more sorry on that account than on account of the death of the great nobleman. His grandfather's family were tenants of the Earl, and that association made Knowsley Hall a kind of shrine as far as he was concerned. Every tenant attended the funeral, and every horse in the immense estate was brought into use for the procession. The sight struck the boy as being a most remarkable one. "Through all the morning," he remarked fifty years later, when he was sending his mind back to those days, "there came to me, even as a child, some knowledge of the deep affection that existed between the Earls of Derby and their tenantry, of which in riper years I have seen many demonstrations."

Another incident that made a great impression on him as a child was the march past of the Scots Greys on their way to Liverpool to embark for the Crimea. It seemed to him that the steady stream of men would never end.

About that time Queen Victoria visited Knowsley, and the children of the local schools assembled there to sing the National Anthem in Her Majesty's honour. It was the first time he had seen Queen Victoria, and the feelings then engendered, and the impression created, lasted throughout his long life.

By-and-by the time came when he had to go to school. He was taken in hand by his father, whose wish it was that Richard should pose as a "possible" to other boys, to whom he was to be an example of diligence and application. Richard had other views in regard to himself, however, and he was determined that his opinion as to what he should do would prevail. Although he was caught early, therefore, he did not play the part at all well. His mind was out in the open, and books and papers had far less interest to him than the games of the playground.

Squire Taylor and the new Earl of Derby were trustees of his father's school. This fact enabled him to become well acquainted with their estates, and the familiarity that grew up in that respect certainly fostered, if it did not actually create, the love of all kinds of sports that soon seized upon him and carried him far from his father's school at times when he was supposed to be studying as only the son of the master could be expected to study. He was shrewd enough to maintain very friendly relations with the keepers of the domains on the two estates. With them, indeed, he made his first reciprocal treaty. They gave him freedom to do as much bird-nesting as his heart dictated, and he, on his part, promised not to interfere with the game in any way, a promise which he kept faithfully.

One day when he was in a reminiscent mood, he told a newspaper interviewer of an incident in his schooldays. "A herd of cattle," he said, "just landed from Ireland, was passing my home one day, and I was standing by the roadside watching them with childish interest, when one of the cows rushed at a younger brother, and might have injured him. I was beside him in a moment, and, pulling the child inside the gate, saved him from any possible danger. This little action must have seemed quite heroic to my mother, for it was a long time afterwards before any circumstances could dislodge me from the very agreeable position of first favourite.

“I have another little story of the same period. After school one day I went to bathe in a neighbouring pond, got out of my depth, and was on the point of drowning. A brass band was passing when my sister gave the alarm, and one of the men came to my rescue. Her further cries brought a local quarryman, and, in the moment before I lost consciousness, I caught sight of these two men, one with his trombone, the other in a leather apron, and ever since I have always felt a particular partiality for all men who play trombones or wear leather aprons.”

One of the most exciting adventures of his youth came to him through an excess of curiosity, which tempted him to test the truth of the tradition that there was an underground passage between the old abbey adjoining his father's school and Scholes Farm.

The cross, then a great feature of interest in the grounds, stood near the playground, in which were piled many grave-stones huddled up from their former position, and while some of the inhabitants were planting flowers in that spot, one of the stones suddenly dropped well below the surface. That was regarded as proof of the existence of the subterranean passage, but to Richard the incident did not carry complete conviction. It was suggested that the hole should be filled up and the place should be left as it was, but he was of another mind, and started to explore with a spade. After a little time his labour came to a sudden end, for he unceremoniously disappeared, having dropped into one of the unknown abbey vaults.

The only branch of school work in which he took any particular interest was mechanical drawing, for which he once received the only first prize placed to his credit. In this way he showed where his desires and talents ran. It was mechanical engineering that captivated his fancy, and when he was still young he decided that the life of an engineer was the best thing for him.

When he began to be a big boy he was one of several who were taught extra subjects. It was an honour that he did not appreciate in the slightest. He asked himself why he should be kept inside the detested class-room learning Latin

while his mates were outside in the glorious sunshine, playing at their games and enjoying themselves to the top of their bent.

The method of expostulation he adopted at last was a refusal to learn his lesson. There was a sharp battle, of course, but the issue was never in doubt. On that day, his grandfather happened to visit Ecclestone. The position that had arisen, which was the talk of the household, was explained to the old gentleman, and it was agreed that the naughty boy should be taken away by him to the farm. There was no intention of sending him on to the land permanently, but it was thought that he would soon tire of country life, and would be glad to get back to Ecclestone and his books.

He did soon grow tired of the country, and further conferences between the heads of the family led to an arrangement under which he was apprenticed to Messrs. Dalglish and Co., engineers and iron founders, of St. Helens. He was fourteen years of age then. Having served an apprenticeship of five years, at the end of which he was told that he had given his employers complete satisfaction, he was sent to the firm's Vauxhall Factory at Liverpool, where he evidently gave satisfaction also. Forty years later, when he returned to England as one of the Colonial Premiers at the King's coronation ceremonies, he saw the foreman of the Vauxhall factory, and asked him jocularly if he would give him a job, and the foreman replied in the affirmative. "He were a good 'un," he remarked to one of Mr. Seddon's friends; "and, if he likes to come back, I'll give him a job to-morrow."

Things were not to young Seddon's liking, however. He was restive, and he longed for change. He did not like the conditions under which the working classes in England had to labour. He saw skilled artizans, capable, sober, and industrious men, slaving ten hours a day for small wages, and he often felt keenly the oppression that took place all around him.

He listened eagerly to the stories of fortunes made in a few weeks in Australia. He was told that young men like himself went to Australia as poor as he was, and returned in a few years rolling in wealth. He tried to put thoughts of the great goldfields out of his mind, and to settle down to the vocation



Mr. Seddon at sixteen years of age, when he served his apprenticeship to the engineering trade.

which he had chosen, and which he was beginning to love as he became better acquainted with its intricacies and the possibilities that it offered.

But the golden dreams haunted him night and day, at work and at leisure. He scanned the newspapers for reports from Australia. The favourable reports sank deep into his mind; the reports of hardships and terrible deaths seemed to fade away as soon as he had read them. He argued, as hundreds and thousands had argued before and since, that, if fortune came to others, it was just as likely to come to him. He was a cheery, optimistic man all his life. He never took the gloomy view. He could not do so, in fact, and to the end of his days was looking forward with the hope and the certainty of getting something done. "My greatest interest," he said once, "lies in the to-days and the to-morrows, not in the yesterdays, with which I have done."

So he heard the Golden South calling to him; and, bidding friends and relatives "good-bye," he stepped on board the "Star of England," a handsome young man, fair in complexion, upright in carriage, and strong in build.

His capital consisted of a Board of Trade engineer's certificate, a pair of broad shoulders, a steady purpose, a determination to succeed, and a stout heart. These friends stood by him through life. It is to them that he owed a great deal of the credit for the things he did in the new land to which Fate was leading him, but which at that time had no place in his thoughts. He went to search for gold, but he was denied success in that direction in order that he might gain that which gold could not give.

At that time, however, it would have been impossible to shake the conviction in his mind that gold was waiting for him to pick it up from the Victorian goldfields.

Soon after he landed in Melbourne, therefore, he set out for the diggings. There he was quickly disillusioned. The paths were not strewn with nuggets. There were no paths at all, and nuggets gave very few signs of being more plentiful than at old Ecclestone in the England he had left. He worked hard and searched diligently; but in vain. He found himself poorer

in everything except experience. The life was rougher than he had believed life among human beings could be, and the sights he saw on the goldfields were far more harrowing than those that had attracted his attention among the poor working classes of England. His optimism was tried as it had never been tried before; and it must be stated that the strain was too great. He broke down, and he went back to Melbourne to seek employment as an engineer. He found it in the Railway Workshops of the Victorian Government, at Williamstown. There he was engaged as a journeyman fitter. This was in the year 1864, and he was then nineteen years of age. He made friends with his fellow-workers, and some of them always had a place in his memory.

He was looked upon by the "hands" in the shop as a good tradesman and a first-class athlete. "He was always a politician," one of his mates explained many years afterwards when Mr. Seddon was a conspicuous figure in the Empire's affairs. "Whether it was an election for a member of the House or for a town councillor, he was always head and ears in it, and would be discovered by old Houghton, the foreman, addressing a crowd of men in one part of the shop or the other. Houghton always knew who it was, and would say: 'Now then, no more of that!' and Mr. Seddon would reply quite cheerfully, 'All right, Mr. Houghton;' but ten minutes later he would be propounding the principles of his favourite candidate to another crowd not very far away. On one occasion he was reported for this to the head of the Department, or the Minister, for the Government employees were not then allowed to take any active part in politics. In the case mentioned, his man got into Parliament, so that nothing came of it."

His fellow-workmen frequently admired his great physical strength. He took a delight in feats that were likely to cause envy. The shop in which he worked was 200 feet long. On one occasion, he walked its whole length with a 56 pound weight strapped to each foot, a 56 pound weight in each hand, and a 28 pound weight held by his teeth.

There was a gymnasium attached to the workshops. It was used by the men in the evenings, and Mr. Seddon was one of the

constant attendants. While weight-lifting was his favourite method of displaying his strength, he was a good boxer, and was dexterous and smart with the single-stick. In later life he resented a suggestion that he was too ready to come to blows in order to assert his rights. "I've often found my fists useful," he said, "but I've never been a bully."

There was nothing that he would not attempt in the gymnasium, no matter how difficult it might be. Another member had only to say: "You can't do that, Seddon!" to make him reply: "Can't I, my boy?" and he immediately made the attempt, which was generally successful.

He seemed to be absolutely devoid of fear. "He was a regular dare-devil," in the words of one of those with whom he worked; "but he was a very good-hearted fellow; he was foremost in subscriptions and acts of charity, and would do a good turn to anyone, if it was in his power."

Outside of the gymnasium he proved himself to be a strong runner. He won the silver cup for general athletes at the Williamstown Eight Hours Demonstration, coming in first in the 100 yards, 200 yards, and 440 yards events. He joined the Williamstown Volunteer Artillery Corps, formed among the workshop employees, and was promoted to the rank of corporal, but got no further, not on account of want of force of character, but because he did not stay long enough to merit further promotion.

Williamstown was fated to play an important part in his career. While he was employed at the railway workshops, he became acquainted with Captain Spotswood and his family. There he met Miss Louisa Jane Spotswood, whom he asked to be his wife. Captain Spotswood was a grandson of a former Governor of Bombay, and the family did not give much encouragement to the young engineer. He and his sweetheart, however, plighted their troth, and Mr. Seddon found that the strongest of all impulses urged him on to make his fortune.

He was still convinced that his trade was not the thing for him. It was slow and tedious, offered no excitement, and failed to gratify his desire to push on in the world.

After he had been employed in the workshops for about a year, news came that rich goldfields had been discovered on the West Coast of New Zealand. An uncle of his wrote to him from the West Coast, and urged him to come, stating that the New Zealand climate was much better than that of Victoria, and the life of the colonists was freer, brighter, and happier.

Nothing would suit him but to leave his employment at the workshops and go to the new fields, to see if they would be kinder to him than those he had believed would be his making.

He left Melbourne in the "Alhambra," and arrived at Hokitika, on the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, in 1866.

He found that life on the New Zealand goldfields was not a bit less picturesque than life in Victoria. It had the advantage of a more vigorous climate. Apparently, the diggers, on the whole, were as fine a set of men as could be found in any part of the world. That was the opinion formed by Mr. Seddon at the time, and the more he saw of the diggers the more he liked them and their rough-and-ready but manly ways. It may be said that there was none more rough-and-ready than he, and none more manly. As shown in other chapters of this book, he lost no opportunity to disabuse the public mind in respect to the class of men who toiled on New Zealand's goldfields. In Parliament, on the platform, and in private life, he declared that they were good citizens, and he saw no reason why they should not have the same status in the community as that of any other class.

In the pages of *Hansard*, and in New Zealand newspapers, he has often recorded his opinion of the West Coast miners. "At Hokitika," he said on one occasion, "I came into contact with a body of men who, physically and morally, were unsurpassed as men, and who were the pick of the world. They needed great physique to stand the hardships and privations of life in those early days on the Coast. Mentally they stood out as men who not only had an adventurous nature, but also followed the craving to get away from the Old World environment. They wanted something new, and they went where they could find it. We had miners from Otago, Australia, and

California, as well as some of the most enterprising spirits of Australia and New Zealand.”

Describing the hardships and dangers that had to be met, he stated that miners who went to the West Coast from Canterbury had to ford the Teremakau River sixteen times. It is only one of the madly rushing streams that stood in the way of communication between one district and another before bridges were constructed. The West Coast is a notoriously rainy district. The heavy rains swell the rivers, and the gold seekers had to swim the Teremakau nearly as often as they forded it. When there was one in the party who could not swim, a swimmer crossed with a long flax rope and fixed it to a tree on the far side, and the miner pulled himself hand over hand through the water. In some cases, rude rafts of the stems of the flax-plant were constructed after the methods adopted by the Maoris, and a primitive ferry service was established.

In those dreadful journeys dry blankets were unknown, and dry clothes were a rarity. “Yet, when you met these adventurers afterwards on the streets of Hokitika,” Mr. Seddon said, “you took them to be the happiest, merriest fellows on earth.”

A writer who was on the West Coast goldfields when the rush broke out has given a graphic description, which well represents the sights that met the keen eyes of the young engineer in search of adventure and fortune. This writer* describes how field after field was opened up with amazing rapidity. Captains of vessels sailing along the Coast saw a continuous line of fires, each denoting a party of miners.

“Prospectors,” he says, “pushed up the rivers and streams, and spread over terraces and hills, their enterprise almost invariably gaining a rich reward. ‘Pile’ claims, as they were known in Victoria, and in some of the Otago workings, were unknown, and no single claim yielded its owner more than £5000 a man. But there were many claims that would give from £10 up to £50, and sometimes £100 per week per man.

“Twenty different rushes would take place in a week, each more promising than its predecessor. Hokitika was the scene of

*Mr. L. Northcroft.

the first great rush, and for a time numbers preponderated there. Kanieri, Eight-mile, Big Paddock, Blue Spur, Waimea, and many flats and gullies supported a bustling, tireless population of many thousands. All along the beaches to Greymouth and up the Grey River, and from there to the Teremakau, the busy hive of workers could be seen.

“The mining camps extended from the Grey along the beaches past such marvellous rich patches as Darkey’s Terrace, along to Brighton, Charleston, Addison’s Flat, the terraces north of Westport to the Mokihinui, and along the beaches and gullies still further north, and then up the Buller, past many rich streams to the Lyell, where the biggest nuggets on the Coast were found, and still on to the Maruia, and the Matakītaki.

“South of Hokitika was the great Totara goldfield, and the celebrated Ross Flat, probably the richest piece of alluvial ground yet discovered in the world, layer upon layer of alluvial wash, all carrying gold in large quantities. Then we have the Okarito goldfield, with the Three-mile and Five-mile Beaches, the tail box of the Waiho River, and still further south the famed Gillespie’s Beach, Hunt’s Beach, and Bruce Bay.

“Gold was found everywhere, and in amazing quantities. At the Five-mile diggers carried the gold dust to Okarito to sell in billies, their ordinary chamois leather gold-bags being too small to contain their rich harvests. It was a life of wild exertion and fierce excitement, which has no counterpart in these somewhat dull and decorous times. Those were glorious, riotous days, which seemed so good that no one believed they could end. Each one had secured the purse of Fortunatus, which could never be finished, and acted accordingly. There was an axiom, in which implicit reliance was placed in those days, that, if a man became saving and economical, his luck would desert him. It was not necessary to spend everything he got, but, above all things, he must not be mean. Illustrations of this were furnished wholesale. The steady, industrious man would be haunted by ill-luck, whilst the spendthrift always sank a golden hole, and never a duffer. A man would be making twenty pounds a week; by Wednesday he would be without a shilling. Saturday

would see him again in funds, but they would slip through his fingers in a day or two; and so the life went on."

This state of things did not last for ever, and it was not very long afterwards that thousands of miners in the district were glad to be employed at regular work for £2 a week.

Mr. Seddon's description of the miners is confirmed by the writer quoted, who says that their ages ranged from twenty to forty, men from twenty-seven to thirty-three years of age being in the majority, and they were a splendid type. "Full dress" on the goldfields consisted of a high slouch hat, the front turned up sharp and the back turned down; a crimson shirt with a knotted crimson silk scarf; a pair of moleskin trousers, with a bright yellowish tinge on account of the clay, which seemed to wash in but never to wash out; a crimson sash; "nugget" pattern boots; and a crimson silk laced cord round the crown of the hat. Full beards were worn, and the dandies prided themselves on the length and thickness of this adornment. Irishmen generally preferred green to crimson sashes, ties, and scarfs, but no other colours were used.

From Hokitika he went to the Old Six Mile diggings at Waimea, and, with a few mates, washed a claim on the Waimea Creek.

His knowledge of engineering was found to be very useful, especially in connection with the "Band-of-Hope" water-race. He was encouraged by his success in that direction, and, later on, urged the Government and the Westland County Council to undertake the construction of large water-races. This was done, and those works, some of which cost very large sums of money, have helped to bring about the prosperity the West Coast has enjoyed.

His luck was still "out" at gold-seeking, however, so he decided to make an entirely new departure, and opened a store at Big Dam.

He found that steady business was better than the chance of making a fortune suddenly and the certainty of having to endure many hardships. He prospered so well that he was able in 1869 to leave his store for a time, go for a trip to Melbourne, marry Miss Spotswood, who had been waiting for him for three

years, and bring his bride to the home he had prepared for her.

The next important change in his life was brought about by a "rush" to Kumara in 1874.

An account of how the "rush" that made Kumara famous took place, states that a gang of men had erected an illicit whisky-still at a spot in the bush. When they were digging down into the ground preparing for the still, they, like Dow in Bret Harte's poem, found what they did not seek: gold. They did not disclose their discovery, but remained quietly washing in the bush. A miner who had been "bushed" between Dillmans-town and Kumara saw the smoke of their fires and reached the spot. There he surprised their secret, which he reported to the miners. Mr. Seddon formed a party, went into the bush, and ascertained that another goldfield had been added to the list.

He removed his business and his family to Kumara, and the name of the town, which has grown up to a population of 2,000 in 1906, was associated with his own name throughout his career. In *Hansard* there are many references to the "Knight of Kumara," as his fellow members of Parliament often called him. There are good grounds for the association of the man and the town. For many years they were one and indivisible. As he grew in influence among the miners, it grew in importance, only not so rapidly.

With his masterful manner and his thoroughness of purpose, he took charge of Kumara from its earliest infancy, nursing it and attending to its wants, and leading it along the rough road that most colonial towns have to travel.

On the New Zealand diggings, as on other goldfields, towns were established without much regard to surveys and skill in laying out. The streets were allowed to make themselves, with the result, as an old resident of the West Coast has said, that they were like a lot of dogs' hind legs, and meandered in and out wherever it was easiest for traffic to find its way amongst the houses.

Mr. Seddon saw the evil of the want of system in that respect. Being determined that his town would be better appointed, he induced the Goldfields Warden to go down and lay off a



Mr. Seddon's Old Home at Kumara.

proper township under the Mining Act. His idea was to make it on the same plan as Melbourne, in hopes, probably, that it would attain the marvellous growth of that great city.

As some reward for his services, one of the streets was named after him, and he lived in it for some years. More than that, he was elected the first Mayor of Kumara when it was promoted to municipal rank.

The little town has not progressed very rapidly, and there is not much likelihood that it will ever achieve greatness as it is understood in regard to colonial cities. A New Zealand journalist* who accompanied Mr. Seddon to the West Coast in 1904, on the occasion of rejoicings at the silver jubilee of his entry into Parliament, describes Kumara in an interesting manner. He says:—

“Kumara is still essentially a mining township, prolific in hotels and permeated with the gold fever that, like the ague of the tropics, stays with the man it attacks until his last hour. Its residents live either by mining or by supplying miners. Gaunt flumes stalk across the country towards the titanic excavations that the driven water has made in the once smiling river flats, and black pipe-lines lie across the country like huge snakes. The bed of the Teremakau is disfigured by the many thousand tons of tailings that have been poured into it, and the whole landscape tells of man's strenuous search for gold.

“Yet, although it stands amidst a wrecked country, Kumara is very far from being unattractive. To the visitor from any other part of the colony it has the charm of originality, of life in a new form and under new conditions. The architecture is quite strikingly distinctive. The mass of the houses would seem to have been built in a hurry, as by men impatient over a labour that promised no golden return, and there is a general unpainted, rugged air that fits in well with the surrounding country. In common with other parts of the Coast, almost every house has the outside chimney, either of iron or of wood, lined with iron, telling of the wide open fireplace and of cheery log fires, and many have their scraps of garden, assisting materially to improve the general effect. Perhaps the most

*A member of the *Lyttelton Times* staff.

striking and pleasing thing about Kumara is its children. They had turned out to the last baby to see the Premier, and their bonny smiling faces and sturdy little forms decorated the view in every direction. 'It is the best place in the world for a child,' said an old Kumara resident. 'Everyone here loves children, and they have a grand time.' Kumara may not be entitled to claim that splendid distinction, but there can be no doubt as to the number or the character of its children. With a total population of some 2,000 souls, the children seem to run into hundreds, and from the little red-vested rascal in his father's old boots to the uniformed cadet, from the rosy-cheeked girlie who shook her curls over her face in a terror of joy at the Premier's smile, to the lithe winsome maiden just budding into womanhood, all seemed the very best of their kind. Kumara has somehow solved one of the most vexed problems of modern times, and if Mr. Seddon should decide to set up a commission of inquiry for the benefit of the colony at large, he would not be without enthusiastic supporters."

By this time Mr. Seddon had become an influential man, well known all over the Coast, and well respected.

He developed a liking, which became a ruling passion, for public life. He loved contests, arguments, and vehement discussions. He found in them the same exercise for his mind as the sports ground afforded for his body. He did not realise it at the time, but he also found in his public duties the disregard of old-groove methods, the boldness and promptness of action, and the broad Liberalism that characterise the legislation of his greater days, when he became an imperialist and a humanist.

At the age of twenty-four years, he was the recognised "head-man" of the district. Disputes were referred to him, and hardly any public action of importance was decided upon before those concerned sought his advice, or received it, as he did not always wait to be asked.

By and by he was able to leave business and to engage in practice as a miner's advocate in the Warden's Courts.

He made a name for himself there, as he had done in other spheres of labour. By his impatience at official delay in opening up the Kumara field, he made himself disliked by

red-tape officers, who were not used to being hustled, and his clamour and persistence led the Minister in charge of the Mines Department to warn a new Goldfields Warden that "there is a political agitator named Seddon down there who makes a great deal of row because there is no one to attend to the rush on the Kumara field."

Knowing every water-right in the district and the history of every claim, Mr. Seddon was well armed against the lawyers who came from the large towns to conduct cases against his clients. One of these lawyers once remarked that he was a distinct loss to the legal profession.

At least one Warden* was impressed by his ability. "His cleverness as an advocate," he says, "was beyond question. He never lost a chance when any legal point gave him an opportunity, and the readiness with which he grasped the bearing of legal matters was remarkable, although, as we now know, this was only one indication of the brain power and mental acuteness with which he was so abundantly endowed. The litigious digger of that day delighted in nothing more than a good legal technicality, especially when he had nothing else to trust to, and he rightly appreciated the qualities of an advocate who had the capacity of discovering a good technical point, and making the most of it.

"Mr. Seddon's excellence as an advocate was necessarily somewhat impaired by the want of regular legal training, and this sometimes caused a certain want of proportion in the view which he took of the importance of the different parts of a case, and caused him to labour too much at some point which would really have been more telling if merely suggested. But I have as little doubt that, with a legal education, he could have made a great name at the bar as gratification in the knowledge that he was reserved for better and greater work."

It would be futile to deny that Mr. Seddon was, even at this early date, a confirmed egotist. He had an unvarying belief in his own abilities. When an old digger declared loudly at a public meeting that "Our Dick'll be Governor of New Zealand," the object of his enthusiastic prophecy was

*Dr. Giles.

in no wise abashed. Other West Coast prophets, some in joke, some in earnest, said they believed that "Dick Seddon" would one day be Minister for the goldfields, and he himself had no hesitation in confiding to his intimate friends a belief that they would learn that he had made his mark in a wider sphere of activities.

Stories are told on the Coast to show the influence he exercised, and it is stated that on one occasion a dispute took place over pegging off some claims on a rich piece of ground. The majority of the miners interested contended that the minority, whose pegs had been shifted, had jumped their claims, and threatened to throw the offenders into the dam. Mr. Seddon addressed the clamorous majority, and, failing to get any satisfaction, challenged any single man to settle the matter with fists. There was no response, but the crowd became more reasonable. Then Mr. Seddon pointed out that the regulations provided for settling disputes without recourse to brute force, and that if they commenced with violence someone would probably have to suffer for it, and there was no saying where the matter would end. They agreed to interview the Warden, and the minority, who had taken the precaution to put in secret pegs, were easily able to convince that officer that they had a prior right.

On the Coast, as in the Victorian workshops, Mr. Seddon had very few equals in any branch of athletics in which he took an interest. Shortly after he entered Parliament, he happened one day to be in Goldsbrough, when a publican, who had some reputation as a runner, expressed the opinion that "Dick was too fat to run." Thereupon the member for the district offered to race him. A wager was made, the race was started, and the member easily outdistanced his opponent. "Well, old man," said the winner, as they walked back to the starting-post, "you see I am not too fat yet."

While he had his store at Big Dam, a miner, who was taking a short cut over a plank crossing the flood-gate, fell into the water. He had his week's provisions on his back. Luckily, it was a moonlight night, and Mr. Seddon was standing in front of his store. Hearing the splashing, he ran to the scene.



Mr. Seddon at twenty-four years of age, when
he was elected a member of the Arahura Road
Board.

Seeing a hand waving at some distance in the dam, he immediately plunged in, and, after a long struggle, succeeded in bringing the man to the edge. By this time others had come, and the two were hauled up on to the embankment. The miner was unconscious, and Mr. Seddon was almost exhausted. After he had changed his clothes, he returned to see how the rescued man was getting on, naturally expecting to receive an expression of thanks. To his surprise he was addressed in an aggrieved tone. "See here, they tell me that you pulled me out; I don't believe it, and I'll swim you for a pound in the morning; it was the load strapped on my back that caused the trouble."

Another story which has often been told on the Coast relates that a bully, who had made things intolerable, insulted Mr. Seddon. This resulted in a fight and a complete victory for the man from Victoria. During the combat the brother of the bully had been profuse in advice and direction, and when the bully was beaten, Mr. Seddon challenged the brother to come into the circle, but he refused to do so. The second challenge appealed to the diggers' fancy, and, shouldering Mr. Seddon, they carried him to the township amidst hearty cheers.

The year 1869 was an eventful one for him in more ways than one. It was the year of his marriage, as has been stated, and it was the year in which he entered definitely upon his career as a public man.

On one day he offered himself to the miners as their representative on two local bodies, the Arahura Road Board and the Westland County Council. Bad tracks and worse roads were the grievances that actually called him forth. There had been great neglect on the part of the local authorities that controlled road-making work in the district. There were many complaints from the miners, but not the slightest notice was taken of them.

The miners thought that the young agitator would stir the authorities into some kind of activity. They therefore elected him at the head of the poll for the seat on the Road Board, but, being convinced that he was too young to take part in the work of the larger body, they made him stand by in preference to an older man. Only a few years passed, however, before he

became not only a member of the County Council, but also its chairman.

The Road Board's affairs had been badly managed. Besides that, local government in New Zealand was not on a good basis in those days, and local bodies' powers and responsibilities were greatly restricted.

The older members of the Board, who were well acquainted with Mr. Seddon's capacity for making trouble where things were not done to his liking, did not look upon his success with a favourable eye. They recognised that he had been elected to the Board to urge them on. In order to secure some kind of revenge for the mild insult, they decided to place him in the chair, saying amongst themselves: "Perhaps the youngster can show us how to meet liabilities and make tracks without money."

He was quite equal to the occasion. He accepted the position without hesitation. He ransacked the accounts, studied the Board's position, got a thorough grasp of it, and prepared a long report. His policy was retrenchment and "bluff." In the first place he cut down the clerk's salary from five pounds to ten shillings a week, and economised in other directions.

In the next place, he induced the Board to announce that it would dismiss its servants, stop its works, and close its doors for twelve months, unless the County Council, the parent body, came to the rescue. The Council, which had not expected this peremptory demand, paid the required money into the Board's fund; the public servants were retained; the works in hand were pushed on; the tracks and roads were improved; and the young chairman became absolute dictator in the field of operations controlled by the Board, and held his position securely until the Board ceased to exist.

Time after time, in the House of Representatives, he showed similar powers of bold resolve and prompt action. The most notable illustration was in 1894, when he went to the rescue of the Bank of New Zealand, as related in another chapter. No responsibility was too great for him, and no danger deterred him from taking steps he felt were required to meet an emergency.



The office of the Road Board at Stafford, Westland, where Mr. Seddon delivered some of his early political speeches.

He lived at Staffordtown for some years, and was a member of the local School Committee. Tradition says that he who was to be the champion of "stone-wallers" in New Zealand did not hesitate to block discussion when it had exceeded the limits of his patience. A debate upon the appointment of a teacher to the school having lasted till four o'clock in the morning, Mr. Seddon, realising that the aim of his opponents was to postpone the fatal hour of division, moved that no more amendments should be taken. This was carried on the casting vote of the chairman, and the original motion, supported by Mr. Seddon, was then carried in the same way.

From the School Committee to the Board of Education was an easy step, and in 1874, when he became a member of the latter body, he played a prominent part in the struggle for secular education. The people were divided into secularists and denominationalists, and the conflict was marked by the peculiar bitterness that enters into most disputes based on religious differences. Mr. Seddon and Mr. John McWhirter, two candidates on the national and unsectarian side, conducted an exciting campaign. At Goldsborough they were sometimes obliged to dismount and walk up the hill, sheltered by their horses from a hailstorm of stones. On one occasion a shot was fired; it may have been an accident, but Mr. McWhirter maintained that it had been fired with the intention to injure Mr. Seddon and himself.

The people of Goldsborough still point out the old Hibernian School, a faded building. This school was the centre of a stirring debate, entitled "Sectarian *versus* Secular Education," in which Mr. Seddon was opposed by a Roman Catholic priest. At the ballot, the miners, who did not approve of church interference in politics, supported Mr. Seddon's views, and the Hibernian School was closed.

On Westland being proclaimed a province, with a Parliament and a Superintendent of its own, Mr. Seddon took his seat in the Provincial Council as representative of Arahura. He became chairman of committees, but he could rise no higher before the provincial system of government in New Zealand was abolished, in 1876. Westland becoming a county again, he

was elected to the County Council, appointed chairman, and continued to sit at the Council table until he entered the Ballance Ministry, in 1891.

A writer, who has worked with him on local bodies, states that he was all-powerful on the County Council. When persuasion and tact failed, he resorted to verbosity. "Fluent, loud, unceasing, and sometimes amusing, he carried the point he had in view by dogged, persistent talk. Worn-out members in sheer despair gave the Kumara orator his way, and he left for his home rejoicing. His rulings were nearly always accepted, whether he was right or wrong; his audacity carried him through."

With May at his fingers' ends he was more than a match for them all; and the bewildered members would often rise from a meeting, after listening to one of his fiery speeches, lost in astonishment at the pitfalls they had dropped into, and at their own blundering stupidity. Mr. Seddon, who enjoyed nothing more than that kind of sport, would chuckle and smile to himself as he traced the consternation displayed on their countenances.

"Without being a money-grubber," says another gentleman who knew him well, "he insisted on proclaiming that a labourer is worthy of his hire. Beyond travelling expenses, however, there was not much to be got out of public work, with one exception. This exception was the chairmanship of the County Council, which carried with it £250 a year and travelling expenses. The annual scramble for this prize was amusing, and was much enjoyed by a cynical public. There were nine members, and, as a rule, they were all candidates for the endowed chair. Of course the first man who got five votes took it. But the trouble was to get that number. Every member could depend on his own vote only, and it was sometimes hours before the game was played out.

"In this annual contest Mr. Seddon took a prominent part, as may well be supposed. When he did not secure the prize himself, which happened once or twice, he invariably managed to get the candidate he supported into the chair. Here again a knowledge of points of order, or disorder, were factors in his success.



Mr. Seddon in 1873, when he was a member
of the Westland Provincial Council.

“The first time he became chairman he demanded from an astonished Council £250 a year, travelling expenses, and a guinea a day while travelling. This was refused, so far as the guinea a day was concerned. The Kumara hero fought hard for his point, but was defeated. Had it not been for the fact that the Council was suffering from chronic consumption of the purse, he would have once more triumphed. He honestly thought himself worth more to the public than a less energetic and hardworking man.”

During all these stirring times, he was qualifying himself for the greater work before him. He could not have entered a better school of politics. He is not by any means the only New Zealand politician who has started in local government and has gone step by step to Parliament. Some of the best members of Parliament have found the Road Board, the Borough Council, and the County Council a splendid training ground, and all who have served their political apprenticeship on those bodies have been useful members of the larger body, which has benefited by the practical advice they have been able to give at all times on many different questions. Added to his training in public, Mr. Seddon lost no opportunity of increasing his knowledge in private life. He learnt May's "Parliamentary Practice" almost by heart, and other standard works on the practical part of Parliamentary work were among the few books he cared to read or study.

CHAPTER II.

ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

When Mr. Seddon first took an active part in Parliamentary work, the tumult of political strife resounded from every public platform in the colony.

Provincial government had been lately abolished. Party government had made its presence felt for the first time, and party lines were beginning to be clearly marked. Party feeling has never been more bitter.

It was a time of many changes. The country was bewildered at the rapidity with which moving tableaux were presented to its view, and it asked itself where its politicians were leading it. A Conservative Administration, crying aloud for political rest, had been driven from the treasury benches. An aged Premier, Grey by name and grey by years, had come from the seclusion of his beautiful island home at Kawau to offer the people their first Liberal policy. With silvery tongue and sweetly spoken words he asked them to enter upon a new era of legislative activity. He told them that they had a glorious future. He hailed them as the heralds of a greater nation than the world had yet seen. He appealed to fathers on account of their manhood, and to mothers on account of the millions yet unborn, and asked them to realise the splendid destiny that awaited them.

“Make homes for the millions,” he cried. “Give your women happy homes, and provide them with husbands who will help them to rear families in health and comfort. There should be a really temperate and happy population here. You must have good men with a stake in the country. You must have men who will be devoted to their country. You must turn New Zealand from a colony with a pauper population into one of the happiest countries in the world.”

The old man's eloquence fired the imagination of the people, who were struck with profound veneration at the sight of the Great Pro-Consul descending from the towering heights of intellectual superiority to take part in the humdrum affairs of colonial life.

Things had gone very smoothly with the governing class until he came to preach the new crusade, and wherever he spoke he created a political disturbance.

He justified his appeals by devising a policy designed to bring about at least some of the great things he promised.

Although his words were sometimes meaningless, his policy was firm, straightforward, progressive and sound. He declared that the voice of the tax-gatherer should no longer be heard in the houses of the poor. His first measure, therefore, provided for a land tax; his second reduced the customs duties on the necessaries of life; and his third sought to tax the incomes of companies. That was the method by which he intended to make property bear a larger share of the burden of taxation, and to relieve the working classes. The land tax was one half-penny in the pound on all land exceeding £500 in value; a customs reform measure abolished the duties on forty-three articles, reducing the duty on tea from 6d. to 4d., and on sugar from a penny to a half-penny; and companies were to pay a tax of 3d. in the pound on their incomes. By an Electoral Bill he proposed to give the country manhood suffrage. By a beer tax of 1½d. a gallon on beer, which was expected to yield £30,000 a year, he intended to amend his finances.

He took office in 1877, and met Parliament in the session of 1878 in a hopeful spirit. It was soon seen, however, that Sir George Grey in Parliament was a different Premier from Sir George Grey on the platform.

His Ministry was weak and disorganized. The policy was the policy of the Premier, not of the Government. The Premier said one thing, the Colonial Treasurer said another thing, and the Attorney-General said yet another thing. Nobody knew where the party was going.

It was weak when the session began; it grew weaker as the session advanced. Towards the end the Premier was facing a

ministerial crisis. The Beer Tax Bill was strongly opposed. Some members of the Cabinet wished to resign because Parliament would not accept it. Others were for forcing the Bill through. It was clear that the House would not have the measure. It was equally clear that no Government which ever took office could go to the country on a Beer Bill and retain its dignity. The measure was therefore withdrawn. Then the Premier petulantly demanded that the Governor should disallow the Electoral Bill because the Legislative Council refused to give the franchise to his beloved Maoris, and that measure was not placed on the Statute Book.

There was much thoughtless action. There were altercations inside the Cabinet, and only half hidden dissensions amongst Ministers in the House. The distracting session came to an end at last, but the Government's difficulties did not disappear with the departure of members from Wellington, and family quarrels became more public, more frequent, and more bitter.

Early in 1879, members of the Opposition were already negotiating for seats in the new Conservative Ministry, which they evidently expected to form shortly after Parliament met again. Sir George Whitmore, a member of the Ministry, was astonished one day when, at a meeting of the Cabinet, there was placed in his hands the following telegram, addressed to him and signed by a leading member of the Opposition, a resident of Christchurch:—

Thanks for telegram, just received. Concur as to Grey's objects. Confident such Ministry would not be supported by either House or country.

The Minister, puzzled beyond measure at the extraordinary message, which was signed by one of his strongest political opponents, believed that a veiled attempt was being made to induce him to desert his party.

Inquiries showed that the telegram should have gone to Mr. Waterhouse, a member of the Opposition in Wellington, who had telegraphed to his Christchurch colleague stating that a ministerial crisis was imminent, that there was little likelihood of a compromise, and that the Premier wished to compel his Ministers to resign in order that he might form a Ministry

entirely subservient to him. The telegraph operator in Christchurch made the signature "Whithouse" instead of "Waterhouse," and the over-eager member of the Opposition in Christchurch read it as "Whitmore," and sent the reply to the wrong man.

The incident shows the eagerness of the Government's opponents to see it fall, and the confidence with which they relied upon getting into office.

Clearly, everything was ready for the Government's defeat. The Conservative Party seemed to be dying of old age just before Sir George Grey came to disturb its slumbers. When he sent it from the treasury benches, the shock and the surprise roused it into activity, and it came forward armed cap-a-pie, with more vigour and more stomach for fighting. Obviously, there was little chance of the Liberal Premier holding his position. His autocratic temperament estranged even his devoted followers. His quarrelsome moods became unbearable. He quarrelled with his enemies; he quarrelled with his friends. The only people he did not quarrel with were the public and the Maoris, both of whom he treated like children.

Difficulties crowded in. The Government had taken office in a year of plenty, when the finances were sound, the revenue was increasing, and the colony's progress was marked by a notable extension of the export trade. After less than two years of office, the Government had to face serious embarrassments. The colony was overtaken by a commercial depression, which came up suddenly like a summer storm. It could not have come at a more critical time. The land revenue, upon which the Colonial Treasurer had largely depended, fell off. The colony's finances were depressed. Unemployed gathered in the streets and abused the Government. Trouble arose with Tawhiao, the Maori King, and with Te Whiti, the Maori prophet.

When Parliament met in 1879 the Government's supporters were grumbling that they were not in the Government's confidence, and the Opposition was sure of victory. The Government brought down its policy again, improved, extended, and more progressive than ever. Sir George Grey believed that even if Parliament did not want the reforms he

advocated, they were more than acceptable to the country. It was in the time of quinquennial Parliaments, and he accused the Parliament to which he submitted his proposals, and which had existed for over three years, of having lived too long. What he needed, he said, was a new Parliament as well as a new policy.

A no-confidence motion, criticising his administration, but not his policy, was carried by a majority of fourteen. Obtaining a dissolution he went to the country, and preparations were made on both sides for a severe and bitter struggle.

For the first time the old Conservative party met organised opponents. Sir George Grey, in spite of his years, displayed extraordinary vigour. He flew from centre to centre, organising, advising, and exhorting. His voice was heard in all his opponents' strongholds. Carrying the war into their camp, he contested the Christchurch seat as well as his old seat at the Thames.

The hot blood of action surged through his veins, and his heart throbbed with the great joy of battle. He felt that he had put on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation, and that he would defeat his enemies and lead the people into the pleasant places of political reform he saw in his dreams.

He spoke of a great nation that would arise in the South Pacific. He drew upon the learning of his cultured intellect, and quoted Cicero's orations and Pliny's letters as embellishments to his addresses. Wherever he went he had the same cry: "Education for your youths, manhood suffrage, equality of rank, and the earth for men and men's children." The interest he had aroused a few years previously when he stepped from his romantic retirement into the centre of the colony's politics induced large numbers of new men to turn aside from their vocations and enter the field of strife.

Among these was Mr. Seddon. He was one of Sir George Grey's most ardent admirers from the first. In 1876, he had offered himself as a Liberal candidate for Hokitika. The other candidates were Messrs. R. C. Reid, P. Dungan, E. Barff, and C. E. Button. Two members were required, and Messrs. Barff and Button were successful. In 1877 Mr. Button resigned, and Mr. Seddon took

a prominent part in securing the return of Mr. Seymour Thorne George, a nephew of Sir George Grey. Mr. Thorne George decided to contest the Rodney constituency in 1879, and this left the Hokitika seat vacant as far as a recognised follower of Sir George Grey was concerned. Mr. Seddon was chairman of the Kumara Liberal Committee, which was divided over the choice of a candidate, and, to settle the difference, he asked the Liberal chief what course should be taken. To the surprise of all members of the Committee, including Mr. Seddon himself, the reply was: "You are worthy; stand yourself." The invitation was accepted, and Mr. Seddon was announced as one of the Liberal candidates.

The electoral district included Kumara as well as Hokitika, and was large and unwieldy. In one respect, however, it possessed few of the distracting difficulties that often beset Parliamentary candidates. The miners' vote was the principal one, and the mining industry was practically the only one that had to be considered.

The names of the candidates as they appeared on the ballot paper were:—

Barff, E.
Cumming R.
Dungan, P.
Reid, R. C.
Seddon, R. J.

They were all classed as "Greyhounds," as Sir George Grey's young followers were called, except Mr. Barff, who was a sitting member and a follower of Sir Harry Atkinson. He was an experienced miners' representative, but a ponderous speaker. It is said by those who heard him that he "was sometimes so prosy as to be a weariness to the flesh." Mr. Cumming was an Irishman, with all the brightness and gaiety generally associated with men of his country. Mr. Dungan, another Irishman, was "a good fellow, a genial man, and a miner." Mr. Reid was a popular and influential journalist.

Feeling in favour of Sir George Grey was so strong in the district that there was little hope of the Conservative candidate securing a leading place. The people generally favoured the

“Greyhounds.” All of these ran the same course; but, to distinguish himself from the others, Mr. Seddon called them Liberal “Greyhounds” and himself a Radical “Greyhound.” It is certain that of all the young candidates who entered the field in 1879, there was none more eager than he to rush headlong into reform.

The contest was more personal than political. The records of the election, which no one then regarded as of special historical interest, show that no candidate worked harder than Mr. Seddon. He had made up his mind to win the seat, and he set all his tireless energy and determination to break down the obstacles that presented themselves on the threshold of his Parliamentary life. One of those who saw him just before the election says that “day and night he was unwearied and unceasing in his efforts to draw his friends closer and placate his opponents.”

On nomination day a message was telegraphed to the leading newspapers of the colony stating that “Mr. Seddon is strong in Kumara; according to all accounts, he is a clever man, with immense energy, and any amount of push.” Another West Coast newspaper correspondent wrote: “It is to be hoped, for the sake of the occupants of the ministerial benches, that he will not succeed; if he does succeed, he will be a terror to them.”

Apparently Mr. Reid was the most popular candidate; but as polling day drew near Mr. Seddon forced himself forward, and those who were in the best position to judge recognised that the winning “ticket” was either “Reid and Seddon” or “Seddon and Reid.”

Mr. Seddon’s first political speech, delivered in the Duke of Edinburgh Theatre, Hokitika, was a clear, plain, sensible, and vigorous statement of the policy which he had adopted, and which he followed with striking consistency throughout his Parliamentary life. Although he had already made a reputation for long speeches, on this occasion, when he might have been pardoned for over-stepping the mark, he kept well within the hour.

“I am not a stranger among you,” he began, “neither do I come without credentials.” Whether he was regarded as a

Radical or a Liberal, he desired that the electors should judge him according to the opinions he would express. He would bear allegiance to Sir George Grey, who, to his mind, "was the only statesman in New Zealand fit to lead." The speech, read at the close of his life, affords proof of his consistency and steadiness of purpose. He never ceased to advocate what he advocated then; the same speech might be safely put into his mouth at almost any part of his career. Manhood suffrage, fair taxation, reform of the Legislative Council, a good system of local self-government, the settlement of the land, the policy of the large landowners, and the restriction of Chinese immigration were some of the headings he had written in the notes to which he referred as he went along. He described the manhood suffrage movement as striking terror into the hearts of the Conservatives. He naively referred to miners as the most intelligent class of constituents, and solemnly declared, amid the applause of his audience, that he would rather be judged by a mining constituency than by any other body of men. His midnight study of Blue Books helped him in his treatment of the financial position.

"I ask," he said, "if this country is in a sound financial position? Six million pounds a year are required to carry on the government, and eight million pounds are imported from the Old Country. New South Wales, with a population of 650,000, owes £12,000,000; Victoria, with 860,000 people, owes £20,000,000; New Zealand, with only 440,000 people, owes £21,000,000; and the £5,000,000 about to be borrowed will make £26,000,000. The public debt amounts to £20 per head of population in New South Wales, to £23 in Victoria, and to no less than £62 10s. in New Zealand. I maintain that this colony has been pursuing an unsound policy. Something ought to be done to check the quantities of imported goods, and to foster local industries. With that object in view, it will be better for the people to pay a little more for a year or two. The sum of over £1,000,000 has been paid for locomotives that might have been made in the colony. Whatever our liabilities are, however, we, as good men and true, will have to meet them."

He had a rough-and-ready, but characteristically practical, solution of the native difficulty, which was then a source of much anxiety:

"The colony, instead of importing Gatling guns with which to fight the Maoris, should wage war with locomotives. Perhaps, on account of my inexperience, I take a superficial view of the native difficulty; but I firmly believe that an outbreak of hostilities among the Maoris cannot be stopped in a better

way than by pushing through the country first roads and then railways. It must be remembered that we cannot judge the Maoris by our own standards. They are aboriginals, and we can hardly take extreme measures against them. They have been treated with toleration, but even now they do not understand our laws. Successive Governments have shown a want of firmness in dealing with these people. There should be no competition in native lands. Roads and railways are being extended through those lands by means of moneys borrowed on account of taxes paid by white people, and the Government should have the right to purchase land on both sides of roads and railways."

Then, as later, he stood firmly against Chinese immigration.

"I do not think that the Chinese are desirable colonists. They are a nuisance in California, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. There has been restriction on their immigration into those places, and New Zealand, unless she wishes her shores to be deluged by Asiatic Tartars, must follow suit. I would sooner address white men than these Chinese; you can't talk to them; you can't reason with them. All you can get from them is: 'No savvy.' The Chinese in San Francisco are entering into competition with women as well as men. There are Chinese cooks, Chinese washerwomen, Chinese everything: they are a hard pill to swallow."

He declared for liberal land laws, and against "land-grabbers," whose methods of securing large blocks of land he described graphically and humorously.

Speaking of local works, he said it was necessary to construct a railway which would unite the east and west coasts of the South Island. "In all human probability," he asserted somewhat boldly, considering the position of settlement, "the line will pay as well as any other in New Zealand." A burst of applause encouraged him to go further, and in the next breath he affirmed his belief that if he was elected he could prove that the work would be highly profitable. The vigour and determination in his tones showed that he would be willing to prove anything which might help the West Coast to a larger share of public money.

As the miners' champion, he denounced the gold duty as particularly obnoxious. The digger, whose average earnings were £2 a week, was taxed more heavily than any other member of the community, and the duty, he said, ought to be swept away.

He concluded his speech by saying that he was in favour of secular education, although, he thought, "the Government



Mr. Seddon in 1879, when he first entered the
House of Representatives.

should provide only elementary education, not Latin, French, and music."

It is on record in the local newspapers, which, like other institutions, were then in their days of small things, that the speech was followed by "loud and prolonged applause." After the candidate had replied to a number of questions, some of them intended to be of a facetious character, a motion that Mr. Seddon was a "fit and proper person to represent Hokitika" was carried almost unanimously.

Mr. Seddon probably never worked harder in his life than he did on that eventful polling-day in September, 1879. All day long he drove a trap between Kumara and Hokitika, the principal centres of the electorate. Some of his old constituents maintain that he did not simply drive, but "drove furiously." At any rate, he must have taken large numbers of voters to the poll by his own efforts. His friends were in good force, also, and gave him the assistance he needed. Wherever there was a vote to be obtained, he was there, and he accepted absolutely no excuse for any supporter of his not going to the poll.

The result was announced as follows:—

Reid	...	...	...	917
Seddon	...	...	...	800
Dungan	...	...	...	561
Barff	...	...	...	463
Cumming	...	...	...	90

Messrs. Reid and Seddon were declared elected, and the junior member for Hokitika was one of the happiest and proudest men in New Zealand.

CHAPTER III.

HIS FIRST SESSION.

The general election swept the country like a great storm, but it did not clear the atmosphere. Both parties claimed a victory. Each was sanguine that an actual trial of strength in Parliament would see it triumphant.

The card, however, could not be pricked with any degree of certainty. Many members had been returned on account of their personality ; many others had been elected to secure for their districts as much money from the public treasury as possible.

These members cared less for the position of parties than for the welfare of their constituencies. Several of them had utterly failed to grasp the principles of party government. They would as soon follow one leader as another, as long as money was spent on roads and bridges and on other means of opening up the country.

The people as a whole were not acquainted with the subtleties of the party system, and some of their representatives, with a frank disregard for constitutional practice and political traditions, absolutely declined to play the game.

In regard to the leaders of parties, the Government was fortunate, but the Opposition was unfortunate.

All the members of the Government were returned. Sir William Fox, a leader of the Opposition, and the most prominent advocate of the temperance cause, had to meet the powerful influence of the liquor trade, and was defeated. Sir Frederick Whitaker also suffered defeat. On the other hand, the Opposition had gained greatly by the Selwyn electorate returning Sir John Hall, who had resigned his seat in the Legislative Council to take part in the contest.

The attention of the whole colony was centred on the House of Representatives in Wellington. Its actions were watched by crowded galleries, and spectators looked down upon the contest with keen interest.

The Governor's Speech, echoing the Premier's platform utterances, expressed an earnest hope that the new Parliament would be distinguished for the enactment of measures that would promote the happiness and welfare of the people.

It was recognised that New Zealand had reached one of the most important epochs in its history, and that the future depended largely on the action of Parliament.

The Speech maintained that, in spite of the severe monetary pressure and commercial gloom which had prevailed throughout the world for some time, the position of the colony was thoroughly sound. It was announced that there would be submitted a Bill to amend the law relating to Parliamentary elections, in which the broad principle was affirmed that every man who pays taxes, and is otherwise affected by legislation, has a right to representation.

It was proposed to introduce a Bill to provide for representation on a population basis.

Among other measures briefly sketched in the Speech was a Bill to change quinquennial Parliaments to triennial Parliaments, which, it was urged, would make members more directly responsible to their constituents, and would secure to the electors the power of returning members so frequently that public opinion, which often in young countries takes a new direction owing to the rapidly varying circumstances of the communities, would be fairly represented in every phase which it might assume.

The Government believed that these three measures were strictly in accordance with the spirit of the people and with the advanced ideas that had been steadily gaining public favour, even before Sir George Grey began his famous campaign.

The Premier, using the Speech as a mouthpiece, expressed a belief that if those measures became law, there would be permanently established throughout the colony a feeling of general contentment. "The power of legislation," the Speech

said, "will then rest largely in the people's hands, and it is to be hoped that they will maintain within the colony's limits an equitable system of taxation, a just administration of public lands, and a sound system of local self-government."

Another policy Bill was designed to suspend plurality of voting at elections of local governing bodies while those bodies were subsidised by the Government.

Sir John Hall, who had taken Sir William Fox's place as leader of the Opposition, came forward with a formidable regiment of members, and lost no time in beginning the attack. On the second business day of the session he gave notice that he would move a direct no-confidence motion as soon as the debate on the Address-in-Reply began.

Four days later the House was in the thick of the discussion. No sooner had the Address been moved and seconded than the Opposition leader rose and brought forth his charges.

His speech was moderate in tone. It was characterised by a spirit of fairness and even old-time chivalry. Many of his supporters, indeed, felt that he was far too gentle. They wanted to strike the Government with a mailed fist. He used a velvet glove. Their old leader was strong, virile, and personal in speech, and was wont to shower blow upon blow with staggering effect. Sir John Hall was courteous and kind.

His motion, however, was drafted very carefully. It left open the course of action the Opposition intended to pursue with all its might if it reached the ministerial benches. The words of the motion were: "Whilst we are prepared to give effect to the Liberal measures desired by the country, we feel bound to submit that the Government, as at present constituted, does not possess the confidence of this House."

In other words, he asked that the Liberal Party should be thrust from office, and that the Conservative Party should be allowed to carry out the Liberal policy.

The charges consisted mainly of allegations of mal-administration, notably the misuse of the telegraphic system and of the Government steamer "Hinemoa" for electioneering purposes. Sir John Hall had a "strong suspicion" that some Government telegrams had not been paid for, and he wanted

information. Ministers had broken their promises. They had made many professions of economy, but had failed to give effect to them. So far from reducing the cost of the Civil Service, they had increased it. Native affairs had been bungled. There was a great deficit. The finances were in a deplorable condition. Newspapers favourable to the Government had received the lion's share of the Government's advertising. Civil servants had been treated arbitrarily. There had been neglect in public departments. The Premier had become an autocrat.

In his first session Mr. Seddon had an excellent opportunity for gaining an insight into the most approved methods of advancing upon a party in power; and there is no doubt that he treasured in his mind memories of those stirring times when he, as a soldier in the ranks, saw leaders of parties fight on the floor of the House, meeting move by move and attack by attack.

Fifteen columns of *Hansard* contain Sir George Grey's reply to his opponent's charges.

"You have accused me," he said in tones that shook with passion. "I now accuse you. For years you have taken liberty from the people of New Zealand. You took from them their provincial institutions. You set up nothing of equal freedom in their place. You took from them their fair right of representation, so that in many places small numbers of electors, who are easily managed, could return members to Parliament. Under that system the Opposition and their friends acquired vast tracts of territory—tracts so large that if the whole of them was summed up together, honourable gentlemen would be astonished. In truth, there was growing up a system of landed magnates that prevails in Great Britain. It appeared inevitable that in a few years there would be a number of very rich men in New Zealand holding enormous properties which they really had no more right to than their fellowmen, and the great mass of people would be sunk in poverty. That is what we were rapidly coming to; and that is what we are determined to avoid. We are determined to return the benefits we have received from the country by doing a service to those amongst whom we have lived.

"We feel that we shall succeed, to some extent, at any rate. As long as we have that task before us we shall know no despair. No chill of despondency will come over us, because we are certain to achieve something. We know that it has taken many years to build up even the smallest portions of the edifice of freedom which the human race is trying to erect. Whatever the difficulties may be, we shall do something towards completing that edifice; something towards adding to its beauty; something towards making its proportions greater and better than they are. We care nothing for the taunts hurled against us; nothing for the puny and contemptible accusations that are made. We know that we shall succeed in laying here the foundations of a race which shall be in every respect a monument to the efforts of those who have striven to build it, which shall be as

a light here, at the utmost limits of the known world, lighting up the dark regions which surround New Zealand and securing to them civilization and Christianity.

“Whether we are in office or out of office, we can pursue that course and do our duty by our neighbour and our fellowman. With that object before us, it is immaterial to us what position we hold. We shall hardly turn aside to notice the contemptible accusations made to try to darken our good fame. We seek something nobler, something greater; and we shall have this solace in old age, that we can look back on something accomplished here, upon abuses swept away, upon freedom secured, upon liberties gained for the people of New Zealand, upon a system of society which secures a home to all, and hope for all men in the country. Fortified by these thoughts and desires we shall walk calmly, quietly, and cheerfully on in the course upon which we have entered, no matter what position we may occupy.”

Mr. Seddon had not intended to take part in the debate. His desire was to watch and listen, and to express his opinion by his vote in the division lobby. He had been asked by the Government Whip to speak, but had absolutely declined to do so.

During the afternoon, however, he rose without premeditation to reply to a remark made by Mr. E. Masters, the member for Grey Valley, and caught the Speaker's eye.

His reasons for wishing to give a silent vote refute the charge that, even in the first days of his political life, he was carried away by a mania to unduly force himself to the front. Probably no young member of that House spoke for the first time with greater reluctance, with more modesty, and with less assurance.

“I declined to speak,” he said, “because there are grave and experienced men here who know more than I can pretend to know of the subject; and I am aware that it is the duty of the young members to act the part of jurymen, and to come to a decision on the arguments used by those who were here before them, and also on what has been said to the constituents at the late elections.”

He then apologised to those older politicians for his boldness in differing from them, and for his inexperience:

“I trust that, though I may differ from the experienced politicians in this House upon the great principles that have been engrossing the attention of the country, they will bear with me in the remarks I am about to make. I will not, like the honourable member for Auckland City East (Mr. W. J. Speight), say that

I dare them afterwards to attack my remarks, for I feel that, owing to my inexperience, those remarks will be open to be assailed. But, Sir, with the experience I have had and the knowledge I have gleaned while serving in the position of a representative on local bodies, I shall try to convince some of those members who are on the Opposition benches that by adopting their present course they are not doing that which is right and good, and which will be beneficial to the colony at large.'

The next sentence was a justification of his action in taking to himself the right to advise members who, in his opinion, were being led in the wrong direction. Was he not a representative of a class of men who were the first in the colony to receive the right of manhood suffrage? Should not that responsibility alone give weight to what he had to say? Manhood suffrage, he explained with some pride, had been granted to the miners of the colony by the Miners' Representation Act of 1865, and he, being purely a miners' representative, represented that great privilege. He was responsible to a manhood suffrage constituency, responsible to 3,500 souls, and what was said by him and by the three other mining members from Hokitika and Greymouth should weigh well with members whose Parliamentary experience might be greater, but whose responsibilities were necessarily smaller.

Having made clear his right to be heard, he at once passed on to the no-confidence motion, supporting the Government and loudly and energetically stating its case:

“What is the position of affairs? When the motion was brought forward last session condemning the Government for maladministration, it was alleged that it had mismanaged the affairs of the country. What has been the response? How is it that you see so many members sitting on these benches? Simply because the voice of the people is with the Ministry. It is said that the only questions submitted to the country were those of manhood suffrage, triennial Parliaments, redistribution of seats, and other measures introduced by the Government; but I say more than that was submitted to the people. It was a question whether those principles having been enunciated by the Government, they were fit and proper persons to be entrusted with carrying them out. What has been the verdict in the large centres of population? In Christchurch we find Sir George Grey and Mr. Andrews, his supporter, returned. At Greymouth, also, the members were returned as pronounced Greyites. At Hokitika we find the same result. We go to Auckland, another large centre of population, and we find that the people there have also elected Greyites. The only centre that has declared against the Government is Dunedin; and the people there have declared against more than that.

“I remember the days when the Victorian miners came and landed there in numbers—men who were prepared to ‘do or dee,’ as the saying is—men who were prepared to come there and develop their country for them, and make it such a country as it had never been before. These men were told by the old identities: ‘Gang awa’ out of this with your clout-houses; we dinna want you here, we dinna want you here.’ If you take the aggregate number of votes that were recorded for candidates who declared themselves Greyites, and an aggregate number of votes polled for those who stood forward in opposition, you will find that we have polled throughout the length and breadth of New Zealand three votes to one.”

A few more sentences brought him to his favourite subject, the West Coast, its trials, sorrows, and grievances. He chose his words carefully and spoke with diffidence, “because it has been said of the West Coast members that they are accustomed to stand up and make long speeches with very little in them.”

He described the separation of Westland from the rich province of Canterbury. To his eyes, Canterbury was a Shylock, which insisted upon having its pound of flesh, so that the new County of Westland was so impoverished that it had no money with which to make its roads and bridges and other public works.

It was obvious that the speaker’s chief object was to defend the Government, but he could not prevent his thoughts from running to the West Coast. He reverted to the no-confidence motion again and again, but only to glance off it and ventilate a miners’ grievance.

Intermingled with short dissertations on triennial Parliaments, financial reforms, manhood suffrage, and the destiny of the young nation, there are frequent references to such prosaic matters as land surveys, sledge channels, tail-races, and water-races.

In view of the radical changes made in the colony’s land system by the Liberal Party when it ascended to power twelve years later, taking him with it, special interest attaches to the remarks he made in that first speech in the House on the land question.

An Irish member had referred to land tenure, and Mr. Seddon said:

“I have seen his fellow-countrymen who have left their homes standing on the wharves at Liverpool. I have seen old men and women bidding good-bye to their

sons and daughters, and shedding tears as they parted from them when the young people were starting on their voyage to this country. Then the time comes when the sons and daughters send for their fathers and mothers to come out. Do those who spent their sixty or seventy years perhaps in the land of their birth tear themselves from it without feelings of regret? The last Sunday comes—they visit the graveyard where those who have been dear to them lie. They tear themselves away from all the old associations, and they come away to this new country. Do they come willingly? Is it of their own free will that they break asunder all these old ties? No; they are driven away. They are driven from their homes by the bad laws which oppress them. I hope honourable members will bear that in mind when they vote on this occasion, and I trust that in years to come we shall not, through their votes, see the same thing happen here. I fear me that if I were to arise from my grave some 50 or 100 years hence, I should find the people driven from our shores and going to Victoria and New South Wales, where they are legislating year by year against squatocracy.”

Occasionally lighter notes were struck. He took exception to the young Greyites being compared to greyhounds by Mr. A. Saunders, the member for Cheviot. “When I heard the honourable member make that remark,” he said, “I noticed a certain ‘doggedness’ in his style of speech that did not tend to raise him in my estimation. He will find that no matter whether the young members’ colour is grey or anything else, there is a watchfulness about them. He said that the greyhounds were ‘running cunningly.’ I say whatever their running may be I hope it will be straight.”

“The honourable member for Cheviot tried to bounce the young recruits, or ‘greyhounds,’” he said later on, when he had worked himself up to some heat; “but if he attempts to bounce me he will find that my motto is ‘no surrender.’”

In a single sentence he summed up the general policy to which he has clung throughout his public career and private life. “When once I take up a position I will fight it out to the last; I will never cry ‘Peccavi’; I will never ask for quarter.”

The debate was kept going vigorously for days. At last, when all that could possibly be said had been said, and charges and counter-charges had been reiterated, the House went to a division.

Almost every member was present and in his seat. No sooner had the doors been locked than the members moved towards the lobbies.

Only four members remained in the body of the chamber. They were : Mr. Vincent Pyke, Mr. E. Hamlin, Sir F. Whitaker, and Te Wheoro, member for the Western Maori District. Mr. Pyke had taken no part in the debate. He had only that day arrived in Wellington from the south, and no one knew how his vote would go. In reply to an urgent telegram sent to him on his journey, he had stated : " I shall vote straight," but as he did not explain under which leader his " straight " voting would carry him, his reply was taken as one of his jokes. Mr. Pyke was a " fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," and he seldom lost an opportunity of making a joke, especially a good one.

He stood in the gangway for a few minutes, apparently uncertain which door to take.

In the meantime Mr. Hamlin and Sir F. Whitaker were shepherding the Maori member on behalf of the Opposition. Te Wheoro probably took less interest in the proceedings than any other person present. He was lying back on his bench, fast asleep. It was only when the Speaker exclaimed in a loud voice : " The honourable member for the Western Maori District must vote," that he was aroused from his slumbers. Rising sleepily to his feet, he moved leisurely to the Government lobby, where he was received with loud cheers.

A few minutes later Mr. Pyke, who was the last man to leave the Chamber, voted with the Opposition.

The division was so close that it was thought Mr. Pyke had decided the fate of the parties, or that there was a tie.

The galleries awaited the result breathlessly. They were not kept long in suspense. The real position was made known by an obliging member of the Opposition, who, holding up two fingers, triumphantly announced that his party had gained a victory by two votes.

Next day, the Liberal Party pointed out to its leader that the vote was against him, not them. They told him plainly that his overbearing actions had estranged members of the party, and that he was a stumbling-block in the way of the very reforms he had placed before the people.

The old leader sorrowfully accepted the position. He himself put to the caucus the motion that deposed him; and he received at his own hands his dismissal from the party which he had created and which he had led to a glorious victory.

"I am now indeed an outcast among men," he said, as he left his seat in the front benches.

The days that followed were anxious ones for both parties. They played with the items of the Liberal policy, quarrelled for possession of them, and, in their bitterness towards each other, nearly tore the measures to tatters.

Before his deposition from the ministerial benches, Sir George had prepared an elaborate Electoral Bill. It had been framed and revised, and set up in type in the Government Printing Office, but had not been printed. As soon as Sir John Hall took office he ordered a rough proof of this Bill to be brought to him. Attached to the proof there were some printed slips containing conflicting proposals, in regard to which the old Government had not been able to make up its mind. Sir John had determined that he would introduce this Electoral Bill, but, after consideration, he discarded the proof of his opponents' measure, and went back to the Bill which was passed by the House of Representatives in a previous session, and was withdrawn while going through the Legislative Council. This he took in hand, but altered to suit his views.

The first policy measure he introduced, however, was the Triennial Parliaments Bill. It was Sir George Grey's identical proposal. When the old man saw it placed on the table his imprisoned temper broke loose. He rose and in angry and haughty tones demanded to know by whose authority his measure had been brought up without his permission. His excited spleen, however, soon died down, and he bowed to the adverse circumstances that were bearing upon him.

Sir John Hall kept two portfolios open. These were dangled before prominent Liberals, and the air was thick with intrigues to induce members to desert their parties. Some of them stampeded from side to side of the House, as the session rolled and jolted uneasily along. Tamoana, a Maori member, was induced by promises to take Cabinet rank, but

when he found that the promises were not likely to be fulfilled, he quickly resigned, and went back to the Liberal Party.

The Government sat insecurely on the benches, wavering between a minority of six and a majority of one. Ministers hardly dared to bluntly refuse a demand for a railway line, a bridge, or any small work, in case they should alienate support. One day each Auckland member received a telegram from his constituents advising him to sell himself to those who made the highest bid in the shape of public works. The telegrams were inspired from Wellington; but the Auckland members were all Greyites, and they declared indignantly that they would never budge from their allegiance to their party. Just as the division was impending, however, four of them agreed to desert their party and throw in their lot with the Conservative Ministry. They did this for the sake of what they could get for their districts. Sir John Hall, on his part, agreed to use the working majority their action gave him to pass several measures to which they were pledged. There was hot indignation in the Liberal Party, and no member condemned the renegades with more scorn than Mr. Seddon.

The Financial Statement was watched for eagerly. When it was placed before the House, it disclosed the fact that Sir Harry Atkinson, the Colonial Treasurer, anticipated a deficit at the end of the year of £550,000. To meet the position and to bring the finances up to a higher level, he advised the imposition of a property tax and the repeal of the income tax. He announced that, after careful consideration, he had come to the conclusion that Sir George Grey's income tax was not applicable to the colony's circumstances. He also asked that Parliament should allow the land tax to be merged into the new property tax, placing land in the same category as other property, and making it equally liable to general taxation, but not especially so. This was a polite demand for the total abolition of Sir George Grey's land tax. Sir Harry frankly admitted that that tax had been imposed for revenue purposes, to check the growth of landed estates, and to prevent land being held for speculative purposes. He endeavoured to justify its abolition by stating that there were

about 26,000,000 acres of land for sale, and as the object the colony desired most was the settlement of the people on the land, it was unwise to impose a special burden for revenue purposes upon capital invested in land. As to the other reasons for a change, he asked what justice or wisdom there was in specially taxing the class whose growth was essential to the advancement of the colony in order to prevent the probable abuse of the acquisition of large estates by a few individuals. The Government therefore prepared to tax all the property, real and personal, each man possessed, excluding his income. The taxable property in the colony, after deducting exemption, was £113,200,000, and the estimated income from this property tax was £470,000. The Colonial Treasurer also proposed to increase the customs duties, and he threw out a hint that the duties could be increased on tea, sugar, and tobacco. His fiscal policy, in short, was almost a complete reversal of the policy with which Sir George Grey had gone to the country and which was proclaimed as the policy of the masses.

The new Government adroitly avoided a direct no-confidence vote, but its position was decidedly weak. It started at shadows and quaked at whispers. When the Premier or the Colonial Treasurer rose to state what the Ministry intended to do next month, or even next week, the announcement was received with laughter from both sides.

The House was so engrossed with the party struggle that it found little time to attend to the legislative work of the session. When it did get to work, it was ready to rush into a no-confidence debate at any minute, and to throw all other considerations aside. On several occasions its mind was so confused that it did not know where it stood. On November 7th it agreed that the franchise should be given to every woman who owned property in the colony. The following day it stood aghast at what it had done, and hastily reversed its decision, taking from women the privilege Parliament definitely made up its mind to give them without reservation fourteen years later. To the very last day of the session, the leaders were snapping and growling across the benches like angry wolves, and the session ended, as it had begun, in rancour and bitterness that

had never been surpassed in the colony's politics before, and have never been equalled since.

Amidst all the clamour, however, important work had been done. Some of it was bad, but a great deal of it was good. In the first place Sir George Grey had the pleasure of seeing the Triennial Parliaments Act placed on the Statute Book, and the mortification of knowing that it was placed there by his opponents. It remains there still, and is regarded by the colony with satisfaction.

The Qualification of Electors Act placed on the Statute Book was not the measure Sir George Grey and some of his advanced supporters desired. They demanded the recognition of the one-man-one-vote principle. What they got was an Act setting forth two qualifications, "residential" and "freehold." Under the former, a vote was given to every man who had resided in the colony for twelve months and in the district in which he voted for six months. Under the latter, every man who had a freehold property valued at £25 or over was granted the franchise. The Conservative Party looked upon the "freehold" qualification as a moderate recognition of the rights of property; the Liberal Party looked upon it as a great extension of the privileges of the propertied classes, as it gave the rich man power to vote in every district in which he liked to purchase £25 worth of freehold property.

The property tax, which was adopted, placed a burden of 1d. in the pound on the capital value of all assessed real and personal property, with an exemption up to £500. In after years it was execrated from end to end of the colony, and year after year, until it was repealed by the Liberal Party in 1891, it was the object of bitter attacks.

The session of 1879 is full of historical significance. It saw the end of the first break in the administration of the great Conservative Continuous Ministry, which governed this colony, with only two breaks, from 1870 to 1890. Five years later, the chain was broken again. Another five years had hardly passed before the famous Ministry was finally beaten out of office; and sixteen years after that, in 1905, the party

which it represented, and which ruled New Zealand throughout the days of its political childhood, passed finally away.

The changes that led up to this complete overthrow are described in other chapters. It may be stated here that the party never acknowledged, and often repudiated, the name "conservative," and it had some grounds for repudiation. Although it was often branded as non-progressive, it gave the colony several of its most liberal measures. A few of these, as in the session of 1879, it took from its opponents, but it cannot be denied that the party numbered among its members many men of progressive ideas, who had the welfare of the masses at heart.

Probably the most notable feature of this very notable session was the utter rout of the first Liberal Party in the very hour of its triumph. Sir George Grey organised the party and planned its policy; but his irascible temper and his tactless manner towards those who would gladly have served under him brought political ruin to himself and his party. He would not lead gently, and the party contained men whose sturdy spirits would brook no driving. As there was no one to take his place as leader, the Liberal Party collapsed and it stood by while its brilliant policy was used by opponents, to whom it had to concede at least half the credit for the good done by Parliament in 1879.

Another interesting feature of the session was the formation of a Young New Zealand Reform Party, to which Mr. Seddon belonged. One of its members, Mr. C. A. DeLautour, of Gisborne, has the party's minute book in his possession. The party, however, had a very short life, and the proceedings of only two meetings have been recorded. The platform comprises six rules, as follow :—

1. This party will support all objects of Liberal reform, to be agreed upon from time to time.

2. The party is called "The Young New Zealand Reform Party."

3. The names of all parties desiring to join after the first enrolment shall be submitted upon their own application to the party; and, after notice given to each member of the intention on a given day to propose the name of the applicant at a meeting to be held on such day, he shall be admitted if the majority present approves of such admission, but not otherwise. Such decision shall be arrived at by ballot at the request of any three members present.

4. For the purposes of the party there shall be a chairman, a secretary and a whip, to be appointed at the commencement of every session.

5. The party shall be subsidiary to the Liberal Colonial Party of the House and its leaders, and shall not assume the position of an independent party.

6. Analysis and review of Government measures and of departmental administration shall be divided among the members of the party according to the desires of members.

It was evidently intended to add other rules, but that was never done, and the last rule in the minute book breaks off with an unfinished sentence.

Twenty-two members of the House signed the roll of membership, which is as follows: Samuel P. Andrews, T. W. Hislop, Seymour Thorne George, William J. Speight, C. A. DeLautour, Jas. A. Tole, J. Bickerton Fisher, B. Harris, Richard John Seddon, Hugh J. Finn, W. Barron, Richard H. Reeves, Wiremu Te Wheoro, George Ireland, H. M. Tawhai, S. Shrimski, F. J. Moss, J. London, E. Hamlin, Ihaia Tainui, R. C. Reid, and J. C. Brown. Mr. DeLautour was elected chairman, Mr. London whip, and Mr. Hislop secretary.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTINUOUS MINISTRY AGAIN.

Although Sir John Hall had taken the leadership of the House, the policy-maker of the Conservative Party was the hard-working, capable, and practical Colonial Treasurer, Sir Harry Atkinson. Sir John Hall's work was done in his office. He tied himself to his table in the Premier's room. He worked there day in and day out until he went a long way towards working himself into his grave. He was able to stand the strain upon his strength for only two years and six months. In 1882 he resigned from office, but not from the House. He was succeeded in the Premiership by Sir Frederick Whitaker, who soon gave place to Sir Harry Atkinson, the real leader of the party and the backbone of the Continuous Ministry.

After the harassing session of 1879 had come to an end, Sir Harry, as Colonial Treasurer, bravely faced the deplorable financial position. His path was strewn with difficulties. The clouds had lifted in some directions, but they had settled down in others more heavily than ever. Sir George Grey handed him a deficit of £800,000. In his first year he increased it to nearly £1,000,000. That sum was wiped entirely away by a fresh loan. In 1881 the deficit was very small, and in 1882 he boasted of a surplus of £200,000. In 1883 he had a deficit of £35,000; in 1884, a deficit of £150,000. He had to add to his deficits a shaky credit on the London money market, low prices for produce, and discontent throughout the country.

The causes that led up to the position are found earlier in the colony's history than the years of the Hall-Whitaker-Atkinson Administration. The financial troubles of those days were mainly the direct result of a great Public Works Policy inaugurated by Sir Julius Vogel in 1870 and put into operation

in 1872. When Sir Julius was at the height of his reputation as the most brilliant Colonial Treasurer of the Southern Hemisphere, he told the colonists that their needs were roads, railways, and immigrants. The colonists had no hesitation in accepting the note he struck as a true one. The country was badly roaded; the railway lines covered less than fifty miles. It was almost impossible for large numbers of settlers to get their produce to markets, and quantities of it were thrown away.

The people was fascinated with Vogel's vivid pictures of the things that would be done when capital and population flowed into the country. Parliament authorised the flotation in London of a loan of ten million pounds and the sale of two and a half million acres of land for carrying out public works and assisting immigrants. The money was borrowed, the immigrants came, and the public debt rose rapidly from seven millions to twenty millions.

There was frantic speculation in land. Values rose to absurd figures, which, in many cases, would not be realised now, twenty-five years later. Money was spent with a reckless hand. The colony bounded ahead with breathless speed; but the furious march was checked, and the colonists, who had spent their days in prosperity and had come to be in want, were staggered at the suddenness of the stoppage, which jolted all industries, and left many of them complete wrecks.

Every winter saw a fresh outbreak of the unemployed agitation. Men who were not loafers, and who were capable of doing a good day's work, begged the Government to afford them relief. Hardly a public meeting of any kind was held without some reference being made to the depression. It was the general topic of conversation. It made its presence felt at all times and in all places. Trade became utterly stagnant. Employers dismissed their workers, factories ceased to operate, farmers turned away their "hands." The reports of the proceedings in the Law Courts show that each winter there was an extraordinary growth of wife desertion cases and other crimes that arise from extreme poverty.

In the centres of population leading citizens were forced to take active steps to relieve pronounced cases of destitution.

Relief depôts, controlled by Citizens' Committees, were established, and there butchers sent surplus meat, while other tradesmen contributed groceries, drapery, and coal. To afford immediate relief, some of the depôts were converted into "Soup Kitchens," and hot soup, bread, oatmeal, and potatoes were given out to the destitute poor. Many of them were Vogel's state-aided immigrants. They were strangers in a strange land, and had come out on his glowing representations, hoping to find in the new country a means of making an independence for themselves and their families.

Unemployed met in the streets every day. These meetings were often organized by agitators, but there was a serious tone in the motions passed, and generally reason in the demands made. A manifesto issued in Christchurch declared: "We want work, not soup." Large bodies of immigrants said that as the Government had brought them to the colony the Government must send them back, or enable them to go to some other country where work was available.

As the outcome of one of these meetings, a petition was sent to the President of the United States asking the States Government to help the poor of New Zealand by giving them facilities to reach America. "If this petition fails in its object," it was stated, "it will at any rate be a standing record against legislators who have brought this colony into such a deplorable condition."

In response to repeated appeals, the Government gave employment on public works. It offered single men 3s. 6d. a day, and married men 1s. a day extra, the Government to sell a day's food to each man for 1s. 3d. This attempt to solve the unemployed problem was not popular. Public and private speculation on anything like a large scale ceased. Men were afraid to invest capital in enterprise. Harvest time was looked forward to anxiously, as the effects of a bad harvest were felt far and near. Even when Nature gave bountifully, commercial, industrial, and social depression was still very marked.

People began to practice economy with a rigour that had never been equalled in the colony before. In one year the Customs duties on the necessaries of life fell off by ten per

cent., and deposits in the Savings Bank decreased by £75,000. There was a panic in the land. The public had absolutely no confidence in itself. It was rapidly declining into a miserable, pitiable, and contemptible condition of hypochondriacal nervous debility. The more it dwelt upon its complaints the worse it became, and a speculator was regarded as a madman rushing upon destruction. When national bankruptcy and repudiation were suggested, the public, thoroughly alarmed, turned round savagely upon the tactless person who had expressed in words a thought that evidently found a place in many minds.

At that time colonisation was carried on by a partnership. The colonists put into the affair their experience and their unbounded energy, but they had very little capital, most of which was supplied by the sleeping partner, the English money-lender, who charged interest ranging from four to ten per cent., according to the risk. It was the sleeping partner who took most of the profits, and there was a continual dread that he might refuse to continue operations or to grant more supplies. Sir Harry Atkinson's problem was to decrease his expenditure on the one hand, and to increase his taxation on the other, and also to avoid frightening the sleeping partner.

The position was a troublesome one for any Ministry; it was a dangerous one for a Ministry that was out of touch with the masses; but Sir Harry, who did not know what fear was, showed no hesitation. The property tax yielded him a handsome revenue. By adopting a scheme suggested by Mr. Alfred Saunders, he made a uniform reduction of ten per cent. in all Civil Servants' salaries, saving £100,000 a year. The consternation created in the Civil Service spread much further when the Government suddenly and without warning, in the middle of the grain season, increased the railway freights.

This action was the signal for a great outburst of indignation from Canterbury. The southern provinces immediately jumped to the conclusion that the Government intended to make them bear an unfair proportion of the burden of taxation. The policy proved to be a very unwise one for the Government, as it brought the southern members into close unity against it. Canterbury's woes drew Canterbury's members together, and all party feelings

were sunk in the desire to defeat the Government that was attempting to milk the "Milch Cow" dry.

Against this adverse movement, however, Sir Harry had the satisfaction of seeing the split in the Liberal Party grow wider. Sir George Grey's temper did not improve with years. He became more irascible, more obstinate, more capricious, more intolerant of the demands and opinions of his followers.

Almost imperceptibly he began to lean towards the very Government which he had previously denounced without stint, and to carry the few who still clung to him away from the bulk of the party of which he had once been the recognised chief. He rose in the House on one occasion and stated that while he had to thank the Conservative Government for its courtesy towards him, he was under no obligation to that side of the House to which he had a right to look for support.

Following his opponent's successful tactics, Sir Harry toured the colony, speaking at the centres of population, and holding out to the people hopes for better times when the depression should have passed away. As he was never a good platform speaker, however, he failed to arouse any enthusiasm, and his effort probably did his cause more harm than good.

He placed before the people a scheme for national annuities. It was not received with much favour, and never went beyond a motion in the House of Representatives. He saw in the scheme an antidote against poverty. He could get very few other people to take the same view. As a means of dealing with the unemployed difficulty the proposal was ridiculed by all parties. His suggestion was that every person should pay into a great fund, and that all should have a right to draw from it. He believed that in this way he would be able to provide against destitution without demoralising the people. Every single person between eighteen and sixty-five years of age was to receive 15s. a week sick pay, every married man 22s. 6d., every married woman 7s. 6d. The superannuation allowance was to be 10s. a week for every person from the age of sixty-five to the date of death. Every widow with one child was to receive 15s. a week, but the scale was to increase as far as 30s a week, in accordance with the size of the family, and the payment was to

be reduced as each child reached the age of fifteen. The contributions were to be compulsory, and were to be collected by staffs of inspectors and other officers.

Mr. W. Rolleston, Minister for Lands, was more successful. He gave the colony a liberal and progressive Land Act, which ranks as the best piece of legislation of its kind at that time in the Australasian colonies.

Sir George Grey also made a grand tour, following closely upon Sir Harry Atkinson's heels; but the Liberal leader's "mana" was gone. People listened to him with patience, but not with the spirit he had aroused when he offered them his Liberal Policy. They only stared when he thundered forth his magnificent phrases. His words, once accepted as those of a great reformer, now created alarm. His own people accused him openly of misrepresenting material facts and misquoting important figures. They said that he deliberately schemed to estrange the artizans of the towns from the rest of the community and to throw classes into angry estrangement. "You can always claim our friendship," he was told, "but you shall never again command our confidence as a leader."

The split in the Liberal Party threw party politics into ridiculous confusion. There were three solid parties. One followed the Government, another constituted the main Opposition, under Mr. W. Montgomery, and the third, a Middle Opposition Party, was led by Grey. Each was in a minority, and none could work effectively without assistance from one of the others. As nothing would induce the two Opposition parties to come together, the Government held office by the will of its opponents and on account of dissensions in their camp. In the first session of 1884, however, the Opposition went sufficiently far into a compromise as to agree to force the Government to a dissolution, with the hope that the country itself would break the deadlock, and, by readjusting things, make a change which would place a fairly strong Government in power.

Probably the change would have been very slight had not another element, which placed quite a different complexion on the position, and entirely altered the course of history, entered

into the political life of the colony. Sir Julius Vogel, who had resided in England for about nine years, returned to engineer an electric light and power company. He came as a private citizen, and announced that he intended to give himself up to business pursuits, and would have nothing to do with politics. During his absence, the cloud that hung over him on account of his extravagant ways and the effect of his Public Works Policy had been dispersed. He was now received by the colonists with joy. Disparagement was turned to adulation. They said that he was the man for the hour, the real leader of the Liberal Party, the one strong man who would stand against the Continuous Premier and remove him from power.

He was entertained at public banquets at Dunedin and Wellington. Demonstrations were held "in order that the public might show its deep sense and high appreciation of the many valuable services rendered by Sir Julius Vogel to New Zealand, and express its admiration for his great talents and ability."

Sir Robert Stout, whom business affairs had forced back into private life, but who had also made up his mind to enter politics again, advised Sir Julius to stand for one of the constituencies that were freely placed at his disposal. Following the advice of his friends, Sir Julius stood for Christchurch North at the general election held soon after the dissolution. He had an easy victory, and at once stepped into the leadership of practically the whole of the members from the south, and a few progressive men from the north.

His genial presence gave politics a hopefulness and a firmness that they had sadly lacked for many years. He had lost none of his optimistic dreams. His cry was still "more railways, more immigrants, more capital." He chided the colonists for their gloomy forebodings and their faintheartedness. Pointing out where new industries might be started, he urged them on to private enterprise. "Howling about your poverty and your helplessness," he said, "is the very last thing you should do." The people began to think that after all they had been very foolish in heeding the dictates of their despairing hearts; and when he held up to them the glorious examples

of pioneer colonists, who had overcome almost insuperable difficulties, they felt ashamed of their weakness. Looking around for someone to blame, they fell upon Sir George Grey, whose croakings about the depression, they said, had added to their miseries.

Throughout the whole of the South Island, Sir Julius Vogel's popularity increased as rapidly as Sir George Grey's decreased, until the spendthrift Treasurer became the idol of the southern provinces. The general election sent him to the House with thirty-three staunch followers and Sir George Grey with five. Sir Harry Atkinson had thirty-two, and Mr. Montgomery twelve, while there were seven independent Opposition members. The Government, in short, had thirty-two followers, the combined forces of the real Opposition numbered fifty-two, and Sir George Grey's party had almost collapsed.

As soon as members assembled in Wellington for the session, a solid Opposition was formed. Sir Robert Stout and Messrs. Ballance, Montgomery, and Macandrew, all strong men, helped Sir Julius Vogel to draw up a scheme for a new Ministry. They offered Sir George Grey a seat in it. The old leader, however, could not overcome his dislike to the new leader, and not only refused the offer, but cut himself off from the party by entering into direct communication with Sir Harry Atkinson. Sir Robert Stout and Mr. Montgomery waited upon him at his residence and asked him to give them help. Merely saying that he would consider the matter, he turned and walked out of the room. Next day, when a deputation waited upon him and asked him to accept a portfolio, he flatly refused to be a member of a Ministry in which Sir Robert Stout was Premier and in which Sir Julius Vogel held any office whatever. He told Stout that in making an alliance with Vogel, he had done a wrong to the party with which he had been associated.

Vogel's infirmities would not allow him to take the Premiership, which therefore fell to Stout, with Vogel as Colonial Treasurer and Ballance as Native Minister and Minister for Lands. It was not a workers' Government, but it was a Government of hard workers, and it lost no time in settling down to the task it had taken in hand. It seemed that the ideal strong

Government had been obtained for the colony at last, and that everything would run smoothly again, without the turmoil of party troubles.

The Colonial Treasurer began to prepare another brilliant Public Works Policy, the Premier hinted that sweeping reforms would be placed before the House, the Minister for Lands busied himself with a scheme of land settlement that would give homes to large numbers of people, and would lead to a great revival of settlement and of the agricultural industry.

The new Government's bright prospects were freely commented upon, and congratulations poured in upon it from all parts of the colony. Nobody dreamt for a moment that New Zealand was approaching an extraordinary series of events, and that party lines would be obliterated and parties themselves thrown into a state of confusion which is probably unrivalled in the history of party government.

A few hours after Ministers had taken their seats on the treasury benches, Mr. J. W. Thomson, a private member from Clutha, moved a vote of want of confidence. He was a personal friend of most members of the Ministry, and had fought side by side with Sir Robert Stout on several occasions. To the surprise of the Government, the vote went against it, and six strong men, with the country behind them, were turned from office before they had time to formulate a policy or announce definitely what they intended to do. This result is largely attributable to Sir George Grey. He joined Sir Harry Atkinson in making an active canvass against the new Government. Many members who had been inclined to support the Stout-Vogel combination and had voted it into office were alarmed by Grey's conversations and his predictions that the brilliant Sir Julius would initiate another extravagant Public Works Policy, more elaborate than the one of 1870, and certain to bring greater disaster on the colony.

Having been sent for by the Governor, Mr. Thomson made several attempts to form a Ministry. He went from Grey to Atkinson and back again to Grey, but without avail, and finally relinquished the attempt. Sir George, having had the task placed in his hands, consulted every leading member of

the House except Vogel. He exhausted all possible combinations of parties and leaders. He went as far as to suggest that parties should meet at a common conference and take a ballot for members of a new Government, to be supported by all. As for himself, he expressed his willingness to waive any claim to place he might be allowed to possess if the combined forces would help him to carry the measures he had at heart. Canterbury members still marched together as a solid and powerful phalanx. Sir George besought them to follow him as they had in former days; but they, still looking to their new leader, turned their backs on the veteran, and he, beaten at every point, reluctantly told the Governor that he could not form a Ministry.

It was now Atkinson's turn again. He was sent for on the advice of Grey, who had lost none of his deep and angry feeling towards Vogel. Atkinson, who had played a waiting game, thought that his opportunity had come; but while he was asking the Governor to give him time to arrange a Ministry, members were declaring that if the no-confidence motion in the Stout-Vogel Government could be moved afresh, it would not be carried. Some members felt that the motion should be rescinded and the Government reinstated.

Another suggestion, which seemed to meet with a good deal of acceptance, was that all the strong men of the House should be brought together and be asked to form themselves into a Ministry, Grey, Stout, Vogel, Atkinson, Ballance, and Montgomery walking six abreast at the head of a mighty array, with one thought, one purpose, one grand object in view. This idea captivated poetical minds, but it was quickly discarded on account of its thorough impracticability.

Besides personal feeling among the leaders of the different parties, there was much provincial jealousy. Auckland and Taranaki would not pull with Otago and Canterbury. Therefore, Grey and Atkinson, from the North, would not pull with Stout and Vogel, from the South. Dunedin idolised Vogel; Wellington hated him and all his works. Nearly the whole of the North Island stood for the old Continuous Ministry;

nearly the whole of the South Island for the new order of things represented by the Stout-Vogel combination. A meeting of Canterbury members unanimously decided to vote as one man against any Ministry whatever of which Vogel was not a member. It was largely a question of the North versus the South, and feeling ran so high that the South began to consider whether it would not be better to separate and let each island attend to its own domestic affairs.

While these wranglings were taking place, and the business of the colony was brought to a standstill, Mr. Seddon came into greater prominence than he had yet achieved. Rising in the middle of one of the party quarrels that were of daily occurrence, he made a speech which found an echo in every centre of population. It was telegraphed in full to the newspapers, and was commended for its practical common sense, and the desire it displayed on the part of the speaker to get on with the work Parliament was supposed to be attending to. Remarking that he had a right to let the people of the colony know the true position, so that they might fairly judge those whom they had sent to represent them, he detailed the history of the previous few months, but he made no further apology beyond saying that "this is a time for plain speaking, and I am going to speak plainly to-day." He was surprised at Sir George Grey's actions, he said, and he could not understand how that statesman regarded it as his duty to help in unseating those who were endeavouring to do good to the country. He wanted to know why men who had worked with Sir George and for him should be turned off the treasury benches before they were able to say what schemes they had devised to chase away the bad times that had overtaken the colony. The father of the property tax, the head and front of the Continuous Ministry, and the man who was supposed to be robbing the "unborn millions" of their birthrights, was now to be supported by the very statesman who had denounced him. Mr. Seddon added that the whole proceeding struck him as being exceedingly inconsistent, and it would require a great deal of explanation to make him see it in a different light. It was a "lamentable state of affairs," and a "sorry spectacle." The session had made absolutely no

progress, he concluded, and the pleasant pastime of "cabinet-making" would have to be brought to an end.

The speech had a powerful effect both in the House and among the electors. It was accepted as an exposure of the absurdity of Parliament giving up session after session to intrigue and conspiracy when the colony's affairs were waiting to be set in order. It was the first time that a member had come forward to show the country the comic-opera character of the proceedings and the great burlesque that was being acted. There is no doubt that Sir George Grey brought Mr. Seddon's attack upon him. This was recognised by many Liberals, who endorsed Mr. Seddon's opinion.

Having succeeded in forming a Ministry, Sir Harry Atkinson found himself again in office, with a minority behind him, and formidable opponents in front. The list of his Ministers affords a good illustration of the looseness of party ties in those days, and the freedom with which members went from one party to another without hesitation, and, apparently, without any qualms of political conscience. Mr. E. Wakefield had been a noted man on account of his uncompromising opposition to Atkinson's policy from beginning to end. He was elected for the Selwyn electorate, in Canterbury, for the sole purpose of helping to oust the Continuous Ministry. He told the electors that the Atkinson Government had departed from the traditions of its good friend, Sir John Hall, and that it was his privilege to ask the people to support him in order to turn the Ministry out of office. He redeemed his election pledges by making quite the best attack upon the Atkinson Government in the session of 1883. He followed this by posing as one of Vogel's most extravagant eulogists; and he expressed an ardent wish to sit on the benches with Vogel. Instead of doing that he secured a seat in the new Ministry, and sat side by side with Atkinson, taking part in his counsels and fighting his battles.

The confusion of parties, in fact, led to many anomalies in politics. Some of them have continued to this day. Most members followed leaders, not political principles. They dropped on to one side or the other, and from one side to the other, without regard to Conservatism or Liberalism. A road, a

bridge, or a short railway line often made all the difference. There was no great sacrifice of principle in this action, as in every Ministry that has ruled the colony from the time it was granted responsible government there has been a strange mixture of the two great political principles that generally divide parties in the Old Country. There always have been Liberals and Conservatives on both sides.

If things had been arranged with any degree of fitness, Vogel and Atkinson would have been together, Grey and Stout, Ballance and Rolleston. As a matter of fact, Atkinson made a distinct offer that he and another member to be named by him, should join the Stout-Vogel combination. There were several negotiations in reference to a coalition, but they all fell through, as Atkinson's party insisted upon having a majority in the Cabinet, and most of Atkinson's followers were opposed to the reforms Stout considered necessary.

Even if the Stout-Atkinson coalition could have been put into practice, there was the difficulty of filling the Premiership. Would it be taken by Atkinson, Stout, or Vogel? And would the followers of all three be led by any one of the trio? It was suggested by Atkinson that this difficulty might be overcome by appointing to the Premiership a member of the Legislative Council who was of a neutral tint and had no particular political leanings at all. In that case, he said, there could be no heart-burnings; but this scheme also fell to the ground, and the Continuous Ministry was left to take its chances against the full force of the opposition from the South Island, which still insisted that it would have none but Stout and Vogel.

A few days later, Sir George Grey's little party met and decided to vote solidly against the Continuous Ministry. When the next no-confidence motion was moved, therefore, all Grey's supporters, together with their leader, were arrayed in opposition to the men they had first ousted and then helped into office. By this time the House had come to the conclusion that it had played long enough at seating and unseating Ministries. It declared that the Continuous Ministry would have to stand down, for a time at any rate, and Sir Harry Atkinson retired

into opposition with a majority of eight against him, and with a deficit of £150,000 in the public accounts.

In great good humour with itself, the House settled down to the real business of the session. It worked unreasonable hours, introduced many new Bills, appointed committees, asked for innumerable returns, produced a bulky Statute Book, and closed the session with the second break in the chain of the Continuous Ministry.

CHAPTER V.

DAYS OF PAROCHIALISM.

While these events were taking place, Mr. Seddon's influence in Parliament was growing, and he was working hard, keeping his duty to his constituents before him and helping to bring about general reforms.

It was not long before he made a reputation for himself as a speech-maker and a "stonewaller." In his second session, it was told as a joke how he had nearly killed *Hansard*, which it was proposed to abolish on the score of economy. There was no closure then, and the only breaks on talkative members were the ordinary rules of Parliamentary debate. Mr. Seddon looked upon *Hansard* as a useful and necessary publication; but he occupied so much time in saying so that he brought it into a critical position, many members using his speech in support of the contention that the record of speeches was more bulky than useful. After pointing out that members' speeches for the session had monopolised 52 yards of *Hansard*, at a cost of £2,000, he continued to speak for four hours, and when the humorists measured his space, they found that it was eight yards long, and the cost was £300.

His most notable "stonewalling" tactics were adopted in 1881, when Sir John Hall introduced the Representation Act which was passed in that year. It was one of a series of measures devised by the Continuous Ministry. It was deemed necessary on account of the uneven growth of population in the colony, and it brought about a redistribution of seats. Mr. Seddon and several other members, however, looked upon it as a dangerous measure, as it gave more power to property and less to the people. He felt that the measure would give the wealthy classes an overwhelming majority of votes. To his eyes, the Bill was a piece of rank Conservatism

when it ought to have been a most Liberal measure. It considerably reduced the representation of the West Coast, together with that of Nelson and other outlying districts, and Mr. Seddon was up in arms against it.

He and other members, mostly from the West Coast and Nelson, gathered together and determined to block the Bill as far as the rules of debate would allow. They were led by the Hon. A. Pitt, one of Nelson's members, and now, in 1906, a member of the Ministry. They held a caucus, drew up a plan of campaign, and, as soon as the Bill went into committee, began their obstructive tactics. They were so successful that they "held up" the House for 48 hours. During that time it sat continuously to discuss the Bill, which, however, made absolutely no progress. Twenty-three motions to report progress were made and defeated. The Government announced that it would take no other business until the Bill was out of the way, and many important measures were kept waiting. One of the obstructionists, finding his ideas running short, delivered a splendid speech on the colony's fauna and flora, with which he was well acquainted. Another fell back upon apiaries and foul-brood among bees. Each man took his particular hobby for his text, and it is not surprising that Mr. Seddon found an unlimited source of inspiration in the West Coast and its people. He knew them all. Using the electoral roll of the district as a chart, he brought the electors individually under the notice of the House. He commenced with the letter "A," and reached the end of "K," before he sat down.

The chairman of committees, utterly worn out, irritated beyond endurance, and convinced that the limits had been reached, refused to accept any more motions to report progress or that he should leave the chair.

Mr. W. Gisborne, the member for Totara, amidst cheers and some excited "hear, hears," immediately rose and moved that progress should be reported. He brought himself into conflict with the chair in order that the Speaker's ruling might be obtained on the chairman's decision. An excited discussion took place, and resulted in Mr. Gisborne being reprimanded by the Speaker and fined £20, but the incident broke down the

most famous "stonewall" of the New Zealand Parliament, and the Bill went through all its stages without further opposition. The fine, it may be stated, was paid by the people of Nelson.

Mr. Seddon endeavoured to have inserted in the Bill clauses abolishing the freehold qualification at the election of members of Parliament, and affirming the one-man-one-vote principle, but he was defeated, in the first case by 31 votes and in the second by 10.

He searched for something useful to do, and for abuses to be stopped. In all his actions in this direction, however, he was cautious and far-seeing. He had no wild schemes of regenerating mankind. His reforms were practical, and mostly affected conditions that came under his own notice. Neither ridicule nor abuse deterred him from his purpose, and if he failed to gain his object one year, he was more persistent in his search after it the next year. Patience and labour were his watchwords in those early days of his career. The West Coast and its requirements continued to occupy most of his attention. That part of his career is marked by motions, questions, and applications for a post office, a bridge, or some other public work. In later years he looked back, with some degree of surprise at his own patience, to the time when he struggled for Westland's needs against his fellow members and obdurate Ministers. In every way he showed that he was an ideal member for the constituency he represented; and his healthy, happy optimism made him the very man for work in the Parliament of a young country.

Outside of the demands of the West Coast, he busied himself mostly with local government and with legislation that directly affected the special interests he represented. Reports of his speeches covering more than the first twelve years of his Parliamentary life may be searched without the discovery of any trace of the great imperialistic sentiments he expressed in later years. The humanitarian spirit, however, is always present.

The unemployed found in him a practical friend. He often expressed a dread that the conditions from which he had fled in England would be brought into the new land. He was strangely

impressed with the fact that the mechanics he met when he first came to this part of the world were more robust than those he had known in England, and were, apparently, quite a different class of men. He saw that the working classes were rapidly developing an independent spirit, and were asserting themselves with an insistence that was likely to be a very important factor in the colony's future. Up to 1890, neither the artizans nor the lower working classes were represented in New Zealand's Parliament as a section of the population that should be treated with special consideration. There were in the House of Representatives men like Mr. Seddon, who had worked hard with their hands. Sir Harry Atkinson once stated that he had considered himself passing rich when his wages were 4s. 6d. a day, and other members boasted of their exploits in driving teams of bullocks, building their own houses, and erecting fences on their own properties; but these members had other interests than those of labour to attend to. Many of them, indeed, were antagonistic to the demands of labour, and turned a deaf ear to supplications for assistance from those who had come to the colony at the invitation of the State and found that there was no work for them to do.

From the beginning, Mr. Seddon looked forward hopefully to the time when the working classes would have their own representatives, and not rely on men who gave them only a small share of attention. He was convinced that they did not possess as much representation as they were entitled to, and to that defect in the Legislature he attributed the absence of measures that would alleviate distress and make life in lower grades more worth living. He took every occasion to champion the interests of the railway servants, who were the principal sufferers of Atkinson's retrenchment policy.

To school teachers he was a good friend and protector. He spoke in indignant tones of the treatment given to them. Even then he had in his mind the teachers' superannuation scheme he was able to put into operation in 1905. A remark made in the House turned his attention to the teachers' position, and he was surprised to learn in 1883 that the colony possessed no fewer than 1,227 competent teachers who received less than £100

a year. It was a disgrace and a blot on the educational system, he said, and he wanted to know how it had come about and why it was not wiped away.

Much of his spare time was devoted to studying local government; and the Stout-Vogel coalition found in him a valuable assistant when it took the subject into consideration and revolutionized the colony's system. In 1884 he seized upon the unsatisfactory position of the people in regard to public auctions, and submitted a Bill to Parliament to deal with auctioneers, providing for the rendering of account sales, when required, to persons interested in auctions, and for the issuing of auctioneers' licenses. At that time auction sales might be held at any time of the day or night, but this Bill provided, in the interest of producers, that no sales should be held at night except stock sales which could not be finished in the day time. For seven years he appeared before the House with his Bill, and finally induced Parliament to pass it soon after he entered Mr. Ballance's Ministry. Under it the license fees go to local bodies; night auctions, except in connection with cattle sales, are prohibited; pawnbrokers are not allowed to hold auctioneers' licenses; and in order to protect the public against fraud, account sales must be rendered within fourteen days.

The first Bill he introduced into Parliament was one of the measures he had devised to relieve the miners of the heavy burdens under which they laboured. His proposal was to abolish the gold duty. The speech he made in support of this Bill had been very carefully prepared. He pointed out in the first place that the West Coast up to that time had exported large quantities of gold. As it was purely a goldfields district the inhabitants had to import all their goods; and seeing that the miners had to pay heavy duties on those goods, he contended that, with the gold duty, the West Coast people paid more to the revenue than was fair.

He contended that the miners of the colony had not received justice at the hands of the Legislature. The population of the Coast was 13,000; but not more than 4,000 were actually engaged in working on the goldfields. If the same rate had been imposed upon the export of wool, he added, there would

have been a great outcry from all parts of the colony, and the House would very soon have been compelled to make a reduction.

The position he assigned to the miners in the scheme of colonization is shown by the fact that he regarded them as the real pioneers. Would New Zealand, he asked, be in its present position if it had not been for the miners? He spoke of their intelligence, and said that in a district in which he had lived for some years there was a population of from 6000 to 7000, and it required only three policemen. He affirmed his readiness to pit the ordinary miner against the working man in any of the neighbouring districts. There were traits in the character of the miner, he said, as he continued his eulogium, which must at all times commend themselves to all who had lived among miners for many years, as he had done. As to charitable institutions, miners gave one pound for every shilling contributed by other sections of the community in the same position. He had been on the goldfields for nearly a sixth of a century, and he had never known a person who was allowed to go without a meal or a cup of tea. In the miner's hut there was always a pannikin of tea and a loaf of bread for any person in want. Miners were not the class of men they had been represented to be in the days gone by. They were, indeed, a most desirable class of colonists. Their average wages were thirty shillings a week, and out of that they had to pay £2 10s. a year as a special tax.

At that time about nine-tenths of the county revenue of the goldfields district was derived from the gold duty, and it was feared that the abolition of the duty would cause serious financial trouble. His Bill was opposed strongly by the different Governments, but he introduced it session after session, and finally succeeded in having it passed in 1887.

He turned his attention to the colony's divorce laws. He believed that habitual drunkenness was a good ground for separation, as there was nothing so deplorable to his mind as "a good soul, a good wife, having to struggle and to provide for herself and her family and then be abused by a drunken husband."

He took a prominent part in turning the Atkinson Ministry from the benches in 1884. He was still in his parochial days, and the principal crime he imputed to the Government was in connection with the goldfields. He did not stop there, however, and stated that most of the distress in the South Island was due to the blunders—"gross wrongs," he called them—of those in power. From generalities he passed on to specific cases. In them he found ample justification for the uncompromising attitude taken up by himself and by the majority of the Opposition members. He saw in the colony's position a great danger. The spread of the depression distressed him, and he seldom spoke in the House without referring to it in some way.

Time after time he urged that legislation should be applied to some of the industries that were crumbling to pieces under the adverse conditions against which they had to fight. While theories, based on the writings of great economists, were being bandied from side to side of the House, he was seeking to improve the colony's position by attending to the small things around him, and he pointed out to the Government that although local affairs might seem of minor importance to the General Government, they were of the utmost importance to the people whom they closely concerned.

He never spoke on party questions except as one of the rank and file of the Opposition. He was quite content to do his duty as the representative of the miners, and when he had done that his ambition was satisfied. He had no thought of leading the fight against the Continuous Ministry. When he came to the front, as often happened, he was careful to explain that he was forced into a prominent position. He seldom made one of his vigorous attacks on the Government without stating in detail the causes that brought him to his feet. Frequently he tempered these attacks, or, rather, made them stronger, by expressing his appreciation of the manly qualities possessed by the Premier and his colleagues. He never forgot that Sir Harry Atkinson commanded the respect of the people.

It was the "fighting Premier's" readiness to enter into battle at all times and on all subjects that appealed to him. In that respect he saw in Sir Harry a kindred spirit. "On the

goldfields," he said once, at the conclusion of an exceptionally fierce attack, "the man who has the courage to fight for what he thinks is right is the man who is respected. I believe I have that courage, and I believe the Premier has it, and that is why we are both respected in New Zealand."

What struck him most in regard to party politics then was that they had no right to exist. He endeavoured to get away from them; but, like many other young politicians, he found that he had to choose under which flag he would fight.

Although he believed that Liberalism and Conservatism had no real meaning here, he felt that the colony was divided by a distinct line of demarcation. "It is the rich and the poor; it is the wealthy people and the landowners against the middle classes and the labouring classes. That is the real position in New Zealand. Wealth has power, and wealth asserts its sway, and I call upon every man on the Opposition side of the House, who desires to do his duty, to prevent the representation of wealth on the Government benches to the detriment of the people."

He was quite willing to work in a humble sphere, but he did not undervalue his services to Parliament any more than he undervalued his services to the County Council. He saw no virtue in making uncalled-for and unnecessary sacrifices. He always affirmed that the legislative labourer, like any other labourer, is worthy of his hire. When he first entered Parliament it was the practice for the House of Representatives to vote a sum of about £200 every session to each member of the House. This arrangement met with his strong disapproval. After two years experience of it, he introduced a Payment of Members Bill, which was framed on a measure in force in Victoria, and definitely fixed the honorarium, but he was not successful then in passing it through Parliament.

He was not afraid, even when retrenchment was the order of the day, to demand the sum he considered he had earned by his efforts. He watched repeated divisions on the question in the House, and was struck by the fact that wealthy members voted for a reduction of the honorarium, while poor members, like himself, asked that they should be paid in something like an

adequate manner. He took up this attitude largely on account of an instance of gross public ingratitude that had come under his notice before he entered politics. A friend of his had been a member of the House for many years, and had served the country in other directions. At a public meeting at which Mr. Seddon was present this gentleman told how he had enjoyed the people's confidence year after year, toiling for them and receiving as thanks the plaudits that greeted him. A position arose in which he had to assert his independence. In doing that, he voted against Sir George Grey and for Sir Harry Atkinson. For his sin he lost the confidence he valued highly, but not above everything else. He explained to his constituents that his views towards Sir George Grey had changed, but said that he ought not to be punished on account of his independence. He referred the people to his past services and asked that they should be weighed against his recent action. While he was appealing in that strain, someone in the audience said, "See here, old hoss, it is about time you were blistered and turned out." In other words, after he had faithfully served his exacting master for many years, he was to be turned away, as it was thought that his services were no longer of much advantage.

The appeal and the brutal response made an impression on Mr. Seddon that clung to him through his life. He never forgot that the public, as a rule, is not a generous master, and that it has no scruples in turning away faithful servants who are no longer of any use.

Not once or twice, but on many occasions, Mr. Seddon affirmed that the public ought to pay for the legislative services it received. He felt that had he not insisted upon being paid for his services he would have been doing an injustice to himself and his family by remaining in politics. He never liked the word "honorary," which he looked upon as a sham, and he asked in his blunt and forcible manner why the sum granted by Parliament should not be officially known as "payment of members."

When Sir Harry Atkinson succeeded in reducing the honorarium from £210 to £150 in 1887, Mr. Seddon made one

of his longest and most vigorous speeches. He was opposed to the proposal, which seemed to him to be purely in the interests of the wealthy classes. On being importuned by his friends to assume a resolute and self-sacrificing attitude, in face of the heavy reductions made in salaries of Civil Servants, he agreed to a reduction of 25 per cent. in the honorarium, on the understanding that it would be raised when the financial crisis was over. He told his fellow members who were in favour of a reduction that if one of them offered to stand for a West Coast constituency and to give his services free, the electors would tell him that he was too cheap, and would not have him at any price. It was not till he was Minister for Public Works in 1891 that he succeeded in having the principle of payment of members affirmed definitely by both branches of the Legislature.

It is a notable fact, in view of the eminence to which Mr. Seddon rose as an imperialist in his later days, that he took no steps to support those who endeavoured in 1883 to extend the Empire's bounds in these parts of the world.

There were colonial statesmen who saw that if the islands of the Pacific fell into the possession of any other Power, great difficulties might arise at any time, and New Zealand might be cut off from a large portion of the trade that was being rapidly opened up with outlying islands.

The subject was brought before the people of New Zealand by the proceedings of the Intercolonial Convention held in Sydney at the end of 1883 to discuss a proposal that Great Britain should be urged to acquire further dominions in the South Pacific. New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, New Zealand, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Fiji were represented at the Convention, which took up a strong attitude in regard to the intention of France to transport criminals to the Pacific. The motions it passed are sufficiently interesting to be given in full. They are:—

(1) That further acquisitions of dominions in the Pacific, south of the Equator, by any foreign Power, would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia, and injurious to the interests of the Empire.

(2) That this Convention refrains from suggesting the action by which effect can best be given to the foregoing resolution in the confident belief that the

Imperial Government will promptly adopt the wisest and most effectual measures for securing the safety and contentment of this portion of Her Majesty's dominions.

(3) That having regard to the geographical position of the Island of New Guinea, the rapid extension of British trade and enterprise in Torres Straits, the certainty that the island will shortly be the resort of many adventurous subjects of Great Britain and other nations, and the absence or inadequacy of any existing laws for regulating their relations with the native tribes, this Convention, while fully recognising that the responsibility of extending the boundaries of the Empire belongs to the Imperial Government, is emphatically of opinion that such steps should be immediately taken as will most conveniently and effectively secure the incorporation with the British Empire of so much of New Guinea and a small island adjacent hereto as is not claimed by the Government of the Netherlands.

(4) That although the understanding arrived at in 1878 between Great Britain and France, recognising the independence of the New Hebrides, appears to preclude this Convention from making any recommendation inconsistent with that understanding, the Convention urges upon Her Majesty's Government that it is extremely desirable that such understanding should give place to some more definite engagement, which shall secure these islands from falling under any foreign dominion; at the same time, the Convention trusts that Her Majesty's Government will avail itself of any opportunity that may arise for negotiating with the Government of France, with the object of obtaining the control of those islands in the interests of Australasia.

A few months previously, Sir George Grey had introduced into the House of Representatives an Annexation and Confederation Bill, which passed its second reading without discussion or a division, and was only slightly altered in committee. The measure authorised the appointment of a Committee to take steps to annex to New Zealand any islands not possessed by foreign Powers. It was thought that New Zealand had a commercial interest in the islands, as well as an imperialistic interest in common with other parts of the Empire. The islands, it was argued, would supply New Zealand with sugar, rice, coffee, cocoa, and other articles, while they would take from the colony many articles which it produced, and for which at that time there did not seem to be an extensive market. No reason could be seen why a lucrative trade should not grow up at the same time as the boundaries of the Empire were being extended and the bonds were being cemented. Besides that, it was obvious that the islands lying near New Zealand's door might be inhabited by a population that would give New Zealanders a great deal of trouble. It was not proposed to give

the colony absolute power to annex new territory, but only to open up the way by negotiations, and when arrangements were completed they would be submitted for approval to the Imperial Government.

It is a strange coincidence that on the very day on which Sir George Grey and other members of the New Zealand Parliament met to discuss the scheme of his Bill, Mr. Gladstone announced in the House of Commons that Great Britain had decided to follow a policy almost exactly the same as that which the Bill sketched.

The islands themselves were anxious for federation. Fiji, especially, wished to be attached to New Zealand. The European inhabitants of that group were unanimous in their desire for political connection. They believed that their country should be a part of the "Dominion of Australasia." Many of them were originally New Zealand colonists, and still looked on New Zealand as their home, and it was their ambition to throw in their lot with the colony, which, although notoriously at loggerheads with itself, was making a good fight in the battle of life.

Sir George Grey's Bill passed both Houses of the Legislature, and it may still be found among the statutes, but it has never received the royal assent, and has never been put into operation. In his romantic language, Grey said that New Zealand had been ordained by Nature to be the future Queen of the Pacific. He saw nothing to rob her of her position except gross failure to attend to the duties Providence placed before her. He introduced again the famous unborn millions and the great nation that he saw coming in the distance, prosperous, powerful, and unconquerable. "These are great islands, capable of carrying more than thirty millions of European inhabitants, situated in a very large ocean, separated by such vast tracts of sea from other countries that it seems almost impossible for a army strong enough to do much injury to be sent against it. Within our shores there are strongholds of a most extraordinary kind. The Maoris have shown us in the past how to use those strongholds. They could make it impossible for an army to penetrate into this country and hold it for any length of time. I look upon New Zealand as being absolutely unconquerable. I

believe that centuries will elapse before an army is able to obtain even a footing on its shores. I believe that we are continually advancing to a position which I have always held we should advance to, the virtual government of the Pacific."

The old man was on his favourite theme. His mind was full of empires and dominions. He again saw a great nation arising out of the Pacific, and New Zealand taking rank among the Powers of the world. There was no limit to the flight of his fancy. He asked that the colony should restore the Provincial Councils. "They were schools in which statesmen might be raised in all parts of the colony, and we might send our governors and legislators to all the distant islands of the Pacific, to unite them by our common system of education, by our common form of government, by one class of habits. We could found as great an Empire as the world has seen, giving employment to every class of our population, our seamen, our merchants, and our farmers. From among our young men we could send lawyers, legislators, physicians, and governors, under whatever name they might go, to these countries. I believe that you could thus awaken the life of a nation here, and put it in the fairest possible position to attain success."

A committee appointed by the House reported that it considered that it was the duty of the British Government, in the circumstances, to take steps for the establishment of its rule over all islands in the Pacific which were not already occupied or protected by a foreign Power. This proposal was received with little favour by many members. They asked, "Will it pay?" The aspirations were considered too high for a young colony. The proposal was venturesome, and there was dread that the craving for dominion would result in disaster. There were members who asserted that Great Britain had no need to extend her dominion beyond the countries already occupied, and that there were plenty of burdens on the British taxpayer as it was, without adding to them; and Sir George Grey's schemes of Empire were not adopted.

Mr. Seddon was not a student of literature. Newspapers, Blue Books, Budgets, and Parliamentary papers afforded him most of the reading he desired at this period of his career.

A fellow member tells how he once saw Mr. Seddon reading a book in the Assembly Library. Anxious to ascertain what had engaged his attention, the member waited until he had put it down, when he found that it dealt with the exploits of pirates on the Spanish Main.

What impressed his fellow members most was the wonderful energy he put into everything he took in hand. He never spared himself. He never seemed to need to do so. Apparently, it was quite impossible to tire him. He soon learned the forms of the House by heart, and it was not long before none knew better than he how to observe them, and, occasionally, how to break them. This knowledge gave him a rather formidable aspect as far as the Speaker and Chairman of Committees were concerned, and he sometimes gave them a trying time.

He was no orator. He did not stop to pick and choose his sentences. They came in a full flood of tumbling words, rushing along with a great sound, like many waters. There could have been no more striking contrast than that of his speeches and those of his old friend, Sir George Grey. It was on the subject rather than the method of expression that he relied for effect. He missed no points, and seldom made a weak one. His knowledge of details was enormous. The masses of particulars he dealt with tended to make his speeches heavy. Had he generalised more he would have been listened to in the House with greater pleasure. He felt, however, that he was there not to supply amusement, but to work. His public duties and the affairs of the country seemed to him to be the last things to be treated lightly. He had no sympathy with those who regarded politics as a pastime.

As he sat in the House in his first years and listened to the debates, he often wondered why he was there, and what he was to do to help in making the colony's laws. Throughout this part of his career, however, he always heard the West Coast calling to him. He continually reminded himself that it was the people of the Coast who had sent him to Parliament, and that his first duty was to them, and his second duty to the rest of New Zealand.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STOUT-VOGEL COMBINATION.

The new spirit shown by the House when it discharged the Continuous Ministry was caught up by the Stout-Vogel Government, which made an honest attempt to improve the colony's position at home and abroad.

One of its first actions, however, was to reward Canterbury for the magnificent services rendered by that province's members. For many years Canterbury residents had clamoured for the construction of a railway to unite the east and west coasts of the South Island. This work was included in Sir Julius Vogel's Public Works Policy of 1870. Sir George Grey poetically described the line in 1879 as the bond of matrimony between two wealthy, beautiful, and powerful provinces. Mr. Seddon and other southern members never let a session pass without some reference to it. The route had been fixed, surveys had been made, information had been collected, and Canterbury and Westland had raised their voices in concert to urge the State to take practical steps so that a beginning might be made.

In spite of opposition from Auckland, the Government had a Bill passed authorising the construction of the line by a private company on the land-grant system. The carrying of the Bill was received with jubilation in Canterbury and Westland, and the people looked forward to the speedy construction of a railway which was to open up a new country and create another little world. Over twenty years later, however, the line is incomplete, and at least five more years must pass before it can bring about the union of the east and the west.

In his Financial Statement of 1884, Vogel used a happy phrase, which expressed the bright view he took of the dismal outlook. "With a reinstated finance and diminished expenditure," he said, "our country will raise itself from its apathy and spring

forward with leaps and bounds of progress." For years afterwards the colony rang with the words, and "leaps and bounds, leaps and bounds!" became almost a national cry.

The Colonial Treasurer showed that he was thoroughly in earnest. A commencement was made with the construction of a trunk railway to run the whole length of the North Island, from Wellington to Auckland. The Otago Central and the Hokitika-Greymouth lines were pushed forward with a vigour that pleased the districts interested as much as it surprised the Government's opponents; and other works were begun almost before the Government's intentions were thoroughly realised.

The system of local government was radically altered. The Roads and Bridges Construction Act, which had defined the position of local bodies and restricted their duties, was repealed. That Act allowed the General Government to borrow money to enable local works to be carried out. Vogel believed that it was unwise to provide funds for local bodies out of loans raised for general colonial purposes. He saw no reason why Parliament should worry its head about main roads or any other kind of roads. Parliament, in fact, had occupied the position of a huge unwieldy Board of Works, which often did a great deal more than justice to some districts and a great deal less than justice to others, and the Government now changed the nature of its work.

Under the new system, the State offered to lend local bodies sums of money at reasonable interest, but it made them legally responsible for properly administering their charges in regard to spending money, and gave them real powers. In doing this it placed them in a position to develop their capabilities and extend their usefulness.

During the nine years since the abolition of the provinces, the General Government had spent no less than £2,653,000 in roads and bridges. The distribution of this sum had been very irregular, ranging from £76,000 in one year to £420,000 in another year, and as the scramble for the money was a determined one, the system had a bad effect all round, on the people, the local bodies, the members of the House, the Government, and Parliament.

The Government, therefore, took from Parliament a function it had grown too big to perform properly, and gave into the hands of local bodies one of the principal means of helping settlement. The local bodies responded to the call made upon them, and showed that they appreciated the responsibilities placed upon their shoulders. The change also had a tendency to put a stop to the excessive borrowing that had taken place, as the ratepayers, through the local bodies, felt the immediate effect of the liabilities they incurred in the shape of loans for public works. Probably the best result of the reform was the interest it induced people to take in local affairs. It placed districts in an independent position, and gave them a much larger share of real self-government than they had enjoyed before.

The same line of operation was followed by the Charitable Aid Act. This measure established Charitable Aid Boards, consisting of representatives of local bodies. These Boards took off the Government's hands the duty of attending to the destitute, a duty which it was thoroughly unqualified to discharge. In other respects the new Government placed the method of dealing with charitable aid on a much more satisfactory footing.

This scheme, which was devised in 1885 by Sir Patrick Buckley, the Attorney-General, is in operation still. Very few changes have been made in it. Practically the only dissatisfaction expressed is in respect to the appointment of members of the Boards; there is a growing feeling that they should be elected directly on the municipal franchise instead of being nominated by local bodies.

Not satisfied with urging the colonists to enter upon industrial enterprises, the Government gave them practical assistance. Sir Julius Vogel was convinced that the vast quantities of fish in New Zealand waters could be exploited for both local consumption and export to Australia and the United Kingdom. He prepared several schemes for establishing fishing villages and stations in the beautiful sounds in Cook Strait. In this way the colony was to develop a source of wealth that remains almost untouched to this day. The scheme was to form small

fishing communities in connection with fish-curing works. It was thought that in time these villages would become important centres of population and large contributors to the general wealth of the colony.

Experts were imported to make experiments in connection with the culture of the silk-worm, which it was believed would thrive well in some districts of the colony. Large bonuses were offered to men who started industries that were likely to be of a permanent character. A special Act was passed to encourage the production of sugar from beet-root, and a bonus was provided of one halfpenny a pound for the first 1000 tons of sugar placed on the market. A committee appointed to inquire into the best means of encouraging trade between the colony and the South Sea Islands drew up a scheme for the creation of the New Zealand International South Sea Trade Company, to which, however, Parliament refused to grant a charter.

An attempt was made by the Government to find outside markets for articles the colony produced. The Agent-General in London was instructed to place himself in communication with the Army and Navy and Civil Service Stores and Whiteley's to ascertain if the British public could be induced to become one of the colony's regular customers. Many private people, seeing that the Government was honest in its promises and earnest in its efforts, came forward with advice. An influential citizen of Christchurch recommended that sample consignments of ghee, a kind of rancid butter, should be sent to India, "to be used externally and internally by the millions of natives there." Companies were formed to manufacture pig and bar-iron in the North Island, and throughout the colony there was a more hopeful spirit and a healthier public tone.

By reductions in the railway freights, which made the phalanx of Canterbury members stand by the Government more steadily than ever, agriculturists were given a bonus of £75,000 a year.

Reductions in the property tax from $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the pound to $\frac{1}{8}$ ths of a penny in the pound relieved the small farmer, and an exemption of agricultural improvements up to £3000 placed the homes of small farmers beyond the reach of the tax. Small

manufacturers were assisted at the same time by the exemption of machinery up to £3000, and with these reliefs the dairy industry, which had been crushed down, was given a chance to get upon its feet.

The mining industry was assisted in several directions, and university professors were offered facilities to travel and deliver lectures in mining centres. Forest-planting operations were commenced to counteract the destruction of native timber, which, it was seen, would be a serious problem for the colonists to deal with.

Quantities of railway stock, previously imported from England and America, were made in the colony, and every encouragement was given to local works and industries of all descriptions. In one year the Government workshops turned out more ironwork than had been dealt with in any five years under other Governments.

An attempt was made to push small railways on to Rotorua and other health resorts in the hope that they would attract visitors from other lands.

In many directions the Colonial Treasurer tried hard to put into operation the great scheme he had given the country in 1870. He placed most reliance upon roads and railways, looking upon the latter as the greatest aid to the prosperity and comfort of a young community in a new country. He saw that each line of railway that was run out into the "back blocks" would mark a distinct advance in the colony's affairs. If he was led by this idea to push his policy more rapidly than the time and circumstances warranted, his mistake was not a very gross one. He was not blind to the fact that an isolated little country like New Zealand might suffer just as much from over-production as from want of good settlers, and he searched the world for new markets and the colony for soils and climates that would produce articles the Old World consumed.

By inaugurating a system of selling native lands through the Government, a great deal of the "land-sharking" that had been common for many years in land transactions with the Maoris was stopped. The sale of liquor to Maoris was

prohibited in a large part of the King Country. By a Married Women's Property Act, copied from the English law, women were allowed to control their own property after marriage. Previously, whenever a woman married without taking the precaution to prepare a settlement, she was liable to have her property dissipated, and to be left without any means whatever. This Act has placed the business relations of husband and wife on a fair basis, and has prevented much injustice.

This period is marked, by the number of its land-settlement schemes and their liberal and revolutionary character. The activity shown in this direction is largely due to the statesmanship of Mr. John Ballance, who, as Minister for Lands, was then preparing the way for the fame he achieved a few years later as chief of the Liberal Party, leader of democratic thought and the head of a great Socialistic Ministry.

He consolidated the land laws, and added provisions which gave a decided impetus to the settlement of land in many districts and helped working men near large centres to obtain small areas on village settlements. He had the willing help of other members, and met with little opposition, even his political opponents joining in the discussions in a friendly spirit and advising him on questions of detail.

Sir George Grey was far from being inactive. He asked Parliament to pass a Land Settlement Bill, empowering the Government to purchase properties from private individuals, either by agreement in the ordinary course of business, or by compulsory methods under the Public Works Act. He described his scheme as an attempt to turn the depression to the colony's advantage, meaning that large landowners were then inclined to sell at cheap rates, while many people with small means would gladly take up moderate sized sections if easy terms could be arranged. The properties were to be bought at the valuation placed upon them for the purpose of the property tax. The system was to be a "quit-rent." The funds for purchasing the properties were to be raised by means of land-bonds. The Government was not to be compelled to redeem these land-bonds at any particular date, although it would, after a certain time, be able to purchase them and liquidate the debt. The

properties were to be divided into farms. The farms were to be valued, and thrown open for selection. Interest on the cost was to be paid as rent, the first payment to be made six months after the selector had taken possession.

The proposal met with very little favour, and Parliament passed over the scheme in order to give its attention to the more practical ideas of Mr. Ballance, who also introduced a Land Acquisition Bill, but had to leave office before he could pass it into law.

Sir Julius Vogel went elaborately into the proposal to lend money to farmers at low rates of interest; but he could not bring himself to ask Parliament to allow his Government to become a money-lender. At one time, he was very much inclined to see the experiment tried, but, believing that it would overthrow the colony's credit, and fearing the bogey of interference with private business, he put the scheme on one side. Rather than risk anything by entering into business as a State money-lender, he decided to leave the scheme alone, and expressed a hope that private enterprise would give such relief to the small farmer as would render State interference unnecessary.

In spite of all the Government's courage and industry, the colony could not shake itself free from the terrible depression. Conditions improved in some directions, and the colonists displayed more enterprise, and were not so inclined to give themselves up to despair; but the unemployed trouble had not been solved, and business was still dull.

There were many factors in deciding whether the colony should have progress or stagnation, and over most of these no Government could have any semblance of control. Fluctuations in the price of wool were one of the principal considerations. Wool and meat were the two staple articles of export then, as they are now; but the frozen meat industry had not given indications of the extraordinary strides it was prepraing to make. It had been in existence only four or five years, and the colony was sending to London about fifty million pounds of meat a year. The first shipment was sent by the New Zealand and Australian Land Company from Port Chalmers

in 1882. There were 9,000 carcasses in that shipment, which reached London in good order. The success of the experiment was the signal for the erection of freezing-works almost simultaneously in Christchurch, Dunedin, Wellington, Auckland, and Napier. The industry has advanced steadily up to the present time, when the trade is worth about £3,000,000 a year to the colony. The only obstacle it has met is prejudice on the part of people in England. That prejudice has almost passed away, but between 1884 and 1887 it was very pronounced, and the prospects of the trade were not bright.

It was on wool that colonists depended; and the price of wool fluctuated greatly. When it dropped, business was paralyzed, and progress was stopped; when it rose, business was brisk and business people were able to meet their engagements. During the greater part of 1886, the wool market was fair, and business was conducted without disruptions. Towards the end of the year, it was announced that "wool was up," and the delighted colonists looked forward to happy and prosperous times. The market continued to rise. Coarser cross-bred wool rose from 7½d. to 9d. a pound, and a finer sort of the same kind from 9d. to 10d. These few pence were of the utmost importance to the Government. They were life or death to it. High prices were as stimulating to the colonists as a fresh loan from the English money-lender; and when money was plentiful there was little grumbling, and the Government was allowed to take its own course. It was when money was scarce and taxation was heavy that the Government had to look to its position.

The period was a stormy one. While the Government was cudgeling its brains to devise means to improve social conditions, no-confidence motions were volleyed into it. The Stout-Vogel combination withstood more no-confidence motions in one session than any other Government the colony has known. More of these attacks came from Sir George Grey than from any other member. He consulted nobody, and asked for no following. Standing on the floor of the House, in the character of a "lone and friendless man," to use his own words, he rated the Government for its extravagance and its mistakes. He sometimes found difficulty in getting a seconder to his no-confidence

motions, and a quorum of members could hardly be induced to attend and listen to the debates, some of which closed without a division, the House simply drifting into the regular work of the session.

Late in 1885, the unemployed trouble, which had previously made Christchurch its headquarters, shifted north and south, and established itself in Auckland and Dunedin. In Dunedin, a flaming manifesto was issued begging the Victorian Government to come to the rescue of New Zealand and send steamers to take workmen to Melbourne, the fares to be paid with the men's first earnings in Australia.

The Government was quite out of touch with the working classes. It ignored them and they distrusted it. At the same time they believed that it was better than its predecessor. As a matter of fact, however, Atkinson was, theoretically, at any rate, in closer sympathy with them than either of the leaders of the Government. Sir Julius Vogel was a Conservative in principle and practice. In England he had been a Conservative candidate for the Falmouth seat, and all his leanings were towards the old Conservative school of politicians. Sir Robert Stout was a Radical in regard to the land question, but he held aloof from the principle of State interference in private enterprise.

The Government, in fact, was a hybrid organism. It was half-Radical, half-Conservative, and wholly Individualistic. Although Stout and Vogel stood far apart in most political principles, they found in extreme individualism a common ground. Vogel held the comfortable doctrine that if labour became dominant it would be as hard on capital as capital was on it. He could never decide in his own mind whether it would be better for the happiness of the community to give labour or capital the greater political power, so he tried to balance the scales.

He saw a long way ahead of him. He believed that Radicalism would ultimately prevail, but that "Conservative Radicalism" would be the happy medium which would restrain capital from being too exacting and labour from demanding more than capital would be in a position to grant. Socialism in

practical politics was beyond his comprehension. He told working men who sought his advice that labour depended upon capital and had no special right to consideration in the scheme of State.

Sir Robert Stout held out to the working classes the simple belief that the less the Government did for the people the better it was for them. He warned them that those who leaned on an Act of Parliament or a vote of the House of Representatives leaned on a broken reed. When the unemployed asked for work, he said that no Government in that or any other country had ever laid it down as part of its duty to provide work, and he reminded the workers in cold and unsympathetic tones that they were not the only sufferers by the depression.

Outside Parliament, a great change was at work among the masses. They began to look on politics in a new light. They declined to follow wealthy political leaders as peasants in old times followed feudal lords. Political knowledge became broader. Aspects of political economy were discussed at working men's gatherings, mostly in a crude and uncultured manner, and sometimes with an utter disregard for economic truths, but generally with significant earnestness.

The public mind began to turn from personal politics to political principles. A spirit of speculative politics was abroad. It showed itself in every public movement. Although it sometimes ran wildly, its presence proved that those who were the worst victims of the dreadful condition of affairs that had lasted for nearly a decade were searching for a legislative pathway out of their troubles.

The new and the novel in politics became the subject of general discussion. The women's franchise movement, for one thing, began to spread with a rapidity that alarmed many who saw no good in it. There were visions of better conditions and of prosperity and contentment, and the very thought of these things made the people's hearts beat faster.

The Government struggled through three stormy years of existence, fighting its opponents with one hand and fending off the depression, the unemployed, and clamouring labour with the other. It was the Government's policy not only to encourage the

establishment of new industries, but also to assist old ones by a protective tariff. But people who are smarting under the lash of taxation are not likely to look favourably on fresh burdens. Defeated in the House on its financial and tariff proposals, the Government appealed to the country. Taking full advantage of the depression and the uneasy condition of trade, Atkinson preached a crusade of anti-Vogelism. He had two watchwords. One was "Retrenchment," the other "No More Vogelism and Extravagance." He persuaded many electors that their troubles were mainly or solely due to public extravagance. He held up Vogel as the type and emblem of all that was unthrifty and reckless in public affairs. Vogel, in short, was made to bear the burden of all the sins committed by all the Ministries that had taken office for the past seventeen years. Sir George Grey added to the Liberals' troubles by placing himself at the head of the movement in favour of Atkinson's return, and the Conservative Party was never more united than in its deep, steady, and unwavering opposition to Vogel.

At the polls the Government was defeated, Sir Robert Stout losing his seat in Dunedin, and the Continuous Ministry entered upon its last lease of power.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIBERAL PARTY IN OPPOSITION.

When members went back after the elections there were no well defined parties. Sir Robert Stout's defeat weakened the Liberals, and many members of the Conservative Party withdrew their support from Sir Harry Atkinson. For a long time they had been dissatisfied with his leadership. They were looking for a new chief. They would, indeed, have asked someone else to move the no-confidence motion in the Stout-Vogel Ministry; but circumstances were far too strong for them, and, it might be added, for Sir Harry himself, as he had no wish to assume the leadership. He accepted it out of a sense of duty and of loyalty to those friends who still stood by him.

The position was described epigrammatically by the Hon. W. P. Reeves, when he said that in the Conservative camp there was a leader without a party, and a party without a leader. Very few members of the Conservative Party disguised their feelings towards Sir Harry Atkinson; they had come to follow another man. To this Sir Harry took no exception, maintaining that it was the duty of all members of the House to accept any place his fellow members might assign to him, and he was prepared to do their bidding.

Even when he moved the successful no-confidence motion against the Stout-Vogel Government, he did not assume anything, but announced that he held the commission temporarily in the interests of those who had gone to the country on a platform in opposition to Sir Julius Vogel. There were strong members of the party who, after Parliament had assembled, would not have followed Sir Harry Atkinson if any one other leader could have been induced to come forward; but as they could get nobody else, they determined to take him.

The first division of the session of 1888 was a revelation to him, and it taught him a lesson that he never forgot. He invited nobody to pledge himself to follow him, but asked that he should be allowed to declare his policy, and then everybody, he said, would be free to support or oppose him, according to opinion and principle. There were not half-a-dozen members except Sir Harry and his colleagues who really believed that the new Government would stand. In the lobbies it was a common remark that the Government would be defeated.

These were the circumstances in which Atkinson formed his last Continuous Government.

It was never strong. The party which was supposed to be supporting it had fallen back gradually from the splendid position occupied before Sir George Grey came to give it its first reverse; and in 1888 and 1889 it was in its last days. Public opinion was against it. Many people thought of it as the emblem of Conservatism and non-progress, and, somewhat unjustly, associated it with the miseries through which the colony was passing.

The Conservatives' success at the polls in 1887 was regarded by Mr. Seddon as a disastrous affair. He saw in it a return to old times. He believed that the colony, instead of continuing to struggle out of the Slough of Despond, would sink back again deeper than ever. He had no hope that Sir Harry Atkinson would foster Sir Julius Vogel's industrial policy. He was afraid that industries would languish, and that trade would come to a standstill. As a matter of fact, the Conservatives' success was the best thing that had happened for Mr. Seddon since he entered Parliament. It opened his fighting vein and it brought him into greater prominence as a politician than he had yet achieved.

He lost no opportunity of attacking the party on the benches. Determined that his voice should be heard, he launched invectives at the head of the Ministry with a persistence that made him a dreaded antagonist. Like many other vigorous public speakers, he appeared to much more advantage as an attacker than as a defender. At first the Government

pretended to ignore him, and it put up followers in the ranks of the Conservative Party to reply to him; but as his attacks became stronger and more violent, and as, above all, he never spoke without a good knowledge of his subject, and arrayed his hard facts so closely and cleverly that they could not fail to have an effect, Sir Harry Atkinson was forced to take him into consideration, so that by-and-by first Ministers and then the Premier himself came forth to meet him on the floor of the House.

Although his impetuosity drove him to the front, Mr. Seddon did not look upon himself as a leader. Often, after the Premier had met one of his fierce attacks, and had obviously taken it as an indication of the Liberals' plan of campaign, Mr. Seddon reminded the House that he was only a private member, speaking for himself and for the West Coast, and saying what he, and, inferentially, the West Coast, believed to be true.

A few months after the Stout-Vogel Government was defeated, Sir Julius Vogel finally left New Zealand for England. The Liberal Party, now quite leaderless, was disorganised, and was too weak to meet the Conservatives on anything like equal terms. It endeavoured to organise itself, but when its full strength was gauged and heads were counted, it concluded that the prospects of a great future were not bright, and that it could devote its energies only to criticism and watchfulness. Hope of defeating the Government was out of the question. As far as searching criticism was concerned, however, it determined that it would not flinch; and it made up its mind that nothing would be left undone to stem the tide of the Conservative reaction, which, it was feared, might gain strength and flood the country.

It was believed that such a leader as Sir Julius Vogel would never be found again. Many members of the party turned once more to Sir George Grey, but the Canterbury members were unalterable in their determination to have nothing to do with him.

The proposal to appoint a leader was discussed at several meetings of Liberal members, but, as no decision could be come

to, Mr. Seddon at last moved that it was inexpedient to elect a leader. He told the members of the Opposition that the best attitude they could take up was one of watchfulness, and that it was their duty to offer every facility to carry on the business of the country. The members of the party felt that they had been drawn together by adversity. All announced their intention to submit to the severest discipline. They assured themselves that their loyalty could not be shaken. Several said that they wanted a leader of "proper age and experience, of respectable views, and not likely to frighten ordinary members, who would claim the respect of the country and appeal to public opinion for a fair trial."

Mr. Seddon's practical suggestions were adopted by the party, which met the Government without a leader. It was guided by a small committee, consisting of Sir William Steward and Messrs. J. D. Lance and O. Samuel. Mr. Lance took the chair at meetings of the party, and occasionally appeared as a prominent member, but for all practical purposes the Opposition had no head; and the Conservatives were surprised to find that, at the beginning of their new reign, measure after measure was allowed to pass without combined attacks from the other side of the House.

Sir Harry Atkinson began his retrenchment scheme by borrowing £2,400,000, amidst the reproaches of his followers. Several of them attempted, when too late, to reduce his borrowing powers, but he was stronger than they, and he ignored their protests as well as his opponents' demands. He pruned the Civil Service for the second time, and cut down the salaries and travelling allowances of Ministers and the expenses of Land Boards, and reduced the Parliamentary honorarium.

There was a cry for retrenchment throughout the whole colony. In Parliament there was formed among the Conservative members a small party of extreme economists, who soon earned for themselves the title of "The Skinflints." Many schemes were suggested for retrenching to the last penny. One, which brought Mr. Seddon to his feet with an angry roar, was that the school age should be raised to seven years, and that

free education should end with the Fourth Standard. This scheme was not adopted.

The artizans and the working classes, tired of appealing in vain to Government after Government, and of being bluntly told that nothing could be done for them, prepared to carry out their threat to forsake New Zealand and go to other countries, where they could at least obtain sufficient work to keep them from starvation and abject poverty.

They went to Sir Harry Atkinson for the last time, and once again asked him to help them. "No Government," he replied, "can do more than give effect to the will of the people. The movement must go upwards, not downwards. You must depend upon yourselves and look to yourselves more than you do."

He told them that he had worked for low wages in pioneering days, and that when his wages rose from 2s. 6d. to 4s. a day it had been said that he was making his fortune. He had made his own house, he informed them, and had carried his provisions on his back, and he was as happy then as ever he had been in his life. When he met the Knights of Labour in Christchurch he lectured them on their moral obligations, and they lectured him on political economy and the duties of the State. After that, the people gave themselves up to the inevitable. They no longer placed their hope in the Government. They began to leave the colony in swarms, like migratory rats that are starved out of one district and pass on irresistibly to another in search of food.

This movement is known in the colony's history as "The Exodus."

At first it was depressing. Then it became alarming; and finally those who had a real interest in the colony's welfare felt that if steps were not taken to stop the migration, New Zealand must indeed sink under the great burden of its sorrows. With "The Exodus" the colony lost a great deal of its vitality. It had suffered for nine years from a long drawn-out depression. This last strain was too much for its strength. Victoria, which was enjoying a "boom" that made New Zealand's depression all the harder to bear, was the country to

which most of the emigrants turned their eyes. The inter-colonial vessels took passengers from New Zealand's shores at the rate of 1400 a month, for several months. It was a serious drain on a population of 600,000 people. The holds of the vessels were fitted up with temporary berths, and the rush of passengers was so great sometimes that cargo was refused. Additional steamers were placed on the service to deal with the traffic, and every sailing vessel had its complement of passengers.

The volunteering movement languished for want of men. Boy-labour was common, and in most trades apprentices found that as soon as they had completed their apprenticeship they had to continue at apprentices' wages or leave; and they generally left. The State that had brought out thousands of immigrants at great cost a few years previously was now losing its population. It was pointed out that the colony spent £400,000 a year on educating its children, many of whom gave other countries the benefit of their knowledge. Large numbers of those who took part in "The Exodus" were married men with families. When they left, their families fell back on the Charitable Aid Boards or on private charity.

When it was seen that the colony was losing the flower of its manhood, public meetings were held to devise some means of retaining and employing the population. The scheme favoured most was the institution of a strong protective tariff on articles that could be manufactured locally. The substitution of a land and income-tax for the old obnoxious property-tax was also demanded.

Prices for produce continued to fall. Wheat had not been so low in the world's markets for many years. After farmers had met the heavy interest on their mortgages and the ordinary expenses of the seasons, they had hardly anything left with which to improve their properties. Consequently, they offered little employment to farm hands.

The colony asked for a protective policy to foster industries and combat the invasion that was being conducted with remarkable vigour by Germany and America. The movement in favour of protection was pushed forward so energetically that

a meeting was held in Wellington in April, 1888, to form a new political organisation. Nearly all parts of the colony were represented at the meeting. It was decided that the time had come for the consolidation of the great industrial party of the colony as an Industrial Protection League. Its avowed object was to support municipal and Parliamentary representatives pledged to secure efficient protection to all classes of producers, and to watch the action of Parliament in regard to the colony's industries. It appointed a governing body and established branches in all the principal centres of population.

It was thought that the tariff in existence, having been framed mainly for revenue purposes, was very unequal in its operations. Sometimes it taxed the local manufacturers' raw material at the same time as it taxed the finished article. The intense competition amongst manufacturers in Europe and America induced the Americans to ship to New Zealand large quantities of surplus stocks. These stocks interfered with ordinary operations of trade inside the colony, embarrassed the colonial manufacturer, and diminished the output. Coming on top of the depression, this movement placed a heavy handicap on industries, and had a direct effect on permanent employment and wages.

Clothing made under the sweating system was imported in large quantities and with a small duty. The tariff encouraged the importation of boots and shoes while large numbers of competent artisans in that line were idle. There was not an engineers' shop in the colony that did not feel the unfair pressure of the importer. Most of the apprentices in the iron trade, as soon as they were out of their time, left for other countries, where they found work that was denied to them in their native country. On top of this, there was a threatened invasion of cheap Chinese labour, which had already reached Australia.

The Protective Conference believed that if the changes it proposed were adopted, every existing industry would be stimulated, home production would be increased, the community would have a larger wage-earning power, and new industries would come into operation. It was in this way that Sir Harry Atkinson's hands were forced.

Seeing that the position was as critical as it could be, and that the colony was drifting from bad to worse, he made up his mind to do something to appease the people, at any rate. He announced that he would introduce a Tariff Bill which would satisfy the protectionists, and would not be so drastic as to seriously hurt the feelings of his freetrade followers.

He had faced many difficult positions before, but none which was so full of danger, and which demanded so much thought, alertness, and courage. There were falling revenues; a deepening depression; a depleted population; an incomplete scheme of retrenchment, which had brought him into great disfavour and had not done much good; and fresh and heavy liabilities.

In the midst of it all, he was in wretched health, a broken man with a wrecked constitution, and hardly anything to help him except his own brave and undaunted spirit. He wanted revenue before anything else. Secluded in his private residence, he spent days and nights pouring over the tariff, rearranging the items, taking from this and adding to that, decreasing here and increasing there, seeking to help old industries and to encourage the establishment of new ones, but always looking out for the increased revenue that was to carry him through his difficulties.

After a dramatic pause in the business of the House, during which members were kept in a state of almost absolute idleness, the Financial Statement of 1888, with the momentous tariff proposals, came down.

It is the clearest and best Statement the famous Colonial Treasurer ever delivered. Every line speaks of his anxiety to raise the colony from the terrible depths to which it had been allowed to fall. He offered a substantial measure of protection to boot manufacturers, clothiers, machinery makers, and workers in brass and iron. He proposed that an additional 3d. a gallon should be placed on beer, 6d. a gallon on spirits, and 1s. a gallon on wines; he doubled the opium duty, and asked the House to agree that the tax on tea should be increased from 4d. to 6d. a pound, half of the tea-duty to be set aside for subsidies given to local bodies.

The longer the freetrade members looked at the new tariff, the less they liked it; and as most of the freetraders came from the country districts and were naturally with the Government, Sir Harry woke up the morning after he had delivered his Statement to find that his party was falling to pieces. Nearly all the freetraders, in fact, were in open revolt.

Before the fatal tariff had been prepared, he counted in his party fifty-four men. Thirty-four of these, known as the "Government Swallowers," swallowed the tariff proposals without any apparent difficulty; but twenty, distinguished as the "Government Malcontents," went about crying out against the tariff, and saying that they would have none of its revolutionary proposals.

Ignoring both threats and supplications, Sir Harry said that it was his tariff, and as it was the best he could devise, and as he believed that it was required to save the country, he would stand by it or fall with it.

The tariff proved to be one of those measures in the face of which New Zealand politicians sink party feelings and act for the common good. There were protectionists on both sides of the House, and when the Government found that the withdrawal of free trade followers made it powerless to carry the tariff by its own strength, it applied to the Opposition for sufficient men to make up the deficiency.

This the Opposition agreed to give. When the second reading of the Tariff Bill was voted on, a heavy contingent went from one side of the House to the other, and gave the Government a larger majority than it had ever had before, Ballance, Seddon, W. P. Reeves, Perceval, Lance, Cadman, Ward, and Steward, all strong men in the Liberal ranks, voting for the Government's measure, in the same lobby as Atkinson, Hall, Hislop, and other members of the opposing party.

In this way the Liberal Party followed the course Mr. Seddon had mapped out for it, and freely offered to help the Conservative Government when it felt that help, not obstruction, was in the colony's interests.

With the aid of those Liberal members, item after item of the tariff went through without much difficulty, until the

proposal to increase the duty on tea was reached. Sir William Russell, a leading member of the Conservative Party, moved to have the item retained at 4d. He carried with him an unusually large number of "Malcontents"; and Mr. Seddon, breaking away from the Opposition protectionists, with whom he had voted, strongly opposed the increase proposed by the Conservative Premier.

In regard to most of the items Mr. Seddon had supported the Government, believing that it was right to make a sacrifice for the sake of local industries; but he maintained that it would be better to bring about all other reductions first and leave tea to the last, so that it might be taken in the nature of a stand-by.

The Premier informed a crowded House and packed galleries that he regarded the tea-duty as an integral part of his Budget. Those who voted against the duty, de declared, voted against the Government, and if the duty was struck out he would adjourn the House in order that the Government might consider its position. His determined attitude had the desired effect. The protectionists rallied round him. The tea-duty was carried by a majority of eight, Mr. Seddon and some other members of the Liberal Party voting against the Government, and Mr. Ballance leading a large number of Liberals into the Government's lobby.

Elated by his success in forcing the tea-duty on to the House, Sir Harry assumed a still more determined attitude, which led to his first reverse during the session. It was administered by Mr. Seddon, who was still taking a prominent part in all important discussions.

Seeing that it was easier to drive than to lead a large section of his followers, Sir Harry unexpectedly announced at the beginning of an evening's sitting that he would consider his estimates at once. Members, who had had no opportunity of examining the estimates, were taken completely by surprise, and one after another they warned him that he, with his weak and wavering party, was going too far. Nothing but his famous "hob-nail boots" policy, however, could satisfy him that night, and he trampled on his followers' protests with an utter disregard, apparently, for their opinions and for the delicate position of the Government.

Mr. Seddon moved the postponement of consideration of the estimates. He did not do it in a hostile spirit, but merely to allow the House time to see what it was doing, and he begged the obstinate Premier to agree to the course he suggested without going to a division. The Premier, in his fractious mood, however, could not be shaken. He believed that he could force his estimates through the House with as much success as had resulted from his policy in regard to the tea-duty. To his surprise, many members followed Mr. Seddon, who actually defeated him by nine votes. His confidence had betrayed him, and the unexpected result threw him completely off his guard.

The blow could easily have been averted. Mr. Seddon, indeed, had never intended to strike it; but Sir Harry seems to have felt that he had not been treated courteously by some members of his party; and realising, no doubt, that the end of the party's rule was in sight, he went straight forward, allowing no consideration to turn him aside, and caring little what happened so long as he was not kept in dreadful suspense. It was pointed out to him, after the division had been taken, that the days for overawing an Opposition by the "big-boots" demeanour had passed away, especially in a House in which there were three distinct sections, the smallest of which was the faithful Ministerial Party.

When the result was known, the Premier moved the adjournment of the House, and for half-an-hour afterwards the members explained the votes they had given. The result of the division was evidently a surprise to many, and a shock to some. Several had voted without any fixed idea as to what they were doing, and they hardly realised that Mr. Seddon had defeated the Government. Recovering from his surprise, the Premier soundly rated Mr. Seddon. He did not take the motion as one of no-confidence, but immediately put on his big boots again, and threatened that if the estimates were not considered next sitting day the Government would take the refusal of the House as an indication of want of confidence, and would certainly resign.

As the Liberal Party was anxious to see the tariff, which had not been finally dealt with, passed into law, it gave way before the peremptory demands of the Premier. The estimates were passed, and the tariff was sent on to the Statute Book.

It is typical of the main motives which actuated Mr. Seddon even in those advanced days of his career, that when the Tariff Bill passed its last stage he explained that he had voted against the duties on both tea and sugar because he believed that they were opposed to the interests of the miners. The West Coast still loomed largely in his mind. Had he lived a few months longer there would have been very important amendments in the present tariff. One of the great principles that had been instilled in his mind by Sir George Grey was that the people should be given a free breakfast table. It had always been Mr. Seddon's ambition to give them this great boon, and he believed that in 1906 the time had come to go at least a long way in that direction. In that year he spent many days over the tariff, revising and altering it, and went sufficiently far to announce that large reductions, representing £350,000 a year, would be made. It was his conviction that the breakfast table should be absolutely free that led him to strongly oppose Sir Harry Atkinson's tea-duty and induced him to break away from his party leaders for a short time in 1888.

The Continuous Ministry, weak and disorganised though it was, carried out with remarkable success the protective policy Sir Julius Vogel had twice failed to bring into operation.

The action of the Liberal members in coming to the assistance of the Conservative Government in the session of 1888 is one of the brightest events in the history of the Liberal Party. The House had never been so dislocated. Owing to protection having been dragged into the very front of politics, parties had seldom been more mixed. The Liberal Party was subjected to a strong temptation to turn the Government from office. It could have done so at almost any moment, but as it had pledged itself to help to enforce the policy the Conservative leader had taken in hand, it effaced itself and sank all party considerations in its desire to attend to the colony's business.

For a second time the colony was amused with the strange spectacle of a Conservative Government holding office, not because it was supported by a majority of members, but because its opponents would not unite to turn it out; and it laughed

again at the idea of the Liberal Party being dragged into the Conservative lobby.

The tariff having been disposed of, the Liberal protectionists went back to their former position, and took up the duty of criticising, modifying, or opposing the Government's measures at the point where they had laid down that duty for a time to give the country's industries the protection sought for. There were suggestions of a coalition, and rather broad hints were made to Sir Harry that it would be diplomatic on his part to get rid of two or three weak members of his Ministry and to fill their places from the front ranks of the Opposition; but this he resolutely declined to do, saying that he had treated the tariff as a non-party question, and although parties had disappeared while the Tariff Bill was being discussed, they must come into full view again now that the Bill had been passed.

The Opposition took up the challenge. It organised itself and prepared a scheme of operations. A committee of seven, including Messrs. Ballance and Seddon, was appointed to direct the party's actions, and the Government's weakness was soon noticeable. Business was checked. The House became so confused that it hardly knew what it was doing. Sir Harry failed to instil enthusiasm into his followers. As he did not know, and, apparently, did not greatly care, when the Opposition would strike a decisive blow, the session dragged along in a weary manner. The Government existed, but it did little work, and its leader realised that rule by a small majority was a difficult matter.

It was not until members had assembled in Wellington for the session of 1889 that the Liberal Party, now forty strong in a House of ninety-five members, felt itself sufficiently well organised to work under a leader. At the first meeting during the session, the leading position was unanimously offered to Mr. Ballance, who, after two days' consideration and consultation with his friends, agreed to fall in with their wishes, and immediately set about preparing a scheme of action for the session.

The House was again divided into distinct parties, and again took up party government on approved lines. Friends

of the Liberal Party hailed the action of its members in submitting itself to rule and discipline as the beginning of a better state of affairs. Experience had proved that the old scheme of a Committee of Management was not workable, and that unless jealousies were put on one side, and a capable leader was appointed, the party must be a party without influence and without a fixed principle or policy. Most men would be pardoned for declining to take the responsibility of leading the party against Sir Harry Atkinson, whose generalship had become a household word in the colony, and who had been in and out of office so often that none knew better how to ward off the enemy's attack and make his position secure. As a matter of fact, Mr. Ballance was reluctant to take the lead. There were only two candidates. Neither sought to lead, and both would have been content to be led. One of the candidates was Mr. Ballance; the other was Mr. W. C. Walker, afterwards Minister for Education in Mr. Seddon's Ministry.

After much discussion had taken place, it was decided that Mr. Ballance, who had been in both the famous Grey Ministry and the Stout-Vogel Ministry, and had earned the respect and confidence of the Liberal Party as a whole, should, on account of his priority of claim, be asked to take office first. If he had refused, it would have been offered to Mr. Walker. When Mr. Ballance heard of this arrangement he said that if the fact of his taking the lead would divide the party, he would stand aside and give a fair support to any Liberal who might be more acceptable. Shortly after he made this statement, he received assurance of support from both northern and southern members, Mr. Walker being among the first to come forward and ask him not to hesitate. He then decided to accept the position, which was thus forced upon him.

Appointing Dr. Fitchett and Sir Westby Perceval, two members of the Young New Zealand Party, as his Whips, and having Mr. Seddon as his lieutenant, he at once took up the attitude of the leader of an orthodox political party, meeting the Government at every turn, and criticising without stint its general policy.

He acted with good feeling and wisdom in bringing the young members round him. The House had a large number of these, some of whom evidently intended to play an important part in politics. A Young New Zealand Party had sprung into existence in the session of 1887. The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Mr. James Mills, Sir Westby Perceval, Sir Joseph Ward, and Sir J. McKenzie were its most prominent members. Some of the members were young in every sense, but others were young merely by courtesy. Several were grey-headed. It included four country members, as well as two Ministers of the Crown. It counted its force as twenty strong. It originated in a social meeting held during the early weeks of the session of 1887, at which party politics were prohibited. During the meeting, a strong wish was expressed on all sides to work together when possible for the good of the country in which all had a stake. The result of the suggestion was that those who attended the meeting agreed in an informal way to look upon Mr. Mills as their leader and to work with him when party ties were not binding. The party, however, did not do very much beyond identifying itself rather timidly with the cry for economy that had been raised, and it saw only one session.

The battle-ground of the session of 1889 covered a wide area, but Sir Harry, with the courage that never deserted him throughout his career, went out to meet the Opposition as soon as it was ready to fight to a finish. He took his Financial Statement, his Public Works Statement, and an amendment to the Property Tax Act in one hand, and throwing them in front of the Opposition, challenged it to discuss the three in one great battle, which should decide once and for all whether the Conservative Government ought to retain its position or resign.

In the ranks of the Liberal Party, there was Mr. F. J. Moss, member for Parnell, who vied with Mr. Ballance in his bitter dislike of the property tax. During a previous discussion on the tax, Mr. Moss had hastily drawn up a motion and moved it. This motion had no special importance attached to it until Sir Harry announced that the debate on the tax would be combined with the debate on the Financial Statement and the Public Works Statement. Mr. Moss's motion suited the views of a

large number of Liberal members. Sir Harry said that the motion would be taken as a direct vote of no-confidence. Mr. Ballance accepted it in that light, and brought out in its support the full force of the party of which he was now the popular leader. The motion that precipitated this no-confidence debate, and subjected the Conservative Government to the severest criticism it had received, set forth, in a few words, that the property tax was unfair in its incidence, and harassing in its effects, and was an obstacle to the progress and settlement of the country.

Mr. Ballance led the attack with one of the best speeches he made in the House. He reviewed the policy of the Government from end to end, and was followed by leading members of his party, Mr. Seddon, however, holding aloof from the discussion, although he took an active interest in the warfare.

The discussion was continued with hardly a break for a whole week. At the end Sir Harry was victorious again, and he once more held power with a bare majority, the Opposition having come within four votes of his full strength. The peculiar nature of the discussion, and the different subjects it dealt with, however, left Sir Harry in great doubt as to whether he was safe. There were members of his party who were strongly opposed to the property tax. Some of them discarded their allegiance to the Government and stood by their pledges to their constituents, but others preferred their party to all other considerations. On the other hand, members of the Opposition had promised not to abolish the property tax, and they voted against the motion, although they would gladly have seen the Government thrown out of office. The debate and the vote at the end of it, in fact, gave rise to many strange actions, and it was not unusual to find a member delivering a ferocious attack on the Ministry, and, a few hours later, following Sir Harry as he went into the Government lobby.

In this year the attention of the colony was drawn to the rapid spread of the sweating evil in New Zealand. The public was shocked by many of the revelations made by the newspapers, which set searching inquiries on foot. The subject was first brought prominently forward by the "Otago Daily Times."

It published a series of articles on the conditions under which women and girls worked in Dunedin. Other newspapers, notably the "Lyttelton Times," took the crusade in hand, with the result that a deplorable state of affairs was disclosed in all the principal centres. Many manufacturers had been unable to make both ends meet, and they had been forced into a position in which they had to cut down wages to the lowest possible minimum. This action was specially noticeable in regard to women's work.

The sweating system, in short, had seized hold of the colony like a plague. It was in its most aggravated form. Large numbers of women were paid wages that hardly kept body and soul together. A woman made shirts at 4½d. a piece and found the cotton, the buttons, and other requisites. She could not make more than three shirts a day, and, even to do that, she would have to work at night. Her daily earnings, therefore, amounted to 1s. or 1s. 4d. Private workmen had to compete with establishments where children were employed as apprentices. These children received no wages at all for a time, and then were paid merely a nominal sum, about 2s. 6d. a week.

Large manufacturing establishments, making frantic efforts to right themselves, introduced the "cutting" system, and wholesale houses followed on the same lines. Women workers aided the "cutters" by competing bitterly for the work, as it was the only means they had of keeping off absolute starvation. Their husbands or brothers could get no work, and they were compelled to do what they could, no matter how small their contribution to the household funds might be. Women who had been taught in their youth to use their needle and were deft with it went out and begged for work, and in many cases they offered to do it under the prices which the warehousemen and manufacturers had brought down.

A few years previously, the price for making crimean shirts was 16s. a dozen, with cotton and buttons supplied by the house. In 1889, the same work was done for 6s. a dozen and the workers had to find both cotton and buttons. The wages for making men's flannel shirts fell from 9s. 6d. a dozen to about 4s. 6d. A great deal of the work in the clothing trade

was done by contract, and the contractors employed underpaid, and, as far as possible, unpaid labour. They monopolised the work of many factories, and the warehousemen considered that they were bound to keep the contractors going.

At an enthusiastic public meeting in Dunedin, a committee appointed previously to inquire into the subject reported that it had asked the warehousemen to agree to a minimum scale, under which the workers could earn fair wages. It also suggested that in giving out work to contractors, the warehousemen and the merchants should obtain a guarantee that the contractors would pay the workers not less than the tariff rates, and, when that rule was violated, work should be withdrawn from the contractors until reparation was made.

The meeting asked the Government to appoint a committee to inquire into the best method of dealing with the whole subject. It also urged that all citizens should use their efforts to form a Trades Union of tailoresses, shirt manufacturers, finishers, and pressers, the Union to embrace all those trades throughout the whole of the colony. A strong committee, with Sir Robert Stout at its head, was appointed to see that the decision of the meeting was given effect to, and there was established a movement that had a marked influence on the future of New Zealand.

It was taken up by nearly all associations that came into touch with the masses of the people. The New Zealand Protection League, for instance, when it held its annual session in Christchurch in June, 1889, discussed the subject at length, and passed a motion stating that the development of the sweating system, especially with regard to several branches of female industry, called loudly for parliamentary interference.

The league's idea of remedying or removing the evil was to establish a Labour Bureau on a large scale and under a responsible head, so that it might record all wage-scales mutually agreed upon by employers and workers, adjust disputes by arbitration, and obtain statistical information in regard to the labour market, and also have an agency that would be capable of drafting the unemployed to districts where they could be given work.

The boot manufacturing trade suffered more than any other industry from frequent disputes, which sometimes developed into strikes and lock-outs. The boot trade, in fact, earned notoriety for the number of its troubles. In some cases, the differences, apparently, arose out of trivial causes. The trade was rapidly coming near the top of the colony's list of industries, and all who took an interest in industrial matters deplored the bad feeling that existed. In Christchurch in 1889 the men demanded a minimum wage of 35s. a week for "clickers," who earned various sums according to their ability, ranging up to about £3 a week. The employers declined to pay a minimum of 35s., and the men, who had other grievances of a minor nature, struck. This dispute was only one of many, and neither employer nor worker in any branch of industry had the least idea when trade would not be dislocated.

It was shown that the baking trade in Christchurch was in a most unsatisfactory position. One journeyman baker declared before the Government Sweating Committee, sitting in that city, that he had to work thirteen and even fourteen hours a day to earn £1 week. He was transferred to an easier place, and even then had to work from eleven hours and a half to twelve hours a day for the same wages. Then he was turned away in order to make room for a lad employed at 7s. 6d. a week. He stated that the men employed by one firm had to work fifteen hours a day, and that few young journeymen earned more than 17s. 6d. a week.

An emissary of the American Knights of Labour, sent out to the colonies, appeared in New Zealand, and worked his way from north to south, through public meetings and private conversations, explaining, exhorting, arranging and founding branches. The great Dock Strike in London had attracted attention in all parts of the world, and the emissary's words were listened to by eager crowds of workers. The Order of the Knights of Labour had already been established in New Zealand, but in a rather half-hearted manner; and the parent branch sent its representative to induce New Zealand to help in the federation of the world's labour. The idea was well received in many parts of the colony by men who were in no way connected

with the working classes, but who believed that industrial warfare would wreck the colony's future.

Late in 1889 hopeful people preferred to believe that the colony had turned the corner, and had commenced to make its way towards the old prosperity that it had lost for many years.

The signs of progress, however, were not very marked. In all parts of the colony, wherever the traveller inquired in respect to general conditions, he received the same answer: "There is no life; no trade, no speculation, no confidence."

There had been two good harvests, and prices had improved in some directions, but business remained dull in several places and stagnant in many. A proof of the presence of the deep depression is found in the banking returns. The banks were slow to make advances. They tightened their purse-strings, and gave little credit. Instead of increasing their advances, in fact, they made determined attempts to draw in advances that had been made already. From July, 1888, to June 20th, 1889, for instance, the banks called in moneys advanced to their customers to the amount of £1,269,845. It was an enormous contraction of credit in a small community, and was felt in all parts of the colony and by all classes. In this way the depression acted upon the banking institutions, and the banking institutions acted upon the depression, making conditions pass from bad to worse.

The most galling aspect of the case was that nearly the whole of Australia was going through a "boom" of unprecedented prosperity. The banks' advances in Victoria had increased in two years by no less than £10,500,000, in New South Wales by £6,920,000, and in Queensland by £5,590,000, making a total of nearly £23,000,000 of increased advances in a population of two millions and a quarter in two years.

There seemed, indeed, to be no hope for New Zealand, which was beginning to resign itself to its despair.

A feature of the session, which had a far-reaching effect on the future of the Liberal Party, was Sir George Grey's success in having the one-man-one-vote principle affirmed by Parliament and recorded on the Statute Book. He had introduced the

principle into his first Electoral Bill ten years previously, and he and Mr. Seddon, Mr. Ballance, and others had fought steadily for the reform throughout the decade. The opportunity came at last in August, 1889, when Sir Harry Atkinson introduced a Representation Bill. The measure was the means of raising a cry of Town versus Country, and, after being bitterly assailed, was passed.

On its second reading, Sir George Grey, who seemed to have regained his old force of expression and his fiery eloquence, made a stirring speech, in which the masses, as of old, received most consideration. He had striven to put an end to plurality of votes; he had often almost gained his object; but he had been disappointed again and again. Members of the wealthy classes, by exercising the privilege of giving six, seven, or perhaps eight votes at the same general election, had turned the scales in a larger number of contests in the colony. These fetters, as the old politician called them, bound the people.

In making this appeal to the House, Grey felt, no doubt, that it was one of the last he would make. His health had been going from bad to worse. His back was bent; he tottered rather than walked along the streets of Wellington; his voice was weak and quavering. He remained in the House for some time afterwards, but did not speak often, and was evidently greatly fatigued with his efforts.

On the evening of July 23rd, 1889, he was in his old form. His theme was the condition of the workers, their hardships and grievances, and the difficulties they had to deal with.

“Look at the dirty lanes of the town,” he said; “look at men and women working in some hot factory all day, learning to do some single act, perhaps of a trifling nature, and spending their lives in doing that instead of in the varied lives of the country. The labour of the town is far more unhealthy than the labour of the country. It is far more difficult to bear. The temptations of the town are great: the lassitude and the weakness arising from its toil often tempt men to drink who would not drink otherwise. That continuous life in one unvarying occupation for many years deadens men’s mental energies. Why should these people be deprived of the one weapon which enables them to resist oppression? Men in the towns and in the country have one common object at present. It is that the profits derived from human labour should be duly divided; all that which is made by capital in excess of fair interest, all that which is so achieved

by the labour of human beings, should be fairly shared between those human beings and the masters who employ them. A fair division of capital is the one object which should engross them. It is the one thing which they can win for their little ones to save them from the fate which nearly all children in great cities have to undergo at present—namely, lives of misery and woe almost indescribable. Both the town and the country require this one equal weapon of the single vote. They require union of heart and union of mind, and there should be no division between them. I cannot impress upon members too strongly that our duty to ourselves and even to our Maker, who has given us the power of determining this great question, is to insist on one vote being given to one man."

When the Representation Bill was in committee on August 5th, he moved that no man should be allowed to vote in respect of more than one electorate. The motion was carried by the splendid majority of 27, and the old Liberal leader placed the coping-stone on the manhood franchise. It is one of the few of his reforms he was allowed to complete with his own hands. It is the greatest practical gift he gave to the party he had created.

Otherwise the session of 1889 was not productive of great results. The Government announced at the beginning that "a number of Bills dealing with matters of great public interest would be placed before the House." To nearly all these policy measures the Opposition took strong exception. Under Mr. Ballance's leadership it fought each measure as it came up.

The Government tried to alter the constitution of the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council, however, quickly decided the matter itself, and said that its constitution did not need alteration. It was then announced that the electoral laws would be reviewed, and that a new departure would be taken. The new departure took the shape of a Bill to introduce the Hare system of voting, and the "rash and revolutionary proposal," as it was called by the Opposition, was practically kicked to death. Then came a proposal to deal with the whole question of the Civil Service, going into the promotion, classification, and payment of Civil Servants on defined principles; but nothing resulted, and no Bill embodying the proposals was submitted. A Hospitals and Charitable Aid Bill was strongly opposed by local bodies as soon as its provisions were published,

and it was dropped. An amendment of the Property Tax Act was opposed by the Opposition so strongly that a no-confidence motion was moved on it, and this motion was rejected by only a very narrow majority. When other amendments were spoken of the Government shelved the Bill. A Bankruptcy Bill was prepared, but no effort was made to move it, and a Medical Bill was killed, nominally by the Legislative Council, but really by hostile feeling outside Parliament.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PROMINENT LIBERAL LEADER.

As the session of 1890 approached there were many rumours about Sir Harry Atkinson's ill-health. It was the subject of inquiries and conflicting bulletins. On the one hand it was stated that he was strong and brisk, and that his sufferings had never been acute. On the other hand there were harrowing accounts of a wasted and shattered invalid clinging desperately to an office with the duties of which he was quite unable to cope. There were reports of anxious consultations among his friends and among the leading members of his party. Friendly newspapers openly discussed the question of his successor, and expressed their opinion as to whether it ought to be Mr. Bryce, Sir John Hall, or Sir William Russell.

The truth was that he had been very unwell for a long time. He ought to have retired from politics instead of taking the lead of the House on the dismissal of the Stout-Vogel Government. It would have been better for him if he followed the course adopted by Sir John Hall, who retired from the head of affairs when he found that his health would not stand the severe strain placed upon it by the vexations not so much of ruling a young nation as of conducting incessant party fights.

Sir Harry clung to his public duties. Although some members of his party often told him that it was not he they wanted, those who were not in the party, and who took a clear view of the position, knew that he was the only possible leader. There were good men among his supporters, men who were very well liked, and men with progressive ideas, but they were not in touch with the majority in the House, and would have commanded only a small following. From the Conservative point of view, although there were many Conservatives who did not realise it, it was Sir Harry Atkinson or nobody.

Mr. Ballance, after consulting with some of his colleagues, had made up his mind that his plan of campaign would be the same as in the previous session. He would instruct his men to scan and criticise the Government's proposals and ask it to explain its actions. He was determined that if the rejected policy measures of the session of 1889 were placed before the House again they would be stopped, even if it meant a useless session and a waste of time.

Some days before members met in Wellington he had determined to bring things to an issue by moving a direct vote of no-confidence in the Government. The attitude he took up was that as the Opposition had no confidence in the Government it was bound to say so in the clearest manner. In addition to that there was a great press of parliamentary work to be attended to, and if the Government remained on the benches undisturbed, a great deal of that work would be postponed for another year.

Mr. Ballance, together with Mr. Seddon and other Liberal members, was anxious, above all, to make a change in the system of dealing with lands for settlement. They saw no hope for that as long as the Conservative Government, as it was constituted then, remained in office. Prominent members of the Conservative Party during the recess had thrown out hints of increased taxation, and this was taken as another reason why no time should be lost in ascertaining whether it was to be a Liberal Government or a Conservative one.

The Governor's Speech, in a tone that the Liberals took as ironical, congratulated the colony on the evidences afforded of the substantial progress made in its circumstances.

Like many others who were disturbed at the frequent strikes that were taking place in New Zealand, as well as in many other countries, Mr. Ballance was surprised that this subject was not mentioned in the Speech. It was, at any rate, in all the people's minds, and he voiced the opinion of many men when he said that the great organisation of labour that was being brought about was one of the most marked features of the age. He gave some indication of the far-reaching reforms which followed his accession to office when he said that organized labour would not find itself permanently arrayed against capital,

and that there would be a reconciliation between capital and labour on an equitable basis. There was a hope, he said, that the toilers themselves would be able to maintain and vindicate their position, and that they would adopt such measures as would entitle them to a fair reward for their labour. These remarks of Mr. Ballance early in 1890 are well worth quoting, as, consciously or unconsciously, they represented the views of the party he led, of the greater party he was to lead in twelve months, and of a large portion of New Zealand a few years later.

His speech on the Address-in-Reply all through was a very strong one. He dealt with every point raised by the Government, criticised its land administration with the utmost severity, and fell upon the object of his bitterest hatred, the obnoxious property tax.

He was followed in the debate by Sir George Grey, whose only object was to see the people play with the new toy he had given them, the one-man-one-vote principle. The impatient old man testily told the House that the electors were waiting to take possession of the privilege. He was irritated at the delay, and every fresh speech made his irritation become more apparent. He was incensed at the spectacle of a dead Parliament governing a living nation. He could not imagine how the people with a great privilege in their grasp could brook the delay of a minute, much less of a whole session. He was eager that the people should exercise the privilege, so that they could show what they were capable of doing. He was waiting to see the electors step forth as absolutely free men, exercising the right of voting fairly and equally.

Even he, with his strange prophecies and his almost supernatural insight into the future, had no conception of the changes that would be brought about when the masses realised the power he had placed in their hands. He saw happiness and contentment in New Zealand, and he saw the country rising into a great nation; but he did not see the long list of legislative reforms that has been placed on the Statute Book since those days of 1889 and 1890.

Mr. Seddon was asked by Mr. Ballance to take part in the debate on the Address-in-reply, and followed Mr. T. Fergus, Minister for Public Works and Mines. Mr. Seddon, of course, was better qualified than any other member to criticise the Department of Works and Mines, and he did so on this occasion with all his vigour. The Opposition had been asked by the Government to wait until the Financial Statement came down before it made its attack.

“Wait till the Financial Statement is ready?” Mr. Seddon said derisively. “When we have the Financial Statement, we shall be told to wait for the Public Works Statement, so we will go drivelling on until two or three weeks have passed, and then the cry will be: ‘You have been in Wellington nearly a month now; here is some work for you to do.’ It is by such tactics as these that the Ministers have managed time after time and Parliament after Parliament, even when they were in a minority, to keep their seats there, like barnacles on a ship’s bottom.”

A large portion of his attack dealt with personal charges against Ministers, and he demanded explanations about one thing and another from nearly every member of the Government. The Governor’s Speech seemed to him to be nothing more than a bald statement. He, like Mr. Ballance, wanted to know what would be done for the men and women who had been hoping against hope for the colony’s condition to improve, and whose eyes had been turned to New South Wales and Victoria. That bald statement, in the face of the deplorable condition of the colony, was, to his mind, the last straw.

The Government had stated that “the position of the colonists, as far as their private indebtedness is concerned, has greatly improved,” and that an additional area of land had been settled. He suggested that the paragraph ought to have read: “That those who hold the estate, the patrimony, of the people in large areas have, through the present administration and the land laws, been able to increase those areas.” He asked for information about the 20,000 persons who had left New Zealand. He valued them at £150 a head, and found that, in plain round figures, on a strictly commercial basis, they were worth £3,000,000 to New Zealand.

The Liberals, with much reluctance, agreed to postpone their main attack until the Statement disclosed the Government's policy. When the Statement was delivered, it was found that Sir Harry Atkinson, who had been granted permission to impose a primage duty temporarily, asked for its continuance. Word was then sent round amongst members of the Opposition that Mr. Ballance had come to the conclusion that it was time to deal a direct blow at the Ministry's policy.

This proposal met with the general approval of the Liberal Party. No finality could be seen in Sir Harry's policy. In 1888 he was given all he asked for in the way of taxation, and now he asked for power to raise more money by taxes. He was given all he asked for in the way of borrowing, and now asked for further borrowing powers. The members of the Opposition condemned the policy entirely. They felt that they were bound in consistency and honour to challenge the Government to go to the country at the general election which was approaching, and to allow the electors to judge between the rival parties.

The following motion was drafted at a Liberal caucus :—

“That, in the opinion of this House, the continuance of the primage duty is unnecessary, and is a distinct breach of the understanding arrived at when it was first imposed; that further retrenchment is imperatively demanded and can be effected without impairing the efficiency of the public service; that the retention of the property tax in its present form and the land policy pursued by the Government alike impede the progress of the colony.”

In moving this motion, Mr. Ballance showed that during the three years of the Government's office, the average number of settlers placed on the land had greatly decreased. He blamed the administration of the land laws for the loss of the colony's population. The land system in operation favoured “dummyism,” which was carried on every day, he said. Finally, he claimed that the House should be dissolved, in order that the whole position should be placed before the people for their consideration and judgment.

The House was crowded while Mr. Ballance was speaking, and loud cheers went up from the Liberals when he concluded his speech. Mr. Seddon's first action, when he was put forward

by the Government, was to defend his old chief, Sir George Grey, from attacks made upon him from the ministerial benches. In indignant tones, he reminded the House that Sir George Grey had been the means of giving the colony manhood suffrage, triennial Parliaments, and a land tax. Mr. Seddon had been in favour of that tax from the first, and he believed that if it had been allowed to remain in force the colony would not have been in such a bad condition as it was in 1890. He was one of those who blamed the property tax largely for "The Exodus," and he was not slow to affirm that with a land tax in operation people would return to the colony, and immigration would set in from the Old Country, as it had done before.

This speech bristles with tables and figures, dealing with land settlement, finances, charitable aid, and other questions. He supported Mr. Ballance in declaring that "dummyism" was rampant under the land laws that existed at that time. He always declared that liberal land laws in New Zealand commenced in 1885, when Mr. Ballance was Minister for Lands in the Stout-Vogel Government. Mr. Ballance was the first Minister who carried the village-settlement system into operation, and Mr. Seddon was not likely to permit detractors to take from Mr. Ballance the credit to which he was entitled.

He seemed to think that it was his duty to defend with all his might all members of the Opposition who had been attacked by ministerial supporters, and he passed from eulogies of Sir George Grey and Mr. Ballance to a confirmation of statements made by Mr. George Hutchison. Then the whole force of the Opposition Party was brought under his protection :

"The blow we have struck is a fair and open blow. The Opposition has been led to the attack by an honourable gentleman who has the entire confidence of the party, and I claim that the work we are doing redounds to our credit and is of decided benefit to the colony at large. Step by step, since the present Government has been on those benches, we have forced its hands. We have prevented it from doing wrong; we have assisted it in doing right; and in many directions we have protected the interests of the people. When we go to the country it will be for the people to judge between the Government and us."

What annoyed him more than anything else was a chance remark by Sir John Hall that the Opposition was composed of

unthinking men. "That, Sir," he said, "was the charge which the honourable gentleman levelled at the Opposition. I should like to know where he gets his 'thinking men' in this House, unless it is from the ranks of the Opposition. It would be invidious for me to give names; but, at all events, I should say that on this side of the House there is a compact body of thinking men who, in the opinion of the large majority of the people of the country, are giants as compared with the pigmies that follow the Government," a little bit of boasting which brought smiles to the faces of several Opposition members, especially when they noticed the speaker's thorough earnestness.

He did not like Sir John twitting the Opposition with not being united. There had, indeed, been many rumours afloat that the Opposition was divided, and Mr. Seddon's name had been mentioned in connection with the supposed discontent. He soon set doubting minds at rest on that score, however:

"I have been in this House since 1879, and I have never seen an Opposition so unanimous as the present one. I have never seen such a united body of men, a body of men imbued with more respect for their leader, or who placed more confidence in him. Our division-lists last session shall be the judge between the leader of the Opposition and the member for Selwyn (Sir John Hall). There were no lost sheep there, no stray lambs, no rodents in our party, no defections from our ranks. It is a compact Opposition, a solid Opposition, with a good leader and with men who have confidence in him. That is my reply to the remark made."

Sir John, while speaking in the debate on the previous day, had referred to defence and to the possibility of a hostile squadron coming to New Zealand waters. On being interrupted by Mr. Seddon, he retorted:

"The honourable member knows full well that a Russian squadron would not touch Kumara; it would not get much there; but if it chanced to come to Wellington during the session, I venture to say that the honourable member would soon skedaddle for the safe shelter of Kumara."

To this Mr. Seddon replied:

"I do not know that, with all my failings—and I have been accused of many in my time—I have ever before been accused of being a coward. If it came to a case of cut-and-run, and there were only the honourable member and myself here, I do not think it would be I. I would respect my honourable friend's old age, and I should place him in the rear and cover him from the enemy's fire, which I should not have much difficulty in doing. If I did run I think the

honourable gentleman would accept it as time to skedaddle. And if I did run to Kumara I should run to the right place, for it is there that all the crack shots are. Last year the Kumara Volunteers took the first, second, and third medals for the best shots in the Island, and two years ago they took first place, firing against the whole colony. Where would a man go for safety rather than to the stalwart miners, who make the finest volunteers in the colony? And where would the best men be more wanted than for the protection of the coal ports of Greymouth and Westport?"

In 1890, he was breaking his mind away largely from its close association with the West Coast. He took up questions with broader aspects; but he was always liable even then to rush back to the old place and drag it into his speeches, no matter what subject he happened to be dealing with. To his mind, the principal blemish in the Financial Statement and in the Governor's Speech was that neither of them said one word regarding the mining industry, and the former seemed to him to be about as clear as the mud that came from the Kumara sludge-channel.

In the midst of the Government's troubles, the "Skinflints" became active again, and demanded some kind of satisfaction. They would not vote for Mr. Ballance's motion because it came from him, but they still insisted that the Government had not gone nearly far enough on the road of severe retrenchment. Mr. Ballance's motion placed them in a peculiar position. They talked of retrenchment for months. They had promised their constituents that they would insist upon retrenchment being made without delay. If they voted for the motion, they might put into office men whom they regarded as political opponents. If they voted against it, they would have to account for their actions when they went back to their electorates; and that tiresome thing, a general election, would take place in a few months. They saw that something must be done to lift them out of the hole into which they had fallen. They therefore appointed a deputation to wait upon Sir Harry Atkinson. His health had become so bad that he was unable to read his Statement, and he had been ordered by his doctor not to enter the House at all until he regained some of his strength. In the meantime, the leadership of the House was taken by Mr. E. Mitchelson, Native Minister.

The deputation found the Premier at his home in company with Sir John Hall, who, all through the strife of those years, remained behind the leaders of the Conservative Party and gave them his advice on all important questions.

The Premier was not at all pliable. He could not see that further retrenchment was necessary, desirable, or possible, and the most he gave the deputation was cold comfort in the shape of a promise that any specific reductions they proposed would be carefully considered. They held another conference, and sent another deputation to the Premier, who then consulted his colleagues. The result was a compact. The extreme economists voted with the Conservatives, the no-confidence motion was lost by 11 votes, and the Continuous Ministry was safe again.

The estimates were the centre of the next attack. Mr. Seddon took that opportunity to insist that if Parliament continued to reduce its servants' salaries, the reductions ought to be made in the higher ones. A rumour that the wages of railway servants would be largely reduced brought him to his feet with questions and protests of a very vigorous nature. He found that Ministers were ready enough to defend the salaries of the heads of departments, but used the pruning-knife in a cruelly regardless manner on the lower salaries. The result was that the weight of the retrenchment measures fell upon the lower salaries, while salaries of £600 and even £1,000 a year were left untouched. A Minister of the Crown received only £800 a year, and Mr. Seddon saw no reason why high officials should be paid out of proportion to both their superior and inferior officers. He therefore determined not to give his vote for the increase of any salary over £200 a year.

He succeeded in the face of the Government's opposition in reducing the vote for the Audit Office by £950. The Audit Office had never been subject to the humiliation of a reduction before, and the action of the House, led by Mr. Seddon, threw the whole of the Civil Service into a state of terror, which lasted all the time the estimates were under discussion.

The harassed Civil Servants at last formed a union to protect their interests. They complained of Parliament, Ministers,

and the taxpayers, and said that reductions or dismissals were made in the same haphazard method as appointments and promotions had been made in former times.

They complained—it must be admitted very justly—that it was not they who had landed the colony in its deplorable condition. They asserted, indeed, that if the advice of the heads of the departments had been followed, thousands of pounds would have been saved every year. Their conduct on the whole had been exemplary, and they saw no reason why Governments and Parliaments should fall upon them and punish them with cruel severity for things that they had never done. Year after year at each session of Parliament there began a reign of terror for them, and it was time, they said, that the service, which was debarred from the ordinary means of defence against attack, should do something for itself, so it formed the Public Service Association.*

The reduction of the audit vote was really a defeat of the Government by two votes, but as it was not taken as a no-confidence question, the House continued to deal with the estimates, Mr. Seddon, Mr. Ballance, Mr. W. P. Reeves, and other prominent Liberals criticising almost every item and showing that nothing would be allowed to pass unless the money asked for was absolutely necessary.

*The objects of this Association were:—

To unite the whole public service throughout the colony in the bonds of an association by which its interests can at all times, and under all circumstances, be judiciously and wisely considered and advanced; to establish an organisation by means of which the voice of the service can be expressed; to promote a competent and acknowledged authority to pronounce the opinions of the whole service upon every matter affecting it, and to provide means also for the full discussion before settlement of all such questions; to vindicate the rights of the service and uphold its claims; to disseminate a better conception of the work of the public service; to promulgate the uncontested opinions of statesmen of all ages that a country which does not respect and fairly treat its public services, opens the door to maladministration and corruption and saps at the root of that energy, zeal, and high standard of performance of duty without which no country can be well served or well governed; to urge that the record of the public service of New Zealand has been such as to give no cause for detraction; to claim that the public service of the colony should open a well-assured and honourable career, and that the attainment of distinction therein by long and faithful duty is deserving of at least as much honour and reward as are accorded to those who become eminent in any other profession; to obtain recognition of the principle that there is no

Mr. Seddon voted for all reductions proposed when he saw that they were likely to put a check on extravagant expenditure. On several occasions, however, he rose to protest against competent officers in the Civil Service being referred to in terms of condemnation that were not deserved. In this debate, also, the miners and the West Coast figured prominently. While in one breath he condemned the Government for appointing too many new officers, in the other breath he asked that coal mine inspectors should be appointed, especially in Westland. He protested against the increase of inspectors generally, but said that more inspection was badly needed on the goldfields and coalfields, where mining was being carried on without regard to proper ventilation or to precautions against accidents.

Mr. Seddon's grasp of the manner in which the different departments had been conducted took the Government by surprise. He repeatedly nonplussed Ministers by asking for particulars of some appointment or some expenditure, and, on not receiving a satisfactory reply, supplied the information himself and commented upon it with vigour. It was not only the Mines and Public Works Departments that he treated in this way, but he also turned his attention to the Government's dealings with the educational system, the dairying industry, and other undertakings. Nothing seemed to come amiss to him.

higher field of duty for a man than to faithfully serve the country; and its corollary, that the position of such a man should be held in the esteem and given the consideration due to it; to promote by every possible means and influence the passing of such a constitution as has been granted to the civil and public service of England, and of nearly all her colonies—a constitution that shall establish, once and for all, the position, rank, and status of the New Zealand service, and of all its various branches and members; shall lay down comprehensive and well-defined lines of classification, promotion, salaries, organisation, and general service; shall free the service from the injurious influence of patronage and from the possibility of unnecessary and uncalled-for interference, at the instigation of political or party motives; and shall ensure that just and honourable independence which is already granted in other parts of the Empire; to collect forthwith all the Acts and Statutes, papers, reports, etc., dealing with the organisation of the public service in other countries, so as to enable the same to be carefully studied and collated by a committee of the Council of the Association, in order that the broad outlines, if not the details, of a measure may be laid down which shall promise to achieve the results already pointed out as so desirable, and which may be agreed to by the service of the whole colony before the meeting of the new Parliament.

There was, apparently, no field of inquiry too wide for his criticism and investigations. His zeal and earnestness carried many members with him. He showed that it was not party feeling which dictated the course of action he had adopted, but a genuine desire to clear the Civil Service of some of the evils that beset it and to place it in a much better position, in which it would receive and hold the confidence of the public. There was no obstruction in his tactics, and when he found a proposal from the Government which he believed should be put into operation, he had no hesitation in supporting it, whether his party liked it or not.

He was now rapidly coming into greater prominence in the eyes of the colony. He was recognised as the first lieutenant of the Liberal Party, a man whom other men might follow. His strength in debate was recognised. It was freely acknowledged by Mr. Ballance, who frequently put him forward to lead the great charges made by the Liberals on the Government's positions.

He was improving steadily in his manner of speaking, and in the way in which he arranged his facts and placed them before those whom he addressed. His speeches were forcible. He discarded flippancies and fribbles of debate, and, with an earnestness that carried conviction to many people, poured forth his grievances against the Government and his hopes for the colony's future.

He himself realised that he was now becoming a prominent figure in politics. He no longer made those half-apologies for speaking that characterised his earlier speeches. His remarks were entirely free from egotism. He said nothing of what he had done or what he intended to do. If he cherished high personal ambitions, they found no place with him when he rose from his seat in the House or stepped on to the public platform. It was his subject that engrossed all his attention; and his subject was New Zealand and her people. He had come forth from his parochialism. He was no longer merely a miners' representative, but a New Zealander, and was determined to do his best for the country in which he had found a home.

He was pleased and flattered to a high degree when, at a crowded meeting of citizens in the Exchange Hall, in Wellington, on August 6th, 1890, at which several prominent Liberal members were invited to give addresses on the political situation, he was placed second on the list of speakers, following the man whom above all others he wished to follow, Sir George Grey. The change that had come over him may be traced in a few extracts from his speech on that occasion, which show that his mind had broadened and that he took the clear wide view of a statesman.

“I shall commence,” he said, “by saying that I believe that we New Zealanders live in the best country under the canopy of heaven; but it is one of the worst governed countries on the face of the earth. But a weapon has been placed in men’s hands in this colony, and if they use that weapon at the coming general election, they will do a great deal towards restoring the colony to a more prosperous condition. The remedy lies with the people. They will find it in the ballot-box. When freedom was brought about in France, liberty, security, and the resistance of oppression actuated the people. The people of this colony must also adopt those principles and assert the equality of men. They must preserve the rights of labour. It has been said that the labour movement will drive away capital, but that is a fallacy. In other colonies, and also in the Old World, labour is protecting itself. I advise the people of this colony not to look at the movement as at an evil thing. It will eventually prove beneficial to capital as well as to labour itself.”

Taxation, the results that followed “land-grabbing” and the sins of an absentee landlord, who drew £2,000 a year from the colony and spent only £75 in it, were other points that he touched upon before he appealed to all working-men who held Liberal views and believed that Liberalism was for the colony’s benefit, to combine and put the right men into Parliament.

The session dragged on for weeks, the Opposition becoming bolder in its attacks and more damaging as it gained more information in regard to the administration of the departments. It found that the country watched its actions with interest, and, it believed, with favour.

By the middle of August, little progress had been made by Parliament, and all members saw that the Government, always looking for the defeat it adroitly managed to avoid, would be unable to pass any policy measures. Parliament was rapidly approaching the date on which it would expire by effluxion of

time, and Mr. Ballance, advised by Sir George Grey and supported by Mr. Seddon, was anxious to go to the electors as soon as possible and see what would result from the first election under the one-man-one-vote principle. With the consent of his followers, Mr. Ballance came to an arrangement with the Government to enable it to get through with the important work and let the House bring the session to a close and go at once to the people.

It was stated in several newspapers that the Government had insisted upon a particular clause being inserted in the arrangement. Mr. Seddon had not dealt with Sir Harry Atkinson's estimates in vain. The Government had come to look upon him as its severest critic, and the man who was to be dreaded most; and a newspaper correspondent, who was not friendly towards either Mr. Seddon or the Liberal Party, published a statement that the Government had made a strong point of demanding from Mr. Ballance a promise that the member for Kumara would submit to party control. Mr. Ballance, the report added, could not undertake to answer for the strong-minded member for Kumara, and negotiations were nearly falling through until Mr. Ballance gave an assurance that there would be no fractious obstruction.

"Sir," said Mr. Seddon, when the Government briefly announced the terms of the compact in the House, "you behold now the wreck of what was originally the independent member for Kumara. You see before you a member with a gag in his mouth, with his hands tied, and bound—without hope of release—I was going to say by party ties. No doubt, it would be galling to honourable members generally that liberty of speech should be taken from them as mine has been taken. As long as I consider that any agreement is in the interests of the country and will facilitate business I will be a party to it; but when I believe that any arrangement made will take away from me my liberty, or will prove injurious to my constituents or to the colony, I will have nothing whatever to do with that arrangement.

"It has been stated that the leader of the Opposition will guarantee to control the member for Kumara. Now, anyone

who knows the member for Kumara must pronounce that statement as being devoid of truth. I think the leader of the Opposition knows me too well, and Ministers know me too well, to suppose that there is anyone who can control the member for Kumara except the member for Kumara himself and his constituents. That is the only control which is held over me in this House, or ever shall be as long as I have a voice in the legislation of this country."

Having vindicated his unrestricted independence and liberty of action, he announced that he entirely agreed with the compact, and sat down amid the cheers of those who had been working with him to reduce the Government's estimates.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW LIBERAL MINISTRY.

With a tottering Conservative Government in power, and a strong Liberal Opposition pressing it hard at every step, the colony prepared for the general election of 1890. The people realised that the contest would be an important one, although few looked for the revolutions it brought forth. The Liberal Party was a thoroughly united body. It had taken over ten years to recover from the effects of the rout into which Sir George had led it at the very point when a permanent victory seemed to be assured. It had practically been in opposition all that time. There were members of the Liberal Party in the Stout-Vogel Government, which received a large share of the party's support; but that Government cannot be described as a Liberal Government in the same sense as the Liberal Government which had gone before and the Liberal Government which was to come after. The Stout-Vogel Ministry introduced liberal measures; but so did the Continuous Ministry all along its career. The former honestly tried to help the colony out of the depression, according to its lights; but its distinctive feature, at most, was its semi-Liberalism. It was the best the advanced Liberals could get at the time. Had it lived longer, it might have gone much further and done much better.

The party's organisation was hurried on. The cry of "North versus South" was sunk. Sir George Grey was no longer a stormy petrel, and there was nothing to divide the forces. The Liberal Party was confident that the people would stand by it. On looking back at the work of the past session, it congratulated itself on what it had done. It had not ousted the Conservative Government, which had the advantage of going to the country as the representative of the party in power; but it had never been more vigorous in its criticisms, and it felt that the colony had reaped some benefit from its operations.

While parties were preparing for the struggle, and while Parliament was officially drawing the session to a close, there happened an entirely unforeseen event. It upset all preparations, but it had a great influence on the future of the Liberal Party and the history of New Zealand.

The colony woke up one morning late in August, 1890, to find, to its astonishment, that it had been dragged into a maritime strike, which had been declared in Australia some weeks previously. Without its consent, and without even its knowledge, the colony was led into the bitterest industrial struggle the Australasian colonies have experienced. All the bad feeling between employers and workers in New Zealand, which had been accumulating for years, and had found only occasional means of escape, now came to the surface. It was an industrial war pure and simple. Very few colonists had the slightest idea how the colony came to be involved in it. Even many of those who took an active part in the strike did not know exactly why they were "called out;" and if the people were asked to-day how it was that they entered the strife they would be unable to give a satisfactory reply. Several different causes were in operation. The Union Steamship Company at that time almost monopolised the intercolonial trade of the colony, and had the lion's share of the coastal trade. Although the company was mainly owned in Europe, it had always been in close touch with the colony's affairs. It had never taken advantage of its monopoly to exploit those whom it employed; and it gave the public as good a service as could be expected—quite as good as it would have been forced into by the severest competition. All the seamen, firemen, cooks, and stewards employed by it were Unionists. None of the officers, however, had joined the Union up to the year of the strike.

About five years previously, the company joined an Australian Association of Shipowners. It was really forced into this action, as it feared that if it did not join the association, its monopoly would be interfered with by the Australian shipping companies. Up to the time of its joining that association, there was no Officers' Association, but afterwards an Officers' Association was formed, and it affiliated with the Maritime Council.

A dispute arose between the shipowners of Australia and the officers employed by them. These officers had formed an association, but had not been affiliated with the Trades and Labour Councils of Victoria and Sydney. The shipowners declined to treat with the officers and asked for delay. Some weeks elapsed; and during that time the Officers' Association had become affiliated to the two Trades Councils named. Then the shipowners said that they declined to treat with the officers until the Officers' Association was disaffiliated. The officers declined to do that. Their demands—"many of them, if not all, were just and fair," according to Sir Robert Stout—were not agreed to, and they threatened to strike. The shipowners, saying that there was nothing to arbitrate about, declined to fall in with attempts to conciliate.

The officers' strike in Australia was then declared. Some of the affiliated trades also struck, and the seamen of New South Wales, out of loyalty to their fellow-workers, joined the movement.

The Maritime Council of New Zealand consisted of branches of the Australian Union. It was the earnest desire of that Council to avoid a strike in New Zealand. The first trouble arose over the *Waihora*, when the wharf labourers in Sydney declined to work that vessel, as she was one of those owned by a company affiliated to the Shipowners' Association. The Union Company appealed to the Maritime Council, and it promptly offered that the seamen should work the vessel. That was done.

But two other vessels belonging to the Union Company arrived in Sydney and the wharf labourers declined to work them also. This time, without waiting for the interference of the Maritime Council, the agent of the company employed non-union labourers. It was known that if that step was taken a general strike would result, and it did. The Maritime Council in New Zealand called out its men, and those affiliated with it joined, and New Zealand was the scene of a big strike.*

* This summary of the causes that dragged New Zealand into the only great strike it has experienced is abridged from a very clear account of the trouble given by Sir Robert Stout in a letter to the "Otago Daily Times" on September 20th,

Deputations of workers waited upon Sir Harry Atkinson at his home and asked that the Government should interfere and try to stop the strike and adjust matters. It was officially announced that Sir Harry was not able to see his way to intervene in such a manner as to bring the trouble to an end.

When, however, the Liberal members, led by Sir Westby Perceval, moved a direct motion in Parliament that the Government should call a conference together in Wellington, at which the representatives of employers' and workers' associations should be represented, it was carried by a large majority. Some of the leading members of the Conservative Party opposed it. They argued that the Government should have adhered to its determination not to interfere in the dispute, and one at least thought that their leader had shown weakness in falling in with the proposal.

Mr. Seddon was amongst the prominent members of Parliament who came out before the public to discuss the position. In the House he was one of the outspoken supporters of the unionists. He denied a statement that they were banded together against law and order. He admitted that in the unions, as well as in other organisations, there were a few men who had made mistakes, as their sufferings had goaded them on to commit indiscretions; but in his opinion it was the duty of the Government and of Parliament to interfere and endeavour to bring about a settlement of the dispute, in the interests of the colony, if not in the interests of those actually engaged in the conflict. He denounced as a base calumny the statement that it was a war of the unionists against the people of the colony. He called upon every lover of fair-play in New Zealand to see that the dispute was considered on its merits. He asked farmers to

1890, when the strike was in progress. In regard to the justification of the action of the New Zealand Maritime Council, Sir Robert says: "If the New Zealanders had not supported the unionists by striking, and had worked with non-unionists, the whole principle of unionism would have been jeopardised. It might have shown a want of loyalty to their co-workers and thus have inflicted a grievous blow to the principle of co-operation amongst labourers. To fairly criticise, therefore, the executive of the unions one must try to put himself in their place, and if that be done it will be seen that a good defence may be made for their action."

co-operate with artizans in order to prevent the working classes being crushed. He spoke long and earnestly in favour of State interference in all these matters, basing his reasons on the fact that industrial disputes militated against the colony's progress and against the well-being of the people generally.

It was during the strike of 1890 that he became thoroughly convinced that State interference was not only justifiable but absolutely necessary for the colony's future. The strike was to him a terrible object lesson. He came out in advance, probably, of any other leading politician of the day and showed so much determination that he was left alone, none caring to follow him in his schemes. He saw that the State Life Insurance Department and the State-owned postal service had been successful beyond reasonable expectations, and he believed it was the duty of Parliament to go a great deal further in the same direction.

He wanted the State to buy the Union Steamship Company's fleet, and by that means place it beyond anyone's power to cause the suffering and loss that were taking place in the colony at that time. Although this scheme did not receive much serious consideration then, it had been carefully thought out; it was not the inspiration of a moment or the chance idea of a heated mind. The company's fleet consisted of 48 steamers. Its capital was £500,000, debentures for £250,000 being afloat bearing interest at the rate of 5 per cent. Three steamers recently constructed had not been paid for, and the sum that they cost was bearing interest. The total sum involved, he estimated, would be about a quarter of a million sterling. That money, taking it all round, was bearing interest at the rate of 6 per cent. The State was able to borrow at 4 per cent, and the difference in the rate of interest would be about equal to a third of the capital, so that the property ought to have been available for about half a million. The State paid the company £6000 a year for the carriage of mails and from 7s. to 10s. a ton for the carriage of coals to be used on the Government railways. In some parts of the colony, the company's steamers were competing with the railways, and that competition entailed considerable loss on the colony. He saw that if the two interests were worked together,

both would gain an advantage, and a large saving would be made.

His proposal, he maintained, would also increase the market for New Zealand coals. The average yearly consumption of coal by the company was estimated at 150,000 tons. Half of that was obtained from Newcastle, in New South Wales. The Australian supply could be decreased by one-half, and there would be an increase of consumption of the New Zealand article by about 40,000 tons.

Besides that, the agricultural products of the colony would be carried at a much lower rate, and a market would be found for them and for the colony's coals in the South Sea Islands. With State-owned steamers, he argued, New Zealand would not need to pay £20,000 a year to the Imperial Government for the presence of men-of-war in these seas, as the New Zealand Government would then have a fleet of its own available for use, and would be able to defend itself. All the men employed on the steamers would be under naval discipline. Wages would be paid at a fixed rate, and the danger of strikes would be gone. The company's profit on its capital had been 8 per cent. for some years, and he estimated that if the State allowed 4 per cent. for sinking fund, insurance, and other charges, there would be 4 per cent. left to go towards extending trade operations, especially in regard to a direct service for mails, for which £20,000 a year was paid.

He went into the cost of the strike to the colony. There were 4,000 men out of work, and he set that loss down at £12,000 a week, while the increased cost of living to consumers was about £8,000, so that the strike caused a loss of £20,000 a week, besides paralysing trade and stopping industries.

In his scheme he saw a means of becoming independent of the other colonies and of breaking a monopoly which, apparently, could not be broken by any private enterprise. He suggested that the company should be asked to place a valuation on its property, and that the Government should say what it was prepared to give, the difference to be settled by arbitration.

Having been seized with the idea that it was the right time for the State to establish a steam service without delay, he

asked the Government: "Will it, with a view of removing a monopoly and putting an end to the present strike between labour and capital, and the disaster, losses, misery, and suffering contingent thereon, take into consideration the purchasing by the colony of the Union Steamship Company's fleet of steamers?"

The reply he received from the Government was that "no doubt a great deal might be said upon the subject; the Government, however, are not at present prepared to take any such action as suggested in the question."

The steamship monopoly led him on to the coal mines. He asked where, if the coal supply continued to be monopolised, the colony was to obtain its motive power, and what was to become of its manufactures. "It is quite evident to me," he said with emphasis, which probably was not noticed at the time, but which is clear enough in the light of after events, "that the State should step in and do something." That "something" is now represented by State coal mines, which he established on the coalfields of the South Island, and which are supplying coal to consumers in several centres of population.

The Government endeavoured to arrange a conference, as directed by Parliament on the motion of Liberal members, but the employers' associations refused to be represented unless the unions admitted the right of employers to retain the "free" labour engaged during the strike, and the right to employ "free" labour or union labour indiscriminately, and also agreed that unionists should work with free men. The unions could not concede this, and the conference, when it was held, was between twenty union delegates and the Hon. G. McLean, representative of the Union Steamship Company, who would listen to nothing but unconditional surrender, which the unionists had to accept.

The public had concentrated its attention on the strike. For a few weeks the general elections, now quite close, had been forgotten, but no sooner had the strike died out than the public mind rebounded back to the political contest. Defeated in the strike, the unionists rushed to the electoral offices to enrol themselves on the parliamentary rolls. Political associations were formed in all parts of the colony, and politics filled the air.

The Liberal Party adopted a policy which included:—

The stoppage of “dummyism” in land sales.

No more borrowing.

Self-reliance.

Thorough retrenchment.

The prevention of the acquisition of land in large holdings.

The resumption by the State of land urgently required for settlement, and vigorous settlement of the land.

The discouragement of absentee landlordism and of speculative land purchasers.

Better treatment of workers in factories.

The use of railways to develop the agricultural and pastoral industries rather than as a means of imposing taxation.

The establishment of scholarships from the primary schools to secondary schools and to the mining and agricultural schools.

The establishment of technical schools.

Reform of the Legislative Council.

Measures to improve the condition of the workers.

The repeal of the property tax and the introduction of a land and income tax.

The Conservative Party's manifesto included:—

Strict, but not parsimonious, economy, combined with cheerfulness and a firm belief in the unbounded resources of the colony.

Further borrowing within the colony.

The purchase of Maori lands.

Retention of the property tax.

Non-interference by the Government or Parliament with industrial disputes.

Trades and Labour Councils rallied round the Liberal leaders, echoed their war-cries, and issued manifestoes broadcast. For the first time, they selected labour candidates and gave them block votes.

The result of the polling was a brilliant victory for the Liberal Party, especially in the large centres of population, Auckland and Wellington returning two Liberal candidates each and Christchurch and Dunedin three each. No prominent Liberal candidates were defeated, but the Conservative Party lost several leaders, including a Minister of the Crown. In the large towns the Conservatives had hoped to isolate the labour vote and then split it up among the labour candidates. Except in Wellington, where the labour vote was divided, this scheme was not successful. In Canterbury, the section of the old Stout-Vogel combination that had followed Vogel through all his fortunes and misfortunes since he returned to the colony from England five years previously, broke away from the Liberals to a large extent, but this did not transfer the balance of power in the province to the Conservatives.

A very striking effect of the exercise of the one-man-one-vote principle is found in the fact that had it not been in operation, Mr. Ballance would almost certainly have been rejected at the polls. He stood for his old constituency at Wanganui, and he won by a majority of only twenty-seven over his opponent. Had plural voting been allowed, as in former elections, it would have been very easy for his opponents to send contingents of voters to Wanganui from the adjoining districts on the day of the election. There is no doubt that that would have been done, as Mr. Ballance was the head and front of the Liberal Opposition, and with him out of the way the Conservatives would have felt some kind of security. The worth of that security, after events have shown, would not have been very great, as Mr. Seddon would probably have taken the leadership at once; but the House had no knowledge of Mr. Seddon as a chief in those days.

Another close Liberal victory was that of Mr. A. Hogg, who won Masterton by twenty-one votes. In former times, landowners from Wellington went up to Masterton by train to vote for Mr. Beetham, Mr. Hogg's opponent. As many as forty have been known to do so and the same tactics would have been adopted in 1890 if they had been possible. Quite a large number of Liberal seats were won by narrow majorities.

which could easily have been turned into minorities had not Sir George Grey, by restricting the freehold vote, given the Liberal Party one of its greatest boons. He had often talked empty words, and there were many Liberals who felt that it would have been better if he had talked less and done more. In his last parliamentary days, however, he gave them something that they have every reason to be deeply grateful for. It is hard to say how far the effect of the one-man-one-vote principle has extended, but it is certain that it has been a very important factor in the marvellous success of the Liberal Party, which has passed triumphantly from victory to victory ever since the principle was recognised by Parliament.

The most unexpected result of the election was the return of a contingent of genuine workers, taken straight from the factory or the bench, and sent to Parliament with the sole purpose of attending to the needs of labour. The working-classes were not dissatisfied with the splendid service given during the previous two years by a small band of men, several of whom were cultured students of social subjects; but they felt that they would like to be represented by men of their own class, who would be labour members first and anything else afterwards.

Working-men had sat in the House for years. Mr. S. P. Andrews, a resident of Christchurch, has been given the honour of being the first man who was elected to the House while actually engaged in a working-man's vocation. He was coupled with Sir George Grey when Christchurch City elected two Liberal representatives in 1879, the year in which Mr. Seddon began his parliamentary career. Mr. Andrews, however, saw only one Parliament, and soon dropped out of politics. Mr. H. A. Leviston, a working engineer, represented Nelson City from 1881 to 1889, and he ranks as another early genuine workingman's representative.

In 1890, however, the maritime strike called men from the workers' ranks, and the experiment of labour being represented by labouring men was tried. The successful labour candidates at that election were:—

Mr. W. W. Tanner, a boot operator, elected for Heathcote, adjoining Christchurch City.

Mr. D. Pinkerton, a bootmaker, elected for Dunedin City with the largest number of votes ever recorded for one candidate in the colony at that time.

Mr. W. Earnshaw, a brass finisher, for the Peninsula or Dunedin Suburbs electorate.

Mr. T. L. Buick, a working carpenter, for Wairau.

Mr. J. W. Kelly, a tailor, for Invercargill.

In the following year, Sir Westby Perceval, who was elected for Christchurch City in 1890, was appointed Agent-General in London, and the vacancy in Christchurch was filled by Mr. E. Sandford, a compositor employed in the "Lyttelton Times" office. These six men, Messrs. Tanner, Pinkerton, Earnshaw, Buick, Kelly, and Sandford, formed the first contingent of purely labour members sent to Parliament.

Messrs. Pinkerton, Earnshaw, and Buick served in two Parliaments, and then lost their seats, but Mr. Pinkerton was called to the Legislative Council, and remained in it until he died, in 1906. Mr. Kelly, after being in three Parliaments, lost his seat in 1899, and has not entered politics again. Mr. Sandford was defeated in 1893, and did not offer himself again. Mr. Tanner is the only one of the original six who has sat continuously. He is still, in 1906, in his old seat in the House.

All the successful labour candidates were thoroughly practical men, sober in their views, but determined to do their best for the special interests they represented. They were not Utopian, and they neither hoped nor demanded that the Liberal Party would go too far in giving concessions to the working people. They were in complete accord with Mr. Ballance, Mr. Seddon, Mr. Reeves, Sir Westby Perceval, and other prominent members of the party who had given their attention to labour questions.

So far from the labour contingent having to force the party on, both Mr. Seddon and Mr. Reeves held views a good way in advance of those of the labour members. It was rather the function of the latter to follow the Progressive Liberals and to help them with advice that was practical and weighty on account of the experience upon which it was based. Most members of the old Parliament, including Mr. Seddon, agreed

that, as labour legislation was in the air, the new men would be able to give valuable assistance in preparing measures dealing with a technical subject, which called for extremely delicate handling, and this has often proved to be the case.

The general opinion formed of the labour members was expressed by Sir Robert Stout, a few days after the election, in the following words:—

“So far as I know of them, they are moderate men, whose sole desire is to see the rights of labour represented; and they should be represented. And my own opinion is that, considering the number of people interested in labour questions, they have too small a number of men in our Legislature, and the time is coming when there will have to be more returned. I believe that those elected now are moderate men, who will be found a credit to labour and to the New Zealand Parliament. Judging from their election addresses, they are people who recognise that the well-being of the colony is to be looked at as a whole, and not as that of simply one class. I have no fear that any policy proposed by them will not be a fair policy, and one which will forward the interests of the colony. I have not any fear that anything absurd will be listened to, either by them or any other class of members. Possibly some of them may imagine that things can be done by legislation which cannot, but after they have had experience of Parliament, and what laws can do, I have no doubt it will be found here, just as it is in England, that labour representatives are most useful members, none more so.”

On their arrival in Wellington to attend their first session, they were welcomed at a monster meeting held in the Opera House, where they were presented with an address and were complimented by Sir George Grey, who, taking advantage of a vacancy in an Auckland constituency, had returned to the House.

They knew that the public were watching them to see how they would behave. They were supposed to be men who would be trapped by the first designer in the House. But though more than one or two men, who would willingly have enhanced their political influence with the labour members' support, made overtures, their efforts were fruitless. From the first the labour members recognised that their constituents had not sent them to play with politics. They told the people that they had not entered Parliament to fill the columns of “Hansard” with unnecessary talk or to become silent members, and they believed that they would not prove incapable of adapting themselves to politics. Each of them felt a deep sense of responsibility in the position in which the electors had placed them.

They felt that they were co-trustees, and that a large section of the people had experimentally and provisionally committed to them their destinies, "for on us and on our conduct," they said, "depends in a great measure the permanency or otherwise of the movement started in 1890."

There was no doubt in most people's minds that the great Continuous Ministry had been beaten at last, and that the Liberal Party, which bitter experience had taught the folly of allowing discord and jealousy to divide its ranks, would take its place at the head of the colony.

It was expected that the Ministers would resign at once, but Sir Harry Atkinson was not so ready to relinquish power. He said he doubted if Mr. Ballance could form a strong Government, and he deplored the fact that the country was likely to have the spectacle of another weak Government in office, with a strong party in opposition. He pointed to the lack of experienced Ministers in the Liberal Party, and clearly showed that he did not believe Mr. Ballance had men whom he could place in ministerial positions with any degree of confidence.

A suggestion, to which Sir Harry did not show much repugnance, was that a Coalition Ministry might be formed from the strong men on both sides. "Reconstruction," however, had come to be synonymous among the members of the Liberal Party with "Continuous Ministry," and when the suggestion was brought under the notice of the Liberal leaders they discarded it.

Mr. Ballance demanded the instant resignation of the Government, without calling Parliament together again. The object of the agreement arrived at in the previous session between Mr. Bryce, on behalf of the Government, and Mr. Ballance, on behalf of the Opposition, was to avoid the cost of two sessions in one year. In view of the roar for retrenchment throughout the colony, and the treatment Parliament seemed determined to give to the Civil Service, the Liberals thought that it would be unreasonable, even unjust, to go to the heavy expense of holding a session when it might be avoided by means of an agreement between the leaders of parties. Mr. Ballance therefore suggested that the next session should be held

as early as possible about the ordinary time, not later than April, 1891. That was agreed to at the conference, and the three months' supplies allowed after the end of the financial year were cut off. Mr. Ballance, while the conference was being held, raised the question of the possibility of the Ministry being defeated at the polls, and Mr. Bryce and he drew up a clause, couched in plain words, providing that if the Ministry was defeated it should resign at once, without calling Parliament together.

When a Cabinet meeting was held to consider the proposal, Mr. E. C. J. Stevens, a member of the Government, objected to the wording of the clause, as he thought that it indicated a foregone conclusion that the Conservative Party would be defeated. Other phraseology was suggested, and it was embodied in a memorandum. This memorandum, which bears the initials of the Conservative Premier, "H. A. A.," is as follows:—

"It is fully recognised that the constitutional practice requires that the result of the general election should, if clearly apparent, regulate the conduct of Ministers in retaining office or tendering their resignations."

It was discussed by Mr. Ballance and his friends, who understood that if Ministers were defeated at the polls, they would resign at once, and that the next session would be the ordinary one towards the middle of the year. The Liberals did not place any great importance on the document, which they regarded as merely the embodiment of the recognised constitutional practice in cases where a Government has forfeited the confidence of the people. They held that if the Government was defeated either in Parliament or at the polls, it no longer had a right to administer the country's affairs, and, in accordance with constitutional practice, should resign.

When the time came, Sir Harry denied that he had given any pledge to resign. He said that he had only promised that if the elections went against him he would "act in the constitutional way." "A perfectly constitutional way," he added, "was to call Parliament together as soon as possible." In this attitude, which was taken up unexpectedly, the Liberal leaders saw a possible attempt by the Government to gain to its side some of the votes that constituted the Liberal majority.

The Government's supporters admitted that to all appearances Sir Harry had not succeeded in obtaining a majority in the new House, but they professed to believe that Mr. Ballance was no better off, and said openly and positively that nobody could point out a set of possible Ministers in the Liberal Party who would, without doubt, secure a majority in Parliament. It was freely asserted that when Parliament met it would probably be found that the Liberal Government, if it was formed, would be ignominiously rejected from office. Several prominent members of the Conservative Party were anxious that the Liberal Party should be given an opportunity of forming a Ministry, believing that, if it took office, it would cover itself with ridicule and bring upon itself a crushing defeat that would preclude it from taking office for another decade at least. If that was done, it was proposed that Sir Harry, whose health was still very bad, should resign, and that the Continuous Ministry should resort to its old method of reconstructing itself and securing another term of power, until it was defeated again and was ready for another reconstruction.

Several members of the Conservative Party, however, disapproved of this course, on the ground that it would endanger the interests of the public for the sake of party tactics. The general opinion amongst the Conservatives was that they should challenge the Liberals to an immediate trial of strength, which would define the position, set all doubts at rest, and enable one party or the other to attend to the colony's affairs, which, in face of the excitement and turmoil, were being neglected.

While the Liberals were waiting for the announcement of the Government's resignation, and were preparing their plans for a progressive programme, they were surprised to learn that at a meeting of the Cabinet it had been decided to recommend the Governor to appoint six more members of the Legislative Council. At first it was thought that the announcement was due more to the enterprise of several newspapers than to any serious intention on the part of the Government, but it was soon seen that the Conservatives were thoroughly in earnest, and that Sir Harry had made the recommendation and sent to the Governor a list of the dying Ministry's nominees.

The Liberals were very indignant at this action. Several of them communicated with Mr. Ballance, and he instructed the party's Whip, Sir Westby Perceval, to prepare a petition to the Governor. This was done, and it was sent to members of the party for signature. The text is as follows :—

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, electors of the colony of New Zealand, having good reason to believe that it is the intention of your Excellency's Ministers to recommend that certain fresh appointments should be made by your Excellency to the Legislative Council, most respectfully urge :—

(1) That any recommendation made by your Excellency's Ministers to increase the Legislative Council, as at present constituted, is contrary to the wish of the people of New Zealand as expressed at the recent general election.

(2) That your Excellency's Ministers are in a decided minority in the new Parliament, their avowed supporters being little more than one-third of the present House, and they, therefore, cannot be said to represent the people of New Zealand, or to possess the right to advise your Excellency on a matter of such importance.

(3) That the people of New Zealand have, at the recent election, demanded a reform in the constitution of the Legislative Council, and that until the new House has had an opportunity of considering the question, no new life appointments should be made.

(4) That the present Premier of the colony, Sir Harry Albert Atkinson, in his Financial Statement, given in November, 1887, stated, in referring to the intention of his Government with regard to the Legislative Council, as follows :—“ They (the Government) will also during the present session invite the Legislative Council to devise a plan by which their number may be reduced to 35, one half of the number of members proposed for this House, and thereafter limited to that number.” The members of the Legislative Council are still more than 35 in number, and fresh appointments cannot therefore be justified.

(5) That your Excellency's Ministers have not been justified in claiming what has been stated, on very doubtful authority, to be the privilege of defeated Governments—viz., the nomination of members of the Upper Chamber because they decline to admit defeat.

Your petitioners therefore respectfully urge upon your Excellency to defer acting upon any recommendation made by your Excellency's present advisers to make fresh appointments to the Legislative Council until they have met the newly-elected House and given the representatives of the people an opportunity of considering the constitution of the Upper Chamber.

When the petition setting forth the party's objection to the appointments was presented to the Governor by Mr. Seddon and other members of the party, they were informed that the appointments had already been made. Lord Onslow also told them that he was responsible to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and to no one else, and he bowed them out of the room.

Whatever happened in the new Parliament, it was beyond doubt that Sir Harry, who had had a longer term of office in the colony's Ministries than any other politician of his day, would have to throw the burden of political work off his back at last. His health became so bad that he could not appear in public. He experienced great difficulty in attending meetings of the Cabinet, and found that it was quite impossible for him to give his attention to even the routine business of the departments of which he was the head.

In these circumstances, the Conservatives, still refusing to admit defeat, seriously considered the reconstruction proposals of some of the party's members. It became a question whether Sir William Russell or Mr. Bryce would take the position Sir Harry was preparing to vacate. Sir William had had a good deal of parliamentary experience. He was not a strong party man—his views were too broad to allow him to be swayed by party considerations alone—but he was a man who had gained the thorough respect of all the members of the House; and it was to him that the party looked for guidance.

After many consultations, the Ministry decided that, in spite of the agreement come to with the Opposition before the elections, it would not resign, and, on its recommendation, the Governor called Parliament together on January 23rd, in the new year, 1891.

Two days before the session was opened, the Conservatives met in caucus, and Sir Harry, who showed all the marks of the physical suffering through which he was passing, announced that the Speakership of the Legislative Council had become vacant. Members of his party urged that he should be appointed to the position. His doctor told him that he must not lead the House again, and he therefore reluctantly decided to fall in with the wishes of the party and, accepting the position, retired from the Chamber which had been the scene of many of his political battles.

At this caucus the Conservative party decided to nominate Mr. Rolleston for the Speakership of the House, which had been vacated by the defeat of Sir Maurice O'Rorke.

The Liberal Party's caucus was held the following day. Mr. Ballance, who was immediately voted to the chair as a mark of recognition of his leadership, briefly congratulated the party on its unity, saying that it was now a party of Liberals all through, and it was almost the first occasion on which the party had been constituted on clearly defined party lines. The vacant Speakership of the House was discussed, and it was agreed to nominate Sir William Steward, one of the staunchest members of the party, as the Liberal candidate.

It was over this election of Speaker that the first division after the notable election of 1890 took place. As the question involved no consideration of principle outside of party politics, it was a clear case of the Conservative Government against the Liberal Government.

Mr. Seddon was asked to propose Sir William Steward, and he did so in a few words, briefly recounting Sir William's services to his party and the country since he entered Parliament in 1871.

The division gave the following figures :—

Sir William Steward	...	...	37
Mr. Rolleston	...	...	30
			—
Liberal majority	...	...	7

A few minutes later, Mr. Mitchelson announced to the House that the Government had resigned, and Mr. Ballance stated that he had already been asked by the Governor to form a new Ministry. Four days later, Mr. Ballance was able to inform the House that he had been successful in his task, and that the following members would be the Governor's advisers :—

Mr. BALLANCE, Premier, Colonial Treasurer, Minister for Native Affairs, and Commissioner for Trade and Customs.

Mr. W. P. REEVES, Minister for Education and Justice.

Mr. SEDDON, Minister for Public Works, Mines, and Defence.

Sir PATRICK BUCKLEY, Attorney-General, Colonial Secretary, and Postmaster-General.

Sir JOHN McKENZIE, Minister for Lands, Immigration, and Agriculture.

Sir JOSEPH WARD, member of the Executive without portfolio.

On the following day, Sir A. J. Cadman joined the Ministry as Commissioner of Stamp Duties, and a few weeks later Sir Joseph Ward took charge of the Postal and Telegraph Department; and a Liberal Government, in office for the second time in the colony's history, started upon the remarkable career with which the name of Mr. Seddon is closely associated.

As Conservative critics pointed out, it was almost an entirely new team. Mr. Ballance and Sir P. Buckley were the only members of it who had held ministerial office before. It had a bare working majority of six, and arrayed against it there were the talent and experience of the party that had held power almost continuously since the beginning of responsible government. Against it, also, it had the leading newspapers of the colony, with two exceptions, and the unreasoning prejudice of a large section of the community, which did not realise the change and the revolution of thought that had been brought about.

A short Governor's Speech, composed of a few sentences, left no doubt as to the kind of policy that would be placed before Parliament. It was distinctly stated that measures would be submitted to improve the relations between labour and capital, and to promote the cause of industrial progress, while one clause, which plainly bears signs of the work of the new Minister of Mines, stated that "earnest attention will be given to the development of the vast mineral resources of the colony, and much can be done to further the mining interests at a moderate cost."

The Liberal Party's opponents had frequently stated that the Liberals in power would be entirely different from the Liberals in opposition, and that when they reached the ministerial benches their advanced labour programme would be thrown to the winds, and they would drop into the old practice of doing as little as possible, as long as they kept things going and saw that sufficient revenue was received from the people to meet the expenses of government. Even after the Speech had

been submitted to Parliament, it was stated that its words were hollow. The party's opponents probably believed what they said. They certainly were not prepared for the extraordinary vigour with which the new Government set its great policy in motion and brought in many reforms, which have attracted world-wide attention.

A week's work was placed before the House, and the session closed. The Continuous Ministry finally disappeared from the colony's politics, and the Liberal Ministers were left to prepare the programme and policies they believed the country demanded.

CHAPTER X.

MINISTER FOR PUBLIC WORKS.

The first thing Mr. Seddon did as Minister for Public Works was to set his department in order. The Conservative Government had contemplated abolishing the Public Works Department altogether. It had frequently proposed to do so, but had never put its scheme into practice. Mr. Seddon thought that, as the money available for the construction of public works was limited, and as the Government had abandoned the borrowing policy with the object of taking safer steps, there should be a large reduction in the departmental expenses. He argued that if the department's income was reduced by about a quarter, its expenses would also have to come down. A day or two after he had been sworn in as Minister he sent for the head of his department and ordered a list of all the officers to be supplied to him. The result of a careful study of the list was that over forty officers were dismissed at once. The list of dismissals included :

One consulting engineer.

Four district engineers.

Eleven assistant engineers and draftsmen.

Twenty inspectors.

Ten clerks.

As Minister for Defence he dismissed an under-secretary, three lieutenant-colonels, and several junior officers. The saving of salaries in the Public Works Department was £8,000 a year, and in the Defence Department £4,800 a year.

It was only natural that his policy of retrenchment should be severely criticised in the House and in the Wellington newspapers, and also secretly in the Civil Service, in whose eyes he was a demon of economy, seeking for poor Civil Servants to dismiss.

The result of the policy, although it seemed so excessively harsh that Civil Servants named him "The Chief Executioner," was to place the Civil Servants under his care on a much better footing than they had ever been before. The life had been crushed out of the Public Works Department by the demand for retrenchment, which had been made session after session for years previously. There was a feeling of uncertainty throughout the whole department, among competent men as well as useless ones. They knew that Parliament insisted upon reductions being made, but as the Conservative Government would never bring its mind to make them, all the Civil Servants waited for the word, and none felt that he was safe.

Mr. Seddon made as many reductions as he could without affecting the efficiency of the department. When that had been done, he let it be known that the reductions would cease. Those under him then felt that the crusade would stop; and, knowing that they were regarded as efficient and faithful servants, they worked with more will and confidence than they had shown for many years. He never lost sight of the fact that his departments must be worked economically as well as efficiently, but from the first he gave his officers an assurance that he would not ask any of them to overwork himself.

His next step was to prevent a recurrence of an abuse that had grown up in connection with the sub-letting of contracts. This was practically the first benefit gained by the working-classes through their action in supporting the Liberal Party at the memorable general election. The workers had suffered greatly from the practice of sub-letting, which had become so common that only a short time before the Liberals took office the whole of a big Government contract was advertised by the successful tenderer to be let in sub-contracts. The sub-letting system was annoying to the principal, and it often entailed hardship on the workers. In many cases, the sub-contractors were "men of straw." Competition led them to take the work at low prices, and the workers sometimes had to bear a part of the loss. Much of the sweating that had been disclosed in the colony was due to this evil practice.

Mr. Seddon made up his mind that there would be no sweating in work undertaken by any of the departments in his charge. He said that the State could pay a fair price for its work, and it was his duty to see that the worker received a fair share of that fair price. He therefore issued strict instructions that the clause in the general terms and conditions of all Government contracts against sub-letting should be strictly observed. For a long time, the clause had been evaded, and the department's officers had looked upon it as a dead letter. He announced that the engineer-in-charge and the clerk-of-works would not be allowed to recognise sub-contracts at all; and that the sub-letting of work, or having it done as piece-work, would be deemed to be ground for the cancellation of the contract, and heavy penalties would be imposed.

Having satisfactorily disposed of that matter, he inaugurated a system of constructing public works on the co-operative principle, giving the work direct to the workmen and dispensing altogether with the middlemen. He seized an opportunity for introducing this system in connection with the construction of sections of the Ngakawau railway extension to Mokihiui, on the West Coast. Public tenders had been invited for sections of that line. Liberal conditions were offered. Immediately the tenders were accepted, the contracts were relinquished, and he had the choice of calling for fresh tenders on the original method or giving the co-operative principle a trial.

On going to Westport shortly after he had been appointed a Minister, he found there a large number of men who had flocked to the coast from different parts of the colony, expecting to secure employment on that line. To avoid the delay that would be caused if fresh tenders were called for, he decided to let three of the sections on the co-operative principle. He asked the men to divide themselves into three parties of fifty men each, and to select trustees from each party. These trustees were to take the work from the Government in the ordinary way, but the work, he explained, was to be done by the whole of the men, each man having equal rights with all his fellows. He arranged that the price should be fixed by the engineer in charge of the work.

The men soon grasped the idea, which they thought was a very good one. As often happens with the introduction of a new system, there was a little friction at first, and some difficulty was experienced in the classification of the men. The strong and able-bodied men did not altogether like to work for the aged and the feeble. Mr. Seddon, however, classified both the men and the work, giving the lighter work to the aged and less capable, and the heavier work to those best fitted for it.

The earnings, as a whole, proved satisfactory, and when the contracts were completed the men engaged on them in that way stated that they were prepared to accept more work on the same principle if it was provided. That was the beginning of the co-operative system, which now forms a marked feature of public works in New Zealand. At the present time, in 1906, between 4,000 and 5,000 men are employed under the system established by Mr. Seddon a few weeks after he became Minister for Public Works. Most of the colony's railway and road works, and a great deal of its public building work, is done under the system.

Mr. Seddon saw that the contract system had many disadvantages. It brought into existence a class of middlemen contractors. These men often made large profits out of their undertakings, and sometimes out of those whom they employed. There had been strikes on public contracts. The result was that valuable time had been lost in pushing on important works, capital had been wasted, expensive plant had been kept idle, large numbers of men had been thrown out of employment, and there was bad feeling on all sides. Under the old sub-contract system, business people who supplied stores and materials were often unable to obtain payment, owing to the workmen not receiving their full wages, or, perhaps, having to go without any. In these cases, contracts which should have proved a benefit to the districts in which they were carried out, by leading to the expenditure of money, only brought trouble and disaster. It often happened that while the sub-contractor was ruined and the workmen were underpaid, or not paid at all, the principal contractor, who did none of the work, was made rich on the proceeds of one contract. The whole of the profits, instead of

being widely distributed over the district, went into the pockets of one man, who generally arranged to leave the colony and live in England as soon as he had made sufficient money.

It was found, also, that the contracting and sub-contracting system led to the congestion of the labour market in districts where large works were being carried out. When advertisements were published calling for tenders for large works, unemployed workers flocked to the spot, hoping that they would be employed as soon as operations commenced ; but if the successful tenderer was a contractor who resided in another part of the colony, and already had a good staff of workmen, or knew where to find reliable men who had worked for him before, he took a regiment with him, and the outsiders had no chance.

Under the co-operative system, every worker is a contractor. He is his own master, and he has a personal interest in carrying on the work economically and successfully. Above all, it is claimed for the system, after fifteen years' experience, that it places him on a much higher plane, and enables him to comprehend more thoroughly the dignity of labour. As for the State, it benefits by having the work carried out at the actual value. The system gives the Government complete control over the expenditure. If it wishes to push the work through rapidly, it can increase the number of men. Departmental officers state that they find the work is done better under the co-operative system than under the contract system. The new system has been attacked repeatedly, but its operation has been attended with more success than Mr. Seddon expected.

He reorganised the defence forces of the colony in a practical manner, arranging for the appointment of an English officer, conversant with modern ideas, to the chief command. He placed the permanent force and the volunteers under district commanders, and he made both branches of the defence service more attractive.

He has seldom appeared to better advantage than at this time, when he was placed in charge of three large departments. He felt that he could gratify his ambition to do something for the colony. He loved the sense of power his position gave him. He regarded it as an exalted position. Like Sir Henry Parkes,

he had been a long time coming to the ministerial benches, but, having reached them, he was determined that while he was there he would uphold the dignity conferred upon him. He was peculiarly sensitive of criticism, and brooked no slights. There were many doubts as to his success as a Minister, but they were not held by the leaders of the Liberal Party, who knew his capabilities and his thoroughness. He was careful, shrewd, and practical, and when any question came within the sphere of his work, he grasped it in all its bearings. Above all, nothing would frighten him. Occasionally he acted with some impetuosity, but it was only when he was led away by his zeal.

There is a noticeable change in the tone of his addresses to the people at this time. He was all for New Zealand now. He was no longer the miners' representative. Instead of representing a district with 1,500 souls, he represented a colony of 600,000 people. In his estimation, the miners had been superseded by the people, and the West Coast by New Zealand. He had now new and important duties to perform, and the coast could claim only a portion of his time. That was in his pre-imperialistic days, and he had no thoughts for the Empire while New Zealand's affairs called for his attention.

As a Minister of the Crown and a recognised leader of his party, he soon made himself known in the land. He began his famous policy of travelling through the colony. He went from the Bay of Islands in the north to Dunedin in the south, speaking, mixing with the people, receiving deputations, giving promises, and granting concessions with all the air and grace of a monarch. It is a policy he never relinquished.

Even in the first month of ministerial office, his opponents commented good-naturedly on his liking for touring the colony. Sir John Hall said that he was the Government's commercial traveller, or bagman. He felt rather indignant at that, but passed it off by saying: "Yes, and as the commercial traveller I've bagged twenty-one votes of confidence; in all the centres of population resolutions were passed, expressing confidence in the Government."

The Press Association reported his appearance at a town in the North Island one day and a few days later he was seen

in Dunedin presiding at the inauguration of a Liberal Association, and informing the country generally what the Government had done and what it intended to do.*

At Christchurch, he was told plainly by the leaders of the unemployed that they expected him to do a great deal more for them than had been done by Sir Harry Atkinson.

He replied by rebuking their spokesman for a slighting reference to Sir Harry, and informed them that they would be disappointed if they thought that the new Government would carry on non-reproductive works simply for the sake of finding employment for men out of work.

One of them complained of having to walk fifty miles to get work, and the Minister for Mines then related how he had walked one hundred miles in Victoria, without money to carry him on his way. He told them that they went out into the country and made a few pounds at harvest time, and then expected the Government to find work for them for the rest of the year. The Government would not encourage those ideas, which were bad for the men and the country. He reminded them that in the past they had been paupers at 4s. a day. The Government would remove all that, he said, but they would have to undertake reproductive works at prices which would pay fair wages.

* The platform of this association, which first took the name of the National Liberal Association, and had a short life, was:—(1) Residential qualification only for electors; (2) the female franchise; (3) State aid for co-operative industrial settlements; (4) the establishment of a Government Labour Bureau; (5) the appointment of a Minister for Labour; (6) extension of the municipal functions and an increase generally of local government; (7) absolute stoppage of the sale of Crown Lands; (8) the introduction of a progressive land and income tax, and the abolition of the property tax; (9) land succession dues to be paid in land; (10) land companies to be taxed periodically to an amount equal to the average proceeds of successive dues; (11) sole tenure of lands to be a lease from the State; (12) nationalisation of the mines; (13) nationalisation of the railways; (14) nationalisation of the postal marine services; (15) a legal periodical adjustment of rents; (16) statutory limitation of the maximum amount recoverable as interest; (17) a State Bank of issue; (18) the State to supply educational requisites at cost price; (19) equal facilities to be given for acquiring primary and secondary education; (20) the appointment of an elective Revising Committee with limited powers, instead of the Legislative Council; (21) an elective Governor; (22) simplification of the machinery of government; (23) simplification of judicial procedure.

The interview was not entirely to the satisfaction of the men who had waited on the new Minister, but it showed that he was determined to take his own course in dealing with the unemployed problem, and would not be dictated to or brow-beaten even by those who considered that they had first claim on the Government's consideration.

He disclosed on this tour his partiality for banquets. The people were not slow to see this, and a banquet awaited him at almost every town he visited. He was the most popular politician of the day, with the exception of Sir George Grey. His cheerfulness and optimism and his over-flowing zeal made the public like him whether they wanted to or not. When the next session came round, Sir John Hall found the banquets of that first ministerial tour a good subject for jokes at Mr. Seddon's expense; and he frequently naively inquired after the state of the digestion of the "Jolly Minister," as he called him.

Mr. Seddon met with rebuffs and discouragements, but he brushed them aside. Even if they had been of a serious nature they would not have deterred him, as his mind was full of the projects he had in hand, and other considerations of less importance had to give way. The people felt that he was one of themselves. They liked his practical common sense. He unconsciously added to his popularity by many generous allusions to Sir George Grey, who, after all, was still first favourite with the public.

Other members of the Cabinet adopted his plan of going through the country and seeing the people. When Parliament assembled for the second session in 1891, therefore, the Liberal Ministers had had good opportunities for gauging popular feeling. Their investigations assured them that they had the people's sympathy, and they met Parliament with confidence and a determination to fulfil the promises which had been made at the polls, and which their opponents said they would never dare to keep.

In the meantime, the Conservatives had decided that a concerted attack would be made on the Government. It was not expected that the Government would survive the onslaught, and it was freely stated in the lobbies and in the streets of

Wellington that the Government would first be reduced to a majority that would be too small to be workable, and would then be killed by a no-confidence motion.

Mr. Seddon was first attacked on the fact that the head officer of the Public Works Department had been attracted to Australia by a higher salary than the Government would agree to give him. The attack was led by Mr. T. Fergus, whom Mr. Seddon had displaced from the Public Works portfolio. Mr. Fergus condemned the whole management of the department, and, apparently, made out a strong case, until Mr. Seddon showed the House that any blame in connection with the department could be traced directly to the management of his predecessor. Other members came to support Mr. Fergus. Mr. Seddon became impatient and angry, and in a few minutes the whole House was launched into a bitter discussion, which reviewed the whole policy of the department for the past ten or twelve years.

Mr. Seddon was not in need of support. He was much more than a match on the ground of his own departments for all the men who could be brought against him. There were several Liberals, however, who stepped forward to express their sense of the justice with which he had acted. Among these was Mr. A. Saunders, who had been returned for Selwyn at the general election. He had been chairman of the Royal Commission appointed some years previously to inquire into the position of the Civil Service, and he had strongly advocated the very course of action Mr. Seddon was successfully adopting. In his inquiries into the Public Works Department, Mr. Saunders had found that there was a very anomalous state of affairs. Highly paid men were often employed at work that men of little special ability could do, highly qualified engineers being set to discharge the duties of accountants, inspectors, and clerks. To make a show of finding employment for a host of engineers at high salaries, absurd regulations had been adopted. A common railway siding could not be erected without the presence of two engineers, one from the Construction Department to decide how such an important work should be done, and one from the Maintenance Staff to see how the siding could

be connected with the existing line. When he saw the waste that had taken place in the department, Mr. Saunders said, he felt thankful to Mr. Seddon for bringing about real and substantial economies.

There were crowded galleries in the House when the Financial Statement was delivered by Mr. Ballance. He was nervous at first, and showed a slight hesitancy; but when a hearty round of cheers was hurled at him from his party, he smiled back at his friends, and read his Statement with the air of a man who has achieved success, but whose elation is tempered with the responsibilities of his position.

He announced that there was a surplus of £143,000 on the operations of the year, "a result which must be very gratifying," he said with a pause, filled in with more cheers, which were renewed when he said that at the end of the next year he anticipated that the surplus would be £260,000. What should be done with it? He glanced towards the new Postmaster-General, and said that the Government believed that the time had come when the penny-post should be established in New Zealand. Thirty thousand pounds could be spent in opening up land for settlements, and a large part of the surplus would be spent in other ways, leaving a good margin, however, in case of emergencies. Finally, he announced that the old property tax had seen its last days, and that the Government would introduce at once a graduated land tax and an income tax; and, in respect to the unemployed troubles, "we are naturally led to the practical consideration of the establishment of labour bureaux in the different centres of population, under the charge of a Minister of the Crown."

A report had been put into circulation that the Opposition would lay in wait for the Financial Statement and then set upon the new Ministers, demolishing them with figures, tables, and learned dissertations on economical questions. There was still a belief, which was being raised to the rank of a legend, that all the learning, all the knowledge, and all the culture of the House was to be found on the Conservative side; and large numbers of people in Wellington who been led to believe that the working man's Socialistic Ministry with revolutionary notions

and ideas of its own that could find justification in the works of absolutely no recognised authority on constitutional government would be held up before the world for ridicule.

As members were given a week to consider the Statement after it was delivered, the Opposition had plenty of time to gather its information and its forces together. The assault was led by Mr. Bryce, who, however, could find very little to criticise. He contented himself with saying that the Government was chasing capital out of the country. Mr. W. P. Reeves followed with a keen and slashing speech, in which he pointed out that the Government had already dared to go much further into reforms than its opponents believed it could possibly go. Another speech that held the galleries' attention was that of Sir Joseph Ward, who passed through a fire of interruptions and interjections, challenging members' statements and being challenged in turn, but never being caught tripping.

Mr. Scobie Mackenzie made one of the fiercest attacks of the evening on the Government's position, but was repelled by Mr. Saunders, who, as one of the pioneers of Liberalism, entered the discussion as a friendly critic of the Government. In that capacity he sustained his character as the Nestor of the House, a name that he had borne for many years. Thirty-six years previously, when he was Superintendent of the Nelson Provincial Council, he had advocated the imposition of a land tax, and he had been one of those who had clamoured most consistently against the iniquities of the property tax the Liberal Government had decided to sweep away. He dealt severely with Mr. Mackenzie, and quietly refuted the assertion that Liberals had inherited a large surplus from the Conservatives, by stating that the heritage left by the Continuous Ministry was a deficit of more than half a million of money. "Surpluses, in fact," he said, "are merely the devices of Civil Servants of this colony; they have no kind of reality, and they do not exist except on paper."

It was not until the debate was nearing its end that Mr. Seddon rose to take part in it. He was calm at first, but as he got well into his subject, he raised his voice and hurled his facts across the chamber to the Opposition benches. No speaker

on the Government benches was so frequently interrupted. He took charge not only of his own departments, but also of the departments of all the other Ministers, and defended them in detail, until the House was surprised at the mass of particulars he had accumulated and had placed ready for use.

"I'm sure," he said, after he had defended his colleagues, "I must thank members of the Opposition for their kind consideration in not, so far, saying much against me during this debate, in fact, ever since I have been a Minister. I hope we shall always remain on the same terms."

"Wait till we come to the public works; your time's coming," shouted back an Oppositionist.

"Well, sir," he replied, "if my time is coming I should say there is 'a good time coming.' I am not one of those who run away. Publicly, privately, and in my capacity as a member of the Government, I prefer to face danger, and simply say, 'Come on,' and I say so now."

"Who gave manhood suffrage?" interrupted one of his opponents when he touched on the franchise.

"Sir George Grey and his party."

"No, Sir John Hall."

"Sir George Grey, I say," he insisted, "gave this country manhood suffrage. I say it was Sir George Grey and the Liberal Party, as the four Auckland members who entered into compact with Sir John Hall to support his Government said that their reasons for doing so was to carry out Sir George Grey's programme. That is why the Hall Government is not entitled to thanks for it."

"I say the Continuous Government was routed at the last elections," he said in another part of his speech; "and there is an Administration here now——"

"You won't last long!"

"Long or short, here we are, and we cannot be worse than the previous Administration."

A journalist who sat in the Press Gallery of the House on that evening and listened to the speech, supplied a graphic description of it to his journal next morning.

"He is in one of his carefully eloquent moods," the writer says; "he speaks with touching reverence of his 'venerable friend,' Sir George Grey; he has an appreciative word for Mr. Tanner; he promises Mr. Perceval's advice the respectful consideration due to the advice of a friend. 'As for the financial proposals, they are a step in the right direction; but our first care, Sir, must be to see that we meet our engagements.' He is very strong and magisterial about this necessity. Having disposed of these two subjects, he draws his sword. As he draws it, he remarks that the administration has been attacked, and his colleagues have been impugned. His voice rises as he declares that he is going to carry the war into the enemy's quarters; and with that he springs to the assault. It is Seddon of old; 'Richard is himself again!' The blows of his right arm descend about him with incessant force, as they used to do of old; his voice goes ringing all over the House. The Ministerial Party listens in the attitude of applause, and the Opposition sits back enjoying the spectacle. Suddenly there is a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition asks if it is permissible to read an extract 'such as that.' The extract is an American paper. It deals with lies and liars of all kinds. Mr. Bryce thought that the honourable gentleman was applying these remarks to the member for Mataura. Mr. Seddon reads again, and speaks till supper time, and after supper goes on with great vigour and power. He defends the Government's administration in the most astonishing detail. His knowledge is tremendous, his resources great, and his power of argument strong. Along the whole line he scores. They attack him one after another, and one after another they go down, Sir John Hall, Captain Russell, Mr. Fergus, Mr. Rolleston, all and each have a skirmish, and each he floors. The House is in a state of great attention and astonishment. When he sits down at ten minutes past one, his party feels that there is nothing more to be said about the administration, and that he is one of the strongest, best-informed, and readiest men in the House. His speech was quite the sensation of the day."*

"I think," he concluded, "that I have proved to the colony, and especially to those who support us, that the proposals of the Government are in accordance with the wishes of the people, that our estimates are likely to be realised, and that the administration of the affairs of the colony may fairly be left in our hands."

The session is the stormiest on record. It left the Government much stronger than it was when the Liberals came back victorious from the polls, and its working majority was placed beyond all doubt. The property tax was repealed, the land and income tax, which has never been discarded, was put into operation; and the Liberal Party started upon its term of office, which, fifteen years later, has not yet expired.

*"Lyttelton Times," July 10, 1891.

At the close of the session, the Conservative Party made a great effort to organise, and gatherings were held in Otago and Canterbury.

At the end of 1891, while the new Government was carrying out its drastic policy of retrenchment, an announcement was sent from Wellington to all parts of the colony that "The Exodus" had stopped. It had not only stopped, but had ebbed back until it became an influx.

The first ten months of the year had seen a serious loss of population. It was the worst year as far as "The Exodus" was concerned the colony had experienced since the appalling record of 1888, when the colonists were shocked to learn that the total excess of departures over arrivals reached 9,175 souls. In 1889 a large exhibition held at Dunedin and other causes enabled the statistics to show a slight balance in the colony's favour. It amounted to only 224, but the colonists said that it was better than nothing. In 1890, the year of the strike, hearts dropped when the colony's life-blood flowed out again. The year 1891 began badly, there being a loss of 187 persons in January alone. It went from bad to worse: in February, 334; in March, 808; in April, 511; in May, 1,431; and in June, 635; so that the first six months showed an excess of departures over arrivals amounting to 3,916, and it was said that the Liberal Government was chasing people as well as capital from the colony. In the latter part of the year, the flow slowed down. In October the loss was only 51, and the colony saw that the turn of the tide had been almost reached. In November the stream began to set in to the colony's shores again, for in that month the arrivals exceeded the departures by 1,156.

The depression had crossed the Tasman Sea to Australia. New South Wales had a large deficit, and was committed to an extravagant public works expenditure, while Melbourne was so distrusted that it failed to float a large drainage loan. Monetary and commercial institutions in Australia crashed to the ground, and the disasters that resulted made that country attractive to New Zealand's floating population no longer. On the top of this, the colony had a very good season for grass and grain; the frozen meat trade was now firmly established, and was bringing

in a splendid revenue from London; wheat was rising; New Zealand butter bounded to the top of the English market, and London experts gave it a valuable advertisement by declaring that it was superior to the Danish and the Norman article.

Nature was kind to the Liberal Government, whose prospects seemed to get brighter each day. With Atkinson's protective tariff, rising prices, and better spirits, there was a stir in commerce and industry. The Bank of New Zealand wrote off a sum representing the depreciation in the value of its landed property. Instead of being kept up to an artificial price, at which nobody could buy, the property was brought down to a legitimate figure, at which it could be bought and put into use. The cry of the unemployed was heard less frequently, and the colony began to lose its melancholy air.

On summing up the position, the public congratulated itself on the fact that although it might have used the word "repudiation" without thinking a few years previously, and although the depression had hung around it like a horrid cloud, good progress was being made and the future was encouraging.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE DIFFICULTIES.

The Government succeeded in passing its land and income tax, and in abolishing the property tax, which had become too unpopular to be tolerated by the country much longer; but the tactics of the last Conservative Government in appointing new members of the Legislative Council just as it was vacating office were quite successful, and the Liberals were prevented from passing other policy measures of great importance, on account of the refusal of a majority in the Council to sanction them.

Sir John McKenzie introduced a Land for Settlements Bill, which could get no further than the House of Representatives. In that chamber it was well received, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Rolleston), and other members of his party agreeing with the principle of the Bill, which was that the State had a perfect right to compulsorily purchase large estates needed for settlement.

The Bill passed its second reading in the House without a division. In the Legislative Council, however, it was received with demonstrations of deep disapproval. The "Lords" looked upon the principle as one of confiscation. When Sir Patrick Buckley moved the Bill's second reading in the Council, there was none but he to say a word in its favour, and it was ignominiously rejected by a majority of two to one.

The same action was taken in regard to the Female Franchise Bill, which was introduced into the House of Representatives by Sir John Hall, and was made a Government measure. It was carried through the House by 33 votes to 8, but was rejected by the Legislative Councillors by two votes.

They killed an Electoral Bill designed to confirm the decision of Parliament that the one-man-one-vote principle

should in future govern all general elections. Sir George Grey's clause in the Representation Act of 1890 merely states that one man can exercise only one vote at an election. The freehold qualification was still in existence. It allowed a freeholder to register in every district in which he possessed property, although he could vote in only one district. At by-elections, the freehold qualification operated very unjustly, as it enabled freeholders on the roll of an electorate in which a by-election was being held to concentrate their forces there, and it gave them a good chance of turning the result to the advantage of the candidate they supported.

Mr. Seddon and other Liberals thought that it was only fair that by-elections should be fought out under the same conditions as those which governed the general elections. In trying to alter the law to remove this anomaly, Mr. Ballance had the support of most of the Conservatives as well as his own party. Mr. Bryce, a leading Conservative, said that he accepted the proposal as being the natural corollary of the confirmation of the one-man-one-vote principle.

The Electoral Bill passed through the House practically without opposition, but the Legislative Council refused to consent to the measure, which was thrown back at the Government. The Liberals felt the slight. They did not hesitate to say that it was monstrous that an important measure which not only was supported by the party in power, but also was agreed to by a majority of both sides in politics, should be rejected by a nominated chamber, evidently completely out of touch with the new order of things and with the wishes of the people.

Mr. Seddon was among those who believed that the Council's action was dictated by the hope that the rejection of the measure would affect the result of some by-elections which might take place, or perhaps, in some way, influence the next general election. Two Labour Bills—a Shop Hours Bill, and a Workman's Lien Bill—were also totally rejected. The Councillors refused to accept even a mild portion of the Shop Hours Bill; and they would not agree to give shop assistants the weekly half-holiday.

Sir George Grey introduced a Friendly Societies Bill, which was taken up by the Government. The Council did not try to amend it, but rejected it by a large majority. Another measure which was supported by both sides of the House was the Selectors' Revaluation Bill. It was intended to extend relief to tenants who had not been reached by similar measures of relief in former years. The Council said that those tenants should not receive relief unless the Bill was amended so as to give power to all pastoral tenants of the Crown—in other words, as was pointed out at the time, squatters and runholders—to get their rents reconsidered, and, if possible, reduced. The Government could not consider a proposal of that kind, and the Bill had to be abandoned.

Sir John McKenzie's Land Bill was received with more courtesy than his Land for Settlements Bill. It went into committee in the Council, but it was treated so badly there that he hardly recognised it when it came back, and he certainly did not feel disposed to acknowledge it. A conference was arranged, at which he endeavoured to meet the Council half way. He compromised on several points, but the Council took everything he offered and gave nothing of any consequence in return. Finding that no good would result from his attempts at a compromise, he withdrew his Bill, saying that he would wait twelve months, and, in the meantime, the Legislative Council would see what would happen to it.

The Council, in short, stood in the road of reform, and, without any compunction, rejected Bill after Bill or altered the measures so that they were practically useless. In this way, the Liberal Party was prevented in its first year of office from putting into operation the elaborate policy which it had been preparing for years, and which had the emphatic approval of the country.

The session of 1891, owing to the obstruction of the Council, was largely a waste of good time. The Liberals, however, sought consolation in the fact that the property tax and its unjust inequalities had ceased to vex the country, and they said that a session which had repealed that obnoxious imposition could not be called a barren one.

During the recess, the Government was brought face to face with a problem of constitutional government, which at one time promised to develop into a serious position, and might have forced Ministers to resign and go to the country for sanction of their action.

Lord Onslow had left the colony and had been succeeded by Lord Glasgow. Shortly after the new Governor arrived, Mr. Ballance advised him to call twelve new members to the Legislative Council, so that the Government's measures should not be in danger of receiving the same treatment as had been meted out to them in the session that had just closed.

An inspection of the division-lists in the Council shows that in 1891 the Government could absolutely rely, as a rule, on only five members of the chamber. One of the Government's supporters had left the colony, and another was too ill to attend the sittings. That left Sir Patrick Buckley, the Minister in the Council, with only two votes upon which he could depend. One of those was the vote of a Maori member of the Council, so that he had actually only one European member to follow him in supporting all policy measures the Government sent up from the Lower Chamber.

An analysis of the membership of the Council shows that up to that time Sir George Grey's Government had appointed four members, the Stout-Vogel Government nine, and the Conservative Governments the remainder. The appointments made by the Stout-Vogel Coalition were of a mixed character, some of the members being advanced in views and some Conservative. When these are sorted out, it is found that nine nominations had been made from the ranks of the Liberal Party, and twenty-six from the Conservative Party.

Mr. Ballance asked that his Government should be allowed to make twelve additions. It would then have fifteen votes in the chamber and would still be in a clear minority, but he said that he would be satisfied if he could assure himself that his measures would be fairly and fully discussed. Lord Glasgow considered that nine was the largest addition he could make. He refused to go further than that number, which the Government declined to accept.

The controversy involved one of the most important political questions of the day. It gave a great deal of anxiety to Mr. Ballance, Mr. Seddon, and all members of the Government and the party. Lord Glasgow could hardly have been acquainted with the feeling of the country in regard to the two political parties. In refusing to accept the advice of his Ministers, he evidently acted without obtaining full information on the subject, and the determined and uncompromising attitude he adopted from the first nearly led to a deadlock. If the Liberal Party had been guided by less skilful leaders than Mr. Ballance and Mr. Seddon, there would have been a crisis. It was a constitutional question whether, if the Governor refused to accept the advice of his Ministers, they should not resign; and their opponents strongly urged this aspect of the case.

Lord Glasgow admitted that some fresh appointments to the Council were desirable, but he felt that the number should be limited. The limitation he fixed would not have helped the Government, which would still have been represented in the Council by a hopeless minority, and there would have been no chance of it relying upon its policy measures being passed. In that case, the nominated chamber, not the popular one, would have ruled the colony, and the will of the people, as declared at the polls and as represented by the party in power in the House, would have been flouted. The Government had certainly been hampered by the Council, and already had good cause to complain of its actions, which had, at any rate, delayed for a whole year reforms that the Government was absolutely pledged to give.

Lord Glasgow took up the position that it was the duty of the Governor to exercise the power vested in him in his capacity as an Imperial officer, without limitation or restraint, and he felt bound to resist the Government's advice on the ground that to grant the number of nominations Ministers asked for would be an unconstitutional interference with the liberties of the Council.

The Government held that the Governor, being neutral in politics, was not permitted by the constitution to do anything that would prevent the feeling of the country from being expressed in

legislation. Mr. Ballance pointed with a good deal of significance to the fact that in view of the friendly relations which should exist between the colony and the Mother Country, it would be a dangerous doctrine to admit that the Governor considered it his duty to thwart the people of the colony in giving expression to their feelings and opinions.

The whole question of the self-government of the colony was involved in the battle between the Ministers and the new Governor. New Zealand had arrived at a critical point in its history. It had had some bitter struggles for its independence in the past. Conservatives and Liberals had united in defending the constitutional right of the people to govern themselves, and there are many traditions of the sacrifices the colonists were ready to make in the early days as long as the Imperial Government left them their self-government. Now, apparently, some of these rights were to be taken from it. From a constitutional point of view, it is probably the most important question that the New Zealand Parliament has had to deal with.

The principle for which the Liberal Party was called upon to fight is sufficiently important to justify the reproduction of at least one of the communications sent by the Government to Lord Glasgow. It is as follows:—

MEMORANDUM TO HIS EXCELLENCY.

“Ministers beg to acknowledge the receipt of His Excellency’s memorandum of the 8th inst., and desire to notice one or two matters therein. His Excellency remarks that the ‘best information he was able to obtain was procured solely from public documents, and the memorandum left by Lord Onslow.’

“Ministers reply that no public documents have ever been submitted to them by His Excellency of any kind bearing on the question, and they have had no opportunity of expressing any opinion upon them. The same observation will apply to the memorandum left by Lord Onslow in so far as it was treated confidentially; and, although a memorandum (probably that referred to) was sent to the Premier for his inspection, no copy was kept, and his Excellency has never asked for the opinions or advice of Ministers on this confidential memorandum. Moreover, the circumstances affecting the Council have greatly changed since the departure of Lord Onslow; and his memorandum could hardly be supposed to express the present condition of affairs.

“Ministers take exception to the statement ‘that the idea underlying the whole case of Ministers is that whatever measures an Administration bring forward are sent in to express the feeling of the country.’ It would be more correct to say that measures passed by large majorities of the House of Representatives, within eighteen months of its election are sufficient to entitle

Ministers to the confidence of his Excellency, and to express in terms not to be misunderstood in a self-governing community that the measures do express the feeling of the country.

“Ministers notice that his Excellency points out ‘that the suspensory powers conferred by the constitution on the Second Chamber is a constitutional check intended to give power to the electorate through the intervention of the Legislative Council at any time to step in and control legislation,’ and that ‘this plan insures greater freedom to the electorate than that favoured by Ministers.’ Ministers reply that the argument, if applied in practice, would prove immediately destructive to the constitution. It means that with the sanction and support of the Governor, the Council is at all times to possess the power to impose a general dissolution on the country; that a nominee Council is to be accepted as a better judge or exponent of the feelings of the country than the representatives of the people; and that a decisive majority in the Second Chamber is to be maintained by the representative of Her Majesty in order to ‘control legislation.’ It also means that a majority irresponsible for its acts may harass, by the expense and worry of an election, the representative body, and it suggests the fatal position that the Governor is to be associated with the Council as the practical application of the doctrine.

“If the Ministers could believe that this was the true intent and meaning of the constitution, they would despair of its survival beyond the popular recognition of the fact; but they have not so read it, and hope, for the sake of the constitution, that such a construction may not prove to be accurate.

“The construction may be stated (in accordance with actual facts in recent history) to be this: A majority in the Legislative Council should be in harmony with the minority in the House of Representatives when the Liberals are in power, with a penal dissolution suspended over the heads of the Government; but when the Conservatives are in power they should have majorities in both Chambers without the ‘constitutional check.’ If the first plan insures ‘greater freedom to the electorate,’ it is difficult to describe the constitutional bearings of the second. Yet Ministers have asked for no more than a respectable minority in the Second Chamber. It is against the application of such constitutional doctrine as these that Ministers respectfully enter their protest.

“Ministers thank His Excellency for the information that the series of correspondence will be sent to the Secretary for State and request that this memorandum may be included.

“Premier’s Office, Wellington, August 9th, 1892.”

“J. BALLANCE.

It was evident that neither the Governor nor the Government would give way, and it was agreed that the dispute should be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Some of Mr. Ballance’s friends thought that in making this agreement he made a sacrifice of his dignity. He was sure of his ground, however, and felt that, in return, he would receive from the Imperial Government an emphatic declaration not only that he was right in his contention, but also that the Colonial Office had no power to stand between the people and their wishes.

Mr. Seddon saw in the attempt to widen the serious breach between the Ministers and the Governor a weakening of the bonds between the colony and the Mother Country, and when he spoke on this question he sounded one of those imperialistic notes which occupy a large part of his speeches in later days.

“Do honourable members on that side of the House,” he said, “contend that we do not owe allegiance to the Home Country, to the Empire; that we have not the right and privilege to consult the Secretary of State on a matter of such importance as this? Are we to take up that attitude? I say, No; and as long as I have a seat in this House, I shall endeavour, as far as lies in my power, to cement the bonds of union that exist between the Mother Country and our colony. As is laid down in Todd, the Secretary of State is simply a channel by which we can approach the Queen; and if it is open to private individuals, to any one of our own colonists, to approach Her Majesty and ask for an expression of opinion on a vital question, the privilege is also open to the Government of New Zealand. I do not wish to see the bond of union broken.”

One evening, when Mr. Seddon was leading the House, in the absence of Mr. Ballance, who was confined to his room through a severe illness, it was reported that the Governor had received a cable message from the Secretary of State. The galleries were crowded immediately, and people thronged into the chamber to hear the result of the controversy on the constitutional point. There was an impression that if the new Government, sent straight from the people, had a particularly weak spot, it was constitutional practice and history, and its opponents were prepared to see it rather badly beaten in its struggle. Besides that they wanted it to resign.

Mr. Seddon tantalised friends and opponents alike for some time. He went on with the ordinary business as if nothing had happened, but, being able to contain his news no longer, he rose and stated that he had received a communication from the Governor, who had been instructed that he must accept unreservedly the advice of the Government. His Excellency had added that he would therefore waive his objections to the twelve fresh nominations.

Mr. Seddon took the Government's great victory with the best of good taste. He made no speech, and passed no comment, but simply, in a few words, communicated the Governor's message. The Conservative members had gathered round Mr. Rolleston, ready to enter upon a heated debate; but Mr. Seddon,

having obtained his victory, was not anxious to rush into another discussion on the constitutional question, and he took the House on to the ordinary business of the session.

In the midst of the heaviest work, Mr. Ballance, who had been working day and night, and whose health had been going from bad to worse, suddenly broke down. He was compelled to relinquish a large portion of his duties. The serious nature of his ailment and the consequent prostration brought upon him, confined him closely to his room. It was thought that he would have to be taken to his home at Wanganui, but he was adverse from that, as he did not want to leave the parliamentary buildings with the session only about half through. His doctors, however, refused steadfastly to allow him to take any part in the debates or to enter the chamber.

Mr. Seddon took the lead of the House. At a meeting of the Cabinet on September 6th, 1891, he was appointed Acting-Premier, and for nearly a fortnight he led the House, until Mr. Ballance was sufficiently well to return to his seat. It is recorded in the newspapers of the day that he "quickly developed decision, courage, and conciliatory tact." He gave the House a taste of his determination when he insisted upon it sitting all night in order to carry the Land Bill through committee, as he did not think that sufficient progress had been made; and in other ways he showed that he was alive to the responsibilities of the high position he had reached.

He did not neglect small things, and he did not forget that he was member for Westland as well as Acting-Premier. The parliamentary records bear ample testimony to the manner in which he attended to the needs of constituents, no matter how humble they may have been in social life.

Amongst measures that were not regarded as part of the Government's policy, he introduced a Boarding and Lodging-houses Bill, to place boarding-houses under control. He pointed out that the Government insisted upon proper sanitary arrangements being made in public institutions, but in the larger towns of the colony people were allowed to huddle and crowd together. The municipal law did not meet the case, and there was no power for any officer to insist upon an improved condition of affairs.

Several proposals he made then have since been embodied in Acts of Parliament. He proposed that when any person was found suffering from an infectious disease in any boarding-house the case must be reported. The object was to prevent the spread of a disease before it had gone beyond the control of the authorities. The Public Health Act had already made provisions in that direction, but they were not adequate. His Bill was based on several old ordinances, which had been in operation in Otago and Southland. It was also proposed to license all boarding-houses and charge a small annual fee. This measure, however, did not get past its second reading.

The Government was not content with the mere vindication of its action in regard to the Legislative Council. The result of the controversy over the appointments seems to have fairly frightened the Council. It dropped its aggressive tone at once, and endeavoured to cloak much of its opposition to the important reforms the Lower Chamber sent up for its consideration. It was less contemptuous in its method of dealing with the measures. It professed to treat the desires of the Government and of a majority of the House with respect. At the same time, it mutilated the Government's measures so badly that they had to be thrown to one side, or were accepted as representing only instalments of reforms.

Its actions confirmed the Liberals in their opinion that new blood was needed in the Council, and that as labour had sent its own representatives to the House of Representatives, it was entitled to have representatives from its ranks in the other branch of the Legislative.

The Government left no room for doubt as to its intentions. In less than a month after the receipt of the message from the Secretary of State, twelve new members were appointed. This was a guarantee to the country that Ministers would not heed those who wished the party to halt in its march; it showed that they would listen to no remonstrances against their new reforms.

The most interesting aspect of the Government's action was the appointment of four labour members to the Council, who were included in the twelve. One was a foreman printer in a

newspaper office, another was a compositor in the Government Printing Office, Wellington, the third was a boiler-maker, and the fourth was a storeman. All were men who possessed the confidence of their fellow-workers, and all had taken a prominent part in discussing or preparing labour measures which had been placed before the House or were in contemplation.

Their appointment was a handsome acknowledgment by the Liberal Government that labour had a right to be represented in all branches of the Legislature. It is one of the triumphs of labour, and it cemented the bond between the Liberal Party and the Labour Party. At this distance from the scene of the inauguration of the Liberal-Labour Union, and after many years' experience, it can be said with safety that the selection of these labour members of the Legislative Council was a very wise one. They have proved themselves to be practical men of sound common-sense, with progressive ideas, and with capabilities that have enabled them to give valuable assistance in the work of revision, which is supposed to be the Upper Chamber's special function.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. SEDDON AS PREMIER.

Mr. Ballance's health was still very bad, and Mr. Seddon had a great deal of extra work thrown upon his shoulders. He did not hesitate to take up the burden. No Minister ever worked harder than he did. He travelled from town to town, finding work for the unemployed, denouncing the Legislative Council, telling the people that there was every reason for them to have full confidence in themselves and their country, hinting at the coming surplus, and outlining the Government's policy. He seemed to delight in the task he had in hand.

He courted opposition, and no prominent Conservative expected to speak in public without having to meet the facts and arguments he would be sure to array against him. The longer he appeared in full light before the people the more he seemed to be liked. He seldom gave an address without receiving a highly laudatory expression of opinion, all of which, he said, was meant for the Government, not for him.

Before 1893 was half through, Mr. Ballance died at his residence in Wellington. The Liberal Party was thrown into the deepest sorrow. Although it had been known that the end was not far off, the announcement came as a great shock. Mr. Ballance's close association with politics for many years, and the valiant fights he had fought, in which he was more often defeated than successful, had made his name revered in the colony. His Liberalism was of the broadest type. His splendid intellect had enabled him to bring his principles to the front and to put into operation the plans that his mind mapped out as the proper ones for a young country.

His death was peculiarly pathetic. He had spent many of his best years in a struggle against heavy odds. At last he had been victorious, with a greater victory than anyone had thought the Liberal Party would ever achieve. He was taken away at

the very moment when his position was assured ; and he did not live to see the fruition of his schemes.

The colony now looks upon him as one of its heroes, a simple, broad-minded, cultured gentleman, with a large heart, which beat in sympathy with the people's needs and aspirations. The task he had undertaken in leading the country was not too much for his abilities, but it was too much for his strength. His days were shortened by the work and the worry he was called upon to pass through as the leader of his party, and he passed away amidst eulogies that few statesmen have received.

Words used by Mr. Seddon at that time express the position held by Mr. Ballance in the people's affection :—

“ He has been a good, true, and faithful servant to the colony. Parliament will miss his wise counsel and the great ability which distinguished his efforts as a legislator and a public man. He was ever generous alike to opponents and friends. He was a wise counsellor, and he had the entire confidence of those whom he led. I can go further, and say that he was loved and respected by all ; and I might say truthfully that we shall never see his like again. I am unable to do full justice to his worth. His life proves that he sought not riches ; but what he did seek, and what he obtained, was the goodwill of his fellow-men. His example is one that our young men might wisely follow. To the noble profession of journalism he was an ornament, and the great power at his command was always used in the interest of those around him and in the interest of the country. Speaking personally, I owe to him a deep debt of gratitude, and those here who, with me, worked with him would, I know, if opportunity offered, testify to his kindness, generosity, and self-sacrifice. He was always willing to work in harmony with his colleagues, in the best interests of the Ministry of which he was the head. They, and those with me, have one bright spot we can look back upon, and that is that during the whole time we have been working together there has not been one unkind word, not one act of unkindness, between us. It is to us a great source of consolation that we worked so harmoniously with him.”

After Sir George Grey, Mr. Ballance was Mr. Seddon's political hero. He never tired of referring to Mr. Ballance's greatness, or of describing his goodness of heart and his deep love for the people. The friendship between the two men began many years ago, before Mr. Seddon entered Parliament. He had almost made up his mind to leave the West Coast and live in the North Island, and had gone up to Palmerston North and on to Wanganui, looking for a place to settle in. On that northern trip he met Mr. Ballance. Their friendship dated from their first meeting. Mr. Seddon felt then that he had found a kindred

spirit. He saw that Mr. Ballance's views were far in advance of the times, and he looked upon his new friend as an advanced thinker. After that meeting, they met frequently, especially when Mr. Ballance was a member of the Grey Ministry and a leader of the Liberal Party. As soon as Mr. Seddon went into political life, the friendship became closer, and he generally relied upon Mr. Ballance's vote on the proposals he brought forward as a private member.

Mr. Seddon was sent for by Lord Glasgow, and, after a long meeting of the Cabinet on May 1st, 1893, waited upon His Excellency at Government House. He had been willing to undertake the hard work of the Premier's office in Mr. Ballance's illness, but he now shrank from the heavy responsibility that came upon him.

At this point of his career, he hesitated. There were few difficulties in respect to the formation of a Ministry by him. He had been selected unanimously by his fellow Ministers as Acting-Premier. He was now an experienced politician, with much more than local fame. His selection as Acting-Premier had been endorsed without any sign of dissent by both the party and the country. He had been recognised as Mr. Ballance's first lieutenant; he had contributed largely to the party's victory; he was one of the most popular men in the country. His accession to the position, therefore, was a sequence and was in accordance with the fitness of things. He was full of forebodings, however, and he hesitated and doubted, asking himself if his command would be for the good of the party and the country. He was oppressed with a sense of heavy responsibility; his self-courage seemed to fail him, and he stood still for the moment, not daring to go forward with the happy confidence that had led him on before. He had always had the courage of his opinions; and if he had concluded that the party required another leader, he would have been content to continue to fight with others in the front rank as before.

In his perplexity, he fell back for advice upon his old friend, Sir George Grey. He sent a telegram to Sir George in Auckland, asking what he should do. The reply came back:

“You have fairly gained the chance; form Ministry if you can, good; if not good, have nothing to do with it. Five are enough to start. If there is any difficulty, others will soon join you. You will have an opportunity of greatly serving your fellow-men. Do it. You have the capacity; do not shrink. All you have to do now is to say you will try to form a Ministry, and I believe you can.—GEORGE GREY.”

Not convinced that he could satisfactorily fulfil the duties, he sent another message, and a second reply came, more emphatic than the previous one:

“You are acting in a great crisis, such as makes a hero. Act with your Maker for the good of His creatures. What anyone else may say or do is nothing to you. The millions of your fellow-men and their Maker—let these be your thoughts. Be brave, unselfish, gentle, but resolute for good. Reflect well before acting; gain time for thought. The good will soon gather round you—GEORGE GREY.”

That evening, after another meeting of the Cabinet had been held, he was sworn in as Prime Minister of the colony, and started upon his record Premiership, extending over thirteen years.

There were conjectures as to the change of policy that would take place with the changes in the Ministry. Mr. Seddon took the first occasion, a visit to Napier at the end of May, to let his party and the country know that that which had been was that which would be. It was half expected and wholly hoped by the party's opponents that the impetuous Mr. Seddon, who was still depicted as a reckless, uncultured experimentalist, would announce a “bursting-up” policy of the most revolutionary character, with an inflammatory manifesto and highly sensational details.

Napier was the centre of much of the Conservative thought of the colony, and nearly all his opponents and many of his supporters thought that the new Premier's speech in that district would come as a thunder clap, which would stagger the colony and wreck the Liberal Party for all time. Rash and random statements, the forerunners of still more rash and random actions, were looked for on all sides. But Mr. Seddon had gauged to the full the responsibility he took upon himself. His speech could have hardly been more moderate in tone. It was as disappointing to his opponents as it was pleasing to his

friends. He showed that Mr. Ballance's policy would be continued just as if the late leader was with them still, and that, as long as the Liberal Party was in power, the colony would progress on the lines laid down by Mr. Ballance, and sanctioned by the people. It was the general policy that he clung to for the rest of his days, the policy which is now in force, and which has left a long line of reforms behind it.

His success completely changed him. From the day when he was sworn in as Premier he became another man. His mind had broadened when he became a Minister; it expanded further when he became Premier. He said that he was no longer merely a party fighter, but the representative of the country as a whole. He recognised that he was the servant of the people, a phrase which he used frequently. At the same time he let it be known that he would not be dominated by any factions. As a private member, he had denied the right of his leader to gag him in the House. In the same way as Prime Minister he denied the right of any collection of individuals to control his actions or dictate his policy. After he had spoken at Napier, he went on to Auckland. A few days before he reached that city the Liberal Association there issued a programme of legislative reforms, to which the Liberal candidates at the coming general election were expected to subscribe. There were fourteen articles in the programme. They included many sweeping reforms, such as the abolition of the Legislative Council, an elective Governor, the State to have full control of banking, coal, gold, and gum-digging, and state-ownership of all the land of the colony as well as the coastal services and other things.

This programme was produced by a few men who desired political distinction, and who, it was thought, believed that they would find their way into the House by inducing the association to put forth an extreme programme that would not be supported by men who were actuated by caution and a sense of responsibility.

When the programme was brought under the notice of Mr. Seddon, he told the framers of it that they were injuring the party and alienating the country people. He declined to be

Mrs. C. G. Morice,
Master Stuart Seddon.

Miss May Seddon,
Capt. R. J. S. Seddon.

Miss Mary Seddon.

Mr. T. F. Y. Seddon, M.H.R.



Mrs. F. Dyer.

Mrs. Seddon.

Mr. Seddon,
Miss Rubi Seddon.

Mrs. W. S. Bean.

MR. SEDDON'S FAMILY.

bound by the opinions of the Auckland Liberal Association, and said that he, as leader of the Government, would accept only such proposals as were good for the whole country. He reminded them that it was his function to lead the party of which he was the head, and he made them clearly understand that while he held that position he would decline to be led by any section of the people. The declaration came brusquely and very unexpectedly, but it was received with a good deal of thankfulness by the party generally, which felt that Mr. Seddon had displayed political bravery as well as common sense.

In Auckland he had a long interview with Sir George Grey, who followed up the advice in his telegrams by telling him that he had the largest claim to be allowed to form a Ministry, and that the party must give him a fair trial.

The strange old man who had led the Liberal Party first to a glorious victory and then to a disastrous defeat; who had come into politics amidst the plaudits of a young nation and surrounded by troops of enthusiastic supporters; who had stood on the floor of the House a few years later and described himself as a "lone and unfriended man"; and who had called Mr. Seddon into politics, now told him not to hesitate on the threshold of a new and a greater career.

There was another claimant to the position, or at any rate, one who was put forward by some Liberals and many Conservatives as being more fitted than Mr. Seddon, and it was suggested that Mr. Seddon should undertake the duties for a short time and then retire in favour of his rival. Against this course, however, Sir George Grey strongly advised him. "You must not take the position tentatively, or as an experiment," he said, "but you must hold office as long as you have the confidence of the House and the country."

The Cabinet decided that new Ministers should be created, and the reconstructed Government was gazetted as follows;—

Mr. SEDDON, Premier, Minister for Public Works, Mines, and Defence.

Sir PATRICK BUCKLEY, Attorney-General, Colonial Secretary, and Minister for Mines.

Mr. W. P. REEVES, Minister for Education and Labour, and Commissioner of Stamps.

Sir JOHN McKENZIE, Minister for Lands, Immigration, and Agriculture, and Commissioner of Forests.

Sir JOSEPH WARD, Colonial Treasurer, Postmaster-General, and Commissioner of Telegraphs and Customs.

Sir A. J. CADMAN, Minister for Justice and Native Minister.

Mr. J. CARROLL, Representative of the Native Race.

Mr. W. MONTGOMERY, Member of the Executive Council.

When he met the House again, Mr. Seddon told members that in the past he had had a good deal of fighting to do, but that that work would now be left to his able lieutenants, a remark which was heartily applauded by the members of the Opposition. It would now be his duty, he added, to direct and guide, and at the same time to remain steadfast and endeavour to carry out that which he believed to be in the best interests of the country. He hoped to have the loyal support of his friends, and he desired to have their fullest confidence. With that confidence, with the assistance he was sure they would give him, with the very able assistance he would receive from his colleagues, and with the goodwill expressed by the leader of the Opposition, he felt confident that the satisfactory position of the colony would be maintained. "The legislation of this country," he concluded, "is in advance of that of the other colonies, and I hope New Zealand may for ever continue in that proud position. Nothing will be wanting on my part in assisting to maintain it."

If Mr. Ballance's Ministry was received with severe criticism, Mr. Seddon's was received with bitter hostility. He had all the principal newspapers in the colony except two against him, and he was subjected to many personal attacks.

It was never thought, even by his best friends, that he would be able to hold the party together for long. His opponents gave him two months, and Sir George Grey hinted that the House would soon lose confidence in him.

In view of the faith the country expressed in his administration at each election all through the remaining years of his career, it is interesting to read predictions and criticisms made a few days after he took office. The following are some of them :—

"Of many departments of government he has no knowledge whatever. He does not know even the rudiments of finance; he is ignorant of the Education Department and of native affairs and customs and lands. His speeches are wearisome to listen to, and we do not believe that his warmest supporters could say they would be read by anyone but a lunatic for pleasure and instruction. Of the science of government as carried on outside of New Zealand he is as ignorant as a babe."

"He talked himself into the Acting-Premiership, and then talked himself into the position of Prime Minister. No matter what the subject is, he is ready to talk. His talk is never clever, never witty, always spun out till it is not worth listening to."

"It is difficult to believe that a man so uneducated, whose speeches betray such scanty acquaintance with affairs, can be a successful Premier. He is a born fighter, and has fought his way to the top, but the Premier must be more than a heavy-weight pugilist. As Leader of the House last session he was a dead failure."

"He is known to be hostile to the female franchise, and he will see that it does not pass while he is Premier."

"His speeches betray such narrowness of mental range, such an absence of broad statesmanlike views, as to place him mentally far below New Zealand's past Premiers."

"The new leader has no tact in dealing with men. That, however, chiefly affects his party. What is more important is his mental inability to deal in a statesmanlike manner with public questions."

"He is a good fighter, but will be a dismal failure as a leader."

"His aspirations are good, but his training is deficient."

"He is impossible as Premier. We give him credit for capacity, but we cannot see the statesman in him."

He had with him well-trying and experienced men. Mr. Reeves had already done a great deal of work as Minister for Education and Labour. In the latter capacity, especially, he had put into operation a large part of the labour programme, which was the principal feature of the Liberal policy. Some of his measures had been carried; others had been blocked by the Legislative Council; but Mr. Reeves had shown that there was much to be done to raise the workers and improve their conditions, and that he and the departmental officers he had chosen to help him in his work would do it. Mr. Reeves was also a strong tower against the party's opponents in debate, where he had few equals.

Sir Joseph Ward, who, like all other members of the Ministry then, was a plain "Mr.," had rapidly come to the front.

From the first, he astonished members by the wide grasp he had obtained of the colony's finances. He displayed a remarkable adaptability for mastering complex financial problems connected with the State's affairs, and his appointment as Colonial Treasurer was approved by all members. Besides that, his courteous demeanour and his bright and happy style of speaking in the House made him personally popular.

Sir John McKenzie, the greatest land administrator the colony has known, was at the beginning of a career that has marked him out as one of the prominent statesmen of the Australasian colonies. His rough speech, quick temper, and intolerance of all attempts to thwart him, were among his faults, but they were the kind of faults that fall in line with the rough, rugged, and sturdy character he possessed. He was exercising an extraordinary influence in politics. In land legislation, he carried everything before him. He certainly gave up most of his time, attention, and energy to the work that his soul loved; he seemed to care for little else, but his individuality counted for much. He was a strong man, and stood side by side with Mr. Reeves and Sir Joseph Ward as Mr. Seddon's strong supporters.

The other members of the Ministry, although not of the same build as the leaders, were good men, who enjoyed the respect of the House, and had placed beyond all doubt their progressive views, earnestness, and abilities. In 1896, the Ministry was strengthened by the inclusion of the Hon. W. Hall-Jones, who has administered the Public Works and Marine Departments from that year on.

It was a splendid team with which Mr. Seddon started out upon the long road he travelled. He could not have had a better one. They had one aim. They were devoted to their party, and they would fight to the last for what they believed to be for the good of the country.

Mr. Seddon's best friends do not begrudge each of these men the great credit he deserves for the success achieved by the whole. Without them Mr. Seddon could not have done nearly as much as he did. They were legislators as well as administrators. They had the power of initiative to a high degree.

Their minds were untrammelled, free, and receptive, and, combined with their progressive spirit, there was a steady common sense which prevented them from going too far. Supported by these Ministers, he met the House in 1893 with a confidence he certainly did not feel a few months earlier, when he made up his mind to form the Seddon Administration.

The Speech he prepared for Lord Glasgow was worded in the same cautious and moderate tones as dominated his Napier address. By means of the Speech, he congratulated the colony on the undoubted turn of the tide. He was on safe ground there, as "The Exodus" had completely stopped. So far from having any anxiety on that score, his troubles began to run in the opposite direction. It was now Australia's turn to lose many colonists. There was a dreadful state of affairs there, especially in the "Marvellous Melbourne" which, a few years previously, had been the subject of Mr. George Augustus Sala's admiration and praise. Nearly all the Australian colonies had drifted into a state of most unhappy distress. New Zealand was looked to as a country that had plenty of work and plenty of money to pay away for public works. The colony got back not only its own people, who had left it in the time of need, but also destitute Australians in search of employment. Mr. Seddon, therefore, had to meet the danger of the country being swamped by those unfortunate people.

The Labour Bureau had been in existence for two years under Mr. Reeves's charge, and it, working in conjunction with the co-operative system, had been able to send many men to places where work was awaiting them. The fame of the bureau soon spread to Australia, where it offered another attraction to those who could find no work in that country.

In these circumstances, Mr. Seddon had to take steps to warn destitute persons from resorting for employment to New Zealand, as he argued that those who had remained with the colony in its trying time must receive first consideration in the labour market, whose power of expanding was still restricted by the fluctuations in prices for products. The country that was at its wits' ends a few years previously to retain its population was now devising measures to keep off those who wanted to flock to it.

Financially, New Zealand was in a very satisfactory position. When Mr. Seddon met Parliament as Premier, he was able to announce that the public accounts showed a gross surplus of revenue over expenditure which was then unparalleled in the colony's history. The actual revenue for the year had amounted to £4,499,836, and the expenditure to £4,153,125, and the Government had an excess of revenue over expenditure of £346,771. With the surplus from the previous year, there was a total surplus of £572,282, and, after taking £200,000 for public works, and smaller sums for other purposes, there was a net surplus of £228,780, which, when announced by Sir Joseph Ward in the first Financial Statement he delivered, was loudly applauded by Liberal members.

It was evident now that New Zealand would remain entirely unaffected by the extraordinary financial panic that prevailed in Australia. It was an escape which, as Mr. Seddon claimed, was emphatic testimony to the far-sighted prudence of the New Zealand public and private finance in the years that had just passed. It was a high tribute to the manner in which the people had learnt the severe lesson they had been taught since they marched at a mad pace, scattering their thousands without regard to the future. It showed that there was still confidence in the colony and its people. Above all, it was a splendid testimony to the self-reliant, non-borrowing policy with which Mr. Seddon and his colleagues went into office.

Under the guidance of Sir John McKenzie, land settlement made great strides. Genuine settlers, many of whom are now well-to-do and even very prosperous men, had been induced by liberal laws and regulations to take up sections, and they had begun at once, by their industry and frugality, to return to the colony a fair share of the proceeds.

Throughout his first session as Premier, Mr. Seddon insisted that the course the colony had adopted so unmistakably ought to be continued. There was no turning back for him. "We must go on and advance with the age," he said repeatedly. "There is still room for improvement. We must not let this young country get into the degrading condition and position of older countries. While we protect labour, we must give

encouragement to capital. Our legislation and administration have tended to bring about a prosperous state of affairs. We have found that what we are doing is in the country's interest; we must continue on the same lines and we hope to leave it better than we found it."

The most important measure thrown upon his hands by his promise to carry out in its entirety the policy of his dead chief was the Electoral Bill, with a clause conferring the franchise on women. Mr. Seddon's connection with this interesting and remarkable movement does not date back very far. He was one of those who believed that woman's special sphere was in the home. He placed her on a high pedestal. His admiration for her was almost unbounded, but he did not like to see her enter into the turmoil of election contests.

Mr. Ballance, on the other hand, had been one of the early advocates of the woman franchise. He had worked for it in Parliament and out of Parliament, and he had helped to bring it prominently before the people. When he came into power the supporters of the movement looked to him for a lead and for some tangible evidence of his sympathy with their efforts. He gave a pledge that the proposal, which had been introduced into the House several times previously without success, would be made a Government measure, and would be passed into law.

Mr. Seddon and some other members of the Government had doubts in regard to the wisdom of the promise given by Mr. Ballance, but as he had given it they felt that they also were pledged. When the leader died Mr. Seddon took up his policy, including the franchise question. Mr. Ballance had said that it should be passed into law, and Mr. Seddon said that the will of his leader would be carried into effect as soon as possible. He held that promise to be as binding and as sacred as if he himself had given it.

The subject had been discussed in Cabinet several times, and had been thoroughly thrashed out there in all its bearings. Ministers knew exactly where they were on the question, and had formed a definite opinion as to the results that would be likely

to follow the granting of the franchise; and they decided that the franchise clause should form part of the new Electoral Bill, partly prepared by Mr. Ballance.

Mr. Ballance believed that women should have the right to sit in Parliament, and he was favourable to that privilege being granted them, as he saw no reason why women, as well as men, should not frame the country's legislation. It was quite useless, however, to expect Parliament to go as far as that.

In 1891, the proposal to extend the franchise to women was carried in the House by a majority of about three to one, but it was rejected in the Legislative Council by two votes. Mr. Seddon's Government, therefore, argued that the proposal, having been sanctioned by the representative chamber, had received the consent of the country and ought to become law without any delay.

The Electoral Bill passed through the House with ease in 1892, but in the Council, which had thrown out the new franchise without reservation in 1891, there was a clause inserted that women, instead of going to the polls to vote, should record their votes privately by the exercise of electors' rights, on the same system as was allowed to seamen and shearers, that is, virtually, by letter. The Council, in its reported arguments, at any rate, expressed a belief that women would not go to the polls in the rain and bad weather. Councillors said that it was unreasonable to ask women in the country districts to ride twelve or fifteen miles to record their votes, and that women who were employed in factories would not have time to attend the polls and wait for their turn for recording their votes, and they should therefore be allowed to vote by letter.

Mr. Seddon, in Mr. Ballance's absence, was in charge of the House in September 28th, 1892, when the amendment of the Electoral Bill, proposed by the Legislative Council, to allow women to vote by electors' rights, was sent down, and he said at once that he would not advise the House to agree with it. He moved that the House should disagree, and the House formally decided that it was not desirable to do as the Council wished, as the proposal, if carried, would place disabilities in the way of

women voting, and would tend to destroy the secrecy of the ballot.

The Council insisted on its amendment, and a conference was arranged, Mr Seddon being among the managers from the House. The point was debated at length in the conference. The Council's managers retired and came back to the managers of the House with an ultimatum that they would agree that the women's electoral right method of voting should not apply to the four city electorates, but it must apply in the country districts.

Mr. Seddon and his fellow managers considered that that was only an aggravation of the position taken up by the Council, as it was making a distinction between women in the country and in the towns. It was seen that the Council's representatives had made up their minds and that nothing would shake them. When it was urged that women in the country would not record their votes owing to the distance they would have to travel, Mr. Seddon said that that difficulty could be overcome by providing that no polling-booths in the country electorates should be more than three miles apart. He made a distinct offer to the Council's managers to arrange that that idea should be carried out if the amendment was withdrawn. Mr. Seddon's proposal had been unanimously agreed to by the managers of the House, and would have removed the difficulty. Some of the Council's managers professed to believe that the proposal could not be carried out in practice, but Mr. Seddon pointed out that tents, schoolhouses, farmhouses, and even shearers' and shepherds' huts could be used. It seemed to him absurd to think that in a colony where settlement had progressed at an extraordinary rate, it would be impossible to provide polling-booths at distances of three miles; but his offer was refused, the Council stood by its amendment, the House refused to agree to the proposal, the Bill was withdrawn, therefore, and the reform was lost for that year.

Mr. Seddon has been blamed by some of the supporters of the movement for not giving way, allowing the amendment to become law, and repealing it in a future session. The position he took up is quite clear, however. It is a position he had taken

up many times before on other questions, and a position he occupied many times in after life. He would have what he believed the country desired: an absolutely unrestricted privilege. He had confidence in the women of the country, but he did not want to see the franchise given to them in a half-hearted manner, and it seemed to him that the Council's amendment involved a proposal to give the franchise to women under degrading conditions.

It was impossible for the Government to place the franchise on the Statute Book in 1892. Before Parliament met in 1893, the whole country had been stirred by those who were behind the movement. They saw that they were within a measurable distance of achieving their aim. Redoubling their efforts, they pushed the franchise to the front on all possible occasions in order to let the Legislative Council see that there was no doubt the country favoured the reform, if it did not demand it.

Franchise leagues had been formed in the centres of population, and the Women's Christian Temperance Union had been working hard for many months to gain adherents. By the time the session opened in 1893, Sir John Hall was ready with a monster petition, signed by 31,872 women, nearly one-third of the women of the colony, praying that the privilege should be granted. The old debate over the Electoral Bill took place again, and every argument that could be used on either side was brought into force.

On August 17th, Sir Patrick Buckley moved the second reading of the Bill in Council. In that chamber, also, the debate was renewed in all its heat and vigour. The fight in the Council cannot be said to have been of a party character, but the opposition to the clause seemed to be as determined as ever. After many amendments had been disposed of, the final struggle took place on September 8th, when the Hon. C. C. Bowen moved that the Bill should be read that day six months. The amendment was lost, and the third reading was carried by a majority of two.

Even then the measure was not safe from the attacks of the critics. Eighteen of them drew up and signed a petition

to the Governor, asking that he should withhold his assent, for the following reasons:—

(1) That it is a Bill of an extraordinarily important nature, and the rights and property of Her Majesty's subjects not resident in the colony are seriously affected, as the results may seriously embarrass the finances of the colony, thereby injuriously affecting the public creditor, who was unaware that such legislation was seriously contemplated.

(2) We firmly believe that the majority of the settlers of both sexes are opposed to the measure.

(3) There has been no opportunity yet afforded to the electors to express their opinions on the subject.

As a counterblast to this, Mrs. K. W. Sheppard, who was leading the women workers in the movement, sent the following communication to the Governor:—

“On behalf of the 31,000 women whose petition I had the honour of forwarding to Parliament, I am empowered by my executive to address your Excellency on the question of the protest urged by a minority of the Legislative Council against your Excellency's immediate assent to the enfranchisement of the women of the colony. I, therefore, beg to point out that on the eve of the last general election a large majority in the House of Representatives affirmed the principle of womanhood suffrage, and that Sir John Hall was induced to withdraw the Woman's Franchise Bill, which would have given effect to the principle, solely on the ground that the question has not come before the constituencies and should be relegated to the country. Womanhood suffrage was one of the most prominent questions raised at the last election, and every candidate, I believe, without exception, declared himself as either favourable or antagonistic to the enfranchisement of women. The constituencies having elected a large majority of representatives who were avowedly supporters of womanhood suffrage, the assertion made in clause 3 of the protest forwarded to your Excellency is absolutely without foundation and contrary to fact. I sincerely trust that your Excellency will not allow the action taken by both Houses of Parliament in acceding to the petition of 31,000 women of the colony to be frustrated.”

On September 19th Mr. Seddon, as Premier, announced that the Governor had assented to the Bill at noon that day. In the meantime, the Government had thoughtfully made arrangements that forms for enrolment should be available at all post-offices in the colony and at the offices of all registrars of electors. Mr. Seddon gave instructions that extra clerical assistance should be allowed throughout the colony to the officers engaged in enrolling electors. There was little time to spare before the general election took place at the end of the

year, and he said that as the women had finally been given the privilege, the Government desired to have a real live women's vote, and every opportunity should be afforded to them to exercise their votes. He also gave instructions that extra polling-booths should be erected as soon as possible to meet the convenience of the new electors.

It has been stated already that Mr. Seddon was not personally connected with the movement, although it was brought to a successful issue in the very first year of his Premiership, and is one of the prominent features of his administration. As a matter of fact, the movement began two years before he was born, thirteen years before the establishment of responsible government in the colony, and nearly forty years before the first Liberal Party came to change the face of the colony's politics. It is true that Sir George Grey formed the first Liberal Party, and was the first great Liberal leader, but Liberalism was present in New Zealand before he came into touch with its politics. It could not have been otherwise. Amongst the people who left England to meet the hardships of life in a new land there were many with broad views and with something more than a leaning towards reformatory legislation. In some cases, it was their Liberalism that sent them from their native land. They wanted a freer atmosphere, where they could shape the ideas they had formed in regard to legislative freedom.

Amongst these men was Mr. A. Saunders, one of the advanced Liberals of his day. It is largely owing to his advocacy that the woman franchise movement was started. He preached the granting of the franchise when those who discussed the proposal in any degree of seriousness were looked upon as faddists of the most pronounced, and sometimes of a dangerous, type. With all the world, apparently, against them, they stood the brunt of severe criticism, and they held to their doctrines through the unpopularity and the scorn that came from the very people the reform they advocated was most likely to benefit. Mr. Saunders, who spoke in favour of the movement in 1843, lived to see it achieve its great success half a century later. There were giants in those days, as in later ones, and Mr. Saunders had the good fortune to live among the Monroes,

Staffords, Dometts, Wakefields, Foxes, and others, whose names appear on the colony's records as the men who laid the foundation stone for any greatness New Zealand may claim. Of those very early colonisers, however, Sir William Fox is the only one who stood by Mr. Saunders in advocating the new franchise. It was not so fashionable to be "advanced" then as it is now, and it required strength of mind and firmness of purpose to press forward with Liberal doctrines.

About 1850, Mrs. Müller, wife of Dr. Müller, Resident Magistrate for Wairau, in the Nelson district, quietly but determinedly suggested in public that the women of the little nation should be enfranchised. Dr. Müller was not only opposed to the proposal, but also disliked the idea of his wife appearing as its advocate. Mrs. Müller then made use of a Nelson newspaper, placed at her disposal by a friendly proprietor, and wrote anonymous articles on the subject, which were reproduced in other newspapers in the colony. Later, Mrs. Müller, believing that this reform was far ahead of the times, took up other branches of work in connection with legislation affecting women, and helped many other reforms. She lived to see the franchise granted and exercised by the women of the colony on three occasions.

The next who stood beside Mr. Saunders and Sir William Fox was Dr. James Wallis. He was another of the colony's Liberals in the pre-party days. On Sir George Grey coming forward to organise the party, Dr. Wallis stood for the constituency of Auckland City West in 1877, and was elected. On the first day he sat in the House he brought up the subject he had at heart. He was the fifth speaker on the Address-in-Reply. Being opposed to Sir Harry Atkinson, who was then Premier, he criticised the Governor's Speech, and remarked incidentally that "there is a great need for some change in the representation of the people in two directions—namely, more equal electoral districts, and of manhood, and I may say womanhood, suffrage—of universal suffrage."

On August 8th of the following year, he showed himself to the House in all his ultra-radicalism. The subject of a motion he moved was so great and so important, he said, that he feared

he might not be able to do full justice to it, and he was ashamed that a motion to put women on a footing of equality with men should have to be advocated in any Parliament, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century of the Christian Era. The motion was :—

“That, in the opinion of this House, the electoral disabilities of women should be entirely removed, and that the same political rights and privileges should be granted to women as to men.”

He made an exceptionally long speech, filling six pages of *Hansard*, and pointed out that New Zealand had already gone a long way in recognising that women had legislative rights. At that time women who were ratepayers possessed the municipal franchise, and could vote at elections of members of Education Boards and municipal bodies and could hold office on these bodies. “The sweet girl graduate,” he pointed out, attended the colony’s universities. Wives’ properties were protected against worthless husbands and their creditors. But New Zealand, in common with all other countries in the world, had not adopted “the principle of perfect equality, admitting no powers or privileges on the one side or disabilities on the other.”

The motion was seconded by Sir William Fox, but it did not go any further, the rules of the House preventing it from being put to the vote.

When Sir George Grey, as Premier, introduced his Electoral Bill, a few days later, Dr. Wallis brought out his pet subject again, but without avail, and, as he lost no opportunity of speaking for the women, he was soon classed among the faddists.

On October 11th, 1879, Mr. Ballance, who had recently resigned from the position of Colonial Treasurer in Grey’s Ministry, openly joined the reformers. It does not seem to be generally known in the colony that on November 7th, 1879, Mr. Ballance was successful in inducing the House to agree to the franchise being given to women who owned property. This was done when the Qualification of Electors Bill was in committee. This incident is referred to in an earlier chapter, but it might be explained more fully here that when the second clause in the Bill was under consideration Mr. Ballance moved as an amendment that the word “person” should be substituted for

“man.” The question was put in the form that “man” should stand part of the clause, and it was lost. The voting was:—

Ayes	...	...	...	29
Noes	...	...	...	34
				—
Majority	...	...	...	5

The word “man” was therefore struck out and “person” substituted. Those who voted with Mr. Ballance for the woman franchise on that occasion were: Sir Harry Atkinson, Sir John Hall, Colonel Trimble, Major Haines, the Hon. A. Pitt, Major Willis, Dr. Wallis, and Messrs. Acton-Adams, J. W. Bain, J. C. Brown, De Lautour, H. J. Finn, Seymour Thorne George, R. Hursthouse, G. Ireland, W. Johnston, J. Lundon, J. Macandrew, W. Montgomery, F. J. Moss, W. A. Murray, R. Oliver, R. H. J. Reeves, R. C. Reid, A. Saunders, W. Swanson, R. Turnbull, E. G. Wright, W. J. Speight, and the full contingent of Maori members, Te Wheoro, Tomoana, Tainui, and Tawhai.

The proceedings were watched by many ladies in the Ladies' Gallery of the House. Mr. Ballance, Mr. Saunders, Dr. Wallis, Mr. Murray, and Colonel Trimble spoke in all seriousness and in good taste; but most of the debate, according to the reporters in the Press Gallery, “was of an inane, not to say idiotic, character.”

That motion affirmed the principle that the franchise should be given to women who possessed property. Three days later, when the Bill was in committee again, Mr. Ballance moved to strike out “man” and substitute “person” in another clause, providing that there should be a residential qualification to vote as well as a freehold qualification. But the House felt that it had gone far enough, and it declined, by 27 votes to 19, to sanction that proposal.

After the Bill had gone through committee, and was reported for its third reading, Mr. Vincent Pyke asked that the Bill should be recommitted with the object of considering the woman's franchise again. The attitude he took up was that it was not necessary for women to hold property in order to possess intelligence, and that the franchise, therefore, should be given to them without reservation; but, as he was one of those who

had voted against the movement, it was understood that the desire was to retract what had been done. Having got the Bill into committee, Mr. Pyke moved that "person" should be struck out and "man" inserted. He was successful; and the franchise, half measure though it was, was taken away from the women a few days after it had been given. The majority against the woman's franchise on this occasion was nine.

In 1881, Dr. Wallis introduced the first Women's Franchise Bill, but it got no further than its first reading. For nearly six years Parliament was troubled with the question no longer, and it seemed to have disappeared from practical politics. Even on the platform it was seldom referred to by either supporters or opponents. Then Sir Julius Vogel came upon the scene. He had returned from England, had re-entered political life, and had placed before the people many schemes for bringing themselves out of the groove into which they had fallen. On being asked to contest an electorate, he spoke strongly in favour of the movement, saying that the franchise should be granted to women without delay. He came into power. Mindful of what he had said on the platform when the people asked him to come and help them out of their difficulties, he introduced the Women's Suffrage Bill. He was assisted, and, probably, largely instigated, by Sir Robert Stout, another friend of the cause. The proposal was received with ridicule, as usual, some members having provided themselves with books of anecdote and facetiousness in order to have a good supply of banter. The Bill came as a surprise from Sir Julius Vogel, who was well known to be opposed to exceptional reforms. His address was strictly logical. It was a calm array of solid arguments with very little appeal to sentiment, and it may be said to be one of the best attempts made in the colony to place the case for the women clearly and forcibly before the people.

The case against the women, also, it must be admitted, was put with much vigour and force. The brief speech made in Maori by Wi Pere, the member for the Eastern Maori district, and translated to the House by an interpreter, is of more than ordinary interest. He said:—

"My opinion of this measure is that if it becomes law it will be a source of trouble to this House. I think we have only to look back to the trouble that

came upon Adam through his wife giving him an apple. We should bear in mind the evil that befell Samson when his locks were shorn by Delilah. We should also bear in mind the story of Naboth's vineyard, how a woman incited a man to murder another in order to obtain possession of his vineyard. I am afraid if ladies were allowed seats in the House it would distract the attention of some honourable members, and they would not pay so much attention to the affairs of the colony as they would otherwise do. Although I am getting up in years I must confess that I should be affected by a weakness of that sort. If the honourable gentleman in charge of this Bill would introduce the clause providing that only plain women should be allowed to come into the House, I think the source of danger would be removed; but if any beautiful ladies were sent to this House I am quite sure they would lead astray the tender hearts of some honourable gentlemen, particularly the elder members of the House. I say in conclusion that if attractive ladies are allowed to come into this House I am quite certain my own wife will never consent to my returning here."

The second reading of this Bill was carried by 41 votes to 22. Evidently, the House, and, presumably, the country, were viewing the proposal with more favour.

In committee on the Bill an attempt was made to limit the franchise to women who owned property; but the supporters of the Bill would have no more of that, and the motion was rejected by 17 votes. The next minute, the House, seeing that the reformers would not take an instalment of the reform, killed the Bill by striking out the second clause, which provided that the Qualification of Electors Act should be amended so as to include women; but the majority against the women was only two. On June 3rd the Bill was discharged, and so ended Sir Julius Vogel's chivalrous attempt.

The movement stood still for another period as far as Parliament is concerned. Then the Women's Christian Temperance Union reached New Zealand in its ambitious endeavour to spread itself into all lands. One of the Union's "world missionaries" came to the colony and established district unions in different parts. Early in 1886, a convention of delegates from these unions was held in Wellington, and a recognised governing body, now known as the "New Zealand Christian Temperance Union," was established. It set up several different departments, and among them was the "Franchise Department." The work lagged somewhat, however, to outward appearances, at any rate, until 1887, when Mrs. Sheppard was appointed Superintendent of the Union

for the colony. Up to this time, although the subject was coming gradually to the front, it was not well received by the public, and the harder the suffragists worked, the stronger grew the opposition. In 1887 the opponents, instead of being apathetic, were decidedly hostile. This hostility did not come so much from men as from women, large numbers of whom regarded the proposal with shuddering dread, as if they knew not what shocking consequences would arise. It began to be thought that if the extension of the franchise was made, the "women's vote," which, it was believed, would be a solid reality, would go strongly for the Temperance Party, and this, while it raised some friends, also raised many enemies who otherwise did not care much whether women received the franchise or not.

Mrs. Sheppard communicated with Mr. Saunders and took steps to organise all the forces in the colony. Literary and debating societies, synods, assemblies, and church unions were asked to give the subject prominence on their programmes, and the publicity afforded by the columns of the daily newspapers was taken full advantage of. "There were numbers of good men and true," says a writer who took part in the campaign, "who, by voice and pen, heartily supported the courageous women; chief among them were Mr. Saunders and Sir John Hall; both were veteran politicians, usually on opposite sides of the House, both were full of years, and both had long and honourable records of public service; the prestige of their names gave weight and influence to the movement, their great experience rendered them invaluable advisers, and their unselfish co-operation and generous advocacy lifted the question high above mere party politics."

The year 1890 saw the colony listening to many public debates on the subject. Early in the session of that year, Sir John Hall was again in front of the movement with a motion in the House, simply affirming the right of women to vote at the election of members of Parliament. The motion was seconded by the Hon. W. P. Reeves, who described himself as a "half-loaf" man. As a liberal, Mr. Reeves believed in equality of rights, but he thought that the franchise should be given to

women gradually, cautiously, and tentatively. He pointed out that the mass of women had taken little interest in the subject, and had not demanded the franchise. He feared that if the privilege was given all at once most of them would be unready for it and would be indisposed to use it, and many of them would be more unfit than were large numbers of the electors in whose hands it had been placed already. He believed that it would be better to begin with the women who had commenced to go through the higher course of education, conferring the franchise first on women who had passed the matriculation examination of the University.

Mr. Saunders was there to support the motion, but there were strong opponents, chief among them being Mr. H. S. Fish, the most determined opponent the movement met in the House. Evidently, however, the franchise had gained much ground, as Sir John Hall's motion was carried by a majority of 26, only 11 voting against it. Sir John, having ascertained the feeling of the House, introduced his Franchise Bill again, but no opportunity was given to him to take it through its stages, and nothing more was done that session.

The work never ceased. In 1891, when Parliament met again, Sir John Hall was ready with petitions, containing ten thousand signatures, in favour of the reform. He first of all presented several small petitions, and this led two members to pass some scornful remarks on the small percentage of women, who, apparently, wanted the franchise.

"I hope honourable members will suspend their remarks until I have completed presenting petitions," Sir John said; and then he produced his monster petition, which was seventy yards long. One end of it was seized by Mr. Kelly and run out to the furthest end of the House, and the document was unrolled before the House, Sir John at one end and Mr. Kelly at the other. Members arranged themselves on each side to inspect the names as they passed along, and some rather rough banter was exchanged between the supporters and the opponents of the franchise.

A deputation of members waited on Mr. Ballance as Premier, and asked him what opportunity would be given

to the House to express its decision. Mr. Ballance replied that if a Bill was introduced the Government would take it up after its second reading. He would not make it a Government Bill, and the question would not be a party one, but each member would vote on the subject as he chose.

On August 24th, Sir John Hall moved the second reading of the Female Suffrage Bill. The motion was seconded by the Hon. D. Pinkerton, one of the new Labour members, who said that the best argument in support of the Bill was the fact that "woman is a fellow being, equal to ourselves in intelligence, in morality, in suffering, and in obedience to the laws in the making of which she has no voice."

This time, the majority for the women was increased to 25. With the object of making sure that the Bill would be thoroughly distasteful to the Legislative Council, and would have no possible chance of passing through that chamber, one of its opponents moved in committee in the House that a new clause should be added providing that every woman registered as an elector should be qualified to be elected a member of the House, and this was agreed to in spite of the efforts of the friends of the Bill. The Council went into a long discussion on the Bill, and finally rejected it by two votes, the Maori members being amongst the opponents, and the proposal was shelved for another year at least.

In 1892, Sir John Hall prepared another Bill, but as Mr. Ballance had made provision for the franchise in the Electoral Bill, Sir John Hall's measure was withdrawn. Mr. Ballance was successful in passing the proposal through the House once more, and the question was threshed out in the Legislative Council afresh. The second reading was carried there without a division. The Bill passed its third reading, but it was found that the Council had added a new clause giving women the right to the use of electoral rights.

It was when this amendment was sent back to the House for consideration that Mr. Seddon took charge of the Bill, and refused to accept the alteration, for the reasons stated. In 1893, the supporters of the movement achieved success, as described above, and the women of New Zealand were fully emancipated.

As the day of the general election of 1893 drew near, many speculations were made as to how the women's vote would affect parties. Several of the strongest supporters of the movement in favour of extending the franchise were Conservatives, who believed that a vast majority of the women of the colony would vote on the side that was conservative in instinct, and Liberal leaders feared that many women would be captured by the social positions of leading Conservatives.

Mr. Seddon hardly knew what to think. The experiment, to his mind, was a bold one, and he was not sure that it was wise. "By granting the franchise to women," he said when speaking on the subject some years later, "Parliament plunged into an abyss of unknown depth."

The contest took place shortly after the session had concluded. The Conservative Party was well organised. It had founded an organisation called the National Association, which had started in Auckland some years previously, and had gradually spread itself through the land, forming branches in all centres, especially in the country districts, where feeling against Mr. Seddon and his Government was supposed to be very strong. Most was made of the socialistic character of the Liberal policy. Its aims were exaggerated, and word pictures were drawn of the evils that would result from giving the "Seven Devils of Socialism" another term of office.

There was a distinct issue before the people. They were asked to decide whether the Liberal Government under Mr. Seddon should be allowed to continue in power, or whether there should be a return to the conservative rule. Both sides made good use of the time available in the recess, and canvassing was carried to an extent that was unknown at any previous electoral contest. Some of the criticism was of a personal nature. Mr. Seddon received hard knocks. He was hampered to a large extent by the position he held. It was not fitting for a general to take the part of a soldier; his share of the work was not in the field, and he spent much of his time directing his forces, issuing instructions, advising committees in all parts of the colony, and giving a helping hand to many Liberal candidates.

The Conservatives' manifesto stated that the confusion and commotion of the previous years had disturbed society and kept the colony from progressing as it ought to have progressed. New Zealand's escape from the financial storms that swept Australia was attributed to the prudence of the old Continuous Ministry. It was urged that the country must send back to Parliament members pledged to prudent and economical legislation. The Liberals were accused of having absorbed the dangerous doctrines of Henry George, Edward Bellamy, and Hyndman. State Socialism, it was said, was the Government's principle, and it was a bad thing and should be thrown out. The labour proposals, a large portion of which had not been placed on the Statute Book, were derided as a complete fiasco. The Government's schemes were described as being crude and ill-considered; others were vexatious; the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill was a measure of coercion that could not be tolerated. The Shop Assistants Bill, which enforced a half-holiday every week throughout the colony, was to come into operation early in the New Year, and one leading Conservative affirmed that if it had come into operation before the election not a single man who voted for it would have been returned for Christchurch City.

Mr. Seddon relied mainly upon the material signs of the colony's progress during the past few years, and upon the contrast the position afforded with that of three years previously, when the Continuous Ministry was in office. He pointed out that Sir Harry Atkinson had raised loan after loan, while the Government of which Mr. Seddon was the head was the first that had gone for three years without passing a Loan Act. He boasted of the advanced land legislation recently passed. The Government's policy, he said, so far from driving capital away, had attracted it. His Government was the first to possess sufficient boldness to reduce the public debt out of the surplus. The time had come when both employees and capitalists would look back upon the labour legislation of those years and acknowledge that it was in their interests. Speaking to farmers, he pointed to the repeal of the property tax, the reduction of railway freights, and other concessions. At that time the

Government was considering its scheme of advancing money to farmers at cheap rates of interest, but he did not use this as a bait to catch votes, relying solely upon what he had done.

The result of the election far exceeded Mr. Seddon's most sanguine expectations. He did not anticipate defeat. He did not see how he could be defeated with a good policy behind him and a better one in front. He was never one of those who placed much faith in the gratitude of a country. He knew too well its fickleness, and the readiness with which it forgot past services, no matter how great they were or how much sacrifice they entailed. But he knew that he had done something for the people. He wanted to do much more and he felt that he would not be denied.

His opponents were practically annihilated. The leader of the Opposition himself was rejected. The colony, on reading the daily newspapers on the morning of November 29th, found that the Opposition had almost ceased to exist. The figures given in the newspapers are :—

Ministerialists	...	...	...	56
Oppositionists	...	...	...	15
Independents	...	...	...	3

The small number of independent members shows the distinct character of the issue. The verdict could hardly have been more emphatic or more flattering to the Premier. It was a thorough endorsement of his appointment, his policy, and his actions, and he, the proudest man in the colony, probably the proudest in the world, felt that he was now the undoubted leader of a nation. He had been practically elected by the whole country.

The only doubt that crept into his mind was whether his success had not been too great. Would he be able to hold his party together? Would it become too unwieldy, break into divisions, and fall a prey to its opponents after they had gathered up their strength later on? Here, at any rate, was a fresh responsibility for him. He would have to carry out his legislation and administration without the check of an efficient Opposition.

He realised that while he could never deviate from the principles of Liberalism, he must act with caution and take no unfair advantage of the immense strength that had been given to him. He now looked upon himself as the chairman of directors of a large company, whose interests he would have to watch. Party considerations had fallen out of his thoughts.

In the flush of his victory he hinted, for one thing, that interest charges on mortgages were too high in the colony, and he foreshadowed the advances to settlers scheme by stating that the Government should, if possible, advance money at a fair rate.

The years that have passed since that victory of the Liberal Party prove that he was as ready to accept victory as defeat, and the steady and unswerving march he made is evidence of the control he exercised over himself and his party. There have been many splits in it, and members have quarrelled with it and left it, but it has remained the same party, and was as ready to follow him at the end of his Premiership as at the beginning in 1893.

Mr. Reeves was the most abused member of the Government, not excluding Mr. Seddon. He had brought himself into high disfavour with the Conservative Party, mainly on account of the persistency with which he introduced his Conciliation and Arbitration Bill after it had been rejected several times by the Legislative Council. As far as he was concerned, the election turned largely on that measure, and when he was placed at the head of the poll for Christchurch City, with a large majority above the second candidate, his success was taken as an endorsement of the measure. In the following session the Legislative Council acknowledged this with some grace, and, withdrawing its obstruction, allowed the Bill to pass, and it became law and was soon in full operation, as explained in another chapter.

What became of the "women's vote?" There was no "women's vote." It is a thing that is often spoken of and discussed in New Zealand still, and it is often said that it has done many things and will do many more. As a

matter of fact, the women did not give a solid vote to any man or any principle in the election of 1893, nor have they done so since. There is as much difference of opinion among them as among men, and they scatter their votes in the same way. No party or section of a party has been entitled to lay claim to the vote of the women of the colony generally. The same may be said in regard to most candidates in the different electorates. The women have had a great deal to do with the advance of Prohibition, but even the Temperance Party cannot say that it receives anything like the entire women's vote.

The colony has become used to women voting now. Women themselves have become used to it, and they flock to the polling-booths in large numbers, recording their votes quietly and intelligently. In 1893, however, the sight was a novel one for everybody, and men electors stood by with good-natured curiosity to see how their newly enfranchised sisters would vote. It is best to let Mr. Reeves, who was in the midst of it, fighting for his seat in Christchurch City, describe his observations and impressions, which are applicable to all election contests held since. He says:—

“ The eventful morning was bright and fine almost everywhere. The women began to vote early—at about nine o'clock—and by amicable arrangement were allowed in the cities to have certain booths pretty much to themselves until noon. A New Zealand elector may vote at whichever booth in his district he pleases. In several districts the committees took care that a woman's vote should be the first vote recorded. Workmen's wives “tidied up” at homes, put on their best clothes, and walked to the nearest poll. Sometimes their menkind escorted them, for it was a general, though not a universal, holiday. More often the women of one or two neighbouring families made up a party and sallied out together. Between noon and two o'clock, dinner postponed politics; in the afternoon the women again thronged the booths, and had almost all comfortably voted by tea-time, when the rush of workmen, which in the colonies begins an hour or so earlier than in England, began to flood the polls. All things were done in courtesy and order, without rudeness, hustling, or hysteria. Good-natured neighbours took it in turns to look after each other's children while the voting was being done. Each woman armed herself conscientiously with her number, and, on the whole, the novices went through the ordeal with much credit. The proportion of spoiled ballot papers was very little larger than at previous elections. When the polls closed at seven o'clock, 90,000 women had peacefully voted. In the towns, crowds of men and women stood patiently in the streets from about nine o'clock onwards, waiting to see the results not only in their own district but of the colony's elections. The order kept by these thousands of full-fledged citizens was astonishing. They talked, laughed, and chaffed each other, and boys ran about

shouting. There was no drunkenness, no brutality. Each party received verdicts, as they were posted up, with groans or acclamation. The interest was of the keenest, but, as there was no irresponsible, voteless crowd merely bent on horseplay, there was no rowdiness.”*

It was found when statistics were available that out of an estimated adult female population of 139,915, 109,461, or 78·23 per cent., registered as electors, and of those registered 90,290, or 85·18 per cent., recorded their votes.

After the women had held the franchise for a decade, Mr. Seddon paid a high compliment to them for the manner in which they had exercised the privilege. He said :—

“Who dares to propose that we should repeal the legislation that gave the franchise to the women of the colony? I have not met a candidate, a politician, or a canvasser who has dared to say this privilege should be taken from them. I want to ask this question: Can you show where woman has been untrue to the great responsibility cast upon her? In the legislation of which we boast, in the great social advancement we have made—more particularly in that beneficent legislation, the Old Age Pensions Act—I say that the women are behind it all; and I say more: that in respect of progressive measures, in respect of that which is for the good of the lives of others, women are keener and more determined than the lords of creation.”

Besides the granting of the women’s franchise, some other notable legislation was passed in 1893. The Criminal Code Act, a monument to the ability and stupendous industry of the new Minister for Justice, Mr. Reeves, was submitted to the House and passed. Its humble title gives no idea of the comprehensive character of the measure, or of its usefulness. It is one of the most useful Acts standing to the credit of the Seddon Administration. It reduces a vast mass of chaotic legislation to order, and simplifies the whole criminal code of the colony. It has abolished a large number of distinctions in regard to embezzlement, theft, larceny, breach of trust, and other crimes. It enlarges the scope of the law dealing with perjury. It acknowledges the right of appeal in criminal cases. If Parliament had done nothing else than pass the Criminal Code Act in 1893, Mr. Seddon’s first session as Premier would still be a notable one among the sessions of the New Zealand Legislature.

There is a third Act which helps to make that session a remarkable one from a legislative point of view. It is the Alcoholic

*State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand.

Liquor Sale Control Act, which many people specially interested in the temperance movement regard as the most important of the trio. There had been a long and bitter conflict in the colony between popular rights and the vested interests of the publican. Sydenham, one of the suburbs of Christchurch, was the scene of the fight. There the Prohibitionists gathered their forces, and there they were beaten in the Courts. The attempt to secure local option on licensing matters through the Licensing Committees failed, and the people, aroused to action by the Prohibition leaders, demanded that they should be allowed the right of direct veto. Sir Robert Stout, as the champion of the Prohibitionists, introduced a drastic Bill. Mr. Seddon was in a very difficult position. The banking legislation tried his courage, but the licensing legislation tried his tact and skill. He showed that he had been as well endowed with one as with the other, and the Bill, which established the principle of local option, was passed.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BANKING CRISIS.

In the second year of his Premiership, Mr. Seddon and his Ministry were tried as Premier and Ministry had never been tried in the colonies before.

Everything had gone well with him. There had been no hitch in his administration or his legislation. The people had said unmistakably that they desired him and no one else as their leader. He was at the head of the strongest and most united party on record. He was surrounded by clever men, upon whom he could rely for support with the utmost confidence. Adversity seemed to be turned into good fortune, and the plans of his opponents were frustrated so that their schemes helped him to gain greater popularity and become more steadily fixed in his position.

In 1894, however, it became evident that there was great trouble ahead, and that he would be called upon to meet an extraordinary crisis. Suddenly, and without any warning of the heaviness of the responsibility that was to be placed upon his shoulders, he was asked to take his reputation in his hands and face a danger that appalled even his stout heart. The Government was called upon to decide in a few hours whether it would save the Bank of New Zealand or let the institution fall and carry with it the fortunes of thousands of colonists and the financial welfare of the colony.

The first hint the public received that the bank's affairs were not satisfactory was in October, 1889. There had been some idea abroad before that time that the bank was making heavy losses. It had advanced money on landed and other properties when the colony was enjoying its period of inflated prosperity, and when values were high. Then came the depression and the heavy drop in prices, values, businesses, and everything else; and the bank found that property after property and

business after business was thrown upon its hands, and that in many cases the estimated values were not equal to the values of the securities. It was compelled to take over many kinds of business concerns, and to endeavour to conduct them, very often in an unbusinesslike and unsatisfactory manner.

It had a mass of securities, which had been accepted in support of weak accounts. The values of these securities had fallen greatly. Many accounts were in liquidation, and the cover for them was very inadequate. These involved losses which the directors had not faced in 1888. The losses would have absorbed not only the whole of the bank's reserve fund, but also nearly one-third of the paid-up capital of the bank as well, amounting to £800,000 in all. In face of this, the bank had for years been paying a dividend that it had no right to pay. Securities were held and accounts kept going in the vain hope of a recovery of the values placed upon them at the time of the inflated prices. On the top of this, there came heavy losses in the bank's Australian business, brought about by the Australian depression.

Mr. G. Buckley, the President, saw that the institution was drifting on to the shoals; and in 1889 he resigned from his position, stating that he had cause to feel dissatisfied, and that at the first convenient opportunity he would give the reasons that led him to the conclusion he had formed. This announcement, coupled with the rumours that had been afloat for some time, raised the public's curiosity.

Mr. Buckley's opportunity came at the annual meeting of shareholders held in October at Auckland, where the bank then had its headquarters. He startled the shareholders and the colony by stating that the balance-sheet was not a correct statement of the assets and liabilities, as there were old losses and deficiencies not provided for. Half the bank's capital, he said, had been lost. The liabilities were under-estimated by at least £300,000, and he urged that some properties ought to be written down to one-third of the value placed upon them; and even if that was done, the times would have to improve very greatly to enable the bank to sell the properties at the reduced values.

Mr. Buckley's statements were the principal topic of discussion in the colony next day, when they were telegraphed to the

newspapers. His action was heartily condemned at the meeting of shareholders and in financial circles. Shareholders complained that the bank had been so discredited that its existence was imperilled. Hardly anyone had a good word to say for Mr. Buckley. The directors had suggested that the bank's headquarters should be removed to London, and the general opinion was that Mr. Buckley's speech had helped that movement, as the aid of a strong London Board and the further assistance of English shareholders were required to rehabilitate the bank. Besides that, the Auckland directors had frequently been charged with mismanagement, and it was thought that it would be better to free the institution from the local influences of any portion of the colony, and from the temptation of mixing bank affairs with politics. There was a belief that local pressure in Auckland had had an injurious effect and was a real danger. Most colonists, however, refused to take Mr. Buckley's statements very seriously. They did not accept his figures, and the shareholders passed a motion stating that the information given by the directors was sufficiently full.

A sensation was caused in London as soon as the report of the meeting reached that city. The *Financial Times* denounced the deception that had been practised. Mr. Buckley's speech created a panic among the depositors. Shares fell to the extent of £2 each, and in London it was suggested that it was the duty of the Government to interpose. All this helped to raise public feeling in the colony against Mr. Buckley, who was accused of being a sensationalist. He was pointed to as a man who was doing immense harm to the colony, and for a time he was the most unpopular person in New Zealand.

In 1893 Sir Joseph Ward noticed that the reserve in coin at the bank was below the legal limit, and he called the attention of the bank's officers to the fact. The general manager maintained that the law had been complied with. Sir Joseph did not altogether accept that view of the case, but as the circumstances were critical at the time, on account of the Australian depression, he did not think it advisable to insist that the coin reserve should be increased. He contented himself with giving instructions that the bank's position should be carefully watched.

Nothing further transpired until Monday, June 25th, when there was disclosed to Sir Joseph Ward, for the first time, the fact that the bank was in such a serious position that the State alone could save it from bankruptcy, and that unless steps were taken at once, its career would be suddenly stopped.

The information was imparted at a private interview by Mr. John Murray, the bank's representative, and, at his request, Sir Joseph placed the whole position, as far as it had been disclosed to him, before Mr. Seddon.

Both Sir Joseph and Mr. Seddon realised at once the gravity of the crisis. They discussed the matter for hours, and endeavoured to look at it from all points. They admitted, without any cavilling, that the bank had to be saved if it could be saved; but they also stood convinced that it was not the function of the Government to sacrifice the country to any extent whatever for the sake of an institution which was conducted in the interests of private persons, and which had brought at least a large proportion of its trouble upon itself by its bad management.

On the day following the disclosures to Sir Joseph, Mr. Seddon and he had a conference with Mr. Murray, who told the Ministers in plain language that, unless the Government came to the rescue, the bank would have to close its doors in a few days. He admitted that, in spite of the sound position apparently held by the bank, as disclosed by the balance-sheet, there was absolutely no hope of its being able to carry on beyond the following Monday. The bank, owing, it claimed, to low prices, bad seasons, and other causes, was quite unable to declare a dividend to shareholders at the approaching annual meeting, and the result would be that the bank must close. Even then, in spite of strenuous efforts to collect resources, the bank's executive found the utmost difficulty in maintaining the gold reserve prescribed by law. The very low price of the bank shares in the market was itself evidence of distrust that might at any moment develop into a panic.

No one doubted that the closing of the bank would be a calamity. The institution was bound up with the colony in many ways. The shadow of the bank was over the whole land.

Its ramifications extended into all corners and affected all classes. Within New Zealand there were 1300 shareholders, liable for nearly three-quarters of a million of money. The bank had 95 branches or agencies in the colony, and they dealt with 25,000 accounts. The bank held the money of 35,000 separate depositors, whose deposits amounted to nearly four and a half millions sterling. Its discount accounts represented traders' acceptances, equal to £600,000. It had granted thousands of overdrafts, and the Government was its creditor to the extent of £825,000.

There were many of its clients who could have found accommodation elsewhere, but they belonged to the better-off classes. If the bank had closed, men who were doing well in business, but were not rich, would have been completely ruined; many promising enterprises would have been crushed; and the colony's industries would have suffered to such an extent that years would have passed before they began to recover. The locking up of the money of 35,000 depositors would have caused dislocation of business and loss. Among the depositors was the Auckland Savings Bank, with about £60,000 at its credit in the bank. The trouble would not have stopped with the Bank of New Zealand, and a banking crisis, on the scale of the financial disasters in Australia, was impending.

The depression had passed away, but the colony still felt its effects, and in some directions felt them very severely. The fall of a large banking institution would have precipitated the colony into the depression again. The public revenue would have been seriously affected, the unemployed would have become clamorous, and the colonists, thoroughly disheartened by this fresh trouble, would have needed all their courage to meet the emergency.

There had been whispers among financiers that something might happen. Nothing had been said openly, but those who had opportunities for knowing, and who observed the signs, were alive to the fact that the bank was in an embarrassed position. There were very few, however, who believed that it was actually contemplating closing its doors, and the revelations came to Mr. Seddon and Sir Joseph Ward like a lightning flash.

As far as the bank was concerned, two things had to be done to avert the crash. One was that the bank should be placed in possession of increased capital resources, partly to fortify its cash reserves, and partly to enable it to extend to its customers the accommodation they required in the second half of the year in anticipation of their wool-clips and crops of the ensuing season; and the second was that the total of the increased capital resources should be sufficient to maintain confidence in the bank's stability, even if no dividend was paid for a time on its existing capital.

The proposal made by the bank was that the Government should give a guarantee to an issue of £2,000,000 in preference shares for ten years, the issue to be replaced by a fresh issue of ordinary shares or otherwise at the end of that time, and the State to be then relieved of its guarantee. As a cover to safeguard the State from loss, there was the bank's paid-up capital, amounting to £900,000, and a reserve liability of £1,500,000, making a total of £2,400,000. It was proposed that one of the two millions guaranteed should be placed at the disposal of the bank in its ordinary business, and that the other million should be held in reserve and invested only with the approval of the Colonial Treasurer. The bank's officers believed that, apart from preventing a terrible misfortune to the colony, the arrangements suggested would have the effect of placing and maintaining the whole banking business of the colony on a sound basis.

Four days after this proposal was submitted to the Government, Mr. Seddon was informed that since the bank's balance-sheet had been issued, the position had become impaired and seriously compromised.

There could be no doubt of the gravity of the position as seen by Mr. Murray. As a banker of forty-five years' standing, thirty of which he had spent in New Zealand, he gave Mr. Seddon his assurance that the occasion was one of public urgency. He was absolutely convinced that if his proposal was adopted the State would not lose a penny, and it would avert a great loss to itself as well as to the community, while the banking affairs of the colony would be placed on an improved footing. "If the Government finally determines to go on with the

measure," he said with significance, "it should be put through to-day."

The Cabinet met and discussed the position, and Mr. Murray attended the meeting and explained the whole position. The same day, Mr. Seddon conferred with Sir William Russell, Leader of the Opposition, Sir Robert Stout, and Mr. Mitchelson; and Sir Joseph Ward saw the Hon. G. McLean (a member of the Legislative Council, and an authority on banking matters), Sir Robert Stout, and Mr. H. D. Bell, one of the members for Wellington. The Government was led to take this action because it felt that all party feeling should be sunk, and that the Opposition had as much interest as the Government in saving the bank and the colony.

The Government took what steps could be taken in so short a time to ascertain the position in all its bearings, and to see how far the bank's proposal would be likely to lead the State. Mr. Seddon and Sir Joseph tried to reduce the colony's responsibility in various directions. They thought out several schemes that would lead to a settlement of the difficulty. They were anxious to get more time, but it was too late, and the more the Government delayed the worse the position became. Some inkling of the trouble had gone abroad, and it was seen that if nothing was done on Friday night, there would be a run on the bank on Saturday morning, and the inevitable panic on Monday.

It was then Friday, and the bank had said in terms that could not be doubted that it would not be able to carry on without assistance beyond Monday. On Friday afternoon, a Bill was rapidly but carefully drafted, ready to be presented to the House in the evening.

The rumour that went about in political circles when it became known that some specially important legislation was pending was that a no-confidence motion would be moved against the Government. Then it was stated that the Legislative Council had made preparations for the unusual course of holding an evening sitting, and it gradually became generally known that Ministers, in conjunction with Sir Robert Stout, who was consulted professionally, were drafting a Bill to save an

important financial institution. There was only one institution that could fall back upon the State for that kind of aid, and it was realised that the Bank of New Zealand had reached such straits that unless it was saved the colony would suffer one of the severest blows adversity had dealt it.

As the House was about to rise for the dinner adjournment, Sir Joseph Ward gave formal notice that at 7.30 he would introduce an important banking measure. The news spread through Wellington with remarkable rapidity. When the doors leading to the public galleries of the House were thrown open, there was a rush for seats. Large numbers could not gain admittance, and stood outside waiting for the verbal reports of the proceedings, which were passed from one person to another.

At 7.30 Sir Joseph moved that half-an-hour's adjournment should be allowed in order that the arrangements for bringing down the Bill should be completed. A few minutes later copies of the Bank of New Zealand Share Guarantee Bill were in the hands of members and were being read eagerly. Delays took place before the Bill was finally introduced, reported to the Speaker, and read the first time, and it was 9 o'clock before Sir Joseph rose to move the second reading.

Speaking on behalf of the Government, he said that the responsibility was fully realised, and the Bill would not have been submitted had not necessity demanded prompt action. After reviewing the position, and giving it mature consideration, the Government had come to the conclusion that it was absolutely essential in the public interest that effective action should be taken, and that it should be taken without the slightest delay. He placed special emphasis on the need there was for action in the interests of the public, because the Government was aware that no person, and no company, no matter how important it was, was entitled to assistance at the expense of the tax-payers.

The bank was not in good favour with a section of the public. Sir Joseph knew that, and he made a point of asking members to dismiss from their recollection all prepossessions that had found an origin in the bank's past career, in its management, or in its connections, unless recollections of that

nature were likely to create an incentive to them to agree to the measure the Government had brought down for the sole purpose of preventing calamity overtaking the colony.

From a more selfish point of view, he explained that the Government's banking business was with the Bank of New Zealand. In carrying on the colony's business, it was necessary to hold large balances from time to time. The Government's balances at that time happened to be lower than usual, but in spite of that fact, and independent of some accounts which local public bodies held in the bank, the institution owed the colony £885,000, represented by actual deposits and drafts in the Bank's possession. In addition to that, the London deposits amounted to £1,500,000. It was evident, therefore, that if anything happened to the bank, the Government, as well as the people individually, would be heavy losers.

The bank, in fact, was virtually a State institution, and the Government had to decide in a moment whether the position should continue until the disaster came. "We were faced with two positions," Sir Joseph explained; "we had to elect to go either to the right or to the left. The left would mean disaster; we have, therefore, decided to go to the right, and we have taken the House into our confidence. We are responsible for the proposals we submit to the House for ratification, and after that the House is responsible to the people of the colony. I have no hesitation in saying that he would be a bold man, who, in the circumstances, and with the information we possess, hesitates to take what I feel is a strong course, and is the only course open to the Government."

Mr. Seddon also expressed his sense of the responsibility thrown upon him and upon the Government and the House. He saw no possible way of meeting the difficulty except by passing the Bill. The cloud that had been seen coming up, he said, was over the colony, and it was the duty of the Legislature to dispel it. A suggestion had been made that the Bill should be referred to a committee before it was dealt with by the House, but Mr. Seddon urged members not to cause delay. The Bill must be passed that night. The Government had not taken up its responsibility without careful consideration, and if the

House refused to accept the Bill the responsibility would rest with it.

Sir William Russell endeavoured to suppress the party feeling of his supporters, saying that there should be no attempt to gain party advantages or to discuss the question in any manner but the gravest and most impartial that could be adopted. He did not like being called upon to come to a decision at a moment's notice, and he suggested that the Bill should be considered by a Special Committee, but he saw that the crisis called for determined action or none at all, and he thought it was less dangerous to meet the liability than to face the appalling disaster which would take place if Parliament did not come to the rescue. His principal objection to the course proposed was that it went a long way in the direction of a State Bank, of which he was a strong opponent, but he waived that objection, and offered no opposition to the passage of the Bill.

One member of the Opposition suggested that the House should continue to sit until the morning in order that a committee could inquire into the position, but Sir Joseph said that if the Bill was delayed until the morning, the House would not be asked to put it through at all. The events that took place a few hours later show that his surmise was correct.

The second reading was carried by 52 votes to 9, and the Bill went into committee. The House refused to adjourn for supper. By 11.30 the Bill was through committee, and at midnight it was sent on to the Legislative Council, which had been sitting in readiness for the measure. The Council was more deliberative than the House in its discussion. It appointed a Select Committee, which briefly took the evidence of Mr. Seddon, Sir Joseph Ward, and Mr. Murray. Having satisfied itself as far as it was able to do so, it recommended that the Bill should be allowed to pass.

At 4 o'clock on Saturday morning, the Bill had passed both branches of the Legislature. Shortly afterwards it received the assent of the Governor, who had also been waiting in order that there should be no delay.

Mr. Seddon was the first to congratulate Parliament and the country. "This Parliament," he said, "has been equal to the occasion, and that the colony has been saved from disaster. I feel sure that what we have done is in the interests of the country, and that the results will be beneficial to the people. The colony may also congratulate itself on what has been done."

On Saturday morning, therefore, the colony was made aware of the fact that in a few hours the Government had arrested a crisis, which had been dealt with before the people generally knew what was happening. Immediately all alarm passed away. People gathered round the doors of some of the bank's important agencies, and there were withdrawals, but they were chiefly from the accounts of small depositors. The promptitude with which the demands were met reassured even the most timid, some of whom had made their way into the premises to ask for gold for bank notes.

The Press of the colony united in praising the courage displayed by Mr. Seddon and Sir Joseph Ward. One of their bitterest critics said that the colony, as well as the bank, owed them a debt of gratitude for their promptitude and boldness in facing the emergency when they were suddenly called upon to do so. Newspapers that had severely criticised Mr. Seddon and his colleagues without stint praised them for the first time in a manner that left no doubt as to the appreciation with which the courageous action was received.

The Banking Act, as it stands on the Statute Book, provides for the increase of the bank's capital by the issue of shares to an amount up to £2,000,000, guaranteed by the State. The shares were to be called in at the end of ten years, and cancelled on payment of the principal sum with the accrued dividend. The rate of dividend was not to exceed 4 per cent. The guaranteed shares were known as "A" shares, and were to have preference over all ordinary shares in regard to both capital and dividend. The issue of the preferential shares was secured on a liability of all the shareholders in the bank. Promises were made that if any money was payable under the guarantee, all the assets and other property of the bank would stand as

security for the advances, and, if the money owing, with the interest at 4 per cent., was not paid, the Colonial Treasurer was authorised to appoint a receiver, who would act as a liquidator. While these shares had currency, no dividend was to be paid without the consent of the Colonial Treasurer. One million of the two millions guaranteed was to be at the bank's disposal for use in its ordinary business, and the remainder was to be invested under the approval of the Colonial Treasurer. Until the guaranteed shares were called in and cancelled no dividend was to be paid to ordinary shareholders without the consent of the Colonial Treasurer, who was authorised to satisfy himself that any proposed dividend would not unduly affect the security of the colony in connection with the guarantee. The Colonial Treasurer was authorised to instruct the bank to call up £500,000, which was one-half of the reserve capital, within twelve months. The Act stopped the movement to remove the headquarters of the bank to London, and provided that they should be in Wellington, and the Government was empowered to appoint a president of the bank, and an auditor for the business outside the United Kingdom, while the Agent-General appointed an auditor in the United Kingdom. By an amendment of the Act in 1894, Parliament consented to the guaranteed shares being issued in the form of negotiable stock.

While the Government's action was the subject of conversation, and there was much praise, Sir Joseph Ward found that there were other circumstances surrounding the bank's affairs, and they were not of a satisfactory nature.

The Bank of New Zealand Estates Company was very closely associated with the affairs of the bank itself. The company owned large areas of land. In many places this land was suitable for closer settlement, but it was not worked to the best advantage. As the company was closely connected with the bank, the Government came to the conclusion that it should be dealt with, and that the two institutions should be separated, or, at any rate, that their relationship should be modified. At the same time, it felt that hasty action might do more harm than good. It therefore decided that a joint committee of both Houses should be set up to inquire into the position of the two

institutions, and to ascertain how they could best be separated, and how the earning power of the bank could be increased.

The Estates Company had been formed five years previously to take over the bank's "globo assets," which consisted of real estate, trading concerns, and other properties that had fallen into the bank's hands. Events showed that it would have been more prudent for the bank not to have formed the Estates Company, but to have called up the reserve liability of the shareholders, and in this way to provide the bank with the necessary working capital. The bank was practically the only shareholder in the company, and the separate existence of the company was purely a nominal matter, existing only in name. The shares of the company, appearing on the bank's balance-sheets, gave rise to misleading impressions, and allowed dividends to be paid when the bank was actually going from bad to worse every year. In the years before 1890, owing to the fall in agricultural produce, wool, and frozen meat, the company's properties steadily depreciated in value until they were no longer able to pay interest on the debentures that had been created. They therefore became a heavy burden on the bank, and in March, 1895, the combined balance-sheets of the Estates Company and of the Auckland Agricultural Company, in which the Estates Company held shares, showed a deficiency of no less than £1,764,383.

The investigations of the Parliamentary Committee showed that the bank, the Estates Company, and the Agricultural Company, although nominally three separate institutions, were one. The division was in name only; all the shares in the Estates Company were held by the bank, and the Estates Company held interest in the Agricultural Company.

The Committee had a difficult task in devising a way of separation. It had not only to separate the institutions, but it also had to safeguard the colony against losses, and, if possible, make it unnecessary for further applications to be made to Parliament. The Committee recommended that the whole of the freeholds, leaseholds, country runs or stations, stock and implements held in New Zealand by the three institutions should be sold to an Assets Realisation Board. It also recommended that £500,000 of the uncalled reserve liability of

the bank should be called up, and that the Government should subscribe £500,000 for preferential shares, giving the bank a clear capital of £1,000,000. In addition to that, the bank was to have the whole of the State guaranteed stock to the amount of £2,000,000 for ordinary use.

First class credit was necessary to insure the confidence of depositors and enable the bank to conduct the vast business connected with the trade and industry of the colony. The incubus of the Estates Company, which, under the existing conditions, had to appear on the bank's balance-sheet, and was a fit subject for attack and for injurious comments of opposing banking institutions inside and outside of the colony, had to be removed. It was important that the bank with which the Government dealt should have the confidence of the discount houses in London.

With the increased burdens thrown upon the bank by the two millions of additional stock and the readjustment of capital, it was necessary that the bank should have a very large addition to its earning power. The only way to do that so as to enable it to make enough profits to pay its way and sustain its credit was by purchasing the business of the Colonial Bank. Arrangements for the amalgamation of the two banks had already been entered into, but they had been dropped. Shortly after the banking legislation was passed in 1894, negotiations for the amalgamation of these banks began in earnest. Late in 1894, an agreement was arrived at. It was proposed to make an amalgamation, but not to purchase the Colonial Bank by the Bank of New Zealand.

One night in September this agreement was forwarded to Sir Joseph Ward. The next day he wrote a long letter to Mr. Seddon, in which he showed the difficulties he had to deal with and the trying time he had gone through. This letter states :—

“ Since the colony guaranteed two millions to the Bank of New Zealand, the whole matter has given me the greatest concern and anxiety, not so much on account of the guarantee of the bank proper, as on account of the position of the Estates Company. Attached to the bank as it now is, it will, in my opinion, render it impossible for the bank to extricate itself, even with the colony's guarantee, and must, if not dealt with now, call in the future for further substantial aid from the colony. If the company is left under the same control as

the bank itself, the duties of the president, auditor, and Colonial Treasurer will be greatly interfered with, and, indeed, I may add that in my humble opinion the Colonial Treasurer's life would not be worth living. To insure himself against the possibilities of disaster in the guarding of the two millions, he would require to know almost every detail of the way in which the two concerns, the bank and the company, were operated upon, otherwise the possibility of a loss in either being transferred or even absorbed by the other would be easy, but would be exceedingly difficult to detect. No president or treasurer would feel safe in assenting to the investment of the funds guaranteed by the State.'

He drew up a scheme for an amalgamation of the banks and for the separation of the company, but the banks would not accept the proposals he made. In 1895, therefore, Mr. Seddon and his colleagues were called upon to introduce further banking legislation. The danger was past now and the crisis was over, and the Government's critics gave themselves plenty of leisure to criticise the Government's action. The debates were of a stirring nature, and led to much delay in getting other measures affecting the bank through Parliament. In that year, however, the whole of the proceeds of the call of £500,000 estimated at £450,000, together with the original paid-up capital, amounting to £900,000, was written off, the full extent of the bank's position having been accurately gauged. Besides that, the Government rendered itself liable for another £500,000 in shares, and a similar sum was again called up from the reserve liability. An Assets Realisation Board was established to purchase all the assets of the Estates Company and the Auckland Agricultural Company for the sum of £2,731,706, which was the estimated value of the properties in 1895. Promises were made for paying the purchase money in debentures issued by the Assets Board, and any deficiency was guaranteed by the Government, which secured itself against loss on account of the guarantee, and if there was a deficiency the Colonial Treasurer was empowered to appoint a receiver, who would have the powers of a liquidator. The same Act, in accordance with the report of the Committee, gave the Bank of New Zealand power to purchase the property of the Colonial Bank. The Estates Company sold its properties, the Colonial Bank was purchased, and the Bank of New Zealand, recently saved from disaster, began an entirely new career, which has been favourable to itself, satisfactory to the shareholders, and creditable to the colony.

The bank went on its way for three years in full enjoyment of a State guarantee, and it increased its business year by year, so that it was not necessary to appeal to the Government again. In 1898, Parliament abolished the position of president, with the right of veto, and gave the Board of Directors a new constitution. The Board was now to consist of six members instead of five, four to be appointed by the Government and two to be elected by the shareholders, the State thus having the preponderance of voting power.

After passing through another period of freedom from legislation, the bank was brought before Parliament once more in 1903. The time when the £2,000,000 worth of State guaranteed stock would reach maturity was approaching. It would expire in July of the following year. It was generally known then that the bank had been doing an excellent business. The State, of course, had not been called upon to make good its guarantee, and had not incurred any actual expenditure. The bank was in a position to redeem the whole of the guaranteed stock issued under the Act that was rushed through Parliament on the night of June 29th, 1894. The bank also repurchased the £500,000 worth of preferred shares issued in 1895, which were cancelled by the new Act, and in their place the Government purchased 75,000 preference shares, fully paid-up, representing £500,000 new capital. These shares carry a preferential dividend of 5 per cent. and a right to share in profits with other subscribers up to 10 per cent., which is the limit of dividend that can be paid upon them. They give the State a permanent interest in the bank's affairs.

The transaction has been more than satisfactory from the start to the finish. The results have been magnificent. The Government saved the bank from bankruptcy, the colony from financial depression, and many firms and individuals from disaster. In doing that, the State has not been called upon to pay one penny, and it holds £500,000 worth of shares, which are now worth more than £1,000,000, and which may be looked upon as some return for the colony's promptness and courage in coming to the bank's rescue.

The institution is practically now a State-bank in all but name, with some restrictions. Its history since the State came to its assistance is an amazing one. The bare figures of its balance-sheets show the extraordinary progress it has made. Its net profits during the past five years have been :—

				£
1902	...	...	...	172,501
1903	...	...	...	195,590
1904	...	...	...	200,303
1905	...	...	...	253,930
1906	...	...	...	274,329
Total net profits in five years				£1,096,653

All through the banking legislation, which marks a distinct period in parliamentary proceedings in New Zealand, there ran a demand for the establishment of a State-bank pure and simple. The State-bank, like the Referendum and the Initiative, the women's franchise, the Elective Executive, and several other questions upon which there is much difference of opinion, has been with the colony for a long time. It has its friends and its enemies. It was on account of the long way the colony had to go towards a State-bank that a great deal of the opposition was offered to the passage of the emergency measure on June 29th, 1894. It was on that very account, on the other hand, that the measure received a great deal of its support. The State-bank question, in fact, has been quite inseparable from the banking legislation, and as the State became more closely connected with the affairs of the Bank of New Zealand, the friends of the State-bank movement rejoiced and its enemies grieved.

When Mr. Seddon submitted the new Bill in 1903, almost irresistible pressure was brought to bear upon him to have the connection between the State and the bank severed. Mr. Seddon, however, had determined that that would never be done with his consent, and he resisted all attempts in that direction. When he was taking up this attitude in 1903, his hands were strengthened by a round-robin, signed by 29 members of the Legislature, and forwarded to him by Mr. H. G. Ell, one of the members for Christchurch City, and one of the most enthusiastic supporters of a State bank. This document is as follows :—

To the Right Honourable the Premier and Members of the Cabinet.

GENTLEMEN,—

We, the undersigned, hereby place before you our opinion respecting the legislation dealing with the Bank of New Zealand, and beg to inform you that we will endeavour to have these views embodied in legislation :—

- (1.) That, as State control has proved such a success, the State should not cease its control, and should continue to be represented on the Board of Directors in the same proportion as before.
- (2.) That as the Bank has received, and is still receiving, material assistance from the State, besides enjoying a monopoly of State and local government business, we consider that the State should share in the profits in return for the monopoly of public business.
- (3.) That the bank should not be placed in a position to terminate its connection with the State.

A reply was received as follows :—

Prime Minister's Office, Wellington,
October 15th, 1903.

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of the letter signed by yourself and 28 other members of Parliament addressed to members of the Cabinet, and dated September 28th, intimating your opinions in respect to legislation dealing with the Bank of New Zealand. In reply I have to say that the matter is at present receiving the consideration of the Government. I beg to point out that the suggestions made are on the lines which, in several speeches delivered by me prior to the session, I submitted as being reasonable.

I have the honour to be

Your obedient servant,

R. J. SEDDON.

Mr. Seddon was never opposed to the principle of a State-bank. As a private member he frequently spoke in support of the proposal. He knew exactly what it meant and what it involved, and he always believed that it was something more than a fad. In 1889, when he was emerging from his parochial days, he felt that there was "something in it." It always seemed to him, he said once, that there was a good deal more in it than members seemed to think. He believed then, five years before he was called upon to virtually establish a State-bank, that the colony was drifting in that direction, owing to the Government converting its trust funds into "trading funds." He thought that the State might issue debentures bearing a certain interest,

and that the people of the colony would take those debentures up and pay the interest, feeling that they would be quite safe in having the security of the colony. That course seemed to him better than going to the extreme length of establishing a State-bank. He was in favour of the State issuing debentures in the colony at 5 per cent., and waiting to see what the result would be. He pointed out that if a State-bank was established in New Zealand it would have the goldfields as a field for its operations. In making this proposal, he was still thinking of the miners, who would get an increased price for their gold. Gold in most places in the South Island was worth £4 3s. 9d. or £4 4s. an ounce. The miners received from the associated banks only £3 16s. "That is why I support a State-bank," he said in explanation.

It is not likely that the agitation for a complete State-bank will cease. The supporters of the movement, who are fairly strong in the colony, believe that they can see the goal before them. They use the history of the Bank of New Zealand as an argument. They say that their next step will be to make that bank the sole issuer of notes, a privilege which is possessed by the Bank of France and other large banking institutions. At present, the Government cannot purchase shares in the Bank of New Zealand except by appropriation. There is no machinery for the purchase of the bank at present, and they will try to induce Parliament to supply this machinery.

CHAPTER XIV.

LABOUR LEGISLATION.

It has been possible in this account of Mr. Seddon's career to follow the history of the Liberal Party in the order in which important events have occurred, touching upon each in turn and in its proper place. With Mr. Seddon's appointment to the Premiership, however, there began an extraordinary period of legislative activity. Measure followed measure with astonishing rapidity, and a far-reaching policy in one department of public affairs ran parallel with an equally comprehensive and sensational policy in another department. These policy measures were largely experimental in their operation, and they had to be amended in almost every session of Parliament. It is, therefore, not easy to keep strictly to the general course of events during Mr. Seddon's Premiership. A better plan is to take each subject separately and briefly sketch its scope and the results it has brought about.

As the Ministry was generally known at first as a Labour Government, it seems fitting that its labour legislation should be placed at the head of the list of its achievements.

Nobody claims that no labour legislation was passed in New Zealand before the Liberal Party came into power in 1891. From its earliest days the colony has been of an experimental turn of mind, and among its very early enactments there are measures dealing with the conditions under which daily work is carried on. Those who left the Old Country to build up a new nation in the furthest ends of the earth brought with them new ideas and new conditions, and they frankly expressed a hope that the bad features of life in the country they were leaving would not be perpetuated. This may account largely for the readiness with which the experimental legislation of 1891-1906 has been accepted by the people of the colony.

It may also account for a great deal of the success achieved, as the people have shown that they are quite willing to give their hearty co-operation in trying anything that is likely to improve social conditions.

Although there was some labour legislation before 1891, it was of a crude character, and could not be made operative because its machinery was faulty. The idea was good, but the framers of the Acts lacked the practical knowledge required to make the measures effective, and, apparently, they did not take the trouble to seek expert advice.

X The year 1873 saw the first enactment regarding factories. It is the Employment of Females Act, and it was introduced by Mr. J. B. Bradshaw, who was the author of several measures to improve the conditions of the workers. Very little interest was taken in it by members of the House. The Bill was copied from a Victorian Act. It was of a precautionary character, and was designed to prevent abuses that had sprung up in Melbourne and Sydney. It affirmed the principle of the eight-hours day as far as women and girls were concerned, allowed no one to employ women or girls at night, gave them a half-holiday on Saturday afternoon in each week, and a whole holiday on Sunday, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, "and any other day set apart as a public holiday," without loss of wages; it authorised Resident Magistrates to appoint factory inspectors, and it provided for the proper ventilation of workrooms.

Parliament passed the Bill in a perfectly uninterested mood. There was practically no discussion on it, and it just slipped through and went on to the Statute Book to lay the foundation of the mass of factory regulations that have been brought into force since.

There were very few factories in New Zealand at that time, only 195 women and girls being employed in workrooms, and that fact accounts for the little interest it created. A few women and girls were employed in Auckland, Dunedin, Wellington, and Christchurch, mainly in making up clothing. What was most required at the time was a drastic measure to regulate the employment of children in the flax-mills. Boys and girls were

employed in the mills in large numbers and under conditions that should never have been allowed. There were several attempts to introduce Bills to place the conditions in the flax-mills on a better footing, but nothing definite seems to have come of these efforts.

The Act of 1873 provided that girls should not be employed before 9 o'clock in the morning, but in the following year that provision was altered so that the hour was fixed at 8 o'clock; the limit at which they could be employed in the evening was left at 6 o'clock. The eight-hours day was still retained, and factory legislation of later days was foreshadowed by a provision that all employers should forward statements to the Resident Magistrates' Courts showing the hours during which the women and girls worked. As far as can be gathered from the records, the Act made a marked improvement in the workrooms, "miserable shanties" we are told, "giving place to fine lofty buildings."

In those days, however, labour legislation was viewed with less favour than it gained later, and it was not long before the cry of the freedom of the individual was raised. There was only one individual in this case. It was a woollen mill, which carried on business in Otago. The mill was in a bad financial position, one-half of its shares being on the market at a discount. It asked that the Act should be modified, otherwise it would have to close its premises. Mr. Donald Reid, in whose district the mill had been established, introduced an amending Bill, which swept away the half-holiday and otherwise modified the Act in a manner that was favourable to the owners of woollen mills. Mr. Reid's action caused much indignation among the workers, and there began, probably, the first serious agitation in respect to labour legislation. Meetings were held in Dunedin and Christchurch to protest against Mr. Reid's action. At Christchurch the meeting was attended by "quite 300 persons," which was evidently looked upon as a large gathering. It was unanimously decided that it would be prejudicial to the best interests of the community to allow the hours of female labour to be increased or to allow night work to be substituted for day work. There were loud protestations by parents and guardians of children.

Mr. Bradshaw, Mr. Rolleston, and Mr. C. C. Bowen, the present Speaker of the Legislative Council, resisted the attempt; but they were not successful, and the amendment went through.

In other directions, however, the Act was extended, and boys, as well as girls, were brought under its provisions. No person under the age of ten was to be employed in a factory; children had to be employed on morning or afternoon shifts, or, if for a whole day, on alternate days; provision was made for meal times; and the Act did not apply to saleswomen, who, however, could not be detained for work after the closing of the shops.

This Act and its two amendments, with their crude provisions and their lack of details, were allowed to remain in force until 1881, when Mr. Thomas Dick, Colonial Secretary in Sir John Hall's Ministry, consolidated the law in a measure entitled the Employment of Females and Others Act. This Bill was passed with very little discussion and no amendment. It is a slovenly piece of work. One clause forbade the employment of any person under the age of twelve in a factory, and another allowed child-labour between the ages of 10 and 14. These two clashing clauses remained in that condition until 1884. In 1885 an amendment extended the hours of labour for women in fruit-preserving and fish-curing establishments and in printing establishments. It also allowed the selection of some other day than Saturday for the weekly half-holiday for women and young people engaged in factories.

It was not until 1882 that legislation was passed dealing with the liability of employers. In that year an Employers' Liability Act became law. It came from Mr. M. W. Green. He pointed out that there were many cases in which men were injured while at their work, and that they had no means of obtaining compensation for their injuries, even when they were the result of culpable negligence on the part of the employers. The measure was designed to protect the workmen. The Act was based on one in force in England, brought into operation two years previously, and it has been altered to meet the requirements of the colony. It was the first Act of the kind introduced into New Zealand. It was drafted very carefully,

several members of Parliament who practised as lawyers going through its provisions and comparing them with those in the English Act. The New Zealand Act gave workmen the right of claiming compensation for death or injuries received by the negligence of a fellow-servant, or sustained by accident in consequence of defective ways, machinery, and plant, or incurred in carrying out legitimate instructions. The workman lost his right to complaint, however, if he knew of any defect or negligence and concealed his knowledge, as it was held that such conduct was the action of a man who willingly incurred risk.

The Act was recognised as a completely new departure in the colony's legislation, and several members of the House said that it was evidently a measure that would give bare justice to the workers and place them on a much better footing. The Bill had its opponents outside of Parliament. The worst they said of it, however, was that it was Utopian in character, and would not work well. There was not a word said against it in the House, and it was so well received that Mr. Green thanked the members who had spoken, and he accepted the assistance of several members who promised to act as members of a Select Committee to consider the Bill in detail.

The colony first dealt with the complex question of payment of wages in an Act passed in 1871. It is the Contractors' Debts Act, and it allows a workman to obtain money due to a contractor who has failed to pay wages. It broke down owing to the sub-contracting that took place at that time. The Act, however, met with the general approval of the people as far as its principle was concerned.

In 1884 the Workmen's Wages Act was passed. It repealed previous Acts, remedied their defects, and made the position quite clear. Under it, a workman whose wages are unpaid for 24 hours might summon an employer before a Resident Magistrate and obtain permission to serve a notice of attachment of moneys on the employer's employer, and, on judgment being given in the workman's favour, the money attached, after seven days, became payable to the workman. The machinery for recovery was cumbrous. The workman often put in his demand

when the contract money had been paid in full, or even in advance; but it was an improvement upon its predecessors, and was in constant use for nearly ten years. In 1888 the Hon. A. R. Guinness, now Speaker of the House of Representatives, introduced a Workman's Wages Bill. It provided that wages must be paid within three days after the termination of the engagement or within a day after discharge in case of a worker being dismissed. This Bill, however, did not pass.

There were a few other measures dealing with labour in operation in those days, but, as has been stated, they were crude, and, in many respects, inoperative in practice. A Master and Apprentice Bill, for instance, was passed as early as 1865. It extended to New Zealand the laws of England dealing with relations between masters and apprentices. It provided for apprentices being taken on in the Government departments; it enabled destitute children to be apprenticed by charitable institutions; and it allowed householders, tradesmen, farmers, and others to take children over twelve years of age and have them legally indentured. This Act also was largely inoperative.

The colony did not provide for the registration of Trades Unions until 1878, when Sir Robert Stout, as Attorney-General in Sir George Grey's famous short-lived Liberal Government, introduced the first Trades Union Bill, which he saw through its stages and on to the Statute Book. In drafting his measure, he followed the English Acts of 1871 and 1876 closely. He brought in no fresh provisions affecting unions, and the only new features of the Bill were those that made it apply to New Zealand. It provided that certain actions should not be lawful, and that Trades Unions should be registered in the same way as friendly societies. The Grey Government had discussed this subject when it first took office, and it came to the conclusion that Trades Unions in New Zealand had a right to be placed on the same footing as similar institutions in England. Workmen, the Government argued, should not be prevented from selling their labour at as high a price as possible.

It must not be thought that this was New Zealand's first recognition of Trades Unionism. The principle had been recognised by Parliament when it passed the Law Society's

Act, enabling that society to pass rules for the protection of lawyers. Sir George Grey's Government took that as an affirmation of the principle of Trades Unionism. There was obviously no reason why a law that had acted upon a branch of business should not apply to men who were forming unions in the factories, workrooms, and other centres of industrial life. Several unions had been established in the colony; they were weak bodies, and their influence was small, but Sir Robert Stout and other members of the Government said that if they desired to be recognised as unions, the colony had no right to refuse legal recognition. In Auckland, Christchurch, and other centres, joiners, cord-wainers, engineers, and other tradesmen had united in self-protection, but they found that they had little chance of making anything like good progress unless they were able to pass such a measure as the one introduced by Sir Robert Stout. The Bill did not attract much attention, and was not opposed in any way. All members agreed that the request of the workers for protection was entirely reasonable, and several said that the Bill was desired by the colony as a whole, as it would enable associations of workers to approach employers of labour in a proper manner, and to satisfy their just demands.

This brief summary fairly represents the extent of labour legislation up to the advent of the last phase of the Continuous Ministry, from 1887 to 1890. During that time, quite a batch of labour measures was introduced by members of that Ministry, but Sir Harry Atkinson's Governments always took up a weak and hesitating attitude towards labour legislation, and none of those measures, which included an Eight Hours' Bill, a Shop Hours Bill, and an Employment of Females Bill, became law.

Several attempts have been made by private members to pass Eight Hours Bills. From the first foundation of the colony eight hours were generally regarded as a fair day's work, and there were few employers in the early days who asked for more. For some reason that is not clear, the principle always found enthusiastic supporters in Dunedin, Scotch immigrants to that part of the colony having stoutly maintained from the

first that the system should prevail in all their dealings, whether as employers or workers. The Rev. Thomas Burns, a nephew of Robert Burns, is given the credit for its introduction into Dunedin. Mindful of the overtaxed and underpaid labourers he had left behind him in Scotland, he assured his people on the "Philip Laing," as they voyaged out to the new land in 1848, that as far as he had any influence their day's work in Otago should consist of eight hours, and should be paid at 3s. 6d. or 4s. a day. To this promise, as almost the sole employer of labour in Dunedin at that time, he faithfully adhered, although another scale fixed by the New Zealand Company remained unaltered for more than a year until abandoned by the force of strong opinion.

Mr. S. D. Parnell, who resided in Wellington for many years and died there in December, 1890, at the age of 85 years, has some claim to the honour of being the first workman to establish the eight hours principle in New Zealand. He was a builder and contractor. He was a native of London, and left for New Zealand in 1839. He landed at Petone, which was then selected as the site of the capital of Wellington province, on February 7th, 1840.

In England Mr. Parnell had devoted much study to social subjects, and he was imbued with the idea that in the new country in which he had determined to make a home eight hours ought to be the measure of a day's work. On the voyage he became acquainted with Mr. G. Hunter, a fellow passenger. A few weeks after their arrival, Mr. Hunter sent for him and told him that he had brought out from the Old Country a large quantity of stores. Further supplies were coming, but he had no place for them. He therefore asked Parnell to erect a building for him. Parnell consented to do so, but as soon as he commenced he demanded that there should be only eight hours work a day. Hunter declared that the proposal was absurd and preposterous.

"There are eight hours for sleep, eight hours for labour, and men do require some little time for themselves," Parnell maintained; "therefore there must be eight hours for recreation." "That's all nonsense!" Hunter replied. "You



Government Buildings, Wellington, draped on the day of the funeral.



Rebuilding of Parliament Buildings, Wellington, New Zealand, on the site of the former Parliament Buildings.

must know very well that with us in London the bell rang at 6 o'clock, and if the men were not there to turn to, they lost a quarter of a day." "Very well," Parnell said. "I've plenty of work I can do for myself, and if you don't care to accept my terms I can't help you to put up your building." He turned and walked away. He had not gone far before he was called back, and was asked to go on with the work on the eight-hours principle. The little strike was successful. It could not have been otherwise, seeing that there were only three carpenters in Petone at that time.

Parnell set to at once, and engaged what unskilled labour he could find. "Don't forget," he said to the men, "that I've bargained for only eight hours a day; work to begin at eight o'clock. Mind you stick to that!"

The chief mover in the agitation for legislative recognition of the principle was Mr. Bradshaw, a resident of Dunedin. In three different sessions he introduced his Eight Hours Bill, and was supported by Mr. Seddon on each occasion. The Bill did hardly anything more than declare that eight hours should be a day's work, and 48 hours a week's work. It had only one clause, and it was introduced by Mr. Bradshaw in a few words.

"It's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of in my life," one member said when Mr. Bradshaw sat down, after moving the second reading in 1885. "It will come to this, that we won't be able to get a boy to clean our boots unless we enter into an agreement with him to do it." This member was afraid that if the House discussed the Bill seriously the whole country would laugh at it.

Sir Robert Stout, who was then Premier, supported the Bill on the ground that New Zealand was likely to become a manufacturing country, and that it was necessary to look after the physical well-being of the working classes. He said that it was surely not much to ask Parliament to simply declare what it believed should constitute a fair day's work. In that year, as in the previous one, the proposal was defeated. In 1886, Mr. Bradshaw was again before the House with his Bill. He said that the principle of eight hours a day was generally recognised

in the colony, but there should be something more; Parliament itself should say that when a man had worked for eight hours he had done as much as could reasonably be expected of him. Mr. Bradshaw again found a supporter in Mr. Seddon, who had lately had cases brought under his notice in which attempts were made to increase the hours of labour. He stated instances where men had to go down into the mines on the West Coast, expose themselves to water and dynamite-fumes, and take risks and dangers for eight hours, and their employers endeavoured to add an hour to their day's work. The employers' action had precipitated a small but irritating strike. Mr. Seddon always felt that a man could do justice to both himself and his employer in eight hours, and as there had been several attempts to break through the eight hours system, he was more firmly convinced than ever that the Bill ought to be passed. At the same time, he thought that it could not very well be applied to farm labourers and domestic servants. The Bill was again denounced as being "vicious," "intolerable," and "oppressive."

Mr. Bradshaw died in 1886, and Sir George Grey took up the proposal in 1887, when it was supported by Mr. Seddon and Sir Robert Stout. Sir George was not very enthusiastic in pressing the Bill on the House. It passed its second reading successfully, but had to be dropped. In 1889 it appeared in charge of Mr. R. M. Taylor, of Sydenham. It was received with more opposition than ever; it passed its third reading in the House, but failed to make any further progress. In 1891, Mr. W. P. Reeves introduced an Eight Hours Bill, but it also had to be dropped before it reached the Statute Book. In spite of all these determined attempts, the colony is still without an Eight Hours Act; the principle, however, is affirmed in a clause of the Factories Act, passed by the Ballance Government, and when Mr. Seddon introduced his Coal-mine Bill in the first year of his Ministry, he had a clause inserted making eight hours a day's work in a coal-mine.

In 1885 there was introduced, first into the Legislative Council and then into the House of Representatives, a remarkable labour measure, but of a different type from those that Mr.

Seddon and his colleagues took in hand. Its title was the "Threats and Molestations Bill." It was designed to deliver a staggering blow at Trades Unionism. It is stated that the Bill really had its origin in a coal-lumpers' dispute at Lyttelton. The provisions it contained could hardly have been more drastic. It provided for sending to prison for a term not exceeding three months any person who induced others to quit their work, or interfered in any of the ways usually adopted by unionists when strikes were contemplated or were in progress. It prohibited people from belonging to any temporary or permanent trade association or combination, and would not allow any fines imposed by such a body to be paid. Nobody was to be allowed to persistently follow any person from place to place, to hide tools, clothes, or other property, or to watch opposite any house or workshop. The Bill, in fact, which contained only half-a-dozen clauses, prohibited Trades Unionism and made "picketing" a penal offence.

It was introduced into the Legislative Council by Sir P. Buckley and into the House by Sir Robert Stout, who was Premier. Neither of those gentlemen, however, took a hand in drafting it. They took it up at the request of a member of the Legislative Council, who was well known to be opposed to unionism, and introduced it as an obligation to him. It was a copy of an English Act then in force. When it came before the House, Mr. Seddon, who expressed surprise at the head of the Government introducing such a Bill to the House of Representatives, explained that the English Act had been passed only after serious outrages had been committed. Nothing of that nature had taken place in New Zealand. To ask the House to pass a Bill of that description seemed to him to be asking it to legislate in the interests of capital against labour. He saw no necessity for the Bill, and he looked upon its introduction as an insult to the working men of New Zealand.

There was only a small number of members present, and it was in the very last moments of the session. The Bill, in fact, was the last business dealt with by Parliament in 1885. It was introduced without any explanation as to its provisions or effect, and had not Mr. Seddon been on the alert, scanning every proposal

with care, it would have quietly passed into law. When he had drawn attention to it, he was supported by Mr. W. Montgomery and Mr. Moss. Sir Robert Stout explained that he had not realised the scope of the measure, and it was withdrawn and discharged.

In accordance with its promises, the Liberal Government brought in several labour Bills in the session of 1891. It had hardly had time to prepare a large labour programme, however, and some of the schemes it proposed then were not sufficiently thought out, and had to be withdrawn until later sessions.

The first labour Act passed by the new Liberal Government was the Truck Act, which prohibits the payment of wages in goods or in any way except in money. No contractor is allowed to make reductions from wages on account of interest, no employer is to stipulate the mode of spending wages, which must be paid at intervals of not more than one month, if demanded; and no set-off must be allowed for goods supplied to the workman by the employer. It was stated that this Bill would bring hardships upon many workers, but the same statement had been made against nearly all labour legislation, and the framers of the Bill did not place much weight upon the objection. The Act, of course, was levelled at a serious abuse which had arisen in the colony, especially in large contracts, and which had grown to a large extent, workmen in some cases having to pay back nearly all their wages to their employer or his agents, or some store-keeper or other tradesman in whose business he had a personal or financial interest. The abuse was stopped as soon as the measure became law, on November 1st, 1891, and it is now agreed that the Truck Act stands out as one of the best labour Acts the colony possesses. It has a fitting position at the top of a long list of labour Acts passed by the Liberal Government.

In the same year the Employers' Liability Act was amended in several directions. The definition of the word "workman" in the old Act of 1882 was extended, and was made very comprehensive. It now means "any person, male or female, under or over the age of twenty-one, who, under contract with an employer, contracts personally to do any work or manual labour of any kind, whether technical, skilled, or unskilled, and whether

such contract is oral or in writing, express or implied." Seamen are included in the definition, but not domestic servants. There are special provisions dealing with remedies for injury to seamen. In hearing a case the Court is instructed to take into consideration the value of payments made by an employer to the person injured, and also payments made to an insurance fund. If a workman knows of a defect that leads to an accident, he is not deemed to have voluntarily incurred risk, but if a workman does not inform an employer that the defect exists, he cannot recover damages. No workman can recover damages if the accident is caused by his own negligence.

It has been stated that the Continuous Ministry introduced several labour measures in the last days of its life. Two of these, a Shops Bill and a Factories Bill, were the outcome of the Royal Commission appointed in 1889 to inquire into sweating. Neither of the Bills was passed, but a portion of the Factories Bill was taken up by the Liberal Government in 1891, and it became law. It did not go very far, and in 1894, after the country had declared its decision in regard to Mr. Seddon's Government and its labour policy, a more advanced Bill was passed. Quite a new departure in factory legislation dates from that time.

In 1901 Mr. Seddon's Government passed a consolidating Factories Act, which, it is claimed, is one of the most complete and perfect laws to be found on the Statute Book of any colony. The Acts passed before 1901 dealt almost exclusively with the protection of women and children, but the Act now regulates the working hours of men. It provides for payment for overtime. Women and youths cannot be employed for more than forty-five hours a week, except in woollen mills, where forty-eight hours are allowed, and if men are employed for more than forty-eight hours in a week they must be paid overtime.

Factory inspectors are constantly on the alert in all parts of the colony, with unlimited powers in regard to investigation and inquiry. All factories must be registered. Plans must be submitted of all new factories, and inspectors may have them altered to remedy defects. A small registration fee is charged in regard to factories, and the fee increases with the increased number of employees

A factory is defined as any room where two or more persons are employed in connection with a handicraft or in preparing or manufacturing goods for trade or sale. It includes bakehouses, buildings in which machinery is used for preparing articles for trade or for packing goods for export, and all places in which Asiatics are employed, even if only one of them is at work. The occupier is deemed to be one of the workers. No workroom is too small to come within the definition, and there are no bodies of employees engaged in factory work who do not come under the regulations.

A limit is placed on the overtime that may be worked. No man, woman, girl or boy can be employed on overtime in a factory for more than four hours at a stretch without having at least half-an-hour for rest and refreshment. Payment for overtime is fixed at a quarter more than the ordinary rate. There are strict regulations to prevent women, girls, and boys being subjected to wet or dampness or to the steam from hot water. They are not allowed to remain in workrooms at all during meal-time, except by special permission of the inspectors, and where more than four are employed a dining-room must be supplied. Girls and boys under fourteen years of age cannot be employed in factories unless permission is obtained. No girl under fifteen years of age can be employed at type-setting in a printing office; neither girls nor boys under sixteen can be employed in a room where there is any grinding in the metal trade or where matches are dipped; no girl under sixteen can be employed where salt or bricks or tiles are being made or finished; if she is under eighteen, she cannot be employed in connection with the melting or annealing of glass; and neither girls nor boys under eighteen can be employed in a room where mirrors are silvered by the mercurial process, or where white lead is made. Besides that, no girls or boys under sixteen can be employed in a factory in any capacity unless the proprietor obtains a certificate of the young person's fitness. This certificate is given by the inspector, who has to see that the youth is fit for the employment and has passed the fourth standard.

There are special provisions to prevent sweating in connection with work given out and done in the workers' homes. These are so stringent that sweating in the colony is practically impossible as far as factory work is concerned. One set of regulations prevents workers being employed without reasonable pay. Persons under twenty years of age must be paid at least 5s. a week for the first year, with an annual increase of at least 3s. a week until they are twenty years of age. The proprietor of the factory is allowed a week's grace in paying wages. After that, if the wages are not paid, he is liable to a penalty up to 5s. for every day during which the wages are unpaid. Meals cannot be taken in rooms where noxious processes are carried on. There are rules to prevent accidents from machinery and fire. The sanitation regulations, which are very drastic, are designed to protect the public as well as the workers.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION.—BOARDS OF CONCILIATION.

A tangled mass of diversity of opinion has sprung up around the scheme of conciliation and arbitration. It is the principal feature of the labour laws, the most important industrial experiment represented on the colony's Statute Book, and the most advanced step the colony has taken in industrial legislation.

It is good, it is bad ; it is successful, it is unsuccessful ; it is effective, it is ineffective ; it is beneficial, it is injurious—according to the standpoint from which it is viewed. With many men it is a cherished conception ; with many others it is a derided piece of empiricism. When it first came into operation, both industrial parties expected great things from it. On the one hand it would bring in a reign of industrial peace. Conciliation would take the place of the sour-visaged strike, and disastrous disputes would be superseded by honied words and compromises. On the other hand, it would kill industries, stifle enterprise, and chase capital out of the country, and the day that it became law would be as the day that came to lay the land waste.

The Act, as passed, establishes several Boards of Conciliation for industrial districts, and one Court of Arbitration for the whole colony. These two bodies are the principal features of the scheme. The Boards, which make recommendations, represent voluntary action. The Court, which makes awards, represents the principle of compulsion, and all the plenary and punitive powers of the Supreme Court. It has been described as the most powerful Court in the British Dominions. As far as its special functions are concerned, its powers are unlimited. All the ramifications of the colony's industrial life

come within its jurisdiction. Its scope has been widened in later years to include railway men, shopmen, clerks, farm labourers, and almost all wage and salary-earners. Great enterprises hang upon its awards, and its decisions directly or indirectly reach all classes of the community. By its operations prices are raised and lowered. There is hardly any corner of the social life of the colony that has not felt its influence. It deals with all questions relating to work done by any workers, and with the privileges, rights, and duties of employers and employés in any industry. The hours of work, the employment of children, the age, qualification, and status of workers, and the terms and conditions of their work, come within its jurisdiction. When it made its first appearance on the Statute Book, it boldly introduced itself, in the face of the accumulated prejudice of many years, as "an act to encourage the formation of Industrial Unions and Associations," and it did not attempt to hide the fact that its mission was to interfere between master and man and to enter into industrial disputes.

Mr. Reeves, its author, spent laborious days and weeks in sketching his scheme. The statutes of England, America, and Australia were searched for precedents. What was considered bad in them was thrown aside, and what was deemed good was taken, and was fused into the main idea. "This Bill," Mr. Reeves was once heard to remark, "has been drafted and drafted, and I have been so dissatisfied with some parts of it that I have altered it again and again."

The most effective opposition to the measure came from the nominated Upper House (the Legislative Council), but the feeling against it found loudest expression in the House of Representatives, where the doctrine of non-interference was strongly upheld.

An Arbitration Bill was drafted by Mr. Reeves as early as 1891, when the Liberal Government came into office. It was circulated amongst members, but the majority of them did not receive it with much favour, and as the Government was busy with other questions at the time it was not forced on to the House of Representatives. In the following year, however, Mr. Reeves brought down a complete scheme for adjusting labour

disputes between Trades Unions and Employers' Associations. It took no notice whatever of disputes between employers and bodies of men who were not legally associated. Mr. Reeves believed that disputes of that nature were not large enough to call for State interference. He could not see how an award would be enforced against nebulous clusters and mere shifting groups of units, and he provided that although an employer might be the unit on one side, only a union must be the recognised unit on the other.

The Act divides the colony into industrial districts. In each district a Board of Conciliation, composed of equal numbers of employers and workers, with an impartial chairman, may be set up. At the request of any party to an industrial dispute, the Board is to call the other parties before it, and, after hearing the case, to make a recommendation, which may or may not be accepted by the parties to the dispute. Each Board has full power to take evidence and compel attendance, but its decision is a recommendation, not an award.

If the recommendation is not accepted, either party to the dispute may appeal to the Arbitration Court, which is a tribunal. It consists of a president, who must be a judge of the Supreme Court, and two assessors. One of these is elected by associations of employers, the other by a federation of Trades Unions. The Court is unfettered by precedent and it settles its own procedure. Its awards have the same force as decisions of the Supreme Court. There are therefore many Boards of Conciliation, but only one Court of Arbitration.

The Act, as its first title announces, deliberately encourages workers to organise. At the same time it deprives them of the right to strike. "When, in obedience to the law," Mr. Reeves said, "they renounce striking and register as industrial unions, it does not seem amiss that they should receive some special consideration. Their exertions and outlay in successfully conducting arbitration cases benefit non-unionists as well as themselves, though the non-unionists have done nothing to help them. Non-unionists must get the same pay as unionists, and unionist strikes are abolished."

It was the compulsory clauses in Mr. Reeves's Bill that were assailed with the greatest vigour when the measure was introduced. Hardly any exception was taken to the Conciliation Boards, but the Arbitration Court was regarded with something more than dread. "Who but a lunatic," demanded one member of the House of Representatives, "would invest money in an industry in this colony if that industry is to be subject to the verdict of an irresponsible and presumably incompetent tribunal?"

Expressions of that nature found a ready echo from many members. "This legislation," they said, "will not tend to the conciliation of the classes, but to their estrangement." "The object is to resuscitate and re-establish unionism." "The Bill has been introduced at the dictation of unionists and under their guidance, and disastrous results must follow. It will throw back the cause of labour and of conciliation. It will bring about fresh strife and trouble. It will be the death-knell of unionism, and of the proper representation of the industrial classes in the struggle that will always exist between capital and labour. It is not conciliation; it is coercion; it is monstrous; it is a mischievous thing; it is a sham."

In the Legislative Council there were drawn up five "Reasons" why the compulsory clauses should be struck out. It was held that Courts of Arbitration, with compulsory powers, were not so likely to effect a settlement of an industrial quarrel as were Boards of Conciliation; the power of inflicting fines given to the Courts in the Bill seemed to be quite unsuitable for the settlement of trade disputes; Courts of Arbitration without the power of enforcing awards would resemble the Courts of Conciliation provided for in the Bill, and would, therefore, be unnecessary; there was reason to believe that the Boards of Conciliation would be more successful in the settlement of disputes if no Courts of Arbitration were in existence; if voluntary Boards of Conciliation did not go to the root of the conflict between capital and labour there was no likelihood of Courts of Arbitration, armed with such unsuitable powers as the infliction of fines, doing so; therefore, the Courts were not needed.

Three times Mr. Reeves prepared a complete and comprehensive Bill. Three times he withdrew it, twice in disgust at the manner in which it was mutilated by members of the Legislative Council, whom he, in a fit of tartness, denounced as "a little handful of domineering nominees."

In 1892 and again in 1893, the House of Representatives passed the Bill with the conciliation and arbitration clauses complete. On both occasions the Legislative Council cut out all provisions dealing with arbitration. But compulsion was Mr. Reeves's standard of faith, and rather than see the measure become law in a mutilated form, he reluctantly moved for its discharge from the order paper. The result of the general election in 1893 convinced the Legislative Council that the measure was desired by the country, and in the session of 1894, when it was submitted to the nominated chamber for the third time, the constitutional practice was adopted, and opposition was offered no longer. The Bill was passed with its compulsory clauses complete, but, although it was then placed on the Statute Book, it did not come into force until New Year's Day, 1895.

The scheme in operation has wholly fulfilled the anticipations of neither friends nor enemies; but it has justified the opinions of the former much more than those of the latter.

It was thought by its originator that most of the work would be done by the Boards of Conciliation. The Court was to be merely a stand-by. The powers given to it were so far-reaching that its constitution was regarded with fear, and it was thought that only in exceptional cases would its great powers be exercised. In 1894 Mr. Reeves said: "I do not think the Arbitration Court will be very often called into requisition; on the contrary, I think that in 99 cases out of 100 in which labour disputes arise they will be settled by the Conciliation Boards." He also, evidently, placed his faith in the Boards, which were to be the main part of the machinery. In the following year, 1895, however, after he had had a few months' experience of the attitude adopted towards the Act by a section of the employers, he modified this opinion and pointed out that the Boards were not an indispensable part of the scheme, as the Act could be worked without them.

Strangely enough, it is the compulsory portion of the Act that has withstood all attacks, while the conciliatory portion has partially broken down. After the Act had been in operation for some years, its critics brought the full force of their attacks to bear upon the Boards, which they saw were the weaker part. The Boards designed by Mr. Reeves were unpaid bodies. When the Legislative Council, in 1894, inserted an amendment in the Bill providing for the payment of members of the Boards, he opposed the proposal, and, as he was supported by the House of Representatives, it was struck out. He left the colony to go to London in 1896, and the Government then decided that members of the Boards should be paid a fee of £1 1s. for each day they sat.

This has helped to bring about the undoing of the Boards, as it placed a powerful weapon in the hands of their enemies. When the Boards were arraigned before Parliament and charged with having failed to discharge their duties, it was alleged that members stirred up strife with the object of bringing about disputes so that there should be more work for the Boards and more fees for the members. There seems to be some truth in the allegation as far as one Board at least is concerned, but it is unjust to make the charge general. Judge Backhouse, who was appointed by the Victorian Government a Royal Commissioner to inquire into the New Zealand scheme, says that it is clear to him that some members of the Boards entirely failed to appreciate their functions. In taking an active part outside in furtherance of the claims of one of the parties, he finds that they became partisans out and out, rendering their bodies Boards of Irritation rather than Boards of Conciliation. He believes that the adoption of these reprehensible methods is partly due to this "vicious system of payment by fees."

The workers have always favoured the Boards. They have not ceased to fight against any curtailment of the functions those bodies were given in the original scheme. Throughout the Act's operation, the workers have maintained that the Boards are highly desirable. They say that the very informality of the proceedings before the Boards is a high recommendation to men who have not been trained to appear before a

tribunal. They meet members of the Boards, and the representatives of the employers at the meetings of the Boards, man to man and face to face across the table. No lawyers are allowed without the consent of both parties. The chairman is not "Your Honour." Free and open discussion is not hampered by plaguey points of law and technicalities. Question is answered by question, and sometimes jest is intermingled with earnest. "Now then, Jack, haven't I always treated you well?" was the question a master hairdresser put to a hostile witness at a meeting of the Canterbury Board. In the Court, on the other hand, the President sits in his wig and gown, and the proceedings necessarily partake somewhat of the dignity and stiffness of an ordinary civil sitting of the Supreme Court. While employers declare that the Boards are worse than useless, workers are almost unanimous in maintaining that the Boards' work on the whole is well done, and that they are very necessary. An influential manufacturer at the head of one of the largest organisations of employers in the colony has frequently stated that the Boards have failed to conciliate. This opinion has been endorsed by many other employers. The employers' representative on the Court, at a sitting in Christchurch, said that the business of that tribunal was to undo a good deal of mischief done by the Boards. On the following day, however, when his statement was challenged, he modified it by explaining that he had meant to say that the mission of the Court was to make peace.

In the House of Representatives, the Boards in operation were denounced as unbusinesslike, mischievous, and sordid institutions. It was alleged that members prolonged cases in order to secure more fees. These extravagant attacks were courted by one of the Boards, which was composed of men who gained the respect of neither employers nor workers; but in districts where the members are carefully selected, the Boards and their decisions are above reproach.

After the critics had been hammering at the Boards for some time, they were asked to name a substitute. Amongst the most feasible suggestions was that there should be established in each district a Board of Experts, consisting of twenty-four

employers and twenty-four workers. Each party to a dispute would appoint one of these experts to watch its interests. The members of the Board, meeting together, would elect two more of their number, and these four experts, with a Stipendiary Magistrate as chairman, would be the body to deal with the disputes.

Another suggestion came from Mr. Justice Cooper, one of the Presidents of the Court, who considers that the Boards, as originally constituted in regard to representatives of the two parties, could be retained if there were chairmen with legal knowledge.

But the workers oppose these suggestions, and several others, which have been put forth by the employers. As to an Expert Board, it is urged that experts are almost sure to be partisans. The Court already has power to call in expert advice to help it out of a difficulty, and the Boards may take the same action. But even in that limited sphere, experts have not been a success. There was a dispute a few years ago in connection with the Christchurch tailoring trade. The Court, finding that a mass of technicalities was involved, called in the assistance of two experts. The Act provides that one of them must be nominated by each party. The experts in this instance were given full and explicit instructions by the Court to take the proposed log, deal with each item, and report to the Court what, in their opinion, was a fair allowance. The experts studied the items, which numbered about one thousand, for more than a month. When the report was presented to the Court, the employers promptly declined to agree to it and asked that it should be set aside. The plea they made was that their own expert was incompetent. The Court refused to set aside the report and accepted the experts' advice.

When a case affecting the bookbinders of Wellington was considered, the Court again sought guidance from experts. "I had to call in the help of experts," the President said later on, "but, unfortunately, they disagreed upon every item." The proposal to establish Boards of Experts, therefore, had to be thrown overboard.

As time went on, however, it became clear that the status of the Boards was not satisfactory. Something would have to be done to change their constitution or amend it. No opportunity of throwing discredit on the Boards was lost. As has been stated, they can summon witnesses and compel persons to attend their sittings. Employers, acting under compulsion, put in an appearance when cited, but many of them openly announced their intention of ignoring the recommendations, and of taking the disputes on to the Court, no matter what the nature of the Boards' conclusions might be.

An outcry was raised throughout the whole colony in 1901 when it was reported that no fewer than 400 employers in one trade had been summoned before a Conciliation Board. That body was denounced on all sides. It was asserted that the employers were being persecuted, and Mr. Seddon startled the colony by stating that the unions were "riding the thing to death." Later on, however, it was explained that at first only a few of the employers were cited. They insisted that the citation should be extended, and they forced the union to cite four hundred, ostensibly to bring all the employers into line, but really, it was reported at the time, to bring the Boards into disfavour.

A leading boot manufacturer complained that one of the Boards dealt with the bootmakers' log, containing hundreds of items, considered all the conditions submitted by both sides, took voluminous evidence, and came to a decision in about the same time that an ordinary man would take to read the documents submitted. The Court, he added, spent double the time over the dispute, although the differences had been narrowed down to three points. He therefore inferred that the Board had performed its duty in a perfunctory manner.

Dissatisfaction grew, until the opponents of the Boards succeeded in partially superseding them and brushing them away. A clause was inserted in the Act providing that a Special Board of Conciliation may, on the application of all parties to a dispute, be set up to meet an emergency or deal with any special case. These bodies have the same constitution and powers as

the ordinary Conciliation Boards, but all the members, except the chairman, must be experts in the trade in which the dispute has occurred, and when the dispute has been settled they vacate office. Up to the present time, no application has been made for setting up any of these Special Boards.

That was the first blow to the Conciliation Boards. The second blow came in 1901, and a pathway was then opened up for completely ignoring them. Previously, it was impossible for a dispute to reach the Court without first going through one of the Boards, and being referred from a Board to the tribunal. The amendment of 1901 allows disputes to be taken straight to the Court on the application of either party. This step was first taken in committee of the House of Representatives. The amendment was moved by a member who is a private employer of labour, at an early hour of the morning, after an all-night sitting, and it was carried by a thin and jaded House. As soon as the amending Bill was passed through committee, and was reported, Mr. Seddon expressed his deep regret at what had been done.

"This is bound to cause friction with the workers," he said. "It will create a feeling of resentment, because they will consider that they have now no opportunity to conciliate. It would have been wiser if we had provided that both sides should consent to a case going to the Court before the Board could be superseded." There was still some hope that the Boards would be saved from the slight the House placed upon them. The Legislative Council had consistently and strenuously opposed arbitration and supported conciliation. Conciliation had been practically struck out of the measure. Would the Upper House insist upon its retention, bringing forth five cogent "reasons," showing that the Boards would be "more successful in the settlement of disputes?" This was in Mr. Seddon's mind when the amendment was sent to the Legislative Council. He had bowed to the will of the majority in the House, but he felt convinced that the members of the other chamber would be consistent throughout and would refuse to agree to the sweeping change.

But those who once would have nothing but conciliation would now have nothing but arbitration. In the face of almost frantic appeals from friends of conciliation in the chamber, the amendment was passed, and the Bill was sent back to the House of Representatives. It was then that Mr. Seddon found expression for his feelings.

"It is not for me," he declared bitterly, "to attribute motives, or to say anything disrespectful of those who have practically abolished the Boards, taking upon themselves this grave responsibility. But I have asked myself: Is it a means to an end? Is there a desire to do away with conciliation and to force us to have nothing but the Court, with a view to ultimately repealing this labour legislation? Time alone will solve that problem. I do not say that those who differ from me on this point are wrong; but the departure is of a very serious nature, and if a conflict is provoked by forcing parties to the Court, the responsibility must be upon other shoulders, not upon mine, or upon the shoulders of those who represent labour in this Parliament. The only reason given for this important change is that there have been shortcomings in the administration of this part of the law. It is not a good reason, it is not sufficient."

It was not very long before the usefulness of the Boards, in one respect at least, was clearly demonstrated. The Court immediately became congested with a mass of business with which it could not deal. It travelled from one end of the colony to the other. While it was away in the north, scores of cases awaited its attention in the south. Unionists cried out against it for not dealing with its business more expeditiously, and blame was heaped upon it for a dilatoriousness that it did not display.

The discovery was then made that the Boards had performed very important duties. It is impossible to set down the results of their work in figures. A statement of the number of recommendations they made, and the number of those recommendations that both sides accepted, would not give an adequate idea of what they accomplished. They dealt with masses of conflicting evidence, narrowed differences, swept away

technicalities, and reduced chaotic disputes into compact cases, which could be grasped by the Court without the expenditure of much time and trouble.

No Board dared to refuse to hear any witness brought forward, for fear of laying itself open to a charge of being prejudiced against one side. In some cases, between 50 and 60 witnesses were called before Boards, the evidence of one duplicating that of another. When these cases were taken from the Boards to the Court, the numbers of witnesses were reduced to six or seven, whose evidence had been shown by the proceedings before the Boards to be important and essential. By means of the Boards, the Court was sometimes able to settle in an hour a case to which it now has to give days.

The proceedings of the Board have often been watched with close attention by men who have come to New Zealand to inquire into the working of the Act. A brief sketch of these proceedings will be interesting.

When a dispute has been referred to a Board, the Clerk of Awards for the district appoints a time for the hearing. Up to the present time, nearly all the citations have come from the workers. The union submits a statement of claim. In most cases the claim contains four prominent items, namely, wages, hours of labour, rate of overtime pay, and the proportion of apprentices that should be allowed to the number of journeymen. There are generally many minor points of difference, arising from the nature of the particular business carried on; but these are the items that evoke most discussion. In their general character, all statements of claim are very similar.

The leading delegate of the workers explains the position from the union's point of view, and urges reasons for granting the men's demands. He deals with the statement item by item. In touching on wages, he shows, sometimes by elaborate sets of figures, that the colony is prosperous, that the industry is flourishing, or at any rate, is in a better position than it was some years previously, and that the employers are able to pay higher wages than the existing rate. The hardships of the men are described, and if the trade is a dangerous one that fact is pointed out. The evils of boy labour are depicted. A plea

is put in for lads who are learning the trade, and who, it is urged, should receive proper instruction instead of being allowed to pick up information in a hap-hazard manner.

Then, item by item, the statement is gone through by one of the employers' delegates. He agrees to some of the items, but opposes others. He controverts the assertions of the other side. The industry, he affirms, cannot afford to pay higher wages; it is suffering from the effects of importations from other countries, where labour is cheap; foreign competition is keen; the local industry is heavily handicapped even under existing conditions; it cannot stand the strain of further disabilities; the workers are treated very well; their demands are exorbitant, absurd, or extortionate; and so on.

Witnesses for both sides are examined and cross-examined. This stage of the proceedings generally occupies a great deal of time, owing, to a large extent, to the duplication of evidence and the inexperience of the examiners. The chairman is not strict, and does not insist on an observance of the ordinary rules for taking evidence. When the evidence is concluded, delegates for both sides sum up, much on the same lines as those taken in addressing the Board.

The Board may at once sit privately to consider what recommendation it should make; it may postpone its recommendation pending a possible settlement of the dispute by arrangement; or it may appoint a committee of its members to endeavour to promote that object. If a mutual arrangement is come to, it is embodied in an "industrial agreement," which is forwarded to the Court, and is given the same force as an award.

But if all attempts to bring about an agreement fail, the Board takes the dispute in hand. It deals with each item separately, and makes a recommendation. It simply recommends the parties to adopt its decision as an equitable adjustment of the case. The recommendation sets forth the period during which the settlement proposed should remain in force. That period must not be less than six months or more than three years. If both parties accept the recommendation it becomes law. If either party is dissatisfied with the Board's recommendation

as a whole, or with any item, it can refer the whole case, or the disputed point, to the Court, and the Board's connection with the dispute is then at an end.

In practice, however, the Boards, useful though they proved themselves to be, have been thrust aside. They are still brought into requisition occasionally, but, as has been shown, they failed to do what was expected of them, and the bulk of the business that ought to go to them is now passed straight on to the Court. As some recompense for the treatment they have received, the opinions of the Board, by an amending Act, instead of being mere recommendations, are given legal force, in default of an appeal against them to the Court. The Boards, therefore, have in a way been made courts of first instance.

Before leaving the Boards it will not be out of place to quote the words of Mr. Justice Cooper at Christchurch, after an attack had been made on them. He said:—

“I would be very sorry if there was any impression in the public mind that the Boards are not a necessary part of the Act. They are very necessary. They are capable of bringing the men and the employers together, and in many instances they have succeeded in conciliating.”

Continuing, he said that he thought his colleagues would agree with him that the Canterbury Board of Conciliation had done very good work, and he, for his part, would be very sorry to see the Boards abolished. He spoke for his colleagues as well as himself when he said that the Boards were an inherent feature of the Act, and, as far as he knew, they had done their work faithfully and well.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION—THE ARBITRATION COURT.

A brief sketch has been given already of the Arbitration Court, with its judge and two assessors and its great powers. It had been in existence for a considerable time before it was called upon to attend to its duties. The Act received the Governor's assent in August, 1894, and came into force on New Year's Day, 1895, but no use was made of it until the end of that year.

Its passing into law, which is one of the most important events in the colony's industrial history, did not raise any enthusiasm whatever, even amongst those who have benefited by its provisions. Before it was passed through Parliament the interest shown in it was not nearly as keen as might be expected, and outside of Parliament it did not meet with as much opposition as was launched against several other labour laws of much less importance.

During the three years between 1891 and 1894 that it was in suspense, as Mr. Reeves has stated, it neither roused the least enthusiasm nor attracted great attention. There was plenty of political excitement in those days, he says, but not about the Industrial Arbitration Bill. "It did not awaken a tithe of the interest and energy expended over a Bill for closing shops on one half-holiday in each week. At the outset the larger newspapers either violently condemned or threw cold water upon it. After a while two or three came round to express guarded approval. A conference of employes from all parts of the colony, held in 1891, objected absolutely to the compulsory clauses and other parts of the Bill." In a letter addressed to Mr. Reeves, the conference stated that "the employed, quite as much as the employer, require to be protected against the theoretical measures of trade reformers and idealist

doctrinaires whose methods may be mischievous whilst their sincerity is not called in question."

This conference viewed with the greatest alarm the proposal to apply arbitration to the colony's State-owned railways, and it "most strongly objected to the whole principle of compulsion." In its eyes, in short, the Bill was "an unwarrantable interference with the freedom of the subject, and most prejudicial to the progress of trade and manufactures." "Freedom of the subject" was a phrase that was often used in the colony in those days, and it was one of the most effective means of raising feeling against not only the Arbitration Act but nearly all the other Labour Bills as they were placed before Parliament and the country.

In referring to these incidents in his "State Experiments," Mr. Reeves points with some degree of complacency to the fact that in 1900, after this "most prejudicial" law had been at work for nearly five years, the Canterbury Chamber of Commerce, one of the chief mercantile bodies in the colony, published the following remarks in its annual report:—

"Probably at no period in the history of New Zealand can we find such unmistakable signs of general prosperity as we have experienced during the past year. Our industries, almost without exception, have had their capacities taxed to the very utmost, skilled labour has been practically unobtainable, and, except in the case of one or two exceptional trades, there is every prospect of a continued demand for the productions of New Zealand labour. The number of workers employed in our factories in the year 1895 was 29,879. That number has steadily increased until, at March 31st, 1900, the number employed reached 48,938, being an increase of 19,059, or nearly 64 per cent. in five years. No stronger proof could be required of the forward march of our industrial army, and it is satisfactory to note that the industries that have benefited most by the wave of prosperity which we are now enjoying have been able to give to the workers higher wages and improved conditions of employment."

After the Act was ready to be put into operation, the unions showed some hesitation in bringing themselves under its jurisdiction. Then one came in and then another, until nearly all of them were registered as Industrial Unions of Workers under the Act.

In the latter part of 1895 the Federated Boot Manufacturers' Association, representing the boot-making trade in practically the whole of the colony, was registered as an Industrial Union

of Employers. It was the first masters' association to come under the Act. It was, and is still, the largest and most powerful body of master tradesmen in the colony, with the exception, of course, of the Federated Employers' Association of New Zealand, which embraces all manner of trades.

The boot-making trade was the worst sufferer by the strikes and quarrels of the past, and there was much bad blood between the masters and the workers. According to a manifesto issued in connection with a strike at Auckland in 1894, and signed by delegates from the union and the masters, "during the past seven years the relation between manufacturers and workmen has been one of constant antagonism and dissatisfaction, engendering much suspicion, ill-feeling, and a strong sense of injustice on both sides, until at last some solution of the difficulty was felt to be a necessity, and its possibility was hailed with delight."

In 1895, a "statement" under which the trade had been working was running out, and there were several differences of opinion, each side holding strongly to its own view of the position. For years the trade had never been free from trouble. The workers made demands at the most inconvenient times, and threatened to strike on the slightest provocation. In one city, a large boot-manufacturing firm in 1889 had its business thoroughly disorganised by a strike brought about on account of a change in the dinner-hour. It was not proposed to curtail the time allowed for dinner, but the hour was put further back in the day, and a strike took place. The whole policy was to strike or yield. Conciliatory measures were thrown to one side, until at last conciliation was not thought of and was not considered possible.

At that time, there was no federation among the employers, who were placed at the disadvantage of having to fight single-handed large and powerful unions. The position became so serious in 1891 that the boot-manufacturers throughout the colony federated, and then met the men on fair terms. The federation of the employers led to the adoption by them of a uniform statement of wages and conditions of labour. For a time the parties watched each other. Neither knew the

other's strength, and as one was afraid to fight and the other did not like to begin, there was a period of armed peace, which lasted until the Act was brought into use by mutual agreement, and the parties went first to the Conciliation Board for Canterbury and then to the Court. This dispute, the first of a long list settled by the Act, is interesting for several reasons.*

Statements were submitted to the Board by both sides. They are long and technical documents, and need not be dealt with here. The employers' statement, in its first two clauses, claimed the right of the employers to employ any worker, whether he belonged to a union or not, and set forth that there should be no distinction between organised and non-organised labour, both to work under the same conditions and to receive equal pay for equal work.

The employers regarded this point as of greater importance than any other in the statement they submitted. "It is not right," they said, "for the union to force its services upon us, any more than it would be right for an individual to walk into a shop and demand employment as a right. We submit that the employers invest their money in their businesses, and if the union's demands are adopted, their capital will be at the mercy of the workmen. If the views of the union are to prevail in this case, they ought to be given effect to in every shop in which workmen are employed. We submit that no employer could carry on business under such conditions. He must be able to select his own workmen. If he is limited, he will risk his capital without being able to control the operations carried on by it. No man would be foolish enough to risk his capital under conditions of that sort. We also submit that the rule demanded by the union would be very unfair to the large body of men who do not belong to the union. Unions, we contend, exist for the benefit of those who belong to them, and not for the injury of those who do not. It would be very unjust to deprive a man of his employment because he does not wish to belong to a union. The ten manufacturers belonging to this Association employ 1174 persons; of these 535 are

*A verbatim report of the proceedings and of the circumstances that led up to the case, together with the recommendations and award, is given in a book, entitled "The Boot Trade Disputes," by Mr. J. F. Arnold, M.H.R., published in Dunedin in 1897.

unionists, and 639 non-unionists, and yet the union demands that we should employ only union men. All persons joining the union must be proposed and seconded by two members. This means that the union has power to refuse membership. It also has power to impose fines which a man cannot pay, and may thus practically expel him. The union accepts no responsibility. It is not prepared to guarantee either the capability or the honesty of any man. In this respect we are entirely at the mercy of those people. Under one of the rules, it would be possible to ruin any manufacturer, as in brisk seasons the union could withdraw its men from our shops, and we would be unable to bring any men from Australia unless it first gave permission, which might be withheld. Summing up the matter, you might say that the union's argument is: 'Let law and learning, trade and commerce, die, but God preserve our union!'

The unionists, on the other hand, contended that, if freedom of employment was allowed to the employers, the union would be destroyed, in violation to the spirit of the Act. "The employers," they said, "ask for the right to employ or dismiss whom they like. They would take away the right of the employé to refuse to work with one who did not belong to the union. Men would leave the union if they could do so without losing anything. The employers, by demanding these clauses, must aim at breaking up the union. If no rule is made, the employer will favour the non-unionist in preference to the unionist. He will offer such conditions that men will be prevented from joining the union. It has been proved that wherever unionists and non-unionists have been compelled to work together, the result has been unsatisfactory."

The Conciliation Board felt that the question was too far-reaching for it to deal with, and referred it straight to the Court. The Court, however, ruled that the Board could not pick out any item and refuse to consider it, but must consider the dispute as a whole, and make a recommendation in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

The Board, after hearing evidence and argument, decided in favour of freedom of employment. Neither employers nor

workers were satisfied with the recommendation as a whole, but the former agreed to wave minor points and to accept it. The latter, however, after submitting it to all the federated unions, rejected it, and referred the disputed points, including freedom of employment, to the Court.

The case was ably and exhaustively argued for eight days, and on the ninth day Mr. Justice Williams announced that the Court had decided to give the workers the famous preference clause, which is included in most of the awards that have been given since, but not in all of them.

The first preference clause placed in an award is sufficiently interesting to be given in full. It is as follows:—

“Employers shall employ members of the New Zealand Federated Boot-makers' Union in preference to non-members, provided there are members of the union who are equally qualified with non-members to perform the particular work required to be done, and are ready and willing to undertake it. When non-members are employed there shall be no distinction between members and non-members; both shall work together in harmony, and both shall work under the same conditions and receive equal pay for equal work. Any dispute under this rule shall be decided by the chairman of the Conciliation Board for the district, under the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, or, if he shall be unable or unwilling to act, by some person nominated by him, not being connected with the trade, being a manufacturer or employed in any trade.”

In laying down this precedent, Mr. Justice Williams explained that the Court had been led to its decision by the fact that for three years the bootshops had in practice been filled solely with unionists. Laying stress on this, he indicated that in later cases the Court would give weight to what appeared to be the custom of each trade. It would reserve the right to decide each case strictly on its merits.

There was a battle over the preference question in the Legislative Council in 1898. In that year, an amending Bill was brought down somewhat late in the session. In order to facilitate its passage through the Legislature, it was introduced into the Legislative Council first. In the original Act, as stated before, the title set forth that it was “an Act to encourage the formation of Industrial Unions and Associations.” In the amending Bill, those words were omitted, on the ground that they might be taken by the Court as an indication that unions

should be encouraged. When the Bill was dealt with in committee in the Council, members went further. By seventeen votes to eleven, they inserted a clause setting forth that it was not lawful for the Court, by any award, to order that members of a Trades Union should be employed in preference to non-members, or to fix any age for the commencement or termination of apprenticeship.

In due course, the amending Bill came before the House of Representatives, which, by twenty-six votes to thirty-eight, rejected the clause. Otherwise, it accepted the Council's amendments, together with the alteration of the title.

On the Bill being sent back to the Council, that body dissented from the decision of the House in rejecting the clause, and it drew up the following "Reasons":—

(1) That the fact that both branches of the Legislature have agreed to amend the title of the Act of 1894 shows that the Act was intended to make provision for the settlement of disputes, and not for the purpose of enabling unionists to obtain preferential right of employment.

(2) That unionists form only a small proportion of the workers of the colony, and it would be unjust to those outside the unions that the Court should have this power.

(3) That the unions are trying to get the Court to fix a minimum age of apprenticeship, and it is desirable to declare that it was not the intention of the Legislature that the Court should have the power to fix a minimum age.

Managers appointed by both branches were unable to come to an agreement, but fresh ones, later on, agreed that the words "making it unlawful for the Court to order that members of a Trades Union must be employed in preference to non-members" should be struck out, and that the remainder of the clause should be retained. In that form, the Bill was adopted. Reference to the encouragement of unions was struck out of the title, but no direction was given to the Court that it should not give preference to unionists in making its awards. The Court, therefore, has pursued its original course, and has continued to grant unionists preference where it thought they deserved the privilege.

In several cases preference has been refused. In the North of Auckland timber-workers' dispute, it was refused on the ground that it was impracticable, owing to the sawmills being

scattered through the provincial district. The same attitude was taken up by the Court in regard to disputes in other districts. When the Auckland Carters' Union brought its case before the Court, the employers strongly objected to the demand for preference. The Court came to the conclusion that "in the special circumstances of this particular occupation, preference to unionists is impracticable where the general body of the employers is in opposition to the claim. We think that, where so many different businesses are involved, as is the case in this dispute, to restrict the freedom of employers against their will would be to unduly embarrass them in the conduct of their respective callings."

Wherever preference is granted, the Court makes stringent provisions that the union's doors must be open to practically all engaged in the trade who wish to join. There is absolutely no fear of a union establishing a monopoly in labour on account of its having been given the preference clause. Always, in dealing with this point, the Court asks for a copy of the union's rules, and examines them, to see if they contain anything that will lead to an unduly restricted membership. If there is any restrictive rule, preference is granted on condition that an amendment is made, and until the union complies with that condition, "employers may employ any person, whether a member of the union or not, but no employer shall discriminate against members of the union, or do anything to injure the union, directly or indirectly."

A preference clause inserted in a dispute in connection with the Thames gold mines in 1901 was specially framed so as to prevent any hardship to non-unionists. It was provided that all that a non-unionist desiring employment had to do was to apply to be admitted as a member of the union, and, upon payment of an initiation fee not exceeding 5s. and weekly subscriptions not exceeding 6d., the union must admit him. If it refused to do so, the employer was entitled to employ him. The general principle adopted by Mr. Justice Cooper is that where the members of the union form a large majority of the workers in the trade affected, unionists are entitled to preference.

After the Court had continued to insert the preference clause in its awards, in spite of the broad hint given by the Legislature in altering the Act's title, some employers in the colony decided to see if the Supreme Court could do something to help them to have the practice stopped. Although the Act specially provides that none of its awards shall be appealed against or reviewed on any account whatever, a firm of plumbers and gas-fitters applied to the Supreme Court at Christchurch for a mandamus to forbid the Court giving preference to unionists. Mr. Justice Denniston, presiding in the Supreme Court, dismissed the motion, holding that the Court could do as it thought fit. When the employers took the case to the Court of Appeal, they found that it was unanimous in supporting Mr. Justice Denniston. Mr. Justice Williams, as a member of the Court of Appeal, said that "the Arbitration Court has jurisdiction to decide a dispute in such a manner as it considers just. The Act confers no status on workmen who are not members of a union. It was not intended that they should be represented, nor did it contemplate that a decision giving preference to unionists should affect any legal right of non-unionist workmen. The non-unionist has no legal right to demand employment. He can sell his labour on what terms and at what prices he chooses, provided that he can find an employer able and willing to accept his terms; but he has no right to demand that there shall be an employer able and willing to accept his terms." It should be stated, however, that the Act now takes cognisance of unorganised work-people. It is provided that any non-unionist working for an employer bound by an award must also be bound by the same award, and is liable to be fined if he breaks it.

But preference is only one of the complicated controversial problems the Court has been called upon to deal with. On one occasion it was asked by a Miners' Union to abolish the contract system. It decided that it was not justified in making a radical change in the manner in which employers preferred to conduct their businesses, unless the party which desired the change proved by preponderating evidence that it was necessary in the interests of justice and was fair and equitable. The union, in this case, it was held, had not brought forward the required

proof, and the Court expressed an opinion that the contract system in the industry affected was not unfavourable to the workers.

It once refused to insert a clause in an award requiring employers to give reasons for the dismissal of men. It held that no worker was under an obligation to give reasons for a desire on his part to sever his relationship with his employer, and it was considered obvious that if the Court was to force employers to give reasons for the dismissal of men, it would be inserting a clause that hitherto had not been contemplated by either party.

The Court was told by the proprietors of Otago brick-fields that the demands of the men, if carried, would increase the cost of producing bricks by 4s. 6d. a thousand. It replied that the people of Dunedin were evidently getting their bricks at a price that would not enable the manufacturers to pay reasonable working expenses or obtain a fair margin of profit. It was shown that bricks were being sold in Dunedin at from 12s. 6d. to 15s. a thousand less than in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland, the other large centres in the colony, and the low prices in Dunedin were attributed to keen competition between the manufacturers. But the Court refused to let this fact weigh in giving an award. It was there, it said, to see that a reasonably fair rate of wages was paid for the class of work required from the worker in that trade. It therefore embodied in the award the scale of wages in force in Christchurch.

The Court was asked by the Waikato Coal-miners' Union to fix the shift-wages for miners at 10s. a day, instead of 9s. a shift. The point was disputed by the company that was working the mine, and the Court ordered it to produce its wages-sheets for each pay-day during the whole of the previous year. After a careful examination of those documents the Court came to the conclusion that the tonnage and yardage rates enabled a miner of average skill to make a net wage of about 9s. a shift. The rate, therefore, was not altered in the award.

An industrial agreement was entered into by the Waikato Coal-miners' Union and the Taupiri Coal Company. By that agreement there was a considerable increase in the heaving-rates, and the company consequently raised the price of coal.

But it seems that the whole of the increased return was absorbed by the increased cost of production. Later on the company's productions and sales for the year declined by 4000 tons. The Court concluded that the operations of the company would not permit it to pay a higher rate of wages and obtain any reasonable return for the capital invested. The representative of the union contended that the company could again raise the price of coal, so as to meet the demand for increased wages. But "we do not consider that the workers at present are unfairly paid," was the finding of the Court; "they would, no doubt, as one of their witnesses very honestly stated, like to get a little more if they could, but the circumstances of this industry do not, in our opinion, justify us in making any further increase in wages."

In 1901 the Court refused to increase the rate of miners' wages in the Auckland industrial district. The President said he was satisfied that, in spite of an increase of gold from the Waihi mine, the industry was languishing, and was in a depressed condition. He went on to say that many thousands of pounds had been sunk in improving the works, and no return from the extra money invested had yet been received. In many cases the money had been absolutely lost. In other cases, the position was so critical that, unless additional funds were provided for continuing development in the hope of payable results being obtained, companies that were employing large numbers of men would have to "slow down," and the men employed would be thrown out of employment. The conditions were already sufficiently unfavourable, and if the Court, by its award, increased the expenses by one-sixth, as proposed, the chances of further funds being forthcoming would be destroyed. "This Court, in our opinion, is not justified in increasing the rate of wages so as to destroy, or, in a great measure, cripple, an industry upon which many workers now depend for their livelihood, and in which many individuals have invested money. We are satisfied that the mining industry, as a whole, in the Hauraki mining district, is in a very critical condition, and that the Court is not justified, unless very cogent reasons are established, in adding to the present expense necessary for the further development of the industry."

The Court has been asked to exclude an undue number of youths, and to limit their number in proportion to the number of adults in almost every occupation that has come under the Act. The proportion is generally stated at either one youth to three adults employed, or one to four. In delivering an award in the grocers' dispute in Wellington in 1902 the President said: "We know of no sufficient reason that can justify us in limiting the number of youths to be employed in a grocer's shop. There are some occupations where it is advisable to limit the youths in number. But there are other occupations where no such limit is either reasonable or necessary, and it is our duty to see that the avenues for suitable work are not closed to the youth of the colony. We owe a duty to the boys of the community, as well as to the adult workers of the colony, and that duty we must perform to the best of our ability."

The Court further holds that if boys are debarred from obtaining suitable employment in trades from which they should not be excluded, a wrong is done to them, and the difficulties surrounding the bringing-up of a family are greatly increased. The interests of the colony, in its opinion, demand that the youths of the colony must not be shut out from legitimate means of earning a livelihood.

It is not necessary to continue quoting cases here to show the vast range of the Court's work, and the problems it is called upon to solve.

One feature that stands out very prominently is Mr. Reeves's wisdom in providing that the President shall be a Judge of the Supreme Court. This is another of the original proposals which met with great disfavour, but which, in practice, has been proved to be successful. The Judges of the Supreme Court themselves were strongly opposed to the idea. When the Bill was going through its first parliamentary stages, Sir James Prendergast, Chief Justice, on behalf of all the Judges, wrote to Mr. Reeves, as Minister for Justice, begging that the proposal to appoint one of their number President should not be carried out. His Honour said that their time was fully occupied, and that they specially objected to the imposition upon them of duties that were not judicial.

It is now admitted without any reservation that the Judge's legal training is invaluable to the Court. If it was not for his presence, attempts would probably have been made to bring the Court into contempt. At first the President had repeatedly to check actions that had that tendency. "No Judge appointed merely for the purpose of the Act," Judge Backhouse, of Victoria, said, "would be accepted; the head of the Court must be a Judge of the Supreme Court actually taking part in the work of that Court."

It has been stated before that there is a wide difference of opinion in regard to the effect of the Act on the colony's industries. Its opponents have given instances to show that its influence has been harsh and bad for trades upon which it has operated. It must be admitted, however, that much of the ill-will displayed towards the Act in these years finds a source in the prejudice created at its birth. Almost every unprejudiced investigator of standing who has come to the colony to see it in operation has spoken in its favour.

The most exhaustive inquiry was made by Judge Backhouse, and he reported to the Victorian Government, under whose instructions he visited the colony, that "the Act, notwithstanding its faults, has been productive of good. It has prevented strikes of any magnitude, and has, on the whole, brought about a better relation between employers than would exist if there were no Act. A very large majority of the employers of labour whom I interviewed are in favour of the Act. Only one did I meet who said out and out 'I would rather repeal it and have a straight stand-up fight,' and he, in a letter, has considerably modified his statement."

A Royal Commission on Factories, sent to the colony from Victoria, praised the Act highly.

Within the colony, a prominent member of the Canterbury Employers' Association, a deep student of all questions touching the relationship between labour and capital, and an employers' representative at one of the largest disputes the Court has held, has said that he did not think that any employer in New Zealand would willingly revert to the method of settling disputes by strikes and lock-outs. "Every

employer would admit that peaceful settlement by arbitration was preferable. It was always a risky experiment to put an untried weapon into inexperienced hands, and allowance must be made for unexpected casualties. There had been casualties, but not more than might reasonably be expected. If they viewed the results of the Act, they might feel fairly satisfied with them. At any rate, if they looked abroad and saw what was being done in America and England, they ought to conclude that they were better off under the Act than other people were without it."

Mr. G. Blackwell, who is managing director of the largest woollen mill in the colony, and is another man with wide experience of the Court, in representing the Canterbury Employers' Association before the committee of the House of Representatives in 1900, said that the association was thoroughly in accord with the principles laid down in the Act. If the amending Bill then before the House was amended in the directions suggested by the association, it was strongly of opinion that it would be impossible to conceive of a more useful measure, properly administered, that would prove of such immense benefit to all sections of the industrial community. "There is no antagonism now," he concluded, "whatever there may have been in the past; we desire to co-operate in making the present Bill a workable measure."

The federated boot operators and boot-manufacturers have now been before the Court three times, referring their troubles to it each time that an award ran out. On the last occasion, in 1901, at the conclusion of the case, the President of the Court complimented the delegates from both sides on the manner in which they had conducted the case. He said that the Court sat for the purpose of dealing in the most patient and exhaustive manner with the questions submitted, and with an earnest desire to bring the parties to a mutual agreement, if possible. The Act was capable of being worked in the interests of both employers and employés, and was productive of great good. If the Court lost sight of the central feature of the Act—the mutual good-will which should exist between employers and workmen—and attempted in any way to deal with the system in

a spirit not contemplated by the Legislature, it might do great harm to both sides. It was the Court's desire to do as little as possible to disorganise the conditions of trade in the colony. At the same time, the Court felt that it was there to protect the workmen on the one side and the employers on the other side. It should do justice to all parties and disorganise as little as possible the numerous industries that existed in the colony. Speaking from his own knowledge of the working-classes, he could say that they were not unreasonable, though he believed that they desired to get what they thought was reasonable for their own interests, and sometimes asked too much. The employers, many of whom had sprung from the working-classes, and knew their conditions, would not, he thought, meet the employés in an unreasonable spirit, if they had in their minds the one idea, that the interests of both were to be mutually conserved for the good of the community and of the particular persons engaged in the trade. That was the principle which should actuate both employers and employés.

Mr. T. Woods, a union delegate, in reply, said that it had always been the ambition of the unions to bring about good feeling between the employers and the workers. Mr. A. H. Cooper, another union delegate, thanked the employers' delegates for their courtesy. Each side, he said, had conducted its case in a conciliatory spirit.

Mr. J. A. Frostick, President of the Boot-manufacturers' Association, said that whatever the Court accomplished, it had assisted in bringing about that excellent feeling which had been referred to by Mr. Cooper. No matter what award was made by the Court, if the men would thoroughly co-operate with the employers in competing with the importations, the local industry would ultimately succeed.

In this way, the Court, and the Act as a whole, have earned the colony's respect and appreciation.

One part of the scheme has not been so successful as was anticipated, but the partial breakdown of the Conciliation Boards has not led to the loss of the conciliatory principle. The Court has taken upon itself the duty of conciliating. It would rather conciliate than compel. It is not only a Court of

Arbitration, an ordinary Court of Law, and a Court of Appeal, but also a Court of Conciliation; and the conciliatory element is predominant. In the settlement of a dispute in Christchurch between the Sheepowners' Union and the Shearers' Union, which threatened at one time to disorganise one of the large industries of the colony, the Court undertook the functions of a Conciliation Board. By its intervention, a disastrous quarrel was averted, and an agreement was come to which, apparently, at the time, satisfied both parties.

The Court's proceedings have often been stopped in the course of hearing a dispute to allow the parties to meet in conference. On several occasions, the President has asked representatives of the parties to meet him privately in his room, so that he might, by his advice and legal knowledge, help to bring about an amicable settlement. In many instances these conferences are quite successful; and when that is so, the agreement is entered in the Court's records as an award, and is given the full force of a judicial decision.

The tribunal that was expected to be a tyrant has proved to be a mediator. There are hardly any limits to its powers; but it is as conciliatory as it is powerful, and it leaves no stone unturned to bring parties together without the intervention of the law.

The Court's constant affirmation of the principle of conciliation is one of the discoveries in respect to the scheme's operation. It has shown that both conciliation and arbitration are integral parts of the scheme, and that they may go hand-in-hand, and, indeed, ought to do so. New Zealand would have found conciliation without arbitration a yielding reed to lean upon in times of industrial strife. Had Mr. Reeves listened to those critics who wanted to strike out his compulsory clauses, the scheme would have been a complete failure from the start. It is only in the iron-bound compulsory clauses of the Act that finality is reached.

If the Act has not helped the colony's progress, as has been alleged, it has not retarded it. Since the introduction of the Act, New Zealand has experienced no strikes or lock-outs, except of a very insignificant character, and the

colony's industrial progress has been uninterrupted and unprecedented.

It is not claimed that the revival of the old prosperity in 1895 and the following years was mainly due to the operations of the Act. A claim of that nature would be absurd. There is plenty of evidence, however, to support Mr. Reeves's contention that the Act has saved employers from strikes and dislocation of trade, and has increased the spending power of labour, and has therefore had a share in bringing about the colony's well-being. As Mr. Reeves points out in reply to his critics, it has not broken down, or become detestable, or been an obstacle to the revival of industry amongst the people with whom it is in constant use.

CHAPTER XVII.

OTHER REFORMS.

Other labour laws and general reforms passed by Mr. Seddon's Administration cover so much ground that it is not possible to do more than refer to them briefly in this work. He personally introduced over 550 Bills into the House of Representatives; 200 of them passed that branch of the Legislature, and over 180 stand to his credit on the Statute Book. It will be seen, therefore, that even a list of his enactments would take up much space. In many cases the measures he took in hand were not his original schemes, and attempts had been made to pass them before; but he watched the advance of public opinion, and when he realised that the time was ripe he lost no time in giving the people what he believed they desired. He made measures his own, remodelled them, and successfully piloted them through their stages, so that they now stand as his. In the same way he dealt with schemes that had already been in operation in the colony, consolidating the laws relating to them, bringing them up to date, and making them applicable to the colony's changed conditions. New Zealand's labour laws, as they are now in use, are so numerous that they occupy a thick octavo volume of 500 pages, with small print.*

Throughout the first few years of the Liberal Party's term of power, there were many bitter struggles over an Act regulating shopping and the system of employing shop-assistants. This movement, which began in Parliament in 1891, was practically the first attempt of the kind in the Australasian colonies. Mr. Reeves, who knows more about the struggles over labour legislation in those days than anyone else, says that it cost more

*"The Labour Laws of New Zealand," with an Introduction by Mr. Edward Tregear, Secretary for Labour.—Government Printing Office, Wellington.

trouble and friction to pass the Shops and Shop-assistants Act than to pass any of the other dozen or so of labour statutes that were its contemporaries, including the famous Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The opposition to the shopping law was largely political, which accounts for a great deal of its bitterness. He says that the party opposed to labour measures picked out this one as the most promising battle-ground, and it was not until after an infinite amount of wrangling, spread over five sessions, that the substance of the Bill was at last allowed to be enacted. It has been the subject of lawsuits, of innumerable public meetings, and of oceans of discussion.

In the first place, the Act puts a stop to the absurdity of shops remaining open to all hours of the night, keeping assistants tied to their work when they ought to be resting or taking recreation; but compulsory closing of shops at any hour is not insisted on unless under certain conditions, each trade being allowed to settle its closing hour by a vote of the majority of those engaged in the trade. Shop-assistants are not allowed to work more than fifty-two hours a week or more than nine hours a day, with some exceptions. All shops must be kept clean and must be well ventilated. A weekly half-holiday is compulsory, but each town may choose the day of the week to be set aside. Sitting accommodation must be provided for women, and there is a special clause in the Act stating that they must be allowed to avail themselves of the accommodation at reasonable intervals during the day. They are not to be dismissed, and their wages are not to be reduced, because they sit down, unless it is proved that they have done so to an unreasonable extent.

The employment of young people at very low rates of wages is guarded against by a provision that no one can work in a shop for less than 5s. a week for the first year, with an annual increase of 3s. a week until twenty years of age is reached. Overtime must be paid in all cases. The occupier of a shop is not allowed to receive a premium for the employment of an assistant.

Offices must be closed at 1 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 5 p.m. on other days. An office-assistant is not allowed to be employed in an office after half-an-hour after closing time, but

there are several exemptions under this clause. A set of clauses is provided to deal with the sanitation of shops and offices. The inspectors appointed under the Act have far-reaching powers, and there are severe penalties for breaches of the provisions or even attempts to evade the restrictions placed upon unfair shop-keepers who are likely to take advantage of their employés.

It has been found impracticable to make the Act apply to shops and offices without reservation, and there are "exempted trades," such as fishmongers, fruiterers, and confectioners. One of the latest additions to the Act's provisions states that no shop-assistant can be employed in the business of any shop before 4 a.m. in the case of bakers, butchers, and milkmen, or before 7 a.m. in any other case. By a special provision, made in 1905, Parliament agreed that workers might be employed till 11 o'clock on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, and chemists' assistants residing on the premises are allowed to supply medicine or surgical appliances outside of the hours of business defined by the Act.

Nearly every town in the colony, apart from the discussion on the principle of the Act, has been torn by a difference of opinion as to the day selected for the half-holiday. The choice rests between Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. Wednesday and Thursday seem to be the favourite days, mainly on account of Saturday being the market-day for small farmers who reside near all the large towns in the colony. At 1 o'clock sharp, shops in the town put up their shutters and lock their doors on the statutory half-holiday, and the town, to all outward appearances, gives itself up to rest. The half-holiday proposal was opposed at first as an unwarrantable interference with the liberty of the subject. There is no opposition to it now, and there are very few people who do not commend it as a satisfactory provision for the health and convenience of a large section of the public. The assistants are given relief from their daily work, and the shop-keepers lose nothing, as the business which would have been done on the half-holiday waits and comes again on following days.

There is an Act which provides that workers shall be compensated for accidents. Formerly, a worker who suffered from an accident had not only to bear the risk and pain of an accident, but also the loss of wages, and he had to meet the medical expenses. It was argued that he had to do this in order that other men might make profits. The cost of an accident is now borne by the business itself as one of the legitimate expenses of carrying it on. But it is recognised that too heavy an expense might fall suddenly on an employer owing to his having to pay a great deal of money in compensation for accidents, and provision has therefore been made by the Government Accident Insurance Act for insuring employers against the risk of paying compensation. Several private companies in the colonies also undertake these risks.

Another Act prevents workers from being victimised by fraudulent or unfortunate contractors. Under this Act a person who has worked on any land or building has a lien on it. The lien can be exercised only under restrictions and for a limited sum of money; but it gives priority of claim for wages against other claims, and allows the worker to take legal proceedings to recover his wages before the property is disposed of or alienated. Mr. Seddon, in his Mining Act, gave the miners special powers in this respect. Women and boys are not allowed to be engaged in or about coal-mines of any description, and many regulations have been made to protect men against the dangers of blasting operations and working in foul air.

In a case of bankruptcy, wages or salaries have a claim before other debts. It is the same in regard to the winding up of a company's affairs. No judge or magistrate is allowed to make an order attaching any workman's wages, and wages below £2 a week cannot be hypothecated for debt. A workman can be sued for debt in the ordinary way, but a particular creditor cannot step in before others and seize wages in advance before they are earned. Mr. Seddon specially safeguarded the wages of coal-miners.

To prevent an abuse that was once very prevalent, an Act passed as early as 1881 declares that no wages or payments of any kind for services can be made to workers in an hotel. There

is an Act to regulate the conditions under which work on the gum-fields is carried on. Shearing sheds on farms, runs, and stations all over the colony are inspected by factory inspectors. The shearers must be supplied with proper sleeping and other accommodation. If no provision is made, or if the accommodation is not sufficient, an inspector serves the owner with a notice setting forth what is required, and if the notice is not complied with the owner is brought before a magistrate and fined. Servants' registry offices are strictly supervised, and steps are taken to prevent unscrupulous agents from exploiting those who deal with them. Every registry office must be licensed, and books and records must be kept and be thrown open to inspection. The proprietor of a registry office is not allowed to take in servants as lodgers; neither he nor any member of his family may have any interest in servants' lodging houses; and each application for a license must be accompanied by a certificate of good character.*

The Labour Department, with bureaux in all parts of the colony, takes a prominent place in the administration of the labour laws. The establishment of these bureaux was urged strongly when the last Conservative Ministry was in power by several of the liberal associations that had been formed then. Mr. Reeves, however, states that the idea first took practical shape in the first year of the Ballance Administration. In May, 1891, he says, a deputation of Wellington members of Parliament waited on the Premier and asked that something should be done to relieve the congested labour-market and deal with the Wellington unemployed. A suggestion was made to one of the Premier's colleagues, who was in the room, that Government officials should be used to furnish reports from country districts where there was any demand for workmen. The hint was taken, and the first Australasian Labour Bureau, which was soon made a department, was established. Mr. E. Tregear, who was well known to members of the Ballance Administration

* This short account of the scope of labour legislation is condensed from Mr. Tregear's introduction to the "Labour Laws." The enactments deal with labour legislation as it stands on the Statute Book at present. Most of the Acts were brought in by the Liberal Party, but labour provisions were in operation before 1891, as explained above.

as a sympathiser with the advanced legislation it was proposed to initiate, was placed in charge of the new department, and has continued to administer its affairs. Mr. Tregear's instructions from the Government were:—To compile statistics concerning the condition of labour generally; to establish agencies for reporting the scarcity or overplus of workers in particular districts; to transfer such workers from overcrowded localities to places needing labour; and, generally, to control all industries for the physical and moral benefit of those engaged therein.

As time passed, the scope of operations was largely extended. The department is one of the busiest in the public service. It has agents in every town, police constables representing it in the small country centres where there are no regular agencies. Its principal object is to send the unemployed out of the cities to the places where work is available. In a way, the bureaux are public servants' registry offices, at which no fee is charged. A labourer, or worker at any trade, can seek employment through the nearest bureau, and an employer who requires assistance can use the bureaux in the same way. In the large centres, the agencies are sometimes kept busy for days at a time receiving applications and bringing together men who want masters and masters who want men. For several years employers held aloof from the department, as they held that it was established not for them, but for the workers. Now, however, it is gaining their confidence, and they are making good use of it. The department also collects vast quantities of information in regard to the industrial occupations of the people, with a view to improving the relations between employers and workers; and it publishes a monthly periodical, popularly known as the "Labour Journal," which contains much useful information.

In 1895, a new branch of the department was established for the purpose of providing employment for women out of work. The results of this experiment have not been encouraging. At first the branch was largely used by women and girls in search of employment, but the response on the part of employers was discouraging. In later years,

when it became difficult to obtain domestic helps, more situations were offering than there were applicants to fill. In 1901-2, for instance, 631 employers applied for servants, and the branch only placed 219 women and girls. It was decided at the end of 1904 to close this branch, as the small number of servants who applied did not justify its further existence.

Mr. W. P. Reeves was the first Minister for Labour, and he remained in office from 1891 to 1896. When he went Home, in the latter year, Mr. Seddon took the portfolio, and held it until his death. From the date the department was established until Mr. Seddon's death, it helped 45,084 men to obtain employment. These men had 84,631 dependants, and the department claims that it has given timely and practical help to 129,715 persons. The following table gives particulars of the department's operations in this direction :—

Year.	Total.	Married.	Single.	Dependants.	Private work.	Government Work.
1891-92 ...	2,593	1,054	1,539	4,729	1,730	863
1892-93 ...	3,874	1,808	2,066	7,842	2,518	1,356
1893-94 ...	3,341	1,836	1,505	7,942	1,019	2,322
1894-95 ...	3,080	2,007	1,023	8,883	894	2,136
1895-96 ...	2,871	1,880	991	8,424	708	2,163
1896-97 ...	1,718	1,084	634	4,719	652	1,066
1897-98 ...	2,035	1,163	872	4,928	544	1,491
1898-99 ...	2,115	1,178	937	4,759	638	1,477
1899-1900 ...	2,147	1,115	1,032	4,471	486	1,661
1900-1 ...	3,124	1,326	1,798	5,432	519	2,605
1901-2 ...	1,830	713	1,117	2,747	396	1,434
1902-3 ...	3,704	1,492	2,212	5,934	580	3,124
1903-4 ...	2,860	777	2,083	3,085	1,216	1,644
1904-5 ...	3,130	953	2,177	3,425	1,960	1,170
1905-6 ...	6,712	2,027	4,685	7,351	1,929	4,783
	45,084	20,413	24,671	84,631	15,789	29,295

The State in New Zealand has more power, is more inquisitive and interfering, and more insistent on its rights and privileges, in agricultural pursuits than in any other department of the colony's industries. The first Dairy Act, passed in the second year of the Ballance Administration, established a standing army of experts and inspectors, who carry out a thorough system of inspection and investigation. They possess

enormous powers. Their objects are to protect the public against impure food, help the farmers by advice, and raise the standard of the colony's produce on foreign markets, chiefly by a system of grading, which affords to the buyer a Government guarantee of quality. Dairy schools are held, experimental farms and stations are conducted, and means are taken in all directions to place the dairy industry on the best possible footing. The Department of Agriculture is one of the most important in the public service and its sphere of operations is extended almost every year.

State control is a prominent feature of the policy inaugurated by Mr. Ballance and carried out by Mr. Seddon. It has been applied in many directions, some of which are entirely new and rather novel. State-ownership of the railways and of telegraph and telephone systems excites no comment in the colony, as it is looked upon as the proper kind of ownership, and a suggestion that these public services could be better managed by private enterprise would be received with ridicule. In 1901 Sir Joseph Ward, as Postmaster-General, took a bold step by adopting the universal penny postage system. It was the first universal penny post introduced by any country in the world. It was estimated at the time that the colony would suffer a loss of £80,000 a year, but the business increased so rapidly that the loss was found to be only £34,000. In 1895 the number of letters posted in New Zealand was about 40 per head per annum; by 1900 the average was 49. The introduction of the universal penny postage sent the average up to $64\frac{1}{2}$; and now it is between 70 and 80. Sixpenny telegrams, introduced by Sir Joseph Ward in 1896, represent another reform that is highly appreciated by the public.

It was Mr. Seddon's endeavour to extend State control in many other directions. This policy gave rise to much criticism when he started on that part of his career which is marked by his Premiership, and he had to fight hard for the principle. Latterly, the right of the State to step in and take part in the affairs of individuals, competing with them and taking a share of their businesses, has been generally admitted by the people.

One of Mr. Seddon's most notable actions in this respect in recent years was the establishment of State coal mines. In 1901, feeling that the time had come when the State should supply cheaper coal to the people, he induced Parliament to pass his State Coal Mines Act. It allows the Government to mine coal-bearing country, first to meet its own demands for coal, and then to supply coal to the public in the ordinary way of business. The Act was in operation for several years before the Government took full advantage of its provisions by placing coal on the market. State coal is now being sold to the public in both Wellington and Christchurch from depôts established by the Mines Department. There are two mines worked by the State. They are both in the West Coast district, one being at Seddonville and the other at Point Elizabeth. Mr. Seddon's principal argument when he was urging Parliament to allow him to establish these mines was that private enterprise was not meeting the colony's demands for coal. By that means he disarmed those of his opponents who said of this proposal, as they had said of all others which went in the same direction, that it interfered unnecessarily with private enterprise. There had been several coal famines, in which prices rose to a high figure, and he said that this, clearly, was a case in which the Government could interfere without being blamed for going too far in the paths of advanced Socialists. Large quantities of coal were imported from Australia, the value sometimes amounting to £90,000 in one year, and he thought that that, also, should be checked.

The proposal was not a new one to Parliament, and he had little difficulty in having it passed into law. The Act gives the Government power to set up a complete coal-mining concern, with managers, engineers, agents, and other officers; to acquire buildings and plant; and, in fact, to carry on mining operations in exactly the same way as a private company would do. The Government is allowed to acquire other coal mines, taking over private businesses and fulfilling private contracts. If the profits from the State-owned mines are more than 5 per cent. the price can be reduced to the consumer. The results of the

State's operations have been a considerable reduction in the price of coal.

Mr. Seddon set up a State Fire Insurance Department, which goes hand-in-hand with the State Life Insurance Department established by Sir Julius Vogel in 1869. The department has entered into keen competition with private life insurance companies that do business in the colony, and it has been the means of greatly reducing the rates of premium. The department, in 1906, has been in operation for only a year, but it is firmly established, and, being carefully managed, is likely to become one of the most popular and flourishing departments in the Government's charge.

The Public Trust Office was established as far back as 1872, nearly a decade before Mr. Seddon entered politics, but during his Premiership its field of operations was considerably enlarged. The office is designed mainly to afford, at low rates of commission, a secure and convenient resource for persons who reside in New Zealand or another country, and who desire to form a trust or appoint an agent or attorney in the colony, and who may be in doubt as to the choice of a representative. Another of its objects is to relieve those who may be appointed trustees of property in the colony, or who, after having accepted trusts, may be unwilling or unable to continue the administration. The Public Trustee may be appointed a trustee, an executor, an agent, an attorney, or an administrator of an estate, and he is entitled to act as administrator on his own initiation in cases where persons have died intestate. The good faith of the administration of the department is guaranteed by statute, and the colony is pledged to maintain the integrity of funds obtained from estates and invested by the office. The State, in fact, gives its guarantee against loss from investments in bad or insufficient securities, and against loss from delay in the investment, and it guarantees that the interest, the rate of which is fixed by the Government, shall be paid regularly and punctually, free from all charges by the office.

The Public Trustee of New Zealand never dies, never leaves the country, never becomes involved in private difficulties, and is never distrusted. He is probably the best trustee in the

world. His powers are much larger than those of private trustees, and he is allowed to do many things that no other trustee could do without an order from a Court.

A notable departure in the system of municipal rating was made in 1896, when Mr. Seddon's Government had a measure passed to give local bodies the option of levying their rates on the unimproved value of the land. The proposal originated in New Zealand in 1894, when the Invercargill Borough Council, on the motion of Mr. J. A. Hanan, decided to ask the Government to frame a Bill to bring the system into operation in the colony. Sir Joseph Ward introduced the subject into Parliament several times, but, although the proposal was repeatedly adopted by the House, it was rejected by the Legislative Council until 1896, when it passed both branches of the Legislature, and became law. It is left to the local bodies themselves to adopt the system, and there is provision in the Act to enable them to return to the old system of rating if the new one is not considered satisfactory after three years' experience. A proportion of ratepayers in any district may demand that a poll shall be taken on the proposal to rate on the unimproved value, and if a bare majority of those who vote is in favour of the proposal, it has to be put into force. Seventy-eight polls have been held in the colony, and the system is now in operation in a large number of districts, including the cities of Christchurch and Wellington, where, apparently, it has given satisfaction. Only four attempts have been made to go back to the old system of rating, and each attempt has failed. Mr. Seddon brought about other municipal reforms, notably by establishing a residential qualification under the municipal franchise, and by increasing the rating-powers of county councils and road boards.

When he first went into the Ministry and took charge of the railways, they were controlled by three commissioners, appointed by the Government. This was a scheme put into operation by Sir Harry Atkinson's Government. The idea was to remove the railways from the region of political control. Mr. Seddon found that that did not suit him at all. His views clashed with those of the commissioners at every turn, and the quarrels that took place were the talk of the whole country. In

1895, he had the offices of the commissioners abolished, and the Government resumed control. During the ten or eleven years that have elapsed, the business of the Railway Department, which has been mostly in charge of Sir Joseph Ward, has increased enormously. Mr. Seddon and Sir Joseph, from the commencement of their administration, laid down the policy that the railways must first be treated as adjuncts to settlement. They did not wish them to earn large profits so much as to secure benefits for the people by giving settlers a cheap and convenient means of transporting the produce of the farms to the markets. Any surpluses gained after paying 3 per cent. on the capital cost of the lines have been returned to those who use the railways in cheapened freights and increased facilities. The wisdom of this policy is proved every year. About £680,000 has been returned to the users of the lines by means of reduced freights. Ordinary and suburban passengers, holders of season tickets, delegates to conferences of religious bodies and friendly societies, pupils of technical schools, judges attending agricultural shows, and competitors at gatherings of rifle associations and other bodies are amongst those who have benefited by reduced fares. Lime used by farmers for manuring farm land is carried absolutely free. To relieve the congestion of the cities and enable workers to live under more healthful conditions, workers' cheap tickets are issued on the suburban lines near the four large centres of population. These tickets are available for one outward and one homeward trip a day and for use by trains that arrive at their destinations before 8 a.m. The prices of the tickets are based on a uniform rate of 2s. a week for distances up to ten miles. Large numbers of these tickets are used, and the concession is highly appreciated by the workers.

To Mr. Seddon, railways were always the principal means of settling the country. He had an undying faith in the saying of an English writer that "next to a prolific soil and the possession of other great natural resources, no adjunct of material progress is so generally important, and exercises so vital an influence on national characteristics, as the growth of the railway system," and he would have added to those remarks that no railways are

worth much to a country unless they are built, owned, and managed by the State. In spite of many disadvantages, attributable largely to the roughness of the country through which some of them have to run, the State-owned New Zealand railways have realised profits nearly sufficient to cover the total interest payable on the money borrowed to construct the lines. There is now a net revenue of about £720,000 a year, equal to a return of over 3 per cent. on the capital invested. The passenger traffic has an extraordinary elasticity, increasing by several hundreds of thousands a year.

When the railways were given into Mr. Seddon's charge in 1891, the Midland Railway Company was dawdling along with its work of uniting the east and west coasts of the South Island. Construction by a private company clashed with his idea of State-ownership. He was also impatient at the delay. The company's capital was insufficient for the work it undertook, and it was obvious that the contract would never be completed by the company. The colony had assisted it largely by giving it several concessions. When the time for completing the contract expired in January, 1895, only about one-fifth of the moneys required for the construction of the line had been spent. Besides the delay, 5,000,000 acres of Crown lands were locked up. In opposition to popular feeling, Mr. Seddon stepped in and took possession of both the completed and incomplete portions of the line, and Government workmen have been engaged on the work ever since. The company made a claim of £1,800,000 against the Government. The hearing of the case spread over five years. It was taken from an Arbitration Court to the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Privy Council, but each tribunal found that the company had no claim and that its inexcusable delay and wilful breach of contract justified Mr. Seddon's action in assuming Government control.

In 1905 Mr. Seddon added another item to the list of benefits he had conferred upon the working classes by bringing into operation a scheme for erecting workers' dwellings in the suburbs of cities. He had given municipalities the power to do this. Several of them had made half-hearted attempts, but nothing resulted from their efforts, and he decided that it was

the duty of the Government to undertake the responsibility. Municipalities in New Zealand are not in a position to do what is desired. Large sums have to be expended in purchasing land and erecting the houses, and the municipalities have other ways of spending their money. The fact remained, however, that the Legislature intended that suitable houses, which could be obtained at a reasonable rental, should be erected for the workers, and the law had been allowed to remain a dead letter.

On making systematic inquiries into the conditions of the workers in recent years, Mr. Seddon found that although wages had risen, and the conditions under which the people lived were much better than formerly, the workers' position on the whole had not improved as much as he expected it would and as much as he thought it ought to. His inquiries led him to conclude that in some parts of the colony the cost of living had increased as much as 33 per cent., and he met with many cases in which quite one-third of the workers' earnings was paid for rent. He could never be led to see how the colony would recede from the progress it had made, and he said that with the increase of population, which, he argued, meant increase in land values and increase in rents, it was necessary to check the tendency to make living for the worker harder as the colony went into more prosperous times.

State-owned workmen's dwellings have now been erected near some of the principal centres. It remains to be seen what effect the scheme will have on rents generally. Mr. Seddon had great faith that it would stop the upward movement of rents in cities, and he confidently asserted that those who occupied the dwellings would sometimes save as much as 7s., 8s., or 10s. a week. When it was stated that he was doing too much for the working classes, he replied that with the rise in rents there would be a demand for a rise in wages, and if he was able to bring down rents he would be helping the employer and the capitalist as well as the worker. It was consideration for the worker's health, however, that had most weight with him. "The more ventilation there is in a dwelling, and the more comfort a man has in his home," he said, "the better work he is able to do, and the more content he becomes. In comfortable

circumstances, a man has an inducement to stay at home; and in some of the slums and wretched tenements in which men are now forced to exist with their wives and families, on account of the high rents, things are anything but comfortable." Every worker's home has a bathroom, and proper means of ventilation. These dwellings are disposed of by the Government on a weekly tenancy or by lease for 50 years, with the right of renewal. Every applicant for the right to occupy a dwelling has to satisfy the Land Board that he or she is a worker—that is, "a person, male or female, who is employed in work of any kind or in manual labour, and who, at the time of application, is not in receipt of more than £156 a year, and is landless." For weekly tenants the rent is fixed at the rate of 5 per cent. on the capital value of the dwelling, in addition to the insurance and rates. The payments on account of the leases are on the same basis, but they are made in monthly instalments. The lessee may acquire the freehold, but this is hedged round with several conditions. He can pay the capital value in cash any time after 25 years from the date of the lease; he can make monthly payments extending over 32 years, at the rate of 8 per cent. on the capital value, or monthly payments extending over 41 years at the rate of 6½ per cent.; or he can proceed by insuring his life in the Government Life Insurance Office for the amount of the value of the dwelling and for either 25 or 32 years, the property passing to him when the insurance falls due.

In 1895 Sir John McKenzie had an Act passed to secure homes for the people, and to prevent these homes from being mortgaged or sold for debt or other reasons. It preserves homes for men and their families who might otherwise find that through adverse circumstances they had lost the property they once possessed. A home up to £1500 in value may be registered under the Act. As soon as that is done the property becomes the home of the family during the life-time of the man or woman who registers it, and it can be neither mortgaged nor leased. The idea was not a new one even twelve years ago. It has been successfully applied in the United States, Australia, and other countries, and its success has also been very marked in New Zealand.

Another notable enactment was brought before Parliament by the Hon. R. McNab.* Its title is the "Testator's Family Maintenance Act," and it makes provision for setting aside wills in cases where property has been disposed of in such a way as to leave a wife, a husband, or children destitute. Several cases of this nature had occurred in New Zealand, as in other countries. In one case, property valued at £20,000 had been willed away from a widow, who was left destitute, and had to depend upon the bounty of her sons and daughters, to whom the whole of the property was left. Mr. McNab did not seek to follow the system adopted in Scotland, where a man is not allowed to dispose of certain portions of his estate, but he said: "Before a man disposes of his property, he must first carry out his obligations; we must see that he does not leave anyone who has a claim upon him destitute and dependent on the State for maintenance." Although the Act is very far-reaching, it contains only five short clauses. A wife, husband, or child left destitute can apply under it to the Supreme Court for an order to be made granting the applicant a portion of the estate, and if the Court is satisfied that the applicant has a just claim, it is empowered to issue the order at once.

Mr. Seddon was Minister for Education for three years, and in that time he did a great deal to improve the position of teachers, and to introduce modern methods. During the thirteen years of his Premiership he took an active part in educational work. He realised that if New Zealand wished to keep pace with the industrial progress of other countries, it would have to adopt a system of technical instruction. In 1900 he introduced into the House of Representatives the Manual and Technical Instruction Act, which has given an impetus to technical instruction in all parts of the colony. "My desire," he said, "is to place the youths of this country on an equal footing with the youths of other countries. If our industries are to be a success, and if our education is to be complete, we must adopt these measures." The passing of that Act is the most important step taken by New Zealand for the advancement of manual and technical

* Mr. McNab took the portfolio of Minister for Lands and Agriculture in Sir Joseph Ward's Ministry, formed after Mr. Seddon's death.

instruction. He encouraged higher education by extending the scholarship system.

In 1905, twelve months before he died, he was able to give practical expression to his sympathy with the colony's school teachers. In that year, when he was Minister for Education, he submitted to Parliament a teachers' superannuation scheme, which is embodied in an Act of Parliament.* He looked upon school teachers as something more than Civil Servants, working day after day for a salary, and apart from his sympathetic efforts to improve the condition of a class of public servants, he felt that it was necessary in the interests of the colony to maintain a high standard amongst all teachers of the young.

"Those who have studied the position, and have gone into it," he said, "will come to the conclusion that the children of a country will be to a great extent what the teachers are. If the teachers are of good moral character, with high ideals, and realise the great responsibility that is cast upon them, then in morals and in bearing you will almost see the reflection of that fact in the children, and, therefore, I say that we have devolving upon us the great responsibility of seeing that our teachers receive an adequate remuneration. They should not be kept at the miserable remuneration that they have received in years gone by; and, contrasting the altered conditions and the increased cost of living, although we have made, during late years, a large increase in teachers' salaries, I do not hesitate to say that to-day the salaries of our teachers are not commensurate with their responsibilities, and are not enough to maintain them in that position which all well-wishers of our country would like to see them in."

His sympathy always took a practical shape, and when he turned his attention to the Maoris, he took prompt steps to place them in better circumstances. In 1898 and 1899, he, with the Hon. J. Carroll, Native Minister, accompanied Lord Ranfurly, who was then Governor of New Zealand, to the King Country, where they met the chiefs and leading men of the tribes in that part of the colony. Large areas of native lands had been sold, and the Maori race was decreasing so rapidly that it seemed to be doomed. Mr. Seddon attended many gatherings of the Maoris, and at all of them he was heartily welcomed. At Waihi, Huntly, he met Mahuta, the Maori King, and other chiefs of the Waikato. The following speech by Rawhiti, an influential

* The Teachers' Superannuation Act, 1905. Details of the measure are given in a speech delivered by Mr. Seddon in the House of Representatives on July 21st, 1905.

native of Waikato, shows the pleasure his visit gave to the Maoris:—

“A greeting! A welcome! A greeting! Welcome hither the Premier, the head of the Government and the Parliament of New Zealand. Come hither with your colleague and companions. We offer them and you, and your wife and children, O Premier, a hearty welcome to Waikato. We bid you come and see the remnant of the Maori people, who are here assembled in response to Mahuta’s invitation that we should meet you and our friends at this place. Come and see us face to face, even as you have met other gatherings of the Maori race on your way hither. Our hearts are exceedingly rejoiced and filled with gladness at your coming to see us personally in your capacity of Premier of our islands, Aotea-roa and Te Waipounamu. Come hither, Premier Seddon, that we may greet and make you all welcome while tarrying with us, coming back as you do from England after taking part in the Jubilee of our gracious Queen. We are very grateful at your coming amongst us, and how much greater will our rejoicing be if you can satisfy the longings of our hearts by granting the earnest desires of the few remaining members of the native race, who are living here in sorrow and suffering under the laws enacted by previous Governments! We, therefore, pray you to consider favourably the grievances which afflict the Maori people, and to save our bodies from these evils.

“The hearts of the women and children, the young and the old, are full of gladness at your coming here among us this day, so that you may see the two races assembled side by side in honour of your visit, and to accord you a united welcome in the name and under the protecting shadow of our gracious Queen. Let this gathering be a token of the love the two races living in New Zealand bear to one another.”

He explained to them the provisions of a measure that had been prepared, and told them that he would not allow them to become landless:

“After giving this question years of attention, I say that it is necessary now that we should stop the sale of the remaining lands, for if we do not do this, the native race will continue to decrease in numbers rapidly, and before very long most of those remaining will become a burden on the community.

“Nothing has caused my heart to bleed more than to find so many natives in the South Island practically landless. The Europeans have disagreed upon some of the questions of the policy of the present Government, but in respect to our native policy, I hold that no Government has done so much for the Native race as the present Administration. And here I must not forget to do justice to a great man who has passed away. I refer to my former chief, the late John Ballance. He was ever a firm friend of the natives, and the great success that has attended our efforts is owing to this. We have always consulted you, we have reasoned with you, we have asked you to advise the Government, and we have not applied force. In this way confidence is begotten, and the greatest sympathy exists between the races. You have as much right to be consulted as the Europeans have; that is the reason for my being here to-day. While I am now leaving you, my heart will continue with you. I hope that every

happiness will attend you, that your numbers may increase, and that you may live in amity, contented and happy, side by side with the Europeans of this colony."

In 1900, he passed the Maori Lands Administration Act, which prevents the Maoris from pauperising themselves by selling any more of their lands, and allows the Government to advance moneys to the Maoris to make roads and improve their lands in other ways for their own use and occupation.

Mr. Seddon has been the centre around which the fighters in the great temperance agitation have moved during the past thirteen years. He passed three licensing Acts, the first in 1893, the second in 1895, and the third in 1903 and each called forth all his skill and determination.

The temperance movement has never entered into party disputes. It has taken its leaders from both sides of the House. Its vote goes to itself, and in general politics it divides its favours, but leans more to the Liberals than to the Conservatives. Mr. Seddon used his influence to keep it in that position. To many New Zealanders it is the end-all of reform. To him it was only one great movement among many; and he did not like to see it, at the general elections, over-shadowing other questions, which he considered more important. He was a kind of buffer between the fierce contending leaders. He took a middle course, which pleased the extremists at neither end of the question, but which, he believed, was what the colony as a whole desired. "The Seddon Government," he told the temperance leaders and the representatives of the liquor trade, "is independent of both of you, and we are here to do what is right and just." Behind the clamorous extremists he saw the "moderates," and he legislated for them. It is a "give-and-take" policy, as he himself described it. He did not feel that he was called upon to join the temperance crusade, but he believed that it was his duty to give effect to the desires and aspirations of the people as far as he could ascertain the direction in which they went.

"I know that I have no friends in connection with this Bill," he said in 1903, "and that I shall have no thanks, but perhaps the curses of both sides; but I am prepared to stand

that, as long as we pass a measure which will be for the good of the community as a whole." From the first, he took the responsibility of dealing with the question, which seemed to him to be too far-reaching to be successfully dealt with by private members. Moderation, regulation, and direct and complete control of the trade by the people at the polls were his guiding principles. He often stated in public that New Zealand was temperate, even sober, and that it must be kept so; and that the trade must, therefore, be subjected to strict supervision. He had no leaning towards State control of the liquor traffic, but he frequently expressed his willingness to submit that proposal to the vote of the people.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SETTLING THE LAND.

Sufficient has been said in previous chapters to show that the land question has always been an important one in New Zealand's politics. It is necessarily so in a young country, with large areas of well-watered and fertile land waiting to be used. Settlement has meant prosperity to New Zealand, and those who have done most to place people on the land are ranked among the colony's greatest benefactors. It is not invidious to select from the large number of politicians and writers who have worked in this direction four notable men. They are: Sir George Grey, Mr. Ballance, Mr. Rolleston, and Sir John McKenzie. Mr. Seddon has named them as the most prominent land reformers who have sat in the New Zealand Parliament. He has repeatedly given much credit to Mr. Rolleston, who was opposed to him in general politics. It was Mr. Rolleston who, as Minister for Lands in the Hall-Whitaker-Atkinson Administration, which turned Sir George Grey out of power in 1879, introduced the perpetual-lease system of tenure. Before the Liberal Party came into power in 1891, more than 1,000,000 acre had been taken up under this very popular tenure, although the area that could be leased by any individual in that way was limited to 640 acres of good agricultural land and 2,000 acres of second-class land.

When Mr. Ballance became Minister for Lands in the Stout-Vogel Coalition, he set the village settlement system on its feet. It helped many of the unemployed to take up sections, and it has proved to be a great blessing to the settlers and their families and a decided benefit to the colony. The tenure of these sections was based on perpetual-lease, the rent charged being 5 per cent. on the unimproved value, which was about £1 an acre. Mr. Ballance, however, was in office on that occasion

for only a year after his village system came into operation, and as his successor did not give very much attention to the welfare of the settlements, they were not as successful as they would have been in better circumstances. On the whole, however, their establishment has been more than justified. The nature of their tenure has been altered by the present Liberal Party under the provisions of the Land Act of 1892, from perpetual-lease with re-valuations to lease-in-perpetuity (999 years) without re-valuation.

These two systems, perpetual-lease and village-settlement, mark distinct epochs in New Zealand's land-settlement history. The next epoch was ushered in by Sir John McKenzie shortly after Mr. Seddon and he were taken into the Ballance Ministry. Mr. Seddon would have been the last to claim for himself a place as a land-reformer; but from the day he entered Parliament, close settlement and liberal land-laws were leading items on his political programmes, as his first speech in the House will show. He was always strongly opposed to the "land-grabbers" and "land-sharks," and lost few opportunities of denouncing them as clogs on the colony's progress. He joined with Sir John McKenzie in fierce and unrelenting attacks on big and almost useless estates. Checkered maps sent out from some of the land offices to show the result of the "gridironing" process, as it was called, on account of the strange appearance they presented, were compared by him to old cathedral windows. He never threw himself into the land question with the ardour that was shown by Sir John McKenzie. In the early days of his Ministerial work Mr. Seddon supported his colleagues in this direction, but did not attempt to lead. His simple doctrine was that land meant power, and he said repeatedly that as long as New Zealand kept her land for her people, she need never fear many of the ills that have overtaken other countries.

One of the troubles which beset the colony when the last Conservative Government gave place to the new order in 1891 was the increase of large holdings. Sir John McKenzie once described in Parliament large estate after large estate, splendid in its fertility, but carrying only a few human beings. One of these estates covered 40,000 acres; most of it was of magnificent

quality, and only one or two families resided on it; another estate was between 60,000 and 70,000 acres in area, and there was a resident population on it of between sixteen and seventeen persons.

Some time after the Ballance Ministry took office it agreed that its land policy should be :

The conservation of the remaining Crown lands for genuine occupation on a true perpetual-lease system.

A land tax of one penny in the pound on the unimproved land value of the colony, with a progressive land tax on large holdings.

The repurchase of land for close settlement.

This is known as the "Ballance Policy."

The Legislative Council would not accept the compulsory clauses in the Land Act of 1892, and, taking half measure, Sir John McKenzie allowed it to go on the Statute Book without those clauses. The re-purchase clauses became law, but experience showed Sir John that they were practically inoperative unless supported by compulsion. Nearly a million acres were offered to him in 1893, but most of the land was worthless for close settlement, or was valued too high. The first estate purchased under the Act of 1892, Pomahaka, in Otago, has never been successful. It is the worst land bargain the Government has ever made. Half of it remains unlet, and the note written against it in the land settlement tables of the Land Department's annual report is still: "Position unsatisfactory, prospects poor."

While Sir John McKenzie was trying to make his Act work without the compulsory purchase clauses, and was meeting with very little success, there was thrown into his hands, by Providence, no doubt, he thought, a large estate called Cheviot, 84,000 acres in extent, and twelve miles square, on the east coast of the South Island, between Canterbury and Marlborough. The year following the passing of the Act, the Government found itself involved in a dispute with the trustees of the late Hon. W. Robinson, the owner of this estate. In the new Land and Income Assessment Act, just passed by the Ballance

Government, there was a clause, since repealed, providing that if a land owner objected to the valuation placed on his land for taxing purposes, he could compel the Government to reduce the assessment or take over the property at his valuation. The Government's assessors valued the estate for taxation purposes at £304,826; the trustees valued it at £260,220, a difference of £44,606. The trustees objected to the assessed value. The Commissioner of Taxes disallowed the objection. He was upheld by the Board of Reviewers. The Commissioner then received a letter from the trustees demanding that he should reduce the valuation to their figure, or take the land at their price.

It was a critical moment for the new Ministry. Its taxation scheme was under trial, and it saw in the demand of the trustees of Cheviot a menace which, if not met by a bold face, might seriously damage the land tax and embarrass the finances. It was not a matter of Cheviot alone; there were many other large estates in the same position in regard to the assessed values, and if the Government allowed the value of Cheviot to be reduced there would be reductions in all parts of the colony.

The Government considered the position in all its bearings. It had to take one of two courses, and both called for serious consideration. It could not allow a deadly blow to be struck at the system of taxation for which the party had been fighting for more than thirteen years, and it was much inclined to take the course, which its opponents never thought it would be courageous enough to follow, of purchasing the estate. The fact that the compulsory clauses had been struck out of the Land Act was additional incentive to the Government to come out boldly and say that it would maintain its system of taxation and take Cheviot. It was looking about for land for settlement purposes at the time, in order to carry out the promises made to the people. Sir John McKenzie had been able to do hardly anything in the way of close settlement. Here, then, was his opportunity. Cheviot was admirably adapted to his purposes. Most of it was good land, and it could be cut into suitable areas for agricultural and pastoral settlement. In view of the results that might ensue, the Government acted with great caution.

Not satisfied with its assessors' valuation, it had several special valuations made. Two of these placed the value at more than £40,000 above the trustees' valuation, one £35,000 above, and the fourth £25,000 above. The Government came to the conclusion that beyond all doubt Cheviot would be cheap at £260,000; and at the end of December, 1892, an order-in-council was issued declaring that the estate had been taken over by the Government. The transaction was completed in April of the next year. The trustees were paid £60,000 in cash, and the balance of £200,000 by cheque.

A few months after the transaction had been completed, a syndicate offered the Government £40,000 on its bargain, but Sir John McKenzie was not likely to depart from his course. He had bought the estate for settlement purposes, and settled it would be; so he immediately laid out the township which now bears his name and had the estate roaded and cut up for selection. There were eighty souls on it when he bought it; in the middle of July of the following year, he pointed proudly to a thriving and industrious population of 650, cultivating the land and making improvements in all directions. There are now more than three hundred Crown tenants on the estate, with 78,000 sheep, over 1,000 head of cattle, and 850 horses. They hold 76,000 acres, and they pay in rent £15,000 a year. The Cheviot purchase has proved to be successful financially and in all other respects, and the estate is now looked upon as one of the colony's most treasured possessions. Previous to the Government taking it over, Cheviot produced sheep and wool, and little else. Now, with its population multiplied ten fold, it grows wheat, barley, and oats; it has a dairy factory, which sends out large quantities of butter and cheese; it breeds and sells splendid horses and cattle; and to-day it exports more wool, fat lambs, and sheep than it did when producing those alone.

In 1894, Sir John McKenzie was made a happy man by the passing of his amended Land Act, with the compulsory clauses and he at once entered upon his scheme of land settlement, sending people out into the country at what seemed to be a furious pace. The brilliant results achieved by the land policy which he administered single-handed until his death in 1901

have been the theme of many speeches, newspaper articles, and parliamentary reports. Supported by Mr. Seddon, Sir Joseph Ward, and other members of the Government, as well as by many staunch members of the Liberal Party, he stood by his land policy when it seemed to be overwhelmed by a sea of criticism. Some of the most exciting incidents of debate in the New Zealand Parliament have taken place when Sir John McKenzie was being bated by the opponents of his settlement schemes.

Many years passed before the Liberal land policy was placed above criticism. It now stands as one of the most successful items of the policy Mr. Ballance and his colleagues submitted to Parliament in 1891. The results have proved more satisfactory than anyone could have expected at its initiation. Under the Land for Settlements Act the Government, up to 1906, has acquired over 120 estates, including Eccleston, Annan, and St. Helens, which were re-named in compliment to Mr. Seddon. The acquired estates cover an area of 680,000 acres, all of which have been opened for selection. There are over 3,000 settlers and their families on the estates, and they pay as rent about £170,000 a year. The total number of souls on the holdings is 10,283. The value of the improvements is £803,000. The arrears in payment of rent amount to only £5,000, and the total receipts since the inception of the system amount to £721,600. The Government borrows the money with which it pays for the estates. Last year it paid £134,705 in interest and received £162,481 in rents, making a profit of £27,776 on the year's transaction. Added to the profit of £166,259 the previous year, it had realised on March 31st., 1905, £194,035, all of which it spent on roads and other works connected with the settlements.

These estates are an enormous national asset. It is expected that the settlements will continue to progress, and that the holdings will become more valuable to the possessors of the leases. Each time a fresh estate is opened up, there is a rush of applicants, and keen interest is taken all over the colony in the ballots for selections. The Government claims, with much justice, that its policy of acquiring freehold properties and

settling them with Crown tenants has been an unqualified success, from the point of view of the tenants, the Government, and the colony.

As the land system stands at present, its outstanding features are State-ownership of the soil, perpetual tenancy to the occupier, and the restriction of the area that any man may hold, thus applying the principle of the land for the people and preventing the aggregation of large estates. No Crown tenant can hold more than 640 acres of first-class land or 2,000 of second-class land.

Besides the lease-in-perpetuity system, which is the only one allowed under the Land for Settlements Act, the Government offers tenants other systems, to meet the wants of different classes. As a rule, ordinary Crown land thrown open to "optional" selection is offered to the public under three tenures, from which the settler can make his choice. These three tenures are: Cash, lease with the right of purchase, and lease-in-perpetuity (999 years).

Most of the Crown land is taken up for 999 years. Nearly 2,000,000 acres have been leased under that tenure. The rentals are based on the value of the land when it is first disposed of. As no re-valuations are made, and as there is no increase in the rents, the holders of those leases-in-perpetuity are often extremely fortunate men. They have a tenure that is practically equal to the freehold from every point of view except the sentimental one. Like the freehold, the lease can be sold, sub-leased, mortgaged, and disposed of by will. Besides that, the improvements made by the tenant are secured to him if he forfeits or surrenders his lease. The values placed on Crown lands are low when they are leased, as the State seeks to encourage settlement rather than to raise revenue directly, and the leases have sometimes increased enormously in value in a few years.

Most of the Crown tenants went on to the land poor men; but many of those who took up leases-in-perpetuity with little or no capital twelve or fourteen years ago are now rich, mainly on account of the remarkably cheap rates at which they obtained their leases and the facilities given them by the Government.

In recent years, there has been a demand that these Crown tenants should be given the right to acquire the freeholds of their leases at the original valuation. The representatives of the old Conservative Party, knowing that the Government was committed to the leasehold, took up the cry of the freehold and made it echo in the colony. Political leaders and the newspaper press went gladly into the controversy. It raged through several sessions of Parliament, and resulted in the setting up of a Royal Commission, which, after spending several months in different parts of the colony gathering information, reported that, on the whole, the condition and position of the tenants were progressive and satisfactory, and that the land reserved under the Land for Settlements Act should remain for all time the property of the State. The members of the Commission were not unanimous in coming to that decision, but nine out of ten pronounced emphatically in favour of the State retaining the land it had purchased; four recommended that the tenants who had taken up ordinary Crown land, apart from the land for settlements scheme, should be allowed to acquire the right of purchase under stringent conditions after they had occupied their holdings for six years; and four recommended that all sales of Crown land of every description should cease. One urged that all Crown tenants, whether occupying ordinary Crown land or land resumed under the Land for Settlements Act, should be allowed to acquire the freehold, and one suggested that when a tenant's improvements on ordinary Crown land represented three times the original value he should be given the right to purchase.

It was one of Mr. Seddon's most marked characteristics that when the Government of which he was a member had decided upon a definite course of action, he followed it unswervingly. He defended the policies of other Ministers with as much courage and determination as he brought to bear on the schemes he himself put into operation. When Mr. Reeves went to England to take the Agent-Generalship, and the Arbitration Act was assailed, Mr. Seddon cared for it with as much solicitude and anxiety as Mr. Reeves would have shown; and when in recent years Sir John McKenzie's land scheme was in danger from the attacks of the "freeholders," Mr. Seddon, in a

memorable phrase, announced that his back was to the door of the leasehold. He committed himself to the "Ballance Policy," and denounced the proposal to give the Crown tenants the right to purchase the freehold at the original valuation as absolutely immoral. "I see no reason whatever," he said, "why these tenants should be given a million of money belonging to the colony, as that will be the outcome of the proposal if it is adopted."

The disturbance raised by those who posed as the Crown tenants' friends drew attention to the position of the holders of leases-in-perpetuity, and the colony began to consider whether it had been acting fairly to itself in granting those leases at all. It argued that a vast amount of unearned increment which ought to belong to the State was going past it, and that there was springing up, to a great extent, the very condition of things that Sir John McKenzie had racked his brains to guard against.

The lease-in-perpetuity has an interesting history. The Ballance Government found that it could not maintain its proposal that no more Crown lands should be sold. Sir John McKenzie was convinced in his own mind that the time had come when the State should sell no more of the land that remained to it. He was strongly opposed to giving anyone the right to purchase the freehold of Crown lands. He did not want to have a freehold clause inserted in any Land Bill of which he was the author, or which he had to administer. He had a reputation for possessing an obstinate and uncompromising temper, which would bow to no other man's opinion. It is a reputation that he never earned, and did not deserve. He repeatedly gave way to other views, against his best judgment. He did so in this case. Recognising that there were many people in the colony who had not come to his way of thinking, and having a deep sense of the responsibility that rested upon him as a Minister, he felt that he had no right to go further than public opinion could go with him. There was no doubt in his mind that those who said that no more Crown lands should be sold were right; but he respected the opinions of others, whom he credited with equal sincerity, and who

believed that all men should be allowed to obtain the absolute freehold of their homes. He had intended to submit a Bill that would do away with the freehold tenure; but he felt that he must give way to the desires of the people of the colony. The first Land Bill he drafted in 1891, therefore, retained the freehold system. It contained the deferred payment system, and it also provided for a perpetual lease. Sir John McKenzie, bowing to the wishes of the "freeholders," said that if a man had cash he could pay it and get his land; if he had not the cash he could still get his freehold on the deferred payment system; and if he preferred the perpetual lease tenure it was there for him, and he could take up the land on lease for 50 years. The Bill was not passed in 1891, and when it appeared again in 1892 Sir John stated that he was prepared to go still further in the way of compromise, and would give a system under which tenants could take up a lease for all time, the lease-in-perpetuity. He offered this to meet the objections of people who said that there ought to be no re-valuation. It was quite an afterthought. The lease-in-perpetuity was not in the Bill of 1891. It was not in the Bill of 1892 when it was circulated among members, but when he moved the second reading in the latter year he struck out the perpetual lease for 50 years and substituted the lease for 999 years; and that is how the lease that many people now consider a great mistake had its origin. It was a compromise on a great principle, and it has produced a harvest of discord. The great feature of the Bill was the optional system, under which an applicant could choose his tenure. He could purchase for cash, the Crown grant being issued only when improvements were made; he could have an occupation license at a rental of 5 per cent., with the right of purchase after 10 years; or he could have a lease-in-perpetuity at a fixed rent of 4 per cent. on the prairie value.

Mr. Seddon realised shortly before his death that the time had come for a new Land Act. He had made up his mind in 1905 that there should be improved conditions in regard to leasing the remnants of the colony's Crown lands. The scheme he had adopted was that all the Crown lands available for selection should be classified. The poorer land, he considered,

should be taken up and occupied for four years without any rent whatever being taken from the tenants; for the next four years those tenants should be charged only 2 per cent., and for some succeeding years only 3 per cent. During the whole term, including renewals, the rent was not to exceed 4 per cent. on the capital value of the holding at any time.

He held that the State should not look to the rent it exacted from the tenant. He had seen many instances where there was really no value in the land itself. The value was created by the tenants going upon it. It had practically only a nominal value until it was improved by the tenants' efforts; and he did not see why, when the State came to renew the lease, the tenant should be penalised for his improvements. He went further, and said that the condition insisting upon the tenant residing on the land should not be exacted until the land had been roaded and proper approaches had been given to the land, so that the settler could take his family straight on to his section. Besides that, he did not see why the settler should suffer greatly from the lack of facilities for obtaining what are now regarded as necessaries. He would have erected schools on the estates, so that settlers could in every instance get education for their children. He thought that the residential conditions were altogether too severe, and he intended to bring about changes which would relieve settlers who found that their rents were too high, and would enable shopkeepers and artisans who had saved a little money to "go in for a bit of land."

He submitted to the House in 1905 a long set of motions, asking it to come to some decision on several aspects of the land question, in order that a Bill could be introduced to bring about any changes desired. He first asked the House whether it considered that the lease-in-perpetuity should be repealed, and that a perpetual lease, for not less than 50 years or more than 99 years, should be substituted, with re-valuation. He did not, of course, propose to interfere in any way with those who hold present leases-in-perpetuity. He recognised that contracts had been entered into by the State with those tenants, and that the contracts could not be broken or repudiated; but he asked Parliament to decide whether those tenants should have the

right to acquire the freehold, and, if so, whether it should be at the present or the original valuation.

Another question he asked the House to decide was whether any individual or company holding 5000 acres of first-class rural land, or 10,000 acres of second-class rural land, should be allowed to purchase the freehold of any more land, or to increase the areas owned; and whether, if any land in excess of the areas named should fall in by way of mortgage or by will, it should be held for five years, and, if not disposed of by that time, the State to have the right to acquire the land at the land tax value, with 10 per cent. added. As to urban and suburban lands, the restriction was to be up to £50,000 unimproved value, the State to be allowed to acquire anything in excess in the same way as with rural lands.

Before the session closed, the House passed a motion that no further leases-in-perpetuity should be granted, that leases should be granted up to 90 years in tenure, and that holders of leases-in-perpetuity under the Land for Settlements Act should not be allowed to acquire the freehold. Mr. Seddon endeavoured to avoid party politics in dealing with the land question, but the discussion was given a party turn by a no-confidence motion affirming the freehold principle. After a long debate, the no-confidence motion was rejected by a large majority. The freehold cry was repeated at the elections in 1905, but it had no effect on the position of parties. Both "leaseholders" and "freeholders" lost prominent leaders, and the public gave no indication that it considered that the right of purchasing the freehold should be granted to the tenants.

October 18th, 1894, is an eventful date to the Liberal Party. On that day, Sir John McKenzie passed his compulsory purchase provisions into law, and Sir Joseph Ward placed side by side with them on the Statute Book his advances to settlers scheme. It is an adaptation of the old Credit Foncier system, which was first established in Germany as long ago as 1770, and was in operation in France in later years. The originator of the idea had the same object as Sir Joseph Ward—to lower the rates of interest on money and to enable producers to work under better conditions. Sir John McKenzie

was finding a means for men to reach the land ; Sir Joseph Ward was finding a means for supplying cheap capital. It is fitting that these two enactments should become law on the same day, as they have gone hand-in-hand in a dozen years in the work of the colony's settlement.

During the few years that the Liberal Government were in office up to 1894, there had been a marked tendency on the part of the money-lending institutions to refuse fresh mortgages and to call in existing ones, even when good security was offered, and land owners found that if they wanted to have mortgages renewed they would have to submit to unreasonable terms. Sir Joseph Ward's measure was intended to afford relief. It did so almost immediately. Rates of interest came down at once. They have never risen again. It is estimated that the scheme has been the means of saving mortgagees in the colony £8,000,000 in interest alone. The incomes of some people have been diminished by the Act, but the farming classes have reaped a great benefit. The Act has helped materially to bring about the prosperity the colony now enjoys. The Government has borrowed £3,200,000 to lend under the scheme. It charges 5 per cent, which is reduced to $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. if the instalments are paid within fourteen days of the date when they fall due. The scope of the scheme has been extended on several occasions, and money is now advanced on city and suburban properties. Mortgages are granted on either the instalment or the fixed loan system. The law costs are very light. Up to the time of Mr. Seddon's death, the department had made 13,350 advances, representing £4,173,970, against which it holds security valued at £9,172,962. The department is conducted so well that the cost of management is only 3s. 2d. per £100 on the capital employed. The department's net profits are £35,000. It has absolutely no losses on advances since it started operations ; there are no securities on its hands ; and there are practically no arrears of interest.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE IMPERIALIST.

Mr. Seddon's mind had now broadened amazingly. He looked at everything through New Zealand's spectacles. When great colonial problems ranged themselves rapidly in front of him, he seized them one after another, solved them, and waited for more. He had constituted himself a guardian of the colony's interests in the same way as he had been the guardian of Westland's interests in his earlier days; and all who tried to depreciate the colony could rely upon meeting in him an unrelenting opponent. With him it was New Zealand against the whole world. Possibly he took himself and his darling colony too seriously. He had no reason to feel surprised when he found that other people declined to take New Zealand at his valuation. Rightly or wrongly, however, there was no place like New Zealand as far as he was concerned, and no other interests were worth considering. He had accepted Sir George Grey's doctrine of national expansion; but there is nothing to show that in the first years of his Premiership he had any thought of applying it or of taking a part in urging it on the nation. He had no "foreign policy" then, and, apparently, no desire for one. All his hopes and aspirations were contained in "this grand little country of ours, Sir, than which there is not a better place in the whole British Empire."

While he was in this stage of his development, there came upon him a far-reaching event, which was to lead him further than he had ever dreamed of going. He had been changed from a member of an obscure local body to a member of Parliament, from a parochial politician to the leader of a political party, and from a party leader to a colonial statesman.



MR. SEDDON AT A CONFERENCE OF COLONIAL PREMIERS WITH MR. CHAMBERLAIN IN 1902.

Front Row—Sir R. Bond (Premier of Newfoundland), Mr. Seddon, Sir W. Laurier (Premier of Canada), the Right Hon. J. Chamberlain (Secretary of State for the Colonies), Sir F. Barton (Premier of the Australian Commonwealth), Sir A. Hime (Premier of Natal), Mr. T. E. Fuller (representing Sir Gordon Sprigg, Cape Colony),
Second Row—Mr. T. W. Holderness (Secretary of the Revenue Department, India Office), Sir J. Anderson (Secretary of the Conference), Sir J. Forrest (Minister for Defence in the Australian Commonwealth), Sir W. Mulock (Postmaster-General of Canada), Lord Onslow (Under-Secretary for the Colonies), the Hon. W. Patterson (Minister for Customs, Canada), Rear-Admiral Custance (Director of Naval Intelligence), Lord Selborne (First Lord of the Admiralty), the Right Hon. G. W. Balfour (President of the Board of Trade),
Third Row—Sir A. F. Baerman (Board of Trade), Sir H. T. Hopwood (Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade), the Hon. W. S. Fielding (Minister of Finance, Canada), Sir A. Cunningham (Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade).

He now stepped out into the open and declared that he was an adviser of the Empire and an imperialist.

This happened in 1897, when he accepted Mr. Chamberlain's invitation to attend the ceremonies connected with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and to be the guest of the Imperial Government. He went as the official bearer of a message from New Zealand to Queen Victoria; he came back as the bearer of an unofficial message from the people of the Old Country to the people of New Zealand. It is a message that was engraven on his mind. He tried to impress it upon the New Zealand public, and he delivered it over and over again.

Business was to be combined with pleasure in the programme the Home Government prepared for the Colonial Premiers, but the business part of the programme was not large. It consisted of the Premiers' Conference, where Mr. Seddon met the representatives of Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Cape Colony, South Australia, Newfoundland, Tasmania, Western Australia, and Natal. The principal question discussed was the political and commercial relations between the colonies and the United Kingdom. Mr. Chamberlain felt that it was desirable to tighten the ties which bound the colonies to the Mother Country. Federation was in the air, and the Secretary for the Colonies believed that practical application could be given to the principle.

The Premiers came to the conclusion that the political relations which then existed were generally satisfactory under the existing condition of things. This decision, however, did not satisfy Mr. Seddon. It was his belief that the time had come already when an effort should be made to render more formal the ties between the colonies and the United Kingdom. The majority of the Premiers were not prepared to adopt that position, but there was a strong feeling amongst some of them that with the rapid growth of population in the colonies the relations that then existed could not continue indefinitely, and that some means would have to be devised for giving the colonies a voice in the control and direction of those questions of imperial interest in which they were concerned equally with the Mother Country. It was recognised at the same time that such a share

in the direction of the imperial policy would involve a proportionate contribution in aid of imperial expenditure, for which the colonies were not generally prepared.

The administration of British New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the New Hebrides were among the other subjects discussed at the Conference, which, although bringing about no definite results, was beneficial to the colonies and the Mother Country, and did a great deal towards bending Mr. Seddon's mind in the direction of the unity of the Empire. The conference brought the colonial Governments into closer touch with the Secretary of State. Mr. Seddon believed at the time that the outcome would be the creation of a Consultative Council of colonial representatives, with a member representing the Imperial Cabinet, for the purpose of considering imperial questions; but he realised that the time was not ripe for the establishment of a body of that nature just then.

In delivering New Zealand's congratulatory message to the Queen, he gave Her Majesty an assurance of the loyalty of the colonists to her, to the throne, and to the constitution. Her Majesty replied that she was greatly touched at the manifestations of loyalty and devotion to the throne expressed on the completion of the sixtieth year of her reign, and was gratified at the warmth shown by the New Zealand Parliament. Shortly after that ceremony had been completed, Mr. Seddon was sworn in as a member of the Privy Council.

One of the most interesting features of his visit was his interview with Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden. He went with Sir Wilfred Laurier and Mr. Reid, the party being taken in charge by Lord and Lady Carrington. The guests were shown over the library, and had afternoon tea under a shady old hawthorn tree in the gardens.

There is no incident in Mr. Seddon's experiences in England that left a deeper impression upon him than this visit to Hawarden. Mr. Gladstone expressed the pleasure felt by him, on his part, at the presence of statesmen who were helping to build up the Greater Britain that had arisen over the seas. Politics were not touched upon during the visit; the Premiers were the guests of the nation as a whole, and in that spirit Mr. Gladstone received them.

Mr. Seddon was charmed with the range of Mr. Gladstone's conversation, and with his knowledge of New Zealand's affairs. Speaking of the millions over the seas, Mr. Gladstone said:—

“ There was a time when some statesmen considered that when the colonies grew in strength, importance, and numbers, they would wish to be severed from the Mother Country. We thought that nothing could be done that would prevent them doing so. But there were those who said: ‘ No, the colonies will not wish to sever themselves from the parent stock. They need nothing but the tie of kinship and of one crown, one country, one race; that is sufficient, and there will be no cry from the colonies if you will give them self-government and freedom. The more freedom they have, the greater will be their love for the Mother Country and the closer will be the connection.’ Amongst the men who stood boldly by that position was John Robert Godley, the founder of the province of Canterbury, in your colony. With him there were four others, and their ideals and aspirations have been fully verified.”

Amongst other things, Mr. Gladstone stated that it was 62 years since he had been appointed Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Drawing upon his own recollection of events in which he played an important part, he spoke of the characteristics of the old colonial system, and of the great reforms introduced into it. Sir George Grey's name was frequently referred to by him, and he showed the admiration he possessed for the old Liberal Leader of New Zealand's politics.

Mr. Seddon, like Sir Wilfred Laurier and Mr. Reid, was greatly interested in the peaceful and happy domestic circumstances of Mr. Gladstone's life in retirement, and by his great physical vigour and his unfailing mental alertness. Mr. Gladstone's kindness prompted him to accompany them to the station when the visit terminated, a mark of courtesy that they highly appreciated.

Shortly after he had taken possession of the suite of rooms allotted to him at the Hotel Cecil, in London, Mr. Seddon had a very agreeable surprise. Before leaving New Zealand he had received disquieting accounts of Sir George Grey's health. He looked forward to meeting him, and he felt much anxiety, as Sir George Grey was then very old, and the exposures he had undergone on his exploring expeditions had made inroads upon the splendid constitution with which he was endowed. A few hours after their arrival at the hotel, a lady called upon him and announced that she was Sir George Grey's private

secretary. Mr. Seddon looked upon this as a call made on behalf of his old friend and chief, and he was pleased to know that Sir George was even well enough to send a deputy to greet him. His surprise and pleasure were increased a hundredfold when his visitor stated that she had merely come to announce that Sir George would arrive in person, and was, in fact, at that moment, waiting in the hotel to see Mr. Seddon as soon as he was disengaged.

The full extent of the veteran's courteous action was made clear to Mr. Seddon when Sir George Grey entered the room. He was very feeble. Old age and time had placed their mark upon him. He had to be helped into the room by his secretary and Mr. W. P. Reeves, and, with a beaming face, he held out a withered hand, which was taken gently and tenderly in the hand of the strong man who was now leading the party his friend had created.

Sir George sat in a big arm chair, and Mr. Seddon sat on another chair by his side, and they talked long and earnestly of the battles they had fought together, of the reforms they had advocated, and of the good that was still to be done.

When Sir George said that he would take his leave, and rose slowly to his feet, Mr. Seddon asked if he might be allowed to carry him down the stairs, saying that it might be easier than attempting to walk. Sir George willingly consented, and Mr. Seddon, gathering him in his arms, carried him gently to the hall, where they said "Good-bye" for the last time. Just before leaving England to return to New Zealand, the following telegram was placed in Mr. Seddon's hands:—

"God take you in his keeping.—GEORGE GREY."

The visit was a whirl of pleasure and gaiety. Even Mr. Seddon's taste for banquets must have been satiated. New Zealanders in London signalled his appearance in the city by giving a dinner in his honour. He gave a great address which took him nearly an hour and a half to deliver, and as New Zealand was the theme all through, he left no doubt as to which country was uppermost in his mind.



Mr. Seddon's last meeting with Sir George Grey, in London, in 1897.

The round of amusements provided for the Premiers became the talk of society. It attracted the attention of the newspapers, and one of them gave the following supposed extract from the diary of one of the Premiers, to show that they were being treated with British hospitality:—

“The Countess of ——’s lecture on the secret of making pancakes at 10.30 a.m. See Mr. Chamberlain at 11. That allows only half-an-hour for the pancakes. Sit for photograph for the ‘Daily Flatterer’ at 11.45—three-quarters of an hour in which to discuss imperial matters of moment. Back to the Cecil at 12.30 to receive a deputation of the Mile End National League. Lunch at 1.30 with Lord —— at Hatfield. Back to town at 3.45 to inspect the troops at Chelsea Barracks. Three garden parties at 4.30—Lady ——’s, the Duchess of ——’s, and Baroness ——’s. Finally decide on the Duchess’s, as it is the nearest to the Cecil. Dine with H.R.H. at 8 p.m. Six receptions for that evening—all at ten o’clock. Can’t do it. Look in at Mrs. Goodworth’s for ten minutes, and then, best of all, repose at midnight, flavoured with anxiety at the thought of the same ceaseless whirl to-morrow.”

The University of Cambridge conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. The ceremony took place in the Senate House at Cambridge, in the presence of a large assemblage. The undergraduates were present in force, and for once they abstained from their customary humorous interjecting and allowed Dr. Sandys, the Public Orator, to pour forth unchecked his periods of classical Latin. The honour was not perhaps the best fitted to mark the career of Mr. Seddon, which had been one long political fight, and which was not in any way assisted by academic advantages, but, as a London journal pointed out at the time, the Universities are restricted by precedent in their methods of recognising merit, and they are so much a part of English life that their recognition of the Premiers was essential to the thoroughness of an English welcome.

Mr. Seddon was accompanied by several other Premiers, and speaking of them collectively, Dr. Sandys said:—

“On the eve of the completion of the sixtieth year of the happiest of reigns, we rejoice that, in honour of so auspicious an event, so many men of eminence have come from far across the seas in answer to our country’s call. We rejoice that all the Premiers of the eleven self-governing colonies have come as envoys of a ‘Greater Britain’ to the Motherland of so many distinguished daughters, the central hearth and home of so many flourishing colonies. Each of these self-governing colonies may proudly say, ‘Daughter I am in my mother’s

house, but mistress in my own,' *filia matris in domo, domina sum tamen domi*. Six of these eminent representatives are now present, men who have successfully administered the affairs of their respective colonies, men by whose labours we trust that all those vast provinces, however distant they are, may at some future day be united to one another and to the United Kingdom by a close federal union. Men such as these—united as they are in a common cause—we are unwilling to separate from one another even when we praise them. And yet we gladly welcome each in turn; and while each familiar name will shortly be proclaimed aloud, we shall at the same time silently remember all the heirs of Britain's name throughout the world."

When it came to Mr. Seddon's turn in the individual presentations, Dr. Sandys spoke in Latin to the following effect:—

"New Zealand, a group of islands of almost the same extent as our own country, has sent us her Prime Minister, a man who, endowed with a truly liberal spirit, and thinking that nothing should be excluded from the ranks of his party, was the first of all Ministers of the British Empire to grant the right of voting to the sex to which the Goddess of Learning and the Muses belong. I present to you a man well worthy of honour, Richard John Seddon."

Wearing a scarlet stuff gown with pink silk facings, and his Doctor of Laws bonnet, Mr. Seddon received the hand-clasp of the Vice-Chancellor, and became an honorary LL.D. of Cambridge.

To the world's eyes he gave himself up to thorough enjoyment on that Diamond Jubilee visit. It seemed to the colonists whom he had left behind, and who read of his doings in their daily newspapers, that he spent a merry and a magnificent holiday. While all England was rejoicing, however, he was observing and thinking, and his observations and thoughts made more steadfast his determination that, as far as his power went, New Zealanders would never be like the physically inferior human beings he saw in the manufacturing districts of the United Kingdom.

At Belfast he went through the flax and linen factories, and made mental note of the fact that children eleven years of age there were not equal in size to children five years of age in New Zealand. He could not refrain from expressing his surprise at seeing those little, stunted, puny, and almost degenerate beings at work in the factories. They ought to have been at school, but there they were, with their gowns wet through,

slaving away in a workroom that was more like a Turkish bath than a place for people to work in. While he was looking over those factories his mind went back to the splendid work-rooms, with their ventilation and supplies of fresh air, in New Zealand, and he said: "If this is the result of factory life in the Old Country, and if this is to be the end of it, it will be much better for us in New Zealand never to have a factory in the country."

In visiting his old home in Lancashire, he took advantage of the opportunity to go through the cotton mills. There, also, his mind was at work, observing, noting, and comparing. He found that during his absence of 34 years, the hours of the workers had been reduced, and their general conditions had been improved; but he said that the physical life of the community had been injured, and that there had been a degeneracy of the race.

He told people in New Zealand afterwards that he saw more evidence of real poverty in ten minutes in Glasgow than he saw in three months in his own colony. He went to Glasgow on a public occasion, when the citizens of the great city put forth an effort to make a good appearance before their distinguished guests. They were clean and tidy, but they could not hide from his eyes their bare feet and unprotected heads, their patched clothes, their wan, pinched, pale faces, and other signs of abject poverty.

London at first oppressed him with a sense of disappointment. The buildings did not seem to be any better than those he had seen in the colonies, and the narrow streets were not at all to his liking. "But when I came to see the great cathedrals, the abbeys, the churches, and the public buildings," he said afterwards, "I was reminded at every turn that I was in a city memorable with age, rich in traditions, and enormously wealthy, as the vast traffic and magnificent pleasure-grounds abundantly testified. I then felt that there could be no city in the world like London. It is the greatest and grandest—a worthy centre of a magnificent Empire."

In the grand array of cruisers at the great naval review he saw the reflected magnitude of the Empire's commerce; in the review of the army at Aldershot he saw the vastness of Great

Britain's military resources. There were not thirty thousand men all told in that function, but Mr. Seddon saw behind them the millions that were ready to come forth when the Empire called them.

Politically, he came back from the visit a non-party man. In London he saw the leader of the House of Commons and the leader of the Opposition consulting as to the best method in which the business of the country should be conducted; and he noticed that although criticism was delivered when it was considered necessary, personal matters were never introduced. That impressed him as being an example which might well be followed in the New Zealand Parliament, where personal feeling often found expression. He determined that he, at all events, would never take part in personalities again, and that it would be no fault of his if, while he was conducting the business of the House, personalities broke out amongst members. He made up his mind that he would always extend to those who differed from him the greatest courtesy. "When we reflect on the short time we are in this world, and how soon Death makes his appearance amongst us," he said, "it must be satisfactory to feel that, though we may have differed from those who are called away, there has never been any ill-feeling or anything of a personal character, and that to the last we retained the friendship of those we knew."

It was thought, and the thought found ready and open expression in the newspapers, that his visit would make him lean towards Conservatism; but the object lesson he was taught by the Mother Country strengthened his determination to help those who were struggling. And the message he brought back to his people in New Zealand from the Old Country was that though they were part of the great Empire, there was a seamy side to that Empire's industrial life, and New Zealand would have to be more watchful than ever that the Old World's evils did not creep into her happy life.

An enthusiastic reception at Wellington was a fitting finale to a memorable chapter in his career. It showed that the people of the colony appreciated the manner in which he had represented them. They had entrusted him with their message of

loyalty and goodwill to the Queen, and he had performed the mission in an earnest and graceful manner. When he stepped on to Jervois Quay at Wellington he saw a great crowd which had gathered to greet him. Members of the legislature, clergymen of all denominations, trades organisations and citizens formed a procession, which accompanied him to the Parliamentary Buildings, and as he alighted from his carriage the strains of "Home, Sweet Home" fell upon his ears. It was a great national welcome.

He inaugurated his "foreign policy" in September, 1900, when he moved in the House that the colony's boundaries should be extended so as to include the Cook Group and other islands. He had thought out his scheme and had gone into its details at length. He had studied the history of the islands, and of the movement for an extension of the colony's boundaries. He had had the advantage of many discussions with Sir George Grey, Sir Julius Vogel, Sir William Fox, Sir Robert Stout, and other statesmen who had taken up the same idea, but had failed to adopt it as a practical policy to be applied to the circumstances of the day. He was prepared for much criticism and opposition to his proposals, and he knew that the personal element had been brought into the discussion, statements having been made that he was seeking self-glorification more than anything else.

The whole modern movement in favour of annexation had been described as another phase of "Seddonism." He had been cartooned as a savage monarch, dressed in mats, with a murderous club in his hand, and with the words "Kingi Tiki" (King Dick) tattooed across his naked chest. It was suggested by other critics that when annexation took place the islands ought to be re-named, and they asked what better name could be given than "Seddonia," and the wit of one joker ran in the direction of comparing Mr. Seddon to Sancho Panza when he became possessed of the idea of governing the Island of Barataria.

These pin-pricks irritated him somewhat, and he complained that although he was conscientiously and earnestly endeavouring to improve the colony's status, and to promote unity of interest, he received very little assistance from

those to whom he had a right to look for at least some encouragement.

He admitted that the colony had made a mistake in not adopting some of the schemes put forward by Sir Julius Vogel and Sir George Grey many years previously, but he thought that the time had come to remedy that mistake. Once, in the Stout-Vogel régime, the Government steamer "Hinemoa" was waiting at Auckland, with everything ready for the annexation of the Navigator Islands, but just before the steamer set out to take possession of the islands the imperial authorities became alarmed, and the Governor was instructed by cable message to prevent the intended action being taken.

Investigations had convinced him that the annexation of the Cook Group would be satisfactory to New Zealand commercially, and he believed that thousands of pounds would be brought into the colony by means of the new connection. He had no fear of a native trouble. The natives would be practically self-governing. He found that they were law-abiding, and would not require an elaborate system of local government. Apart from that, he struck the imperial note in his addresses on the question. When he brought his motion before the House, several members said that they wanted to think over the scheme before they decided upon its feasibility; but Mr. Seddon was too intent on annexation to listen to proposals for delay, and he said that it would not be in the interests of the colony or the islands to postpone the great action.

"We want to think over it," they reiterated, but their inexorable Dictator replied: "It is not a question of thinking it over; the time has come for action. It has been thought over already. It will not be wise to postpone this debate, and the House must come to a decision." It did so by passing his motion by a large majority, and he was a happy Premier, with a small "foreign policy" in hand and a larger one in view.

In that thorough manner he carried through the policy founded by Sir George Grey almost exactly half a century previously. It was not New Zealand's fault that this step in the direction of annexation was delayed. At an early date Sir George Grey brought his scheme before the imperial authorities, and in



Mr. Seddon and the Duke and Duchess of York during the Royal Visit to the Rotorua District, in 1901.

succeeding years he continued to urge it on them, but without avail.

The old laws and customs of the natives of the Cook Group have been preserved as far as possible, but there is provision in the annexation Act for the gradual introduction of New Zealand's laws. The old High Court of Justice is confirmed, but appeal is allowed to the Supreme Court of New Zealand. The native Federal Council and the Island Councils are allowed to make ordinances, but the Governor of New Zealand has the power of veto. The Customs tariff of New Zealand applies to the islands, all New Zealand's products are admitted free, and the New Zealand Government is empowered to set aside reserves for military and naval purposes.

There is probably no one in the British Empire who watched with keener eyes than Mr. Seddon's the rapid development of affairs in South Africa from the beginning of 1899 onwards. Great Britain's quarrels were his quarrels now; her enemies were his enemies; and when at last it was clear that war with the Boers was unavoidable he grasped the situation firmly, displayed to the full his powers of organisation, and infected the whole colony with his enthusiasm.

The story how he sent out one contingent, then another and another, until ten had left the colony's shores, has been told often and graphically in the newspapers of the day. It has been stated that his action on that occasion illustrated the exaggerated view he took of the position occupied in the world by the country he ruled, and that he expected a handful of New Zealand troops to have a marked effect in subduing the Boers. As a matter of fact, he looked upon the contingents in an entirely different light. They were to him a living representation of the imperialistic principle, of the solidarity of the Empire, and of the readiness of the colony to spring ready armed to the side of the Mother Country. He placed no value on the numerical strength of the contingents. He knew that the imperial troops did not need assistance, and that the Imperial Government could settle its difficulties without the colonies' assistance; but he believed that the moment had arrived when those who had been talking of national unity should do something to show the world that it

was not talk alone. It is necessary to make this explanation, because Mr. Seddon's motives were quite misunderstood at the time, especially in England, where, when the first offer of contingents was made, a leading newspaper wanted to know what New Zealand had to do with the Transvaal.

He did not rush into the conflict. When he moved a motion in the House of Representatives on September 8th, 1899, giving instructions that a contingent of 200 men should be enrolled, he probably never spoke under a sense of greater responsibility. The Empire was involved in a struggle, and he, the Premier of New Zealand, and one of the counsellors of the nation, had to take steps which would show the Empire's enemies that the nation was united. He had counted the cost of sending that single contingent. It was £20,000—a tiny sum when set beside the great total the nation spent on the war; but it was a little colony with a population of only three-quarters of a million that was sending the contingent, and it would have to see that the men were maintained and well-equipped in South Africa, perhaps for a long time. It was not a small undertaking, and he knew how far the effect of his action might go. He recognised, however, that the expense must be a secondary consideration, and that the principle with which he had been seized must be upheld. Looking all round the subject, he anticipated the question, which was asked afterwards, "Why should the people of New Zealand follow your lead in this?" He had a safe reply: "Because we are an integral part of one great Empire."

Someone expressed a doubt as to whether he would get a sufficient number of volunteers. "If we want two thousand at once, instead of two hundred," he replied, "we could have them." He had gauged public feeling accurately, and he knew that he would be almost unanimously supported.

Sir William Russell, Leader of the Opposition, seconded Mr. Seddon's motion in the House, and spoke strongly of New Zealand's duty. There was a brief discussion, and the motion was carried by fifty-four votes to five.

A stirring scene followed. Led by Mr. Seddon, the members almost spontaneously rose and sang the National Anthem with

great enthusiasm. The onlookers in the galleries rose at the same time, and joined in the hymn. Hardly had the last notes died away when Mr. Seddon raised his hand and asked for a true British cheer, which was given with the utmost heartiness. The response from the public was greater than he could have anticipated, and in three weeks the first New Zealand contingent was on the water. In later months, nine more contingents left, taking in all over 6,000 men.

His action in sending the contingents was appreciated more highly in New Zealand than anywhere else. In the Canterbury Hall, Christchurch, he was presented with a national address shortly before he left the colony to attend the ceremonies at the Coronation of the King. The character of the gathering is shown by the fact that on this occasion he was surrounded by political opponents. Foremost amongst them was Sir John Hall, who gracefully presented the address, which is sufficiently brief to be given in these pages in full. It is as follows :—

“ To the Right Honourable Richard John Seddon, P.C., LL.D., Premier of the Colony of New Zealand.

“ Right Honourable Sir,—

“ In the course of a few days you will leave us to represent New Zealand at the Coronation of our King, and it is thought that your approaching departure presents a fitting time to express to you our appreciation and approval of the prompt and practical proof you have given of the sympathy of your fellow-colonists with their Motherland in her South African struggle. Loyalty is but kinship written large, and every man and woman of this colony is proud of the crimson thread which makes the people of New Zealand loyal sons and daughters of the British Empire. Your high office has been to voice our loyalty, and give it effectual shape, and the vigour and judgment you have displayed in this have not only won our gratitude and admiration, but have shown the world that whatever be the sacrifice, we cheerfully take our stand beside the Mother Country for the maintenance of her honour and the integrity of the Empire.”

He was highly pleased when he received an invitation from Lord Kitchener to break his journey Home at Cape Town and see something of South Africa. He accepted the invitation, and left the colony's shores on April 14th, 1902, with the plaudits of thousands ringing in his ears. The “good-byes” that echoed on the Wellington wharves found a response throughout the colony, and he knew that he went to London as the representative not of a party or of a class but of a united country.

He had not gone very far on his voyage when he was stopped by people of another country, who desired to show their appreciation of the position which he had now taken in the Empire's affairs; he was welcomed at Sydney by a brilliant gathering at the Hotel Australia, where a banquet was held in his honour under the auspices of the Birt Company and the Houlder Company. Amongst those present were Mr. Barton, Mr. See, Mr. Wise, Mr. Reid, and Sir William Lyne. On rising to respond to the toast of his health he was very heartily received, and amidst shouts of "Kapai the King*" he told those present that he took the honour as belonging to New Zealand, not to himself.

South Africa received him with many marks of appreciation. Buried away in piles of parliamentary papers in the General Assembly Library at Wellington there are copies of many addresses presented to him in South African towns. There was something about him and his speeches that made the people there feel brighter and more hopeful. They had been tried and depressed by the great struggle, which was just drawing to a close, and it was refreshing to turn to the breezy personality of their visitor. They said they regretted that the imperialist of New Zealand had not had an opportunity of meeting Mr. Rhodes, the imperialist of South Africa. The open manner in which he said what he thought and fearlessly expressed his opinions came to them with startling effect, and they could not refrain from comparing him with their own statesmen, who spoke guardedly and in carefully chosen words.

With bewildering rapidity he passed from one town to another. New Zealanders read one day that he was speaking to thousands in Durban, and a few days afterwards that he was addressing New Zealand troops at the front. Then he was in the hospitals comforting sick and wounded New Zealanders, then back in the seaport cities with more speeches, more cheery words, and more imperialistic sentiments. Night and morning, wherever he stopped, there were New Zealanders to welcome him, and the cheers of his fellow-men seemed never to die out.

At the front he inspected the Eighth New Zealand Contingent at Klerksdorp. The contingent had just returned from

* A Maori-European appreciation.

a successful "drive." He was accompanied by Generals Hamilton, Baden-Powell, and Wilson, and when General Hamilton, addressing the column, praised the New Zealanders and said that he did not want any better men under him, the New Zealander Premier was a happy man. He went along the front for sixty miles, and also visited the hospitals at Johannesburg, Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp, speaking kindly and encouragingly to the New Zealanders who were sick or wounded.

At Durban he announced that New Zealand desired peace on an everlasting basis, "but if more men are wanted," he added, "more will be sent." In the same city he told the people of South Africa that the only conclusion possible to the war was unconditional surrender by the Boers, but he declared with an air of kingly clemency that brave fighters would be treated with Britain's traditional generosity.

On May 24th he sent a cable message to Sir Joseph Ward stating that he had had tea with Lord Milner and dinner with Lord Kitchener. "Had a long interview with both, which was very satisfactory," was the significant addition to the message, and on the same day there came the still more significant brief message: "No more contingents will be required."

This message was taken all over the world as an augury of peace, and London newspapers accepted it as fairly strong proof that the conditions were such as to satisfy this strong advocate of unconditional surrender.

He supplied the South Africans with a policy, to be taken in hand as soon as the country had settled down after the war. That policy ran largely on the lines adopted in New Zealand, whose example, he thought, South Africa could not do better than follow.

In Reuter he had a zealous advance agent. Almost daily the great morning newspapers told the people of London in large type what he was doing, saying, and thinking. At least one comic journal had a Seddon cartoon ready for publication on the day of his arrival. At the Diamond Jubilee he had gone as a stranger, but at the Coronation it was the return of an interesting man who had been the talk of the Empire, and he received a royal welcome.

At Euston station two royal carriages were in waiting, each drawn by a pair of horses, and with coachmen and footmen wearing the royal scarlet liveries. In these carriages he and his party were driven to the Hotel Cecil, London. He was disappointed at not having a little more time for a chat with several New Zealanders who met him on the station platform, but there were the royal carriages waiting, with the men in their gorgeous liveries, attracting much notice, and he set off at once. It rather amused him to travel in such state, and to see the sentries at one place present arms as the party passed; but he felt that he was being given a very pleasant welcome to England.

There was another whirl of receptions, banquets, excursions and other amusements, and then came the second Premiers' Conference and business.

He had brought with him from New Zealand a number of proposals to place before the Premiers. They were:—

(1.) That it is essential to the well-being of the Mother Country and His Majesty's Dominions beyond the seas that in such dominions, where the same does not exist now, preferential tariffs, by way of rebate of duties on British manufactured goods carried in British-owned ships, should be granted, and that in the Mother Country a rebate of duty on colonial products now taxable should be conceded.

(2.) That it is desirable to have an Imperial Reserve Force formed in each of His Majesty's Dominions over the seas, for service in case of emergency, the limits within which such reserve force may be employed outside the colony wherein it is raised to be defined by the Imperial and Colonial Governments at the time such reserve is formed, and to be in accordance with any law in force for the time being respecting the same; the cost of maintaining and equipping such reserve force to be defrayed in such proportion and manner as may be agreed upon between the Imperial and Colonial Governments.

(3.) That the Australian Squadron be strengthened: (a) by increasing the number of cruisers; (b) by withdrawing some of the inferior gun boats and replacing them with modern and better-class cruisers; and (c) by adding torpedo catchers or destroyers, if deemed necessary, the extra cost of maintenance entailed to be defrayed in the same proportion as provided under the existing agreement and on a population basis.

(4.) That, in arranging for the administration of that portion of the Empire formerly known as the South African Republic and the Orange Free State, provision should be made that duly qualified members of the learned and skilled professions now admitted and hereafter to be admitted to practice in the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, and in New Zealand, be allowed to practice within the newly acquired territories referred to.

(5.) That it would be an advantage to the Empire to have subsidised mail services established as between Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Great

Britain, the steamers carrying such mail to be British-owned, and such steamers to be of such a class, and so fitted, that in time of war they may be armed and cased as cruisers.

(6.) That it would be to the advantage of the Empire if triennial conferences were held at which questions affecting the political and commercial relations of the Mother Country and His Majesty's Dominions over the seas could be discussed and considered as between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing colonies. In case of any emergency arising upon which a special conference may have been deemed necessary, the next ordinary conference to be held no sooner than three years thereafter.

He was strongly in favour of colonial participation in the defence scheme, but he did not get as much support from his colleagues as he had anticipated. Sir Wilfred Laurier and Mr. Barton made it clear that they were not prepared to ask their Parliaments to sanction any military expenditure beyond what was necessary for their own defence. The discussion showed considerable difference of opinion amongst the Premiers. While the representative of Cape Colony and Natal was inclined to fall in with the policy suggested by Mr. Seddon and the Secretary for War of having a special body of troops ear-marked for imperial service, the Premiers of Canada and Australia believed that the best course was to endeavour to raise the standard of training for the general body of the forces, to organize the departmental services and equipment required for the mobilisation of a field force, leaving it to the various colonies, when the need arose, to determine how and to what extent they should render assistance. It was held that to establish a special force, set apart for general imperial service, and practically under the absolute control of the Imperial Government, was objectionable in principle as detracting from the power of self-government enjoyed by the colonies, and would be likely to impede the general improvement in training and organization of the colonies' defence forces, and their ability to render effective help if it should be required. The Conference ultimately decided that if the Imperial Government should think it desirable to take action on the suggestion of the Secretary for War, it should do so by communication with colonies that were disposed to give assistance.

The strong point of Mr. Seddon's proposals was the scheme for a preferential tariff. The discussion showed that there was

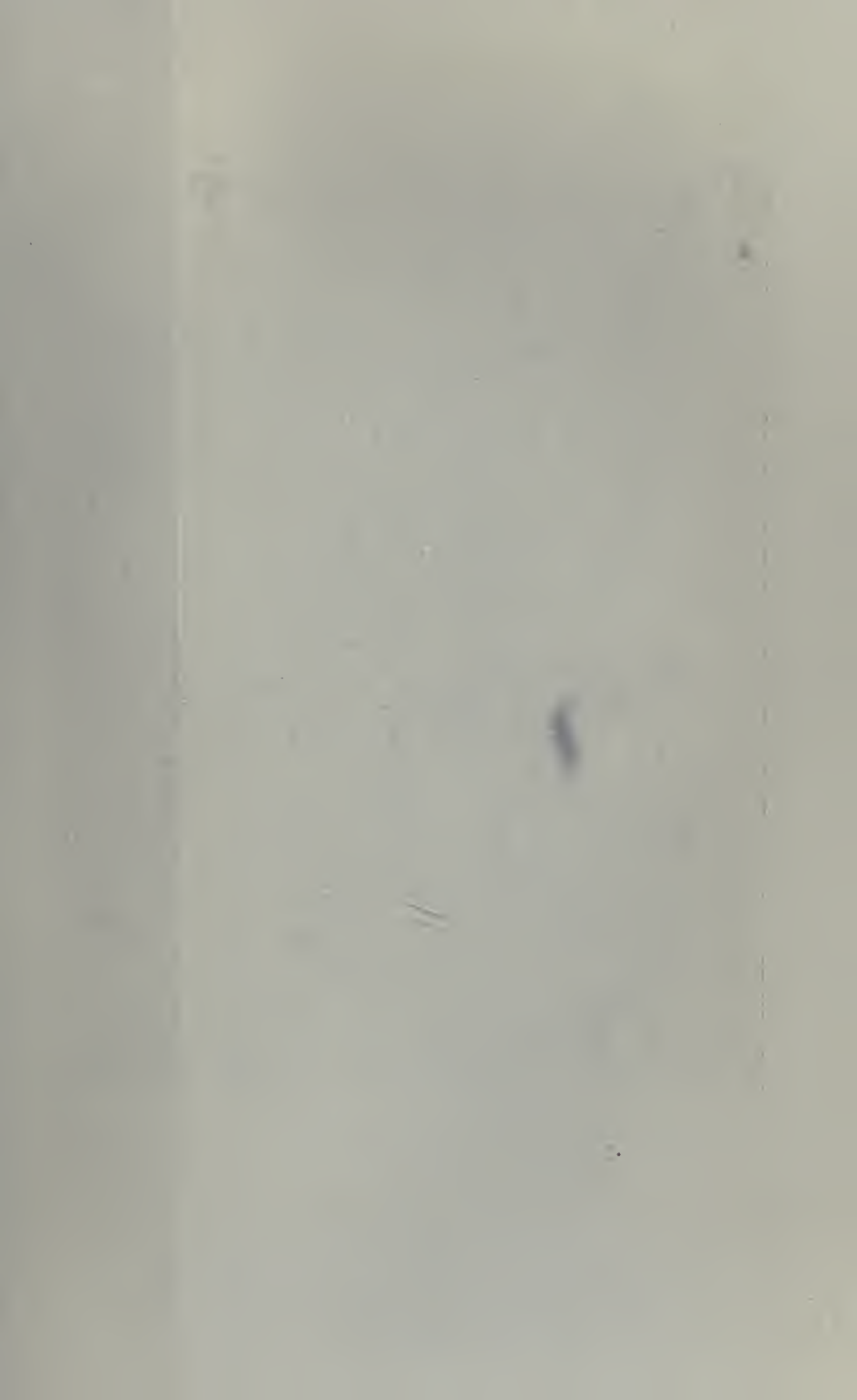
a feeling amongst the Premiers in favour of making some definite advance towards establishing closer trade relations, but they said that the circumstances of the different colonies differed so widely that it was apparent that no arrangement applicable to all of the colonies could be devised. The general effect of the resolution passed was that while the Conference recognised that certain trade relations existed between the United Kingdom and other Powers, it was desirable that closer trade relations should exist between the Mother Country and the colonies. The Conference also recognised that while anything like free-trade between the different parts of the Empire was impossible at present, the promotion of inter-imperial trade was desirable, and, with that object in view, the Parliaments of the Empire should be asked to give a substantial preference in customs duties to the products and manufactures of the Empire.

Mr. Seddon's proposal to establish triennial conferences of Premiers was discussed at length, but it was decided that a better plan would be to hold them as far as practicable at intervals not exceeding four years.

As to the strengthening of the Australian squadron, it was shown that Canada, Newfoundland, Cape Colony, and Natal were not directly concerned, and it was decided that the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand should deal with the matter as a separate question apart from the Conference.

The opinion in regard to the fourth and fifth motions submitted by Mr. Seddon was that colonial members of the learned and skilled professions should be allowed to practice in the newly acquired South African territory, but that the arrangement should be reciprocal; and that the position of mail services between the different parts of the Empire should be reviewed by the Governments interested, and that all new contracts should contain provisions to prevent excessive freight charges.

Other motions moved by Mr. Seddon were passed, drawing attention to the position of the navigation laws in the Empire and urging that steps should be taken in that respect to promote imperial trade in British possessions.





During the Duke of York's visit to New Zealand, in 1911.
The Duke and Duchess of York leaving Parliament Buildings, Wellington, after
saying "good-bye" to Mr. Seddon.

The Conference did not go as far as Mr. Seddon thought it ought to have gone. He was rather disappointed with the result. He had held high hopes that something would be done, and he felt that the imperialistic tone was not as prominent as he had been led to expect it would be. The feeling in New Zealand, and the press of the United Kingdom, had made his view too optimistic. He had heard a great deal about consolidating the Empire, taking counsel, interchanging opinions, and discussing imperial questions, and he was disappointed that the Premiers, when they came together, did not go much further.

During this visit to England he was given the freedom of St. Helen's, Annan, and Edinburgh, and received the degree of LL.D. of the Edinburgh University. At all ceremonies, public or private, he sang New Zealand's praises, and he insisted that the honours bestowed upon him should be shared by his colony. He told the people that the other nations were making war on Great Britain by means of the trade relations that existed. It was a ruthless war, and the only successful method of warfare the Empire's enemies could adopt. Foreign nations increased their trade with the British colonies, and out of that increase they strengthened their armies and navies. He advised the Old Country to make itself independent of foreign nations, and to build up its own commerce, trade, and manufactures. He told England in plain words that she would have to do more for her aged workers, and broadly hinted that she might do worse than adopt a scheme of Old Age Pensions on the same lines as the New Zealand scheme.

The most striking impression made upon his mind during the coronation visit was England's apathy regarding the danger that threatened her manufacturing supremacy, and he gave her four clear-cut pieces of advice :—

- (1) Adopt up-to-date ideas.
- (2) Establish confidence between workers and employers.
- (3) Do not hang on to obsolete machinery.
- (4) Be less conservative.

The cartoons and the jokes made in the press at his expense were quite a feature of the visit. A good many imperialists in England thought that he had gone too far when he freely criticised the administration of affairs in South Africa, and one daily newspaper facetiously told its readers: "That we have no reason to believe that Mr. Seddon, of New Zealand, at present inspecting South Africa, has arranged to succeed Lord Salisbury at and after the coronation; while another report that he intends to take over the Colonial Office and the War Office and run them together as one department, which they were before 1854, is at least premature."

"The Put-on and Take-off Tax" is the title of a cartoon. Mr. Chamberlain is shown working at his desk in the Colonial Office. Behind him hangs a portrait of Mr. Seddon, and on a table stands a frame bearing the words, "What Seddon says." "Seddon" and "Imperial Zollverein" are clearly visible on the papers on the desk. The Chancellor of the Exchequer enters and says: "I'll tell you what it is, Chamberlain, if this peace comes very soon I'll be hanged if I don't drop the bread tax." Mr. Chamberlain says: "Good heavens, don't do that! What shall I say to Seddon when he comes?" "Send him to my room," replies the Chancellor. This cartoon was suggested by the rumour that the Cabinet was divided on the question of dropping the tax and the Chancellor (Sir Michael Hicks-Beach) had threatened to resign if the tax was maintained in the event of a speedy declaration of peace.

Another London cartoon was entitled: "Suicide or Seddon." It referred to his statement that Great Britain must withdraw altogether from the suicidal position which it had maintained for years in regard to trade and commerce. In the cartoon, John Bull lies on his back on a stone labelled "Protection," to which he is firmly bound by ropes. Above him there is suspended by hook and tackle a massive block labelled "Zollverein." Mr. Chamberlain is pushing the stone towards John Bull's body, while Mr. Seddon lowers it by the rope. Both men have taken their coats off for the work of "laying the foundation." Mr. Chamberlain cries, "Lower away, Seddon." John Bull, who has an agonised expression on his face, exclaims,

"Here, I say, what're you doing?" "We're saving you from suicide!" replies Mr. Seddon.

There was genuine regret when the time came for his departure. Just before he left, he sent the following letter to the London press:—

"On the eve of my departure from the Mother Country for New Zealand, I feel I cannot leave without expressing through the medium of your valuable paper my appreciation of the hospitality that has been extended everywhere and at all times to myself, as one of the representatives of the self-governing colonies beyond the seas who visited the Old Country on the occasion of the Coronation of His Majesty. The very kind manner in which I have been treated will afford much pleasure to the people of New Zealand, and I deem the courtesies that have been extended to me more a compliment to the colony than to myself personally. I hope that the confidence and goodwill now existing between the Motherland and the dominions beyond the seas may long continue, and that the labours of the colonial representatives may result in improved imperial trade relationship and further insure the stability of our great Empire."

One of the London newspapers headed the letter "Mr. Seddon's Encyclical," and another "By Royal Proclamation." The "St. James's Gazette," in a happily-worded leaderette, expressed in the following words the general impression that Mr. Seddon had made upon London, England, and the whole of the United Kingdom:—

"We have, more's the pity, lost our semi-royal visitor. Or, rather, it would perhaps be more correct to say that he has gone before his welcome has outworn itself. But he has left something more tangible than mere happy memories behind him; and for the moment we refer rather to the encyclical which has made its august appearance in our morning paper than the work which he has accomplished in the cause of Imperial Federation. For the work is more or less in secret, while the letter is written openly. 'On the eve of my departure,' writes Mr. Seddon, and it is the general tone of his graceful letter of appreciation of English hospitality that gives us pause at this sentence. Surely 'my' should have been 'our?' There is indeed in all the deeds, and more especially in all the words, of the splendid Mæcenas of our poor little home-grown institutions something so characteristically regal that the final proclamation issued by H.S.H. R.J.S. seems quite in character. Here in the impoverished heart of 'our great Empire' we have the kindest feelings for the Premier of New Zealand, and we are glad that he is pleased with us."

The following year, he gave effect to his suggestions at the Premiers' Conference by introducing into the New Zealand House of Representatives the Preferential and Reciprocal Trade Act, which places additional duties on certain goods not produced or manufactured in the Empire, and imposes duties on

foreign goods that were once imported free. The Act abolishes the duty on tea grown in the Empire, and supplies machinery for establishing reciprocal trade relations.

In introducing the Bill, he said he believed that it was the duty of all who wished the Empire well to facilitate the granting of preferential trade with the Mother Country, but he thought that it was better to go further, take a broader view, and give preference to all within the Empire. He looked upon the Act as hardly anything more than an affirmation of a principle. It seemed to him to be only an instalment of a great deal that was to come afterwards. He scouted the idea of receiving something from the Mother Country in return. He refused to take up that attitude at the Premier's Conference, and gave another refusal in the colony. New Zealand, he said, must be prepared to give, and he left it to the Mother Country to say what the return should be, or whether there should be any return at all.

He never ceased to look upon the Empire's trade as its life-blood, and he often said that the vaunted open door of the United Kingdom was the open Sheol of trade and the Hades of the British manufacturer and workman.

He pointed out the importance of Great Britain establishing and maintaining supremacy in the Pacific. He lost few opportunities of expressing the strong opinion he held on this question. He believed that English statesmen did not realise the danger which he saw in the distance. A few months before he died, he wrote to a friend in England:—

“The Pacific Islands question is of paramount importance. Under the altered conditions now existing, which in the future will be greatly changed, to the advantage of other nations, by the construction of the Nicaragua and Panama Canal, numbers of industries will be greatly affected. In fact, it is difficult to grasp the momentous issues involved. Unless British statesmen grasp the situation and provide therefor, they will find in years to come the weak spot. They will discover that the most deadly blow will be struck at our Empire in the Pacific itself.

“The Japanese have stopped the Russians in the East, and what is going to happen in the West, who can tell? It is well ever to be prepared. With industries crippled and food supplies stopped, the people in the heart of our great Empire will be in a bad way. It is not too late for action. Prevention is better than cure, and we must be up and doing. If our kindred at Home do their part, then the self-governing colonies will not fail when the occasion arises. Meantime, wherever possible, the British flag should float over the islands of the Pacific.”



Mr. Seddon and Sir Joseph Ward at a welcome given by the Maoris to the Hon. Huia Onslow, son of Lord Onslow, a former Governor of New Zealand, in 1904.

In 1891, the Hon. Huia Onslow, who was then one year of age, was inducted as a chief of the Ngatihuiua tribe, of Ohaki, in the North Island. On his return to the Colony in December, 1904, he was welcomed at a gathering of the Ngatihuiua and Ngatiraukawa tribes.

On several occasions, he referred to his policy of annexing islands to New Zealand, and he remarked: "I never stood such jeering as when I was fighting this question."

He spoke in angry tones of the apathy of British statesmen in this respect:—

"They foolishly lost Samoa. The steamer was there tearing at her hawsers, and everything was in readiness to take possession. The king and islanders were prepared to be annexed—in fact anxious to come in with New Zealand—but Downing Street intervened, and Samoa was lost and given to America. Great credit is due to Sir Robert Stout and Sir Julius Vogel for the effort to save Samoa. The imperial statesmen did not grasp the full significance of the loss of this and other islands. New Zealand was injured, as Samoa was close to it and lay on the track of the West. Through their muddling and through their mistakes irreparable injury was done to New Zealand by the British statesmen of that day.

"As to the Sandwich Islands, the Republican Government was prepared to support a protectorate under America and Britain. I interviewed John Sherman, Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on the subject, but that gentleman told me there was no danger. To interfere with these islands, said Mr. Sherman, would be contrary to the Monroe Doctrine, and he did not himself approve of a protectorate. America, he said, would be true to her Monroe Doctrine. I then saw President M'Kinley, who put quite a different complexion on the position. He said, 'You know, Mr. Seddon, American interests are so great—there is so much American capital there: there is the cane interest of San Francisco, then there is the beetroot sugar question—that we find great difficulty in our country in that respect, and it is important to us. And,' said he, 'I will urge all I can that those islands shall be annexed to America.'

"I subsequently saw the representative of Great Britain on arrival in England, and made representations strongly urging that, in the interests of the Empire and New Zealand, British statesmen should do their duty and save these islands. At that time a third of the boats trading between San Francisco and New Zealand belonged to New Zealand. They were doing a large business with Hawaii, and I knew that if the American coastwise laws were to be applied New Zealand steamers would be shut out. Two of the Ministers of the islands were New Zealanders, and the majority of the Sandwich Islanders wanted the islands to be British, and my idea was to have a protectorate as a step in that direction. Further representations were made in London, but they were pooh-poohed. America, they said, would never annex; but within three years those valuable islands formed part of the American Republic, and British and New Zealand trade was shut out.

"Then with regard to Noumea, Sir George Grey urged, as far back as 1853, that it should form part of New Zealand—and the chiefs wanted to be annexed to New Zealand—they wanted it to be British. Sir George begged Downing Street to make the annexation, but, apparently, from sheer indifference, no action was taken. Shortly after that the Marist Brothers arranged with some agents who were there, the French hoisted their flag, and Noumea and New Caledonia became annexed to France. These losses were incalculable, and it was a pity that such statesmen should ever have been entrusted with the destinies of Great Britain.

"The Philippines are also American. Undoubtedly America is pursuing an inter-island policy, and has entirely departed from the Monroe Doctrine. It was only the other day that President Roosevelt said that the Stars and Stripes should dominate the Pacific. I say the flag that should dominate the Pacific is the Union Jack.

"In New Zealand we are face to face with the New Hebrides difficulty. At one time the New Hebrides actually belonged to New Zealand, having been included in the latitudinal and longitudinal bearings, but subsequently this was altered and the islands were left out. I wish that they had been allowed to remain. They are valuable islands and are close to New Zealand, only about four days away.

"A long time ago a despatch was sent from this country to the British Government, in which it was plainly and distinctly laid down what was believed to be a proper course for the British Government to follow. Some other arrangement should have been made with France, in the way of compensations or concessions elsewhere, in consideration of her ceding her claims in the New Hebrides to Britain. As things are, it would be better if they divided the New Hebrides, Britain taking one part and France the other. The protectorate between the two nations is dangerous, as it may lead to friction between the two Powers, and ultimately end in Britain ceding everything to France. In these matters the Opposition should join with the Government. In all such cases party matters should be sunk, and we should stand together for the good of our colony and the advancement and solidarity of the greatest Empire the world has ever known."

CHAPTER XX.

THE HUMANIST.

The process of evolution did not stop at imperialism. Passing on to still greater things, he became a humanist, eager to do something for humanity's sake.

"All legislation which I have brought to bear upon the human side of life is the legislation which counts most with me," he said to a newspaper interviewer once; "there is much talk of men being Radicals, Conservatives, Socialists, and Liberals. I am none of these. I am a humanist. I desire to improve the conditions of the people, to inspire them with hope, to provide for their comfort, and to improve them socially, morally, and politically."* The humanity stage came last of all, and if he had lived longer he would have done more in the humanitarian field of work.

It was an open secret among his friends that of all the measures he brought into operation, he took most pleasure and pride in the Old Age Pensions scheme. He fought for it as he never fought for anything else in his life. He rightly looked upon it as his greatest achievement. The sending of the contingents, the annexation of territory, the saving of the Bank of New Zealand, Premiers' Conferences, reciprocal treaties, and preferential tariffs, all fell back in his estimation behind his Old Age Pensions scheme. "If I succeed in passing an Act that guarantees a pension to the deserving aged poor," he said to himself some years after he became Premier, "I shall be doing a really great action."

There are members of Parliament who tell the wonderful story how he sat in the chair at the table of the House for

* *The Evening Post*, Wellington, May 1st, 1906.

eighty-seven hours to get the Bill through committee. "I doubt if I could bear the strain again," he remarked to a friend six years afterwards; "a man does not want to do that more than once or twice in a lifetime."

A short sketch has been given in a previous chapter of Sir Harry Atkinson's scheme of annuities. The proposal came from Canon Blakely, who took an absorbing interest in the subject, and wrote many newspaper articles showing that legislative action was feasible as well as desirable. Sir Harry was a humanist himself. He was thoroughly in earnest in all his attempts to improve the people's conditions; but he lacked a great deal that Mr. Seddon possessed, and failed to carry his proposals to the last stages. His scheme was supported in a dreamy manner by the country when he "stumped" the electorates with it in 1882, but he found that Parliament would not have it, and he allowed it to drop quietly out of politics. He had several conversations on the subject at the time with Mr. Seddon, who told him that a scheme involving compulsory contributions must fail in any country except Germany, where a standing army could enforce the payments. Mr. Seddon always believed that an Old Age Pensions scheme based on compulsory contributions was unworkable in a British country; the majority of the working-men, even in New Zealand, where wages were high, could not afford to pay. It was against the principle of compulsory contributions that he fought the hardest fights with members of the House, several of whom insisted upon having compulsory contributions or nothing. He did not believe it possible for the ordinary working-man, who maintains a family, pays rent, settles his accounts, and sends his children to school until they have passed the Sixth Standard, to pay insurance premiums or make other provision for old age.

He believed that the theoretical part of an Old Age Pensions scheme had been fully dealt with. There was nothing for him to do in that field. But there was great work to be done in devising a practical scheme, which would be applicable to the needs and circumstances of New Zealand. That was where his mission lay, and he took up the task carefully, thoughtfully, unflinchingly, and cheerfully.

He believed that it was in him to grapple with the subject, to overcome the difficulties, and be successful. Looking backward, he remembered that the colony had not hesitated to pledge itself to the extent of a million and a half sterling in order to give cheap money to the settlers. It had not hesitated to commit itself to a direct liability of two millions and a half, and also a contingent liability, at the time of the banking crisis. Early in the colony's history, its war with the Maori race cost between ten and eleven millions, and the people bore that burden also without demur. In these circumstances, he had no doubt that it would accept his new scheme, and pay the money that would help to make the lives of the destitute poor less miserable.

He had another way of looking at the question. The money borrowed for advancing to settlers, the fifteen millions spent on building railways, and the large sums expended on other public works, had benefited chiefly the land owners and the well-to-do classes, while it was the masses who supplied the money to pay the interest on these sums and the sinking funds. The colony had been committed to large liabilities for public works, and it did not seem to him unreasonable to ask the colony, in the hey-day of its prosperity, to commit itself to the payment of a sum of money that would give an annual pension to insure old colonists against pressing want.

At the time of the Maori war, the colony passed a Military Claims and Land Settlements Act, giving land-grants to those who fought in the war, although they may have been engaged in it for only a few months. To attract military men, land-grants were given to them if they would come and settle in the colony, even if they took no part in the war, and many old soldiers came from India and England and other countries in the Empire, and settled under those conditions. He pointed out that that was really a system of pensions, which sometimes proved to be very valuable ones, and he used the regulations under the Act as further arguments in favour of granting pensions to old people.

He knew that the difficulties which had surrounded Old Age Pensions schemes in the Old Country did not exist in New

Zealand. A careful study showed him that he was in an entirely different position from that in which other British statesmen stood when they were appalled with the mass of obstruction before them and were afraid to take one step forward.

He startled Parliament towards the end of the session of 1896 by introducing, without warning, an Old Age Pensions Bill. The country had taken very little interest in the matter; no one, apparently, had demanded it; and no member of the House seemed to know that the Premier's thoughts were running in that direction. The Bill was crude. He had not worked out the details, and had no fixed opinion in regard to some of the minor provisions. What he had made up his mind to adhere to was that everybody should contribute to the scheme, and that it should be a State concern from beginning to end. He did not say that it was right that the wealthy should pay for the pensions of the poor; but he argued that those who had acquired wealth should not have pensions, as there would be no necessity for them to fall back upon a State institution for assistance. He proposed that every person over 65 years of age, whose income, other than from personal exertion, was less than £52 a year, should receive 10s. a week. He placed great faith in that 10s. a week. He believed that it would turn the course of many men's lives, as it would give them something to look forward to, and would let them know that the State would not forsake them in their old age. It was to be some kind of a temperance reform, to save men from taking to drink in their despair, and it was to keep them out of the refuges and gaols. He roughly estimated the cost at £250,000 a year.

A general election was quite close when he introduced the Bill, and his opponents accused him of trying to catch the popular vote by holding out a benefit which he never intended to confer. The hasty manner in which the Bill was drawn up gave colour to this, and they said: "You are not in earnest; we shall hear no more of this after the general election." To this and other criticisms he replied: "You will see."

Very few members, however, were courageous enough to vote against the second reading of the Bill, which was carried

by a large majority. In committee, however, the opposition to the proposal was shown by the number and nature of the amendments moved. An opinion was held by many members that the pensions should apply to all persons, without reservation in regard to income or property. Mr. Seddon said that it was quite hopeless to expect the colony to find a sufficient sum to meet the demands of a scheme of that extent, and he withdrew the Bill rather than agree to the extension of the scope. His intention at that time was to find funds to pay the pensions out of a graduated stamp tax, a mortgage tax, a ticket-tax on entertainments, and a totalisator tax, but the means from those sources were limited, and would not allow him to go as far as the House desired. The Bill was withdrawn, but his object had been gained. He had ascertained that an Old Age Pensions scheme of some form was acceptable, and he was encouraged by many offers of help to turn out of the legislative machine a really practical and workable measure.

At the general election of 1896 the principle was much discussed, and was generally approved, but there were still many different opinions as to details. In the session of 1897 Mr. Seddon's Bill appeared again. It was more workable and practical now. Steps had been taken to find approximately how many persons came under the scheme. Applications for registration had been invited, and it was found that 8000 claims were admitted. Mr. Seddon realised then that 10s. a week would be too heavy a drain on the colony's resources, and he brought down the pension from £26 to £18 a year, or 7s. a week, all persons whose ascertained wealth exceeded £36 a year to be excluded. On a basis of £18 a year, he felt that he had reached a sound finance, and that there need be no anxiety on that score. He retained the age and property restrictions, and he estimated that there would be 10,000 claimants, so that £180,000 would have to be provided.

He had changed his mind in regard to the method of establishing a fund. He discarded the idea of special taxation, and now said that the whole of the money would have to come out of the Consolidated Fund, the colony's general account. At that time £300,000 was being taken from the fund for public

works, which in Australia, and previously in New Zealand, were constructed out of borrowed moneys. He pointed out that that drain on the fund could be reduced, if necessary, in order to have sufficient money to pay the pensions. There were other ways of reducing the colony's general expenses if the worst came to the worst, and he hinted pointedly that there were some high salaries in the Civil Service that could come down before the old age pensioners were made to suffer.

He had another object in taking the money out of the Consolidated Fund. He believed that it would insure the scheme for all time, as the pensions would rank as one of the first claims on the fund, in the same way as the capitation under the Education Act and other charges, and the money to pay the pensions would always be available. He argued that if he fixed any particular tax upon specific items to meet the expenditure, he would be face to face with the fact that those who paid the particular tax would become the enemies of the scheme, and might ultimately wreck it. Another argument that weighed with him in placing the burden on the colony's general funds was that the pensioners would be able to say that they were not dependent upon the land owners, or people who attended entertainments, or anyone else. They would have contributed their share to the Consolidated Fund, and it was out of the Consolidated Fund that they should be given their pensions. In going through the goldfields he often met with old miners who would rather die in poverty than accept charitable aid donations, which they considered degrading. His pension scheme would enable them to take money from the State without compunction, as it would be given as a right. He emphasised that point persistently, saying repeatedly that his scheme contained no element of charity.

The principal objections against the Bill were that the people would not be satisfied with the restricted pensions Mr. Seddon proposed to give; they would demand an increase in the sum, and a reduction in the age limit; a popular chamber would be unable to resist the pressure, and the cost of the scheme would be enormously increased in a few years, when the colony might not be so well able to pay; the population of the colony

was only 800,000, and it was hardly able to take up such a tremendous burden; it would be a piece of heartless cruelty to pay the pensions for a few years and then withdraw them; the scheme was likely to discourage the thrifty and encourage the thriftless in their bad ways; it would speedily create an army of sturdy beggars; it offered no incentive to work, and men and women would just wait for the time when the pension would be due; it would detract from the self-reliant spirit that was necessary in the working classes; New Zealand might have the hollow honour of leading the English-speaking people in establishing Old Age Pensions, but it would be making itself a laughing-stock for the whole world; in any case, the scheme was only an extension of the charitable aid system, and there was nothing more demoralising than to encourage people to throw themselves on the State in their old age; they must be encouraged to practice thrift and self-reliance. The strongest attack against the scheme, however, was made on the ground that it did not provide for individual contributions, and did not apply to all aged people. Sir William Russell urged these points strongly, and he was well supported. "If we specially bring up our people to rely entirely on the State and thereby encourage pure Socialism, it will tend to destroy our civilisation," he said, "while if we bring them up not to rely on the State, but on their own endeavours, it will advance our civilisation. I believe that the Socialistic methods now preached throughout the world will, if allowed to prevail, gradually destroy our civilisation."

Again the Bill passed its second reading with a large majority; but in committee it had a stormy passage. There is probably no measure on the colony's Statute Book that has been so battered and torn. Eighty-nine amendments were moved, and 945 speeches were made, Mr. Seddon contributing 147. The House again decided that the pension should be granted to all old people. Mr. Seddon said that in that case he would again drop the Bill. Members, however, were in a very rebellious mood. In opposition to his wish, they said that the Bill should be gone on with, and one member offered to take the chair at the table and pilot the Bill through, as an affirmation

of the principle that measures of that nature could be taken in hand by private members as well as by Ministers.

Mr. Seddon was so incensed at this that he adjourned the House for an afternoon, saying that he would have to consider the Government's position.

The Bill went to the Legislative Council; but there it met with determined and unveiled hostility. The Council decided that the scheme should be laid aside because no opportunity had been given to consider its scope and operation and its effect on existing benefit societies; its financial proposals were unsatisfactory; it was not based on carefully prepared estimates or actuarial calculations; it was practically a form of conditional relief, open to the risk of great injustice in administration, and should be considered with the whole question of charitable aid. The Bill was therefore dropped for that session.

Parliament, knowing Mr. Seddon's determination, was not surprised to see the Old Age Pensions Bill on the order-paper in 1898. It was his third and final attempt. There was another stormy passage in committee of the House. The opposition displayed by opponents was dogged and obstinate, but not as dogged and obstinate as Mr. Seddon himself. It was on this occasion that he had the great battle to fight. The House sat uninterruptedly in committee for nearly ninety hours, and more than 1,400 speeches were made.

Mr. Seddon's strength seemed almost to give way. For a long time, in the small hours of the morning, he would sit in the chair, with his head fallen forward and his arms crossed on his chest, more than half asleep, while the droning of a member's speech fell on his ears.

After one of those all-night sittings, the House presented a worn-out appearance. When members reassembled after breakfast, the floors were dusty and strewn with papers, as if a paper-chase had taken place around all the desks and had ended at the Premier's chair, where a snowdrift of paper had piled up. The chamber bore many signs of having been used as a dormitory during the night. Almost every bench had a ministerial grey blanket or an opposition or independent rug huddled into one corner, and cushions were lying about in confusion. Members were still to be seen endeavouring to snatch an hour's rest.

Occasional remarks came from the recumbent figures, and the Chairman of Committees, in a loud voice, asked that members should not speak whilst lying down.

Opposition members moved many amendments that they never expected the House to take seriously. Sir William Russell took an active part in the proceedings. An amendment to exempt horse-trainers and jockeys from the provisions of the Bill gave him an opportunity to deal at length with the work, training, and responsibilities of jockeys. He described the methods adopted by jockeys to reduce their weight, the antics of a thorough-bred horse while being brushed down, and the dangers of a jockey's life. He spoke on the subject time after time, taking up the thread of the dissertation, until he exhausted all the information he possessed, and the committee, having negatived the amendment, went on to other clauses of the Bill.

Modified in scope and duration, but an Old Age Pensions scheme still, the measure passed through the House and on to the Legislative Council. The Speaker of the latter body ruled that it was a Money Bill; it could not be amended by the Council, and must be either accepted or rejected.

Mr. Seddon had strengthened his position in the Council by the appointment of new members. In any case, the Council hardly cared to flout him again. It accepted the Bill, which became law at the end of the year. He had done his duty to the deserving poor. The cause for which he had valiantly fought was the cause of humanity, and many thousands of people now look back with gratitude to what he has done for them.

Mr. Seddon rapidly prepared his machinery and regulations. Registrars were appointed, districts were proclaimed and gazetted, and claimants were invited to send in their applications without delay. By January, 1899, Magistrates were busy inquiring into thousands of claims, and by March the pensions were actually being paid.

The people took more interest in the measure after it was passed than they did in Mr. Seddon's strenuous efforts to get it through Parliament. The Magistrates' Courts presented strange sights, and were the scene of some striking incidents, when

they were opened to the applicants. Mr. Reeves has given an interesting description of this in his "State Experiments." He says:—

"One magistrate, who had 693 cases set down for inquiry before him, announced at the outset his intention of disposing of them at the rate of fifty per diem. Another, less energetic, was satisfied to take them in batches of twenty. The actual rate at which they were heard seems to have been about thirty a day. The courts, on the days of hearing, were an odd, and rather a touching, sight. The lame, the halt, and the blind were there in evidence. Here was some white-bearded pioneer, crippled with rheumatism contracted in the wet New Zealand bush; there, a luckless gold-seeker, maimed by some mining accident; or a seamstress, poverty-stricken through failure of her eyesight. On the whole, however, the old people seemed of good physique and well fed. Almost all looked decent folk; hardly any but were clean, fairly intelligent, and neatly clad. The comfortable appearance of many was explained by their being supported by the earnings of grown-up children. Others had sallied forth from State charitable institutions, called the Old Men's Homes. A number were still earning a wage, often small and precarious. Generally speaking, the applicants seem to have been frank enough about themselves. Some did not know their age, a difficulty which, however, was usually surmounted by a little patience and the examination of documentary evidence. Several candidly admitted the date of their birth, and retired silent and crestfallen on it being explained to them that they would have to wait a few months before reaching the legal age. One old fellow could not say how old he was, but was certain that his married daughter was forty-eight, and so on. The calculation of minute incomes produced some amusement. The proud and affluent possessor of £39 a year of his own retired only half satisfied with a certificate for a pension of £13, and almost envious of the entirely incomeless woman to whom the full pension of £18 was adjudged. Clergymen, former employers, and neighbours, were brought in as witnesses to character—policemen also, occasionally. The evidence of any neighbour or friend of good standing and repute was usually accepted as sufficient. The police, at first, watched the cases in Court, and, as a rule, their presence was enough to keep fraud in check. A significant feature was the tiny amount disclosed of dire and utter poverty relatively to the whole population of the colony. Poor people there were; but there was little trace of the sordid, dismal, social wreckage of the Old World—the rubbish and 'tailings' of urban society."

Up to 1905, the full amount of pension paid was £18 a year, as Mr. Seddon proposed in his first complete Bill, but in the amending Bill of 1905, the sum was increased to £26, and the Act was widened in other directions. The pension is now paid to all men and women over 65 years of age who have resided in the colony continuously for 25 years before the date of application. There are several reservations in this respect, however, and occasional absence does not disqualify unless the



Mr. Seddon and General Booth in Wellington, in 1905 (with members of the Ministry and General Booth's staff).

period is over three years. The claimant must not have been sent to gaol for four months during the twelve years preceding the date of application for a serious charge, "dishonouring him in the public estimation;" the desertion of wife or husband and of children is also a disqualification. The applicant must be of good moral character generally, and, for the five years immediately preceding the date of application, at any rate, must have been leading a sober and reputable life. At first no one with a yearly income of £52 could claim the pension, but the sum was altered in 1905 to £60. The joint income of husband and wife, including the pension, must not exceed £90, an increase of £12 on the sum originally fixed. The net capital value of the applicant's property must not amount to £260. The pension is diminished by £1 for every complete pound of income over £34, and by the same sum for every complete ten pounds' worth of net accumulated property. The pension is paid each month. Pensioners may be disqualified at any time by a Magistrate, who may order a pensioner to forfeit instalments of the pension in cases of drunkenness. The Maoris come into the scheme, but no aliens, Chinese, or other Asiatics can claim pensions. The total sum spent in pensions in 1906 was about £300,000. The ages of the pensioners range from 65 years to 104 years, and among them are between 600 and 700 Maoris.

At the time of his death, Mr. Seddon was engaged on a scheme of national annuities, which, no doubt, he would have carried through with the same determination that he brought to bear on his Old Age Pensions Act. Full details of his fresh project he did not make public, but the scheme may be stated briefly by saying that it embodied voluntary contributions subsidised by the State.

He proposed that, in order to receive an annuity in later years, any person, male or female, rich or poor, should be allowed to deposit with the Government any sum, paid in instalments, if desired, and the sum should be increased by the Government's subsidy. As soon as the deposit was completed, there would be an end to the liability of the depositor. Compound interest would accrue on both deposit and subsidy. The

rate of the subsidy would vary according to circumstances. A poor man's deposit, he suggested, should be subsidised to the extent of 25 per cent., while the well-to-do would receive only 10 per cent. Between these extremes there would be a gradual scale. A further point he would have taken into consideration when deciding the rate of subsidy is the size of the depositor's family; the larger the family the larger would be the subsidy. Incidentally, he believed, that provision might help the solution of the birth-rate problem. Mr. Seddon gave an example of the operation of his scheme. "A young man of five-and-twenty, of the clerk or artizan class," he said, "deposits, say, £10, either in a lump sum or in instalments, as he prefers. This, with the Government subsidy, and interest additions, is brought up to about £25, which will yield him at the age of sixty an annuity of ten shillings a week; that is if he marries and has an average family. If he has a large family the annuity will be greater owing to the increased amount of the subsidy. On the other hand, if he does not marry, or if he marries and is childless, the subsidy will be on a lower scale, and the annuity consequently smaller. Once he has paid his £10 he will have no further liability."

In his scheme, a depositor might begin to draw his annuity, if he wanted to do so, at any time, not less than fifteen years from the date of completing his deposit, but, of course, in that case he would get a smaller amount than if he waited till he was sixty. If a husband, however, joined the fund, he would not be permitted to anticipate the annuity without the consent of his wife; and, similarly, a wife would be unable to do so without the consent of her husband. Special arrangements would have been made for people joining the fund when past the age of forty-five. Another feature of the proposal was a provision giving to the members of Friendly Societies subsidies in excess of the ordinary subsidies paid, and in some instances these subsidies would amount to as much as ninety per cent.

Mr. Seddon had the scheme examined by actuaries, and he was assured that it was workable and financially sound. He had no intention of abolishing the Old Age Pensions.

It was his intention that the two systems should exist side by side, but he hoped that, though there would be an inevitable residuum of the thriftless, the pensioner would in time become practically absorbed in the annuitant. He desired that many young married people should take advantage of the scheme. What he really wanted was power to compel everybody to join in it in proportion to his or her means. The difficulty which confronted him was that English-speaking people would not tolerate compulsion. He intended to do the next best thing by persuading people to help themselves in spite of themselves. He did not believe that his scheme would cost the State any more money than it paid at present; he even hoped that it would bring about a saving. At present the Government subsidises charities to the extent of £100,000 a year, and he felt that when his annuity scheme was put into operation the bulk of that expenditure, as well as a great deal of the expenditure on Old Age Pensions, would be saved.

He believed that the scheme was practical and possible. "Strength and health," he said in 1906, "may be left to look after themselves, but when years bring their burdens, the claims upon our human kindness increase. Old Age Pensions, we were told, when we introduced the Bill, would destroy thrift, encourage idleness and extravagance, and spell all sorts of social trouble. We forced this 'humanity' through Parliament; and who to-day, of all those who opposed it, would venture to declare against it on the hustings? Apprehensions of poverty in old age often darken advancing years, and we will next session try to institute a system of State annuities by which the Government will subsidise the thrift and savings of the people, to provide them with a comfortable income in their old age."

It was his doctrine that the life, the health, the intelligence, and the morals of a nation counted for more than riches. He wanted to see his country free from want and squalor and the unemployed. That was to him a far better condition than if the colony became the home of multi-millionaires. He was striving to make "New Zealander" a title of honour to the bearer wherever he went. He thought that it ought to imply a type of manhood "strenuous, independent, and humane."

He was not a theorist, but a practical reformer. Unlike Sir George Grey, he took up no reform until he was prepared to apply it immediately. If it was not practical, and if the time was not ripe, he would lay it aside or wait. In the meanwhile he would not waste time and energy on it. He never expected to do things all at once, and was not disappointed when he failed. He would try again by-and-by, more strenuously. He was willing to take small profits and slow returns. He did not despise piecemeal methods. Short and steady stages were good enough for him. Slowly and surely he removed obstructions to the people's development, and offered facilities to bring about a better state of affairs. That was what he had in his mind when he talked of humanitarian legislation. It was that spirit which he endeavoured to infuse into all the progressive laws and State experiments tried by his Government. He liked to call those measures "Our Humanities." He even had a classification for them, placing them in the following order:—

- (1) Humanity for the mother and the infant.
- (2) Humanity for the young.
- (3) Humanity for the worker.
- (4) Humanity for the old and feeble.

His memorandum on the preservation of child life, sent out to the people through the newspaper press in 1904, was widely read. In it he sketched many new departures and made many suggestions, some of which he saw embodied in laws before he passed away. His mind had been greatly exercised by the Report of a Royal Commissioner in New South Wales on the falling-off in the natural increase. He set his officers to collect information in New Zealand, and when the results of the inquiry were placed before him, he saw that the evil existed in his colony as well as in Australia, although not to the same extent. He was led to the conclusion that it was his duty to do something for the preservation of infant life. He was there to prevent sorrow and affliction as far as he could.

"Too much money is spent in coffins, headstones, and funeral expenses," he said; "and it is pure hypocrisy to

bewail the want of a proper natural increase unless we do something substantial in the way of saving the infant life that is born into the colony. I may be told that these things should be left entirely to the benevolent and philanthropic. Such objection may be applicable to older countries in certain cases; but we must deal with things as we find them. We have no leisured classes, and we have not many people of ample means. Therefore, the responsibility of saving these valuable lives falls on the State. The necessity for action is admitted by all; and in these circumstances, at the risk of jibes and sneers from those who ever resist and oppose the expansion of State functions, humanity, in my opinion, demands that we should do something in the direction I have indicated, thus preserving life, increasing our population, and proving our claims to a higher civilization. This scheme, will, of course, meet with opposition, and some may be unkind enough to say that, if wanted before, it is a sure sign of impaired health now. Let them say what they like; my heart prompts me in my present proposal."

The scheme he devised at the prompting of his heart is embodied in the Midwives Act, passed in 1904. Any woman is entitled to be registered under the Act on paying a fee and satisfying the registrar that she has been practising as a midwife for at least three years before the Act came into operation, and that she has a good character. At State-owned maternity homes, pupil-nurses may, on paying a fee, be carefully instructed in the duties required for attending to the welfare of mother and child. Instructions are given to the pupils by means of lectures outside of the hospital, and by midwifery work. There are regulations for the examination of the pupil-nurses; and every nurse who successfully passes the examination is given a certificate. The District Health Officer appointed under the Public Health Act is a supervising authority over the midwives in his district, and may investigate charges of negligence. A heavy fine may be imposed on anyone who practises as a midwife without having been registered.

The Act is the first of its kind the colony has put into operation, but Mr. Seddon intended that it should be but the

first of a series of enactments on the same lines, designed to help mothers and infants. In going into the figures, he was shocked to learn that in one decade no fewer than 20,487 children under five years of age had died in the colony, and of that number as many as 15,767 died before reaching the age of one year. The argument upon which he placed most reliance in appealing to Parliament to pass the Bill was that when the colony lost its children it lost its population, and that the loss of the children, or the want of child-life, showed that the nation was decaying. It was stated that in establishing these maternity homes he was legislating almost solely for the working classes, but he denied that, and said that no woman need be ashamed to go into the homes, as the institutions would be able to command the very best medical and nursing skill that could be obtained in the colony.

There was a remarkable unanimity of opinion in favour of the Bill when it was submitted to the House for its second reading. Every member who spoke supported the principle. Several criticised the details, but not in a hostile spirit, and all showed that the Premier had entirely carried them with him in that "humanity." Amidst hearty congratulations, Mr. Seddon started upon this part of his "humanity" scheme. It was essentially an auspicious beginning. No measure ever introduced into the House of Representatives was received with greater favour by all members. There was no tinge of party feeling in the discussion, which became a eulogium.

If Mr. Seddon had lived he would have seen other portions of his child-preservation scheme received with the same hearty good-will.

He was intensely fond of children. Nothing delighted him more than to be amongst them, to listen to their prattle, and to hear their voices raised in cheers when, at a visit from him during school hours, they were given a holiday to celebrate the occasion. He never ceased to look upon the children, apart from the charm of their years, as coming colonists, who would have to carry on the work he and other statesmen had taken in hand; and he felt that in putting his humanitarian policy into operation he was not only making the lives of those around him

less hard to bear, but was also doing his best for the future happiness of New Zealand.

He noticed that amongst the poorly-housed working classes, when sickness overtakes young children, difficulty is experienced in getting them to the ordinary hospitals, and it often happens that medical aid is called in too late. To meet cases of this kind, he included in his preservation scheme founding hospitals, the State providing the money for the erection of the buildings and the maintenance of the institutions, the management to be handed over to committees, trustees, or ladies, "who, I am sure, will take a delight in performing this humane and philanthropic work."

He faced the risk of criticism when he affirmed that the State should provide nurses for the poor. He saw nothing revolutionary in this proposal. Indeed, it seemed to him to be quite natural. He said that the only direct return the masses received from the colony's general fund was in regard to free education. They supplied the lion's share of the nation's fund, and if the State gave nurses to the poor it would not do more than they might fairly claim.

To meet the demand for trained nurses in the colony, he urged that the Government should arrange with the trustees of the public hospitals to allow girls to be trained as nurses in the institutions, the State paying for the girls' board and lodging.

He was surprised when a clergyman told him that New Zealand was far behind other countries in regard to prevention of cruelty to children and in dealing with the neglect of parents in cases of sickness. Infant-nursing hospitals, on the lines of those established in the United Kingdom, were therefore included in his scheme.

It is only one step from infants' hospitals to day homes for infants, and he proposed that these also should be established, because they would be used largely by mothers who have to leave their homes to win their bread at charring, washing, and scrubbing. When they were away for a day or half a day, they could leave infants in the homes, where they would be attended to by the nurses and properly looked after until the mothers' return. To prevent the sacrifice of infant life on account of

insurance, he proposed that no child under ten years should be insured for more than £5.

The measures described in these pages are only some of those that deal with the "humanities." The humanitarian principle runs through many Acts passed by his Administration. It permeates the labour laws, the educational system, the land policy, and even the tariff. The long series of Acts stretching over fifteen or sixteen years of the colony's history is full of humanitarianism.

He once reviewed these "humanities," and he was not afraid of ridicule by beginning with the Midwives Act. He saw the scheme embodied in this measure sufficiently far advanced to enable him to open a maternity home at Dunedin. "The silent martyrs of life," he said on that occasion, "are the low-waged workers' wives, who keep the cradle full and bear the double burden of poverty and maternity. Can we not profitably lighten their cross and brighten their lives by this simple humanity? One great, large-hearted man in England declared that most of the children of the poor in that country were not so much born into life as damned into it; this reproach should have no truth in this prosperous land. The wages of the working classes seldom permit of comfort and skilled attendance. Feeling this, we have taken steps to establish maternity homes. My desire is that these homes will be available to all whose means will not permit of private comfort and skilled attendance. My earnest hope is that this 'humanity' may give the child a better chance of life and the mother a lighter burden to bear."



A cartoonist's representation of the joy in England when it was announced that Mr. Seddon would visit the Old Country. From *King Dick Abroad*.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN CARTOON AND STORY.

There is no colonial politician, with the exception, perhaps, of Sir Henry Parkes, who has been so often described in song and picture as Mr. Seddon, and there have been more stories told of him, probably, than of any other Colonial statesman of these times. He has been cartooned in almost all conceivable political situations. The prominence of the characteristics and talents that helped him on in his career has made him especially adaptable to the purposes of the cartoonist's art. Even before he became Premier he was looked upon as a man upon whom the comic journals might legitimately draw at any time. It is a sign of the popularity he enjoyed that the cartoons in which he figured are, with hardly a single exception, of a thoroughly good-natured character. There is no spleen in them. Mr. Seddon enjoyed the cartoonist's extravagant exaggerations of his words and actions as well as anybody, and he had many a hearty laugh when he saw himself as cartoonists saw him.

In the colony, he had two humorous publications given up mainly to his doings. In one, "King Dick Abroad," he is shown on his visit to South Africa, taking part in the negotiations for peace, advising Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener, pardoning the Boers, and telling Great Britain what to do. In one picture in this publication, Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, and other English statesmen are depicted dancing, evidently in great joy at news just received by the Imperial Government. The cause of this display of feeling is made known by Mr. Chamberlain, who says: "Hurrah, he's coming; King Dick of New Zealand has finally announced his intention of looking us up," and Lord Salisbury adds: "At last, success is assured!"

In South Africa, he is shown pardoning De Wet, who is kneeling before him and humbly offering his arms. On the voyage to England he is in conversation with Sir Thomas Lipton, to whom he says: "Now, look here, Lipton, you're a right good sport, but, hang it, man, you're not patriotic. Racing for the American Cup and giving Uncle Sam all the benefit of your cash isn't the thing. What do you say to promoting a sports syndicate to develop the sporting proclivities of the Empire? As for yachting, why New Zealand can arrange the finest winds in the world, and Shamrock III. and Columbia wouldn't be in it with Aorangi, and there are lots more knocking about Maoriland waters. Bring your yacht to New Zealand if you want some really good sport."

In another cartoon he is taken as a typical John Bull, standing full in the foreground of the picture, with Lord Salisbury, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Balfour, very small figures in comparison, in the background. He is dressed in the dark-felt hat, top boots, and cut-away coat usually worn by John Bull in pictures, and carries in his hand the orthodox hunting-crop, a specially thick and heavy one. He is speaking to Jonathan, who has his hands full of trusts and combines. "Jonathan, my boy," he says, "I'm just telling you gently, in a friendly sort of way, to stop it. These trusts and combines must be put down, and I'm the man to do it. As long as you act fairly and squarely with the Empire you can rely on Dick Seddon; but the moment you come the underhand on us, I will resent it in a way that will never be forgotten."

He appears before Lord Roberts in the uniform of a general. "Look here," he says to the Field Marshal, "you've got to drop all this red tape and sealing-wax. I'm not going to stand any of this kid-glove business." He is shown speaking through a telephone in England to Sir Joseph Ward in New Zealand, sending messages to the colony, and giving instructions to the Empire generally.

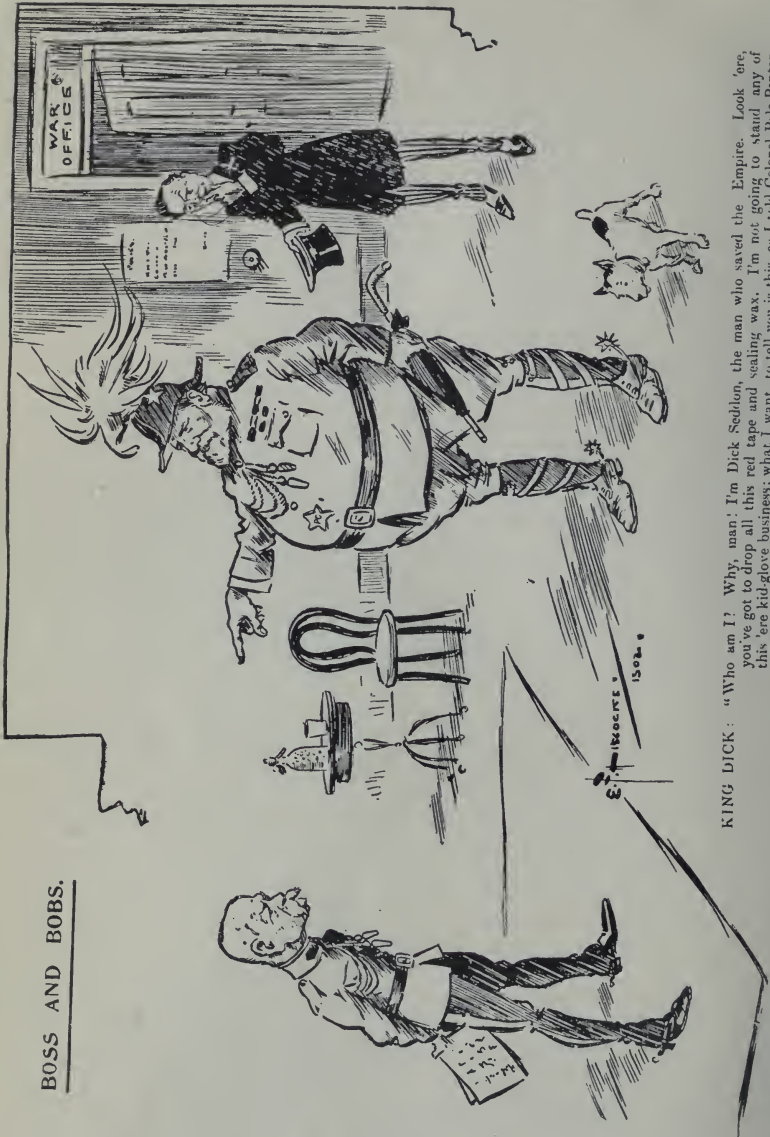
The political situations that he helped to bring about have often been drawn upon for cartoons, many of which have happily represented the attitude he took up. His successes at the polls have also been an inspiration to cartoonists, and he has been

THE FATHER OF HIS NATION.



KING DICK (as John Bull): Jonathan, me boy! I'm just telling you gently in a friendly sort of way to stop it. These Trusts and Combines must be put down, and I'm the man to do it. As long as you act fair and square with the Motherland you can rely on Dick Seddon; but the moment you come the underhand on us I'll resent it in a way that will never be forgotten.

BOSS AND BOBS.



KING DICK: "Who am I? Why, man; I'm Dick Seddon, the man who saved the Empire. Look 'ere, you've got to drop all this red tape and sealing wax. I'm not going to stand any of this 'ere kid-glove business; what I want to tell you is this, as I told Colonel Pole-Fenton at Palmerston—I'm BOSS; and don't you forget it."

From King Dick Abroad.

Mr. Seddon and the Field-Marshal.

placed in horse-races, boat-races, boxing bouts and military and naval engagements, in all of which he is either leading in the contest or defeating his opponents.

Punch could hardly be expected to let Mr. Seddon's visits to England pass without notice. New Zealand would probably have felt rather slighted if the famous humorist had failed to take notice of the Premier from over the seas. Shortly before he arrived in London in 1902, *Punch* published some notes from his diary at sea. The following extracts are taken from them :—

(Communicated by Marconi wire).

"Thursday,—Mr. Seddon has had a busy day. Directly after breakfast he summoned all the crew into the saloon and addressed them in a stirring harangue on the duties and privileges of the British sailor. One passage has excited considerable comment: 'I am not sure,' said Mr. Seddon, 'judging by what I have observed since I came on board, that there is not a disposition to impose too many restrictions on the sailors who do the work on board this ship. I strongly advise you when you receive an order to ask yourselves whether its execution is consistent with the inalienable rights of a Briton. If you find that it is not, it will obviously be your duty not to carry it out—at any rate, not without consulting me. I shall at all times,' continued Mr. Seddon, amidst great applause, 'be ready to give you advice on these points.' Some of the ship's officers, including the captain, seem disposed to think that Mr. Seddon spoke, if anything, just a little too strongly. They urge, too, that the captain's consent should have been asked before the crew were summoned to the saloon, as the absence of the men from their work might, under certain circumstances, have involved the ship in various risks. These remarks were, it is supposed, conveyed to Mr. Seddon, for during lunch he was heard to say that, as Premier of New Zealand, and a friend of the Colonial Secretary, he could not possibly submit to dictation from anyone—certainly not from the captain of a merchant vessel."

Punch also honoured him with a "Pæan" while he was in England on that occasion :

Oh, what an honour 'tis to be
The Premier of a colony !
Who is there wants to hear a speech
From B-l-f-r, Ch-mb-rl-in, or B-ch ?
But all eyes fill and cheeks redden
At every speech from Mr. S-dd-n ?

When during this colonial week
Anyone else essayed to speak,
A deep depression settled down,
I noticed, upon London Town,
Our hearts were cold, our spirits laden—
Until aroused by Mr. S-dd-n !

When in the streets a prince rode by
 We looked at him with careless eye ;
 Even the most distinguished peer
 Passed through our midst with scarce a cheer,
 But nothing in the world would deaden
 Our interest in Mr. S-dd-n !

Since this is so—and so it is—
 Since only eloquence like his
 With our imperial needs can cope,
 I venture to express the hope
 That England, at her Armageddon,
 Will have the help of Mr. S-dd-n !

The home of "Seddon" stories is the West Coast of New Zealand. It was there that he was best known as a man and a friend. On his visits to the Coast he threw aside all the trammels of office, and went among the people as one of them. His journeys to that part of the colony were triumphal processions, and royalty could hardly have aroused greater public interest.

In 1904 he celebrated his "political silver jubilee" by a special visit to the Coast, where he was received with unbounded enthusiasm. A journalist who accompanied him on that visit states that "if he rode or drove, young and old would wait along the road to do him honour. Red-cheeked children would swing on gates and wave hats and handkerchiefs; their parents would come forward with the certainty that Mr. Seddon would pull up and ask a few questions that would indicate his clear recollection of their family and affairs. In Kumara was Mr. Seddon's old home, whose trees he had planted with his own hands, and he never missed an opportunity of visiting the spot from which he had come forward to take charge of a young nation. When the Premier spoke of those old days, he became once more the genial 'Digger Dick,' whom the Coast has never allowed to sink in the Right Honourable R. J. Seddon."*

Another pen-picture by a journalist represents Mr. Seddon at a ceremony connected with the opening of a section of a railway on the Coast. The writer says:—"Gathering little knots around him, he spun yarns for their amusement, and started songs with rollicking choruses, in which his voice

* *New Zealand Times* (Wellington)



From the *Auckland Weekly News*.

THE PREFERENTIAL TRADE SCHEME.

Mr. Seddon is represented as a Kiwi (Apteryx), a flightless bird peculiar to New Zealand, which lays an extraordinarily large egg, quite out of proportion to the size of its body.

sounded jolliest. In these diversions he was assisted by his good wife (who shared the love of all Coasters, with her husband) and their daughter, Miss Mary Seddon. It was a unique spectacle this, to the few strangers present, to see the Prime Minister of the colony—the man who was a power in the British Empire—exerting himself to add to the people's enjoyment of the outing. Probably no Premier had ever done such a thing before. Later on, when he visited Ross, it was a sight to see the old men and women surrounding him with gladsome, welcome, and loving looks. One octogenarian hobbled up to Mr. Seddon, and, with tears streaming down his withered cheeks, exclaimed as the Premier shook him heartily by the hand, 'Oh, Mr. Seddon, thank God I have been permitted to see you before I die.' Before leaving Ross upon that occasion Mr. Seddon, who had just returned from a long and wearisome journey to the south, rushed up and down all the streets, and entered shops and dwellings to bid farewell to all the folk. These are the characteristics which endeared Mr. Seddon to his constituents, and there was no sordid element in their love."

Two stories are told to illustrate his hold on the affections of the people of the West Coast. It is related that one of his political opponents once approached an old miner with a request that the man would give him his vote in a parliamentary election. The old fellow looked at his questioner with a startled glance. "Is Dick dead, then?" he said. The other story states that an Old West Coaster, in the last days of a lingering illness, was visited by a friend from the East Coast, who inquired whether he needed anything to add to his comfort in his few remaining days. "No," was the reply; "Dick's seen to all that."

His birthday, and May 1st, the anniversary of the day he was sworn in as Premier, were red-letter days in the colony. On those days, he was compelled to discard any idea of business. He had no time to do anything but receive the congratulatory messages which streams of telegraph-messengers brought to his room all day long. The following are a few of the messages he received on the last May Day he saw:—

"Heartiest congratulations, and wish you continued health and happiness; from an old pensioner."

"Your thirteen years' Premiership has brought progress, prosperity and happiness to the people."

"Congratulations to the May King."

"Fourteenth lap."

"Most hearty congratulations on completion of your thirteenth year as Premier and to New Zealand on the happy and prosperous state to which she has been brought through your wise and beneficent statecraft. May the happy bond of union remain unbroken for years to come. *Kia ora.*"*

"May you continue for the colony's benefit for thirteen more."

"Congratulations on the fourteen, not out; hurrah!"

"May you carry out your bat."

"Warmest congratulations on your remarkable record; time only adds to your lustre; many happy returns of the anniversary."

"Banzai! Long live the King!"

"Please accept my heartiest congratulations on passing the thirteenth mile post, and still retaining unabated confidence people New Zealand. Long life."

The same deluge of messages poured in upon him as the result of each general election during his Premiership was made known in the newspapers of the colony. His last contest was fought in December, 1905. It was his greatest victory. For his opponents it was a *débâcle*, and as the result of that election the old Conservative Party practically passed away. The following may be selected from the immense piles of messages that almost smothered him the day after the poll:—

"Thank God!"

"*Kapai, Rangatira; kia ora, ake, ake, ake.*"†

"Congratulations for earning the confidence of the whole country that loves you so well."

"Verdict of the country should greatly encourage you to further service for good of people."

"Hearty congratulations on the practically unanimous recognition of your liberal and progressive administration."

"The greatest victory for Liberalism in the annals of the world."

"O King, live for ever!"

"Hurrah! King Dick still."

"Fifteen years' service rewarded. Hurrah!"

"Truth prevails, virtue hath its own reward."

"Te Whiti said, 'The potato is cooked.'"

"Congratulations. Steering on the old straight course, avoiding dangerous reefs."

"I salute the admiral. 'Tis a glorious victory."

"Good old Dick. I don't like it, but you are a warrior."‡

"Unprecedented success, you're simply knee-deep in clover."

"Old song says, 'And it was a glorious victory.'"

"*Kia ora koe.*"

"Congratulations from Canada."

*Maori for "Good luck" or "Long life." †Maori for "Well done, chief, live on for ever."
‡From an Opposition candidate.

An enthusiastic Liberal, eighty-two years of age, sent the following letter from Auckland :—

“I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the noble stand you are making to benefit our colony and to conciliate our kindred and neighbours abroad. We remember your sickness and weakness and weariness, and we know that those who are on your side are greater, more powerful, and outnumber those who are opposed to you. I write to bid you go forward: do not falter or faint. If God be for us, who shall be against us? Your work is before the whole world, and is being copied everywhere; but the battle is still raging, and the fight must go on. We shall need you for our leader to the very end of the conflict.

‘For the life of our leader, aye, now we plead,
Oh, spare him Lord, our country’s need.
Oh, lengthen out his earthly span,
God save our chief—our Grand Old Man.’

“I wrote the ‘Liberal March,’ and these words appear in the ‘Liberal March’ of twelve years ago, and they are still applicable, and we must and will pray for you to be spared. Sir George Grey was my master, and at his dictation I wrote that well-known telegram to you ‘to go forward,’ and to-day I say, ‘Thank God for your life and work.’”

Mr. Seddon is credited by a London newspaper with having given the loudest shout heard in the streets of London in these times. It was during the coronation festivities, when the colonial military contingents were marching along the Mall. A stand had been erected for the distinguished representatives of Greater Britain. Sir Wilfred Laurier, the Prime Minister of Canada, was astonished at the apathy of the crowd, and said: “These people want waking up. I say, Seddon, you have a good voice. Raise a cheer.” The New Zealand Premier took off his hat, waved it on high, and gave a cry that echoed from Buckingham Palace to St. Paul’s.

Those who came into close touch with him tell stories of his extraordinary energy. In the House, until ill-health made inroads upon his constitution, he seemed to do without sleep. He worked day and night in trains and steamers, sitting up till the small hours and rising to begin work again the first thing in the morning. His thirst for work was never satisfied. He found the hardest work doing nothing while he was under the doctor’s orders, which he often, in utter desperation, disobeyed.

Among many stories of his determination, one may be selected. It was told in the smoking room of a steamer by a gentleman who had known him in the early days. The scene

was the old West Coast and the time was in Mr. Seddon's pre-parliamentary days. He had become well known, however, and, as a reward for his services, it was decided that he should be allowed to christen a new mine opened up near Kumara. On the day set aside for the ceremony Mr. Seddon was away from home, and at the time fixed for the departure of the townspeople for the new mine he had not returned. The party waited for some time, but as Mr. Seddon did not appear it was decided that another gentleman should perform the ceremony. They started on the twelve-mile track to the mine, with pack-horses to carry the hampers.

They had not gone more than half an hour when Mr. Seddon reached Kumara, and was informed of the departure of the caravan. "Who is going to christen the mine?" he asked. "Mr. Blank," he was told. This was too much for Mr. Seddon, because the gentleman named was a formidable opponent of his in local affairs. Without waiting a minute he hurried home, snatched up a tomahawk, and set out for the mine in a direct line through the heavy bush. He had six miles to go—only half the distance by track—but those who know the New Zealand bush will understand the difficulties of that journey. "Did he get there first?" asked one who listened to the story. "He gets everywhere first," replied the story-teller; "he was waiting for them when they arrived, with his clothes in rags and his body scratched all over, and it was he who christened the mine."

He had one pastime; it was deep-sea fishing. That, and a little horse-riding in his later days, were the only relaxations he took from work. Sometimes on a fine day he took the Government launch, the "Ellen Ballance," down Wellington harbour and fished for an hour or so. A gentleman who accompanied him has said that he was as jolly as a boy, and always as pleased when any other member of the party caught a fish as if he had caught it himself. The rougher the weather, the more he enjoyed the excursion, and it was not unusual to see him sitting up in the bows fishing happily while all his companions were prostrated. Once he stopped in the middle of a journey to go fishing in a rough sea, and reached the height of his enjoyment as he sat in a small boat with the water dashing over his feet.



Mr. Seddon as Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge of New Zealand.



Mr. Seddon's Residence in Molesworth Street, Wellington.

Mr. Seddon administered some sharp lessons to speculators, notably those who took up town sections around one of the State coal mines. These gentlemen, in anticipation of a large influx of miners, leased all the best sites in the township laid off by the Government, and were waiting to realise the "unearned increment" from the people who had to occupy them. They had seen the same thing done by people in other parts of the colony, and were probably unconscious of any impropriety in their conduct. The miners, however, appealed to Mr. Seddon, and he promised to lay out another township further down the railway line, and to place the railway station near the miners' sections. This seemed at first to be a high-handed solution of the difficulty. The speculators were quite within their legal rights in attempting to exploit the expected population. The sections were offered on the usual conditions, and it was open to anyone possessing the necessary qualifications to apply for them. But, apart from the legal aspect of the question, public sympathy was with Mr. Seddon and the miners.

When Mr. Seddon first went into Parliament, in 1879, he lodged in a quiet establishment near the Parliamentary Buildings, with several other members of the party, who formed a little democratic coterie, and were a happy family. It was customary for them to assemble in the drawing-room after lunch and spend an enjoyable hour or so. One member of the party played the piano and Mr. Seddon and other members sang and told stories. Mr. Seddon's favourite songs were "The Minstrel Boy" and "The Wearing o' the Green," and he seldom sang either without having to respond to encores.

It was his custom, after attending banquets that demanded his presence, to return to his home or his hotel and to commence steady work there, from, perhaps, one o'clock in the morning until daylight. He would take a few hours' sleep, and then start work again. A work-day of eighteen hours, for several days in succession, was nothing unusual for him, and after he had worked night and day he was still a match for the freshest of his opponents.

He fought five general elections as Premier. He was never beaten, and although his opponents looked for the turn of the tide at each fresh contest, the people always declared that they wanted him. The results of the contests are shown by the following figures, giving the numbers of members returned to support him and the Opposition:—

Year.	Government.	Opposition.	Independent.
1893	52	16	2
1896	41	26	3
1899	53	16	1
1902	48	19	3
1905	56	16	4

“I find it impossible to express my grateful appreciation of this last evidence of the confidence of the electors,” he said, when the result was communicated to him in 1905. “I have trusted the people always, and I have found them true to themselves, to principle, to progress, and to humanity. The result of the polls humbles me. I feel that a great additional responsibility has been cast upon my shoulders, and I can only hope that I may prove worthy of the trust that has been reposed in me. With the assistance of those who have been sent to Parliament with me, I shall strive to obtain results that may contribute towards the happiness and prosperity of the people and the advancement of the colony.”

His rapid journeys up and down New Zealand attracted much attention and admiration from his friends and followers. The diary of his movements at the close of his last session, in October, 1905, gives the following record of his remarkable activity:—

October 31—Left for the south to open a new section of the Cheviot Railway.

November 2—Returned to Wellington.

November 2—Left for Palmerston North.

November 3—Returned to Wellington.

November 7—Left for Auckland, and spoke on November 8th at Paeroa, and subsequently opened a railway to Waihi, and a section of the Helensville line. He also addressed meetings at various places in the Auckland district, and on his way south spoke at New Plymouth, Wanganui, Greytown and Martinborough.

November 26—Returned to Wellington by special train.

November 27—Left for Shannon, and addressed a meeting there.



THE SEDDON ADMINISTRATION, 1906.

Mr. Seddon.

Sir Joseph Ward.

Hon. J. McGowan.

Hon. T. Y. Duncan.

Hon. C. H. Mills.

Hon. W. Hall-Jones.

Hon. James Carroll (standing).

Hon. A. Pitt.

Hon. Mahuta Wherowhero.

- November 28—Returned to Wellington.
November 28—Left for the south.
November 29—Spoke at Christchurch.
November 30—Left Christchurch for Dunedin.
December 1—Left Dunedin by special train for Lawrence to turn the first sod of the railway to Roxburgh.
December 2—Was at Waihola and Stirling.
December 6 (election day)—Returned to Wellington.
December 7—Received the colony's congratulations on his great victory.
December 12—Left on a trip in the "Tutanekai" for Marlborough Sounds.
December 14—Returned to Wellington.
December 16—Left for Christchurch, where, on December 18, he laid the foundation stone of the New Zealand International Exhibition.
December 19—Returned to Wellington.
December 21—Left for Auckland.
December 28—Returned to Wellington.
December 28—Left for Greymouth in the "Tutanekai."
January 25, 1906—Returned to Wellington.
January 26—Left for Pahiatua, and spoke at a political banquet there.
January 29—Returned to Wellington.
February 5—Left for Palmerston, where he attended a banquet to Sir Joseph Ward.
February 6—Returned to Wellington.
February 13—Left for Waipawa, attended a banquet there, and went on to Hastings and Napier next day.
February 16—Returned to Wellington in the "Tutanekai."
February 17—Left for Oamaru, attended a banquet to the Hon. T. Y. Duncan at Ngapara on February 19; opened the new High School at Ashburton on February 20.
February 21—Returned to Wellington.
February 21—Went to Hastings and attended a Maori meeting.
February 26—Returned to Wellington.
March 3—Left for Auckland by the "Tutanekai," received the footballers there on March 6, and attended a banquet at Rotorua on March 9. On his way south attended a banquet at Foxton on March 13, another banquet at Levin on March 14; returned to Wellington by special train at 2.15 a.m. on March 15.
March 15—Left for the South and attended a banquet to Mr. F. R. Flatman, M.H.R., at Geraldine, on March 16.
March 18—Returned to Wellington.

Mr. Seddon held many positions in the Ministry, and there were few State departments that he had not personally controlled. At the time of his death, he was Prime Minister, Colonial Treasurer, Minister for Defence, Minister in Charge of the Government Insurance Department and the Public Trust Office, Minister for Education, Minister for Labour, and

Minister for Immigration. The following is a list of ministerial positions held by him :—

Portfolio.	Date of Taking Office.	Date of Relinquishing Office.	Remarks.
Minister for Public Works (including Railways)	Jan. 24, 1891	May 1, 1893	Resignation of the Ministry owing to the death of Mr. Ballance
Minister for Mines ...	Jan. 24, 1891	May 1, 1893	
Minister for Defence ...	Jan. 24, 1891	May 1, 1893	
Minister for Marine ...	June 3, 1892	May 1, 1893	
Premier ...	May 1, 1893	June 10, 1906	
Minister for Public Works	May 1, 1893	March 2, 1896	Succeeded by the Hon. W. Hall-Jones
Minister for Mines ...	May 1, 1893	Sept. 6, 1893	Succeeded by Sir A. J. Cadman
Minister for Defence ...	May 1, 1893	June 22, 1896	Succeeded by the Hon. T. Thompson
Minister for Native Affairs	Sept. 6, 1893	Dec. 21, 1899	Succeeded by the Hon. J. Carroll
Minister for Labour ...	Jan. 11, 1896	June 10, 1906	
Commissioner of Trade and Customs	June 16, 1896	Oct. 29, 1900	Succeeded by the Hon. C. H. Mills
Postmaster-General ...	June 16, 1896	Dec. 21, 1899	Succeeded by Sir Joseph Ward
Electric Telegraph Commissioner	June 16, 1896	Dec. 21, 1899	Succeeded by Sir Joseph Ward
Colonial Treasurer ...	June 16, 1896	June 10, 1906	
Minister for Defence ...	Jan. 23, 1900	June 10, 1906	
Minister for Education ...	June 22, 1903	June 10, 1906	
Minister for Immigration...	June 22, 1903	June 10, 1906	

CHAPTER XXII.

LAST DAYS.

In later years the strenuous character of Mr. Seddon's life made its mark on his health. He felt the strain of the heavy tasks he voluntarily undertook. He found it necessary to take frequent rest and occasional holiday trips, and necessity compelled him to leave a great deal to his colleagues, and to the senior officers of the departments he controlled.

At the beginning of 1906, his health was in a very unsatisfactory condition, and it was clear that he would have to take another rest soon, and to make it a fairly long one. He had set on foot a proposal for holding a great International Exhibition at Christchurch, and his busy brain was devising many means to make it attractive to people in other countries. Early in May, after he had celebrated the anniversary of his accession to the Premiership, he received the following cablegram from Mr. T. E. Donne, Superintendent of the Tourist Department, who had gone to Australia, and was then in Sydney:—

“General opinion expressed here that if you could possibly arrange visit to Australia now, it would be of direct advantage to Exhibition, by creating special interest, likely to result in heartier co-operation. It is also desirable, in the interests of New Zealand commerce, that definite proposals should be discussed and propounded for a reciprocal tariff between the two countries before the meeting of the Federal Parliament. I have information from Melbourne to the same effect. If you concur and intend coming, kindly cable me. Newspapers are asking for information.”

Mr. Seddon fell in with Mr. Donne's suggestion, and left Wellington on May 12. “It will be a trip partly for health and partly for business,” he said. A few days before he left for Australia, he told a friend in Christchurch that he had had warnings. “They are serious warnings,” he said; “and the doctors tell me that I must get away or risk my life.” “But

are you going to take a rest?" his friend asked him. "Oh yes," he replied. "There will be the trip across; that will be nearly a week; and then I am not going to worry myself on the other side. There will be reciprocity, the Hebrides, and defence, and, perhaps, one or two other things to talk over with the Federal Premier, but this will be nothing compared with what I am doing here. Oh yes; I am going to take a rest." "And I suppose that you will be banqueted and interviewed, and expected to make speeches just as you are here." "No, I am going on a holiday. It must be a holiday. I can't give up work altogether while I can be of any use to the country, but I am not going to throw my life away. The doctors have treated me very frankly. They say that I have gone as far as it is safe to go, and that they won't be responsible if I go any further. It is hard, because there is so much left to do, but I suppose I must stop."

He took a little rest while on the water, but politics and public affairs were always uppermost in his mind. On the day before he reached Sydney, he wrote a long letter to a gentleman in England who had been a political opponent of his in New Zealand many years previously. In this letter, he said:—

"We often think of you, and of your kindness and attention to us when we were in the Mother Country. My kind feeling towards you dates much farther back, for you were very considerate and kind to me, although, perhaps, as a young colt and turbulent spirit, I gave you more trouble than all the rest put together. Those were happy days, and looking back to those who took part I think we were not as generous to each other as we might have been, and perhaps construction was placed upon the actions of leading men of those days which, viewed in the light of the experience I have had myself, was hardly justifiable, and which now leads me to respect their memories. There is nothing like responsibility for sobering one.

"A funny thing occurred in respect to the well-remembered 'compact' of '79, when Swanson died. Considered in the light of subsequent events, I thought, and still think, that what the four Auckland members did at the time was the wrong thing to do, and yet the actions of Colbeck, Hurst, Wood, and Swanson were, with one or two exceptions, of such a character as to modify the strictures applied to the method adopted.

"I must thank you very kindly for your congratulations on the result of the last elections. It is true time works many changes, and you would be surprised to know the large number of people who supported and helped me. But their action was in accordance with common sense, and in no way reflected on their intelligence, and can be put in the following terms:—'With Seddon we know where we are, and he will not go to the extremes. If anything happens to him we might get a weak Government, and then what would happen to us? It is

better to be sure than sorry.' This is the keynote of the situation that led to the great majority of December 6th last. And the conclusions arrived at were quite right. Extremes on the part of either the labourites or the capitalists must lead to disaster. To exalt labour and to improve the conditions of the workers is noble, but at the same time it is wise and just to give security to capital, to ensure its profitable employment, and the corollary of the development of the resources of the country.

"On May 1st last I commenced my fourteenth year of office as Premier, and the papers say—and I suppose when both the Conservative and Liberal Press say it they cannot be far off the mark—that I am firmer in the saddle now than ever. However, I have my troubles before me, although with the whole of our party returned, and with only a few new members (or in other words 'young colts') to break in, the duties of the whips and the driving of the coachman will not entail much anxiety. Imagine a party of fifty members, and to lose only one of them, and he (Willis, of Wanganui) to be replaced by another Government supporter. I think this might claim to be a record in parliamentary history. However, I must leave New Zealand politics and give you a little idea as to how the Home elections and their results strike a New Zealander.

"In the first place, I was not surprised at the defeat of the Balfour Government. Had the result been otherwise, I should have been astonished, but I did not expect the *débâcle* that took place. Between the Chinese in South Africa, the muddle in regard to education and tariff reform, without the people being educated, was enough to wreck two or three Governments. How on earth they allowed the Rand mine-owners to juggle them into the importation of Chinese into South Africa, one cannot understand. The method was clumsy, and the Government should never have touched it. All they ought to have done was to have swamped the country with people of our own race. It was a splendid opportunity; they should have put road, railway, and irrigation works in hand, so as to provide work for immigrants. Numbers would have gone to the mines, people would have settled down, and I go the length of saying even supposing they had allowed Europeans—Scandinavians, Italians, and other Continental nations—to come, it would have been better than to have introduced the Chinese. Chinese, from my long experience on the goldfields, were never any good underground, whilst their other characteristics are sufficient to condemn their introduction into any country. They have proved dear labour, much dearer than Kaffir, just as I anticipated. As below-the-surface miners they have proved to be no good, both in Australia and Cuba. They are, moreover, a source of trouble to the present Government, who seem to be 'backing down.'

"The education question, too, had got to be solved by the Bannerman Government. It is just possible that between the Catholics and the Anglicans on the one side, and the Nonconformists on the other, they might steer a middle course and put the Bill through. But they have got a hard row to hoe. As one who had a taste of it in our own colony, you will understand it. I think myself that in the end the secular system with the modified Bible-reading or religious instruction out of school hours would go through, but education should be put outside of sectarian influences.

"In respect to the parties at Home, Mr. Chamberlain, to my mind, still stands out as a bold and brilliant leader, and I am inclined to forgive him a little of the Chinese question. The courageous manner in which he tackled tariff reform stands out in bold relief as contrasted with Balfour's weakness on

almost every question that has arisen. The one great blunder that was made was that he and the Government started before they were ready. You know better than I do how slow the average English working man is, how he requires to be educated up to a reform to a much larger extent than we do in the colonies, and it was ignorance on the part of the masses that led to the defeat of the Government in respect to the preferential tariff. There is a warmth of feeling at Home towards the colonies, but when it comes to a small loaf without the corresponding advantages, as understood by the workers, the way the votes were cast does not in the slightest take me by surprise. It required, in my opinion, another three to five years before the people at Home could properly understand what closer union with the colonies really means, and what an important part trade and commerce play in maintaining the solidarity of the Empire, and in strengthening the unbreakable bond of union.

"I must thank you very much for the information given regarding the meat freezing companies and shipping rings, although I see no reason, so far as shipping combines are concerned, to alter the statements I have made, and to which you take exception. When at Home in 1897 I saw the danger there was of New Zealand produce being hemmed in and around London and the Midland Counties. I ascertained that the Argentine and America were at work. The only way to counteract them was to get in amongst the working and middle classes, and by introducing our meats ensure a larger and more extended market. I am satisfied now that a great mistake was made by the meat producers and meat companies here opposing my 'mutton shops,' and I still feel sure, and I am fully convinced, that the colony suffered. The same principle has now been adopted by private firms, who have done exceedingly well. The Argentine also has profited by what ought to have fallen to New Zealand. However, on the whole, things are now much better than they were before. My principal trouble is the consumers in the colony. They are complaining at having to pay Home prices for their meat, caused, so they allege, by the export of our meat to the Mother Country. There is something in this. But for this exporting the local market prices would be much lower, but they fail to realise there must be an export for the surplus products, and this causes a collateral advantage to the producer and to the worker. There is one thing that we must do, and that is to counteract the distance we are from the markets of the world. It is no use for us to give reduced freights on our railways if we find our efforts to lower freights checkmated by shipping companies. There is no doubt whatever, as compared with Australia, even making allowances for the vessels to have to go tramping round from one port to another in New Zealand collecting cargo, that the freights from our colony are much higher. Amongst our other ventures, I do not wish to start the colony with a mercantile fleet, but at the same time it is well for the shipping companies to realise that in these days they must be satisfied with moderate profits.

"I am just now on a visit to Australia, seeking a little rest before the session commences. The only large question is the national annuities. I am going to try my 'prentice hand, where other stronger and better men have failed. I think my scheme will take. It is practical and simple; summed up, it means that those people who assist themselves, exercise thrift, and pay a certain amount into a given fund, will have the amount so paid subsidised by the Government. The scheme will also assist friendly societies, and by this means a number who would otherwise probably come on the old age pension will be encouraged, by the

exercise of thrift, assisted by the Government, to provide for themselves. Of course, there is a class that will never assist themselves no matter what you do, and they will be provided for under the old age pension scheme. Going into this matter carefully, as I have done during the last few weeks, I find that Sir Harry Atkinson was not far out, and if he had kept clear of the compulsion proposed in his scheme he would have had a very good workable provision for the masses in this country.

“The Imperial Government has called the next conference of Prime Ministers for April 15th next. If all goes well I shall again represent this colony, and Mrs. Seddon and members of my family will be with me. I do not anticipate, however, that much good will eventuate, and if we hold what has already been conceded I shall be satisfied.”

When he arrived in Sydney, on May 16, he was received with an extraordinary outburst of enthusiasm. No statesman who has visited Australia has been received with greater demonstrations of admiration and love. He visited Sydney, Melbourne, Bendigo, and Ballarat, and made, in fact, a great triumphal procession through the land. He was accompanied by staffs of reporters, and Australian newspapers published long accounts of his doings. He transacted important negotiations in regard to reciprocal tariffs between New Zealand and Australia, made speeches, gave interviews, attended banquets and conferences, received deputations, and worked from early in the morning until late at night. It was a very characteristic holiday.

In Melbourne, he was entertained by residents of his own country, and there he made his last speech to New Zealanders. He was received into the drawing-room of the Grand Hotel with cries of “Haeremai Te Hetana.”* During the evening he spoke for an hour, and “God’s Own Country” had a large share of his remarks. He said:—

“What is it that makes a New Zealander so glad to meet one of his countrymen when abroad? It is this, that New Zealand people have high ideals and aspirations. There is a national life in New Zealand, a life which is noble, exalting and good. If the people are true to that which is noble, their country must be prosperous. A nation is judged by its moral life. If the morality of the people is good, if the foundation of the country rests upon a basis of advanced humanity, then all is well. New Zealand to-day enjoys greater prosperity than she has ever enjoyed before. It is also lasting in character. There are no unemployed in New Zealand. Capital was never safer or bringing in better returns. I honestly believe that if the country continues on its

*“Welcome Seddon.”

present lines, vice, degradation and suffering will be kept from the land. I have been asked in Australia how New Zealand's prosperity is accounted for. My reply is that it has been to a large extent promoted by the development of national resources, and by giving equality of opportunity. When I read of the large number of workless people in London I feel that there must be something seriously amiss. It is a terrible reproach to the nation. In these self-governing colonies there should be no one unemployed. This great economic loss should not be permitted. There is no doubt that outside of the colonies capitalists are afraid of the workers. This is not justified. My experience is that when a worker has a cottage of his own and a few pounds in the bank he becomes very conservative. Let want and anxiety for the morrow be removed from the worker's life and there is nothing to fear. After all, they only want bread and butter, and something to look forward to and up to. It was not very much. Hope must be the paramount feeling in every breast; the moment it dies there is loss of energy.

"There must be educational equipment for the battle of life. In New Zealand the University is within the reach of every man's child. There are to-day free places and scholarships for three thousand; thus master minds will be at the command of commerce and politics. When the best minds of a nation guide its destinies that nation is bound to hold an exalted position. The country which in the future is going to rule the destinies of the world is that in which primary, technical, and secondary education is within the reach of all.

"There is no mistaking New Zealand's loyalty and imperialism. We know that we are integral parts of a great Empire, living under a flag which ensures justice and freedom. The self-governing colonies must prove themselves buttresses of the Mother Country. Only the other day there was war in the East. Now we read that the Chinese are arming and training, and there are four hundred millions of them. There are four million people in Australia. The time is coming to be on guard. If trouble comes from the East the battleground will be Australia. If anything happens to Australia what will happen to New Zealand? These dangers will have to be provided against. Then who can say that trouble might not come from the West under changed conditions of the future? The United States is bent on securing the trade of the Pacific. If trouble does come from the West, New Zealand will have to bear the brunt of it. She is well prepared. There are thirty thousand trained men and boys there, a number relative to the population unequalled in the civilized world. I believe that the people in the colonies will be true to their traditions. Their race has fought at Trafalgar, at Alma, Inkermann, and Waterloo, and held Mafeking and Ladysmith. If necessity arises the colonials will prove themselves worthy chips of the 'old block.'

"The self-governing colonies have a great opportunity to avoid what has taken place in older countries. They are building the foundations of a great nation. At the creation of the world it was never intended by the Divine Master that only a few should have the enjoyment of the good things, and that countless thousands should want for food. The sooner selfishness is thrown aside the better."

He never struck the imperial note more effectively than whilst on that visit to Australia, and he never spoke more

enthusiastically of the good he hoped to do for the people of New Zealand. He told the Federal Labour Party, when its members entertained him at lunch, that they were engaged in a noble work, but that their first endeavour should be to improve the material conditions of the people. "We must shape our labours so as to avert from our children the heritage of degradation and misery they have had in the Old Country. I have been for years the butt of much abuse and ridicule for what has been called my experimental legislation; but where am I to-day? The greatest curse of our day is the sacrifice of principle to expediency. Men are too much afraid of pushing a principle to its logical conclusion."

It was on Friday, June 8th, that he spoke those words to the Federal Labour Party in Melbourne. On the same day he had a conference with Mr. Deakin and Sir William Lyne on trade reciprocity, and he left Melbourne for Sydney by train in the afternoon. Sir William Lyne accompanied him on a part of his journey, and in the train the conference was continued.

He had little rest that night. Arriving in Sydney at 11 a.m., he went to his hotel, and worked with his secretaries all day. In the evening he attended a performance at the Criterion Theatre with several members of his family, and afterwards was present with them at a supper in the House. After supper he found that he had more work to do at his hotel, so back he had to go with his secretaries, and he remained there until 2 o'clock on Sunday morning. In, apparently, the best of health, he went on board the "Oswestry Grange," but he had no sooner reached the steamer than he sought his cabin, evidently with the object of securing rest at last. He had been buoyed up with the magnificent reception accorded to him wherever he went. Now that his hard holiday was over, he felt jaded and in need of real rest. "It's the hardest month I've had," he said in a tone which showed that he was utterly worn out; "I'm glad it's over."

On rising after a rest on Sunday, he stated that he did not feel very bright, but he did not seem to be seriously ill. As he was no better after lunch, he rested on his couch in his cabin, and Mrs. Seddon remained with him until he fell asleep. He

slept for nearly two hours, and rose refreshed. His mind was still on his work, and he said that on the following day he would prepare some speeches he intended to deliver at the opening of Parliament. He also referred with satisfaction to the fact that he had practically arranged the reciprocal treaty between New Zealand and Australia.

At 6.20 p.m., when the steamer had passed the Heads, he was sitting in his cabin with Mrs. Seddon and Mr. J. F. Andrews, his private secretary. Suddenly placing his head on his wife's shoulder, he said, "Oh, mother," and expired immediately.

His death was dramatic. The plaudits of the Australian nation were ringing in his ears, and he was returning to his own country to put into practice schemes he had devised to help his people. Throughout his Australian visit he had thrown off the ill-health that had beset him; he had spurned the ease to which he was entitled, and, apparently, was in splendid health. In his last moments, he suffered no pain, and he passed away in the happy possession of the love of his own country and the esteem of the Empire to which he belonged. He had had a hard life of toil, but he died a happy death. It was such a death as he, or any other man, might have wished for. He was in the enjoyment of great influence, which he was exercising for good; and the public, in whose gratitude he had little faith when he entered politics twenty-seven years previously, was showering upon him honour after honour and kindness after kindness. The time was fast approaching when he would have to relinquish the work he loved. He had already realised that; and he had made up his mind to retire from the Premiership when he returned to the colony after attending the Premiers' Conference in London in April, 1907. But Death anticipated him, and he passed away at the height of his career.

The steamer was taken back to Sydney, and when the sad news was sent abroad it created a profound sensation in the whole of Australia. The Australians were shocked to learn that the great man who had come to visit them, and who had said so much to them about the destiny of the Empire and the aims of humanitarian reformers, had suddenly passed away. His last

message to the public, delivered a few hours before his death, was full of the imperialistic spirit :—

“ Ask the British Government to take care of the colonies. The Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments are incensed at the Imperial Government Conference fixing conditions of dual protectorate in the New Hebrides without first consulting the colonies so deeply interested. The Imperial Government calls upon us now for advice on what is already decided, making our difficulties very great. The entire subject is of vital importance to the Commonwealth and New Zealand. We ought to have been represented at the Conference. If anybody had been there for us who knew anything about the subject, the result would have been very different. Whoever represented Britain, French diplomacy was too much for them. I cannot honourably say anything further, my hands and tongue are tied by the Imperial Government, but I wish I had the power of Joshua to make the sun stand still.”*

The last telegram he despatched was sent to Mr. Bent, Premier of Victoria :—

“ Just leaving for God’s Own Country.”

In New Zealand the grief was intense. The news came on Monday afternoon, and with one impulse the people stopped the ordinary transactions of the day. All business places and offices were closed, and the whole country mourned. Nobody had expected the end, and the suddenness with which it came seemed to stupefy the public.

The “Oswestry Grange” left Sydney again late on Monday night, and took the body to Wellington. Those who were on board state that they will never forget the voyage. They say that as one day followed the other the mournfulness of the journey increased, until it became heart-breaking. The ship’s company went about their duties subdued and depressed. When the snow-clad Mount Egmont was sighted the grief on the steamer deepened. Shortly after Wellington harbour was entered, the Government steamer “Tutanekai,” with members of Mr. Seddon’s family, the Hon. W. Hall-Jones, Acting-Premier, and other members of the Ministry, and a few personal friends, went alongside, and then the “Oswestry Grange” steamed up to the wharf and was berthed, and the body was taken to the ministerial residence at Molesworth Street.

*Given in an interview with the Sydney representative of the “British Australasian.”

Soon after day-break on the morning of the day of the funeral, June 21st, 1906, Maori mourners began to assemble at the Parliamentary Buildings. There were several hundreds of them, and they represented nearly all the New Zealand tribes. A few tribes, who were not present, sent messages of sorrow.

At 7.45 a.m., the coffin was carried into the lobby of the House of Representatives by a company of the New Zealand Permanent Artillery. It was followed by the Hon. W. Hall-Jones (the new Premier) and other Ministers, and Mr. Seddon's sons and other male relatives. Some of the chiefs had placed on the floor, beneath the picture of Queen Victoria, some beautiful flax cloaks and mats. These were the "hopaki," or wrappings for the coffin. Treasured ancestral weapons, taiahas and mérés, were placed on the floor beside the coffin. They were gifts in honour of the dead.

Behind the chief mourners and the Ministers there followed several old friends of the late Premier. They remained there for a few minutes, and then quietly left the lobby, which was given up to the Maoris.

A woman's high-keyed voice, raised in the opening cries of a tangi-wail, was heard, and the Maoris, in a compact body, with the women in front, marched in. About fifty women formed this advance-guard of the "bringing of the tears," as the Maoris call it. They trod slowly, turning this way and that way, but always keeping their heads bowed, until the front rank was close to the coffin. All the women of the tribes were of high birth and station. Most of them had blue tattoo marks on chins and lips, the cherished "tohu." All were dressed in black. From their ears, hung by black ribbons, and around their necks, they wore greenstone ornaments and glistening white sharks' teeth, as in olden days. On their heads and shoulders there were green leaves and chaplets, the ancient insignia of mourning. They carried green branches in their hands, and kept time with these to the shrill dirge: "Haehaea! Ripiripia!" "Score the flesh; scarify your bodies as with knives!" This was the burden of their opening song, and they kept time to it, drawing their hands

up and down and across their breasts and shoulders, in imitation of the ancient funeral custom of lacerating the flesh with flakes of obsidian or mussel-shells.

In front of these women there came a chieftainess from the Wanganui district, Wiki Taitoko. She is a daughter of Major Kemp, and a woman of commanding presence. With Utauta, a lady of rank from the Ngatiapa tribe, she gave the time to the main body of mourners in the "maimai," the chant and dance of grief.

The men strangely and strikingly represented the old and the new. There were men who had fought for and against the Europeans in the Maori war. A college-bred Maori member of Parliament stood side by side with old Poma Haunui, whose deeply tattooed face singled him out for notice. He is one of the few survivors of a gallant band of friendly Maoris who defeated the rebellious and fanatical Hauhaus on Moutoa Island, in the Wanganui River, in 1864, and saved the Wanganui settlement. Tuta Nihoniho is chief of the Ngatiporou tribe on the East Coast of the North Island. He and his tribesmen were always friendly. He holds the New Zealand war medal for his services with Major Ropata Wahawaha, in the Urewera campaigns of 1869-71. Near to him there stood Tutange Waionui, who was a Hauhau in his younger days, and was one of the most active scouts of the famous Hauhau leader, Titokowaru, in the Taranaki war. The most conspicuous figure of them all was that of the Hon. James Carroll, the Native Minister, one of Mr. Seddon's colleagues.

The first wild burst of the "maimai" song subsided. The swaying women seated themselves on the floor and left a narrow lane, through which one or two chiefs advanced to place fine mats beside the other Maori treasures at the side of the coffin. The hum of weeping rose, led by the old tattooed ladies of Ngatikahungunu and other tribes. The Wanganui men, led by their chief Takarangi Mete Kingi, who quivered a polished méré in the air, chanted in chorus one of their laments.

Mr. Carroll addressed the Maoris. "Haere mai e te iwi takoto nei," he said; greeting to all the tribes from both islands. Their shelter had gone, their provider had been taken away.

The noble totara tree had fallen, cut off by the axe of Death. He had gone to the Great Night. Nothing could stay the hand of Death, but loving messages of sympathy could, perhaps, do something to assuage the keen sorrow of the bereaved ones. In that spirit it was desired to present the widow and children of the late Mr. Seddon with the Maoris' "mihi," their loving message of sorrow and condolence.

Turning to the sons of the late Premier, Captain Seddon, and Messrs. T. Y. Seddon and Stuart Seddon, Mr. Carroll said that the whole of the Maori people felt most poignantly the death of their parent, and he trusted that if anything could in any way temper the sorrow of the afflicted family, it would be that little tribute of affection and grief from the native race.

He read from an engrossed scroll an address to Mrs. Seddon in Maori and English. It had been signed by more than 100 Maoris, men and women. The English, which was drafted by Messrs. Heke and Ngata, is as follows:—

TO MRS. SEDDON.

In Memory
Of
RICHARD JOHN SEDDON,
Premier of New Zealand,
From
The Maori Tribes of Aotearoa (North Island)
and Te Waipounamu (South Island).

"Remain, O Mother, with thy children and thy children's children! Tarry ye a while in the house of mourning, in the chamber of Death. Clasp but the cold form of him who was to thee husband beloved. He is now from thee parted, gone into the Dark Night, into that long, long sleep. God be with thee in thine hour of trial. Here he lies in the calm majesty of death.

"Rest, O Father! The tribes have assembled to mourn their loss. Aue! The canoe is cast from its moorings, its energy and guide no more. The red-hued bird, the Kaka-kura,* the ornament of Aotearoa, the proud boast of the Waipounamu, the mighty heart of the land, the moving spirit of the people—fare thee well, a long farewell! Pass on, O noble one, across the long sands of Haumu, beyond the barrier of Paerau—going before to join the illustrious dead. Woe unto us that are left desolate in the Valley of Sorrow. In life thou wert great. Across the Great Ocean of Kiwa,† beset by the turbulent waves of faction, mid the perverse winds of opinion, thou didst essay forth that thy

* The red parrot.

† The Pacific Ocean.

peoples should reap of benefits, that these islands and thy mother race should see and do their duty in the broader spheres of Empire and humanity. Fate, relentless, seized thee in the mid-ocean of effort, and compelled thee into the still waters of death, of rest.

“Sleep thou, O Father; resting on great deeds done, sure that to generations unborn they will be as beacons along the highways of history. Though thou art gone, may thy spirit, which so long moved the heart of things, inspire us to greater, nobler ends.

“Stay not your lamentations, O ye peoples, for ye have indeed lost a father. Verily our pa of refuge is razed to the ground. The breastwork of defence for great and small is taken. Torn up by the roots is the overshadowing rata tree. As the fall of the towering totara tree in the Deep Forest of Tane* (Te Wao-nui-a-Tane), so is the death of a mighty man. Earth quakes to the rending crash. Our shelter gone—who will temper the wind? What of thy Maori people hereafter unless thou canst from thy distant bourne help and inspire the age to kindlier impulse and action!

“So bide ye in your grief, bereaved ones! Though small our tribute, our hearts have spoken. Our feet have trod the sacred precincts of the court-yard of Death (te marae o aitua). Our hearts will be his grave. Love will keep his memory green through the long weary years. Hei konei ra! Farewell!”

Mr. Carroll concluded his oration by chanting a fragment of a beautiful old funeral dirge of his race:—

No te ao te hua ra tanga
 Riro ki te po.
 Waiho noa hei tumanako
 Ma te ngakau.
 Kei tawhiti to hou tinana,
 Kei te reo o tuku;
 Tenei au e noho ana
 I te pouritanga,
 Mapu kau noa atu i konei.
 Au koha hau raro———i!

By day what thoughts of thee arise!
 But thou'rt vanished in the Night of Death!
 Naught is left my heart to cherish
 But fond longings—fond and vain.
 Far, far away thy form has taken flight;
 Far, far thou'rt severed from my side,
 And spirit voices breathe thy name.
 Here in this lonely world
 I sit with drooping head
 And nurse my grief in depths of black despair.
 Yet on the gentle northern breeze
 Thy tender message, loved one, ever sighs to me.

* Tane, the God of the Forest.

Then tribe after tribe rose to pay tribute to the dead. Chief after chief stood up to deliver his "poroporoaki," his salute to the spirit of Te Hetana.* Up rose Hori Te Huki, a grey old chief of Ngatikahungunu. "Haere atu, e koro! Farewell, O Old Man!" he cried. "Go thou to that last dwelling-place to salute thy honoured ancestors, to greet the spirits of the mighty dead."

Then Te Huki broke out into a plaintive lament, in which all his people quickly joined in a resounding chant. It was an ancient lament by a widow for her departed husband:—

Restless I lie
Within my lonely house,
For the loved one of my life
Has passed away.

The singers, their voices rising and falling in wild cadences, went on to compare the dead chieftain to an uprooted tree: "My shelter from the blustering wind, alas, 'tis now laid low."

Then the poet developed another beautiful piece of imagery:—

Behold yon glistening star so bright—
Perhaps 'tis my beloved friend,
Returned to me again.
O sire, return!
And tread with me again
Thy old loved paths.

Changing the metaphor again, the mourners chanted all together:—

O thou that art gone,
Thou wert as a great canoe
Decked with the snowy down
Of lordly albatross.

In another dirge, introducing many mythological allusions, the poet said:—"Thou'rt borne away in the canoe Rewarewa; snatched from us by the gods Raukatauri and Ruatangata. Dip deep the paddles, all together, to bear thee far away."

* Mr. Seddon.

Eruera te Kahu and Ratana Ngahina, chiefs of the Ngatiapa tribe, led their people in the singing of this finely-phrased mourning chant, an adaptation of an apakura:—

Haere ra, Hetana, i te ara haukore,
 Taku ate hoki ra, taku pa kairiri
 Ki te ao o te tonga ;
 Taku manu-korero ki te nohanga pahii,
 Taku manu hakahaka ki runga ki nga iwi.
 Houhia mai ra tematua
 Ri te kahu Tahu-whenua ;
 Houhia mai ra te matua
 Ki te kahu Taharangi.
 Marewa e te iwi
 Nana i whitiki taku motoi-kahurangi,
 Ka mau ki te taringa ;
 Taku koko-tangiwai
 Ka mau ki te kaki :
 Taku pou-mataaho e tu i te whare.
 Kia tu mai koe i te ponaihu o te waka,
 Kia whakaronga koe te wawara tangi wai hoe,
 I roto Poneke,
 I te Runanga-nui,
 Waiho i muri ne i to pukaikura—i !

Pass on, Hetana, along the quiet ways,
 The beloved one of my heart, my shelter and defence
 Against the bleak south wind.
 My speaking-bird that charmed the assembled tribes,
 That swayed the people's councils.
 Clothe him, the Father, with the stately garments,
 The very fine mats Tahu-whenua and Taharangi,
 Place in his ear the precious jewel-stone,
 The greenstone kahurangi,
 Hang on his breast the koko-tangiwai,
 Of glistening lucid jade,
 Oh, thou wert a prop within the house ;
 At the prow of the canoe thou wert,
 Ears bent to the plashing sound
 Of many paddles
 In the waters of Poneke,*
 In the contentions of the People's Council.
 Our prized kaka-bird has gone,
 The plumes alone remain.

Then came the chiefs of the Greenstone Land. A big half-caste chief, Timoti Whiua, who is better known as George

*Port Nicholson, the former name of Wellington Harbour.

Robinson, of Little River, Canterbury, chanted his dirge with a force and intensity that thrilled his hearers. In a short address to the dead Premier, he referred to him as the sweet-singing bird of the dawning day, the bright star of the morning, the great one of the earth. He then sang :

Keen blows the nor'-west wind,
 Wind from the Mountain-land,
 Bringing sad thoughts of thee.
 Where, O Hetana, art thou gone?
 Perhaps in council-hall thou'rt laid,
 To await thy people's coming.
 Yes, there lies thy mortal shell,
 Resting at last
 From its many, from its innumerable travels,
 From its ceaseless going to and fro.
 Yes, thou return'd'st to thy people
 Round yonder mountain-cape,
 Back to thy dwelling-place—
 Rest from thy travels !
 O well-beloved one,
 Sharp pangs dart through my soul,
 O lordly totara-tree,
 The pride of Tane's woods,
 Thou'rt lowly laid,
 As was the canoe of Rata,
 The son of Tane launched
 For vengeance on the slayer Matuku,
 Who soon himself was slain.
 'Twas thou alone that Death didst pluck
 From the midst of living men,
 And now thou stand'st alone
 Like the bright star of morning ;
 For us naught but sad memories ;
 Sleep soundly, Friend !

Wi Pere, who represented the Eastern Maori district in Parliament for many years, was the next speaker. "Farewell," he cried, "Farewell, O friend of mine! Depart to the Great Night, to Po, that opens wide for you." When he began his tribal funeral chant he was joined by his people of Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki, Te Rongowhakaata, and Ngatiporou in the stentorian song :—

Farewell, O Friend !
 Depart to thine ancestral company.

Thou'rt plucked from us
 As the flax-shoot is plucked from the bush
 And held aloft among the mourners.*
 Thou that wert our boast, our pride,
 Whose name has soared on high,
 Thy people now are lone and desolate.

Indeed thou'rt gone, O Friend!
 Thou'rt vanished like our ocean-fleet of old—
 The famed canoes, Atamira, Hotutaihirangi,
 Taiopuapua, Te Roro-tua-maheni,
 The Araiteuru! and Nuku-tai-memeha,
 The canoe that drew up from the sea
 This solid land.

Wi Pere began again, and all his people chanted with
 him:—

Affliction's deepest gloom
 Enwraps this house,
 For in it Seddon lies
 Whose death eats out our hearts.
 'Twas he to whom we closest clung
 In days gone by.

O whispering north-west breeze,
 Blow fair for me,
 Waft me to Poneke,
 And take me to the friend I loved
 In days gone by.

O peoples all and tribes,
 Raise the loud cry of grief,
 For the Ship of Fate has passed
 Port Jackson's distant cape,
 And on the all-destroying sea
 Our great one died.

The final scene in the "tangi-hanga" was a dramatic climax. Both Maoris and Europeans had been wrought up to a deep feeling by the songs, the high-pitched cries of farewells, and

*The reference to the plucking of the flax-shoot is in connection with the methods of divination practised in ancient time by the tohungas, or priests, before a war-party set out on the enemy's trail. The reader of the omen plucked the "rito" or central shoot of a flax-plant. If the end broke off evenly and straight, it was a good sign, presaging an easy victory. If it was jagged and gapped, or torn, that was a "tohu kino," or evil omen, a warning that a leading chief of the war party would be slain. The ancient canoes named were some of those which brought the ancestors of the East Coast tribes to New Zealand from the islands of Polynesia. The Araiteuru is the sailing canoe which was wrecked on the beach near Moeraki six centuries ago. Nuku-tai-memeha is one of the mythological names of the canoe from which, in the days of remote antiquity, the great god Maui fished up the North Island of New Zealand.

the notes of despair. Hone Heke, M.H.R., the last of the speakers, gave the old farewells, and then Takarangi Mete Kingi rose to his feet, and, circling his *méré* round his head, cried the opening words of the lament :—

Whakarongo e te rau
Tenei te tupunà o te mate.

The Maoris sprang to their feet and broke into a grand chorus, an old chant to Death. They stamped and threw their arms from side to side. The women waved their green branches, and as the sonorous poem was chanted with full voice, they seemed to be defiantly challenging Death. No translation can convey the pathos and poetic force of the lament, but the words may be given. They are as follow :—

Hearken O ye people !
This is the parent of Death,
Our common ancestor,
Who must embrace us all.
'Twas conceived in the Reinga,*
'Twas engendered in the Dark, Sad Night.
'Tis but a breath from heaven,
And we pass away for ever.
We fall, and prone we lie,
And ever soundly sleep.
We slumber with our knees drawn up,
We slumber stricken in a heap.
I liken me to yon bright starry sign,
To Maahu-tonga†
That round and round revolves.
(We circle our short lives and then pass on),
I am but as a wandering sprite—
Behold the hawk that soars so far above
In summer skies—
And listen to the sullen matuku,
The bittern‡ that bellows in the swamp
(E hu ana i to repo—i—e !)

With eyes rolling, feathers dancing, black tresses tossing, and weapons brandished in the air, the Maoris ended their great song with a long drawn “ E—e ! ”

*Te Reinga, the Maoris' name for Spirits' Bay, where, it was thought, spirits of the dead departed from this world for the other world.

†The Southern Cross.

‡The matuku, or bittern, apparently, is taken as the symbol of death.

Takarangi, still quivering his *méré* in an excited hand, cried his loud farewell, higher and higher until he almost screamed it:—

“Farewell! Depart! Depart!
And greet your many ancestors.”

Then he snatched up a soft flax mat on which he had been kneeling, and, advancing, placed it at the foot of the bier. There arose again the wild heart-breaking cry, “Haere atu, Haere atu E Koro!” “Go, O, Old Man, to That Place, That Place!”

Subsiding into respectful silence, after their excited outburst, the Maoris formed up in line, and with bowed heads and tear-stained faces, filed past the coffin in order to shake hands with the Premier’s sons and take their last look at their friend.

The body lay in state for three hours, and thousands of the dead Premier’s “subjects,” as many of them loved to call themselves, passed in front of it. There was a service in the pro-cathedral, and the procession followed the remains to Observatory Hill, where the worker found a resting-place. On the day of the funeral, the whole colony was in mourning. The occasion was absolutely unique. One impulse ran through the whole community; one thought prevailed; and one sentiment was in all breasts. The man who had stood at the head of the administration for thirteen years, who had toiled with the people and for them, and who had been called suddenly away, was in every mind. They saw him again, as they had known him best, with his kingly presence and his majestic bearing, when he loved to come amongst them, listening to their troubles, inquiring into their grievances, righting their wrongs, and granting their petitions with the air and grace of a mighty monarch. He had had many enemies, as well as many friends, but all joined in reciting the good he had done, and extolling his splendid qualities.

The sorrow caused by his death was felt in all parts of the Empire. When the news was announced to the world, messages of condolence were sent to New Zealand.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies sent the following messages to the Hon. W. Hall-Jones:—

“I am commanded by His Majesty to convey to you the expression of the deep regret with which he has received the intelligence of the death of the

Prime Minister of New Zealand. His Majesty is assured that the loyal and distinguished services which Mr. Seddon has rendered during his long tenure of office will secure for his name a permanent place among the statesmen who have most zealously aided in fostering the sentiment of kinship on which the unity of the Empire depends."

"His Majesty's Government have received with the greatest regret the news of the death of the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Please convey to Mrs. Seddon expressions of my deepest sympathy, and to the people of New Zealand our sense of the loss which they and we have all sustained by the removal of a statesman so distinguished in the history of the colony and the Empire."

The Queen's message to Mrs. Seddon was as follows:—

"Accept my deepest sympathy in your overwhelming sorrow, which the whole of England shares."

The Prince of Wales sent the following message to Mrs. Seddon:—

"The Princess of Wales and I are deeply grieved at your irreparable loss. We shall never forget your dear husband's kindness to us in New Zealand."

Sir Joseph Ward, who was in London, sent the following message to the Mayor of Hokitika:—

"The hearts of the people of New Zealand are saddened by the removal of the representative of Westland from the control of the colony's public affairs. The Empire, whose interests were ever uppermost in his mind, will feel the loss of Mr. Seddon's powerful advocacy for its welfare. Among those who will miss his great public figure most will be his steadfast friends of Westland. The miners have lost a true friend and champion, and all classes will join me in tendering his wife and family their deepest possible sympathy."

The High Commissioner in London received the following letter from Mr. J. Chamberlain:—

"Dear Mr. Reeves,—I have seen, with the deepest regret, the news in the paper this morning of the sudden death of my friend the late Prime Minister of New Zealand. I have ventured to cable a short message to Mrs. Seddon, but desire also, through you, as the official representative of New Zealand in this country, to express my keen sense of the loss the colony has sustained by the death of its able and patriotic leader. On the various occasions on which I had the pleasure of meeting him, I formed the highest opinion of his ability, courage, and devotion to the interests of New Zealand, while I had full opportunity of recognising his far-seeing appreciation of the privileges and responsibilities of the Empire in which he so earnestly desired that New Zealand should take her appropriate place. At the time of the South African war, he was the first to appeal to his fellow-colonists to give a practical proof of their sympathy with the Mother

Country in her time of trial, and he induced New Zealand to offer a larger material assistance both in men and money than any other British colony in proportion to their wealth and population. The spirit which moved him then is to be found in almost his latest spoken words delivered at Sydney just before he sailed for what has proved to be his last voyage. During his long conduct of affairs the colony has made splendid progress in all that constitutes the true greatness of a people, and his friends looked forward to a continuance of his valuable life as a guarantee for the advancement of the interests to which he had devoted himself with so much energy and power. The Empire has lost one of its noblest citizens, and the colony a great administrator, while in our personal capacity Mrs. Chamberlain and I sincerely deplore the death of one whom we were proud to number amongst our friends.

"I beg you to accept the assurance of our heartfelt sympathy with his family and with the colony which he served so well."

About forty members of the Imperial Parliament, representing all parties, assembled in one of the committee rooms of the House of Commons and passed a motion of condolence. Sir Joseph Ward, who was present by invitation, acknowledged the appreciation. At a meeting of members of the Independent Labour Party in the House of Commons, a motion was passed expressing condolence with Mr. Seddon's family and admiration for the social work of the Government he had led.

In the Federal Parliament of Australia the following motion, moved by Mr. Deakin, the Premier, was passed:—

"That this House places on record its profound regret at the untimely decease of Mr. Seddon, and expresses its deep sympathy with his family and the people of New Zealand."

When the session of the New Zealand Parliament opened on June 28th, Mr. Hall-Jones, as Premier, moved in the House of Representatives:—

"That this House desires to place on record its high sense of the devoted and distinguished services rendered to New Zealand and to the Empire by the late Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Richard John Seddon, P.C., and of the loss the colony has sustained by his death; and respectfully tenders to Mrs. Seddon and her family an assurance of its sincere sympathy with them in their bereavement."

The motion was seconded by Mr. W. F. Massey, leader of the Opposition, and after he had spoken the members present rose to their feet while the Speaker put the motion, and remained standing until he had declared it carried. A similar motion was carried in the Legislative Council.

The newspaper press in all parts of the Empire united in praising him. One of the most interesting eulogies published in the press was written by Sir William Russell to the editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, in which Mr. Seddon's old opponent said,—

“ At the moment of a great tragedy it is difficult to judge accurately of the character of the hero, difficult also to define a true perspective of the work on which he had been engaged while that work is still new, and much of it incomplete. It is about a quarter of a century since first I remember him, sitting somewhere about the centre of the House of Representatives—aggressive, arrogant and resolute, caring little for the forms of the House, less for the opinions of those opposed to him—essentially a man, a man of the rough and ready type, a typical representative of a mining community, vigorous, alert, intelligent, but unrestrained, in marked contrast to his leader, Sir George Grey, calm, critical, controlled. And yet one reacted on the other. The old statesman acquired practical experience of the views of a new democracy; the young politician learned the art and craft of government.

“ In our own Parliament he has been a New Zealand Bismarck—of indomitable will and endless fertility of resource—and he unquestionably deserves the epithet ‘ Great ! ’ It may be objected that many of the measures he placed on the Statute Book were not of his own origination, but he had, at least, the wisdom to know what the people wanted, and the personal influence which persuaded an often unwilling Parliament, and the tactical ability to realise what he might insist upon.

“ Many have asked, ‘ Had Mr. Seddon enjoyed the benefit of a university education would he have been a greater man ? ’ I doubt it. Education polishes the exterior, but God alone creates the material out of which a man is fashioned. Many are dwarfed by fears of precedent, and the personality and inherent force of any but the strongest men may be contorted by the formalism of too much training. Possibly Mr. Seddon would have been less great had early discipline taught him to consider more carefully the conventionalities of the world. His genius had greater scope owing to an untrammelled brain.”

Many poems have been composed in his honour. The following three, all by New Zealanders, are amongst the best :—

Rest, Premier, rest :
 The end of strife has come,
 Thy strenuous life has reached its peaceful close :
 Throughout the land is hushed its busy hum,
 With slackened pulse the life within it flows :
 What grief was this, that held a people dumb ?
 From each has passed a dear-loved, faithful friend,
 And wet, blurred eyes are dim to see the end
 To this our woe of woes ;
 Rest, Premier, rest.

Sleep, Leader, sleep.
 Whose ardour never slept ;
 Thy teeming brain has borne abundant fruit ;
 Before thy fellows thou hast proudly stept,
 Regardless of flung scorn and rancour's bruit.
 Whom thou hast led thou leavest, not unwept ;
 Though blossoms fall, the fruit will yet mature ;
 Thy works with thy young nation will endure,
 Deep runs their well-struck root ;
 Sleep, Leader, sleep.

Rest, Toiler, rest ;
 In regions of dim dawn,
 Through social wildernesses thou hast led,
 Nor climbed alone, but all thy people drawn
 To sunny heights ; but now thou liest dead,
 Like that old seer on Pisgah's upland lawn :
 Though we behold the land of promise near,
 Our leader leaves us with our hope, our fear—
 God called him ; bow the head.
 Rest, Toiler, rest.

Peace, Statesman, peace.
 Do we with blinded eyes,
 And hearts too fond, exalt thee o'er thy peers ?
 A voice, no echo of our own, replies
 (And each sad heart rejoices as it hears):
 "Of him who now forever silent lies
 We know the worth ; a life yet promise-filled
 Has passed away ; a mighty heart is stilled."
 With our tears flow their tears ;
 Peace, Statesman, peace.

Sleep, Father, sleep.
 To prove the love we bear,
 May we accomplish that by thee begun ;
 What thou triumphant daredst, may we dare ;
 What thou wouldst do, may that by us be done.
 Father ! thyself thou wouldst not respite, spare—
 Shall we then sit and wait ? Nay, rather spend
 Our lives as thine was spent, that so our end,
 Like thine, may worth declare.
 Sleep, Father sleep.

Rest, Premier, rest :
 Premier in very deed
 As we have known, as sister States have known.
 Thy words prophetic hitherward did speed—
 "I leave for God's own country," and alone
 We wait, and hope, yes hope, with hearts that bleed.

Thy soul was borne from life that knows not ease,
 Thy body tossed upon the billowy seas
 Mid brackishness and moan,
 Rest, Premier, rest.

 Sleep, loved one, sleep :
 Our cheeks with waiting burned,
 Through calm, cold nights, and froze midwinter days :
 No heart but day and night to theeward turned,
 No eye but seaward did expectant gaze ;
 No friend but for his leal true comrade yearned.
 Thy faults though seen, what could they but endear
 Thee to us all?—and now thou canst not hear
 Our sorrow or our praise ;
 Sleep, loved one, sleep.

 Peace, War-king, peace :
 Triumphant in the fight,
 In midst of victory thou hast found thine end ;
 Old errors vanquished, lo ! the cause of right
 Has found thee life-long champion, life-long friend.
 The nation thou hast welded moves in might,
 And as thyself was known o'er sea and land,
 May it in van of nations purely stand ;
 And now—God us defend.
 Peace, War-king, peace.*

JOHANNES C. ANDERSEN.

 Out of the West, sound sleeping,
 Heedless now of the change of dawn and sunset,
 Dreaming deep of the olden clamour and onset,
 Wrapt in peace and swayed in the passionate swell
 Of hurrying waves high leaping
 To foam farewell.

 Home to the hills that mourn him !
 With silence set on the lips that laughed and lightened,
 Darkness set in the clear grey eyes that brightened
 When once he swept the strings of the songful days.
 High, high, pale Death has borne him
 By far, dim ways.

 Vain now the trumpets' blaring,
 The bright, blithe cheers and shouts of the hearts that love him
 Wishful only of peace and the grass above him,
 Out of the dark strange sea he is seeking rest.
 Ended his strong wayfaring—
 Closed his long quest.

*From the "Lyttelton Times"

Our days go heavily onward,
 The light that lit us of old is no more shining ;
 The dark has hidden our path beyond divining ;
 The soul that saw the East where the morning gleams
 Has swept in a long flight sunward
 With all its dreams.

Far past our utmost knowing !
 Tears, or desirous hearts, or the death flag streaming
 Vex him not in the deeps of his secret dreaming ;
 Passion he knows no more, nor the face of woe,
 Where poppies of peace are glowing,
 And sweet winds blow.*

M. C. KEANE.

I.

What does he see, what does he hear,
 Through the Future's vistas streaming—
 He whom we saw on his tragic bier,
 And bore to his rest on the hillside here,
 On the darkest, saddest day of the year ?
 Does he look on the sordid scheming
 Of puny pigmies for power and place ?
 Does Grief's black wing throw even a trace
 Of shadow over his placid face ?
 What does he see in his dreaming ?

II.

Out on the world beneath him he looks from his high watch-tower ;
 No glance for the Senate Halls, where he ruled in his day of power.
 Why should he care for the paltry plots of the petty brood,
 Each one pursuing his own, instead of his country's, good ?
 With freer and fuller sweep he looks over sea and land,
 With sight made clear by the touch of the dread Magician's wand ;
 His keen eye scans the Empire, wherever Britons dwell,
 But first it rests on the people and the land he loved so well.

III.

Looking forth from his watch-tower, with eyes undimmed and free,
 Down through New Zealand's future, he sees what we may not see—
 Sees the full-ripened fruit, the wise laws that assuage
 Arrows and darts of misfortune, sorrow and sadness of age ;
 Sees strong Plutus degraded, grinding Monopoly prone ;
 Sees men reap where they sowed, each one holding his own ;
 Infancy nurtured, Maidenhood guarded, and Motherhood blest ;
 Labour ennobled and richly rewarded with guerdon of rest ;

* From the "New Zealand Times" (Wellington) and "Bulletin" (Sydney).

Homes made brighter and purer, hearts more glad and elate ;
 Woman, co-equal with Man, sharing the duties of State ;
 Sees Humanity, Justice, and Love going hand in hand—
 Progress and Peace and Plenty blessing this beautiful land !

IV.

Over a world-wide Empire he casts his sweeping glance ;
 Argosies, commerce-laden, on the ocean's broad expanse
 Sees, as they speed on errands of love, goodwill, and peace,
 Bearing joy to the nations and wasteful War's surcease ;
 Sees one free flag waving o'er all the Pacific Isles,
 Canada grand in her strength, Australia wreathed in smiles,
 Africa cleansed and purged of the alien helot strain—
 Our race, pure, glad, triumphant, through all the proud domain.
 These lands have heard him and heeded ; his words were as pregnant seed,
 And the golden grain is an Empire united in thought and deed.
 Why, then, should women weep or the hearts of men be sad ?
 The fruit of his life's long travail he sees, and his soul is glad.

V.

Sleep, tired Worker, and, sleeping, see
 Those glorious visions teeming—
 See, in the days of the Yet to Be,
 The world more glad and men more free,
 Brotherhood reigning from sea to sea
 And the Banners of Progress streaming !
 Sweet be your rest on that windy hill,
 While all that we wish for and work for still—
 The final triumph of Good o'er Ill—
 You see in your peaceful dreaming !*

J. LIDDELL KELLY.

* From the *New Zealand Times*.

APPENDIX.

OLD AGE PENSIONS.

The following table gives the numbers of pensions in force at the end of each financial year (March 31) since the Old Age Pensions Act came into operation in 1899, and the gross payments made in each year:—

Year.	Pensions in Force.	Gross Payment.
		£
1899	7,443	3,124
1900	11,285	157,342
1901	12,405	197,292
1902	12,776	207,468
1903	12,481	210,140
1904	11,926	203,164
1905	11,770	195,475
1906	12,582	254,367
	Gross Total	£1,428,372

WOMEN'S FRANCHISE

The following tables show the share taken in elections by women since they were granted the franchise, as compared with the voting of the male population:—

Date of Election.	Estimated Total Adult Males.	Number of Men on Rolls.	Proportion of Adult Males Registered as Electors.	Number who Voted.	Proportion of Males on Rolls who Voted.
1893	179,539	193,536	*	129,792	69·61†
1896	197,002	196,925	99·96	449,471	75·90
1899	214,773	210,529	98·02	159,780	79·06†
1902	233,602	229,845	98·39	180,294	78·44
1905	‡	263,597	‡	221,611	84·07

* The number on the rolls was in excess of the estimated adult male population at the date of the Elections.

† Excluding figures for three Electorates in which there was no contest.

‡ Figures not available.

Date of Election.	Estimated Total Adult Females.	Number of Women on Rolls.	Proportion of Adult Females Registered as Electors.	Number who Voted.	Proportion of Females on Rolls who Voted.
1893	139,471	109,461	78·48	90,290	85·18*
1896	159,656	142,305	89·13	108,783	76·44
1899	171,373	163,215	95·24	119,550	75·70*
1902	195,783	185,944	94·97	138,565	74·52
1905	†	212,876	†	175,046	82·23

THE LAND AND INCOME TAX.

The combined land and income tax is still (1906) in force.

The land tax is the more important part of the dual impost. It is assessed on the unimproved value, that is, the capital value (or gross saleable value), less the value of all improvements. An owner of land the unimproved value of which, together with mortgages owing to him, does not exceed £1,500 (after deducting mortgages owing to him) is allowed an exemption of £500, but where such value exceeds £1,500 the exemption diminishes by £1 for every £2 that such value increases, so that no exemption is allowable when £2,500 is reached. If the total unimproved value of land in any assessment amounts to £5,000 or over, graduated land tax is payable on it (in addition to ordinary land tax) in graduations beginning at the rate of $\frac{1}{16}$ d. in the pound, and increasing by sixteenths to the maximum rate of 3d. in the pound. Mortgages are not chargeable with graduated tax, but, on the other hand, they are not deductible in assessments for graduated land tax. Owing to the deductions and exemptions allowable the number of land tax payers is only 22,778 as compared with the number of land-owners, 115,712. Fifty per cent. additional on the amount of the graduated tax is levied where the owners have been resident out of the colony for a period of not less than one year next preceding the date of the passing of the annual taxing Act. The Act contains a provision that in cases where the income from any land or mortgages, plus income from all other sources, is less than £200 per annum, and the owner is incapacitated by age or infirmity from supplementing such income, a further exemption may be allowed by the

* Excluding figures for three Electorates in which there was no contest.

† Figures not available.

Commissioner upon his being satisfied that the payment of the tax would entail hardship on such owner. This discretionary power has been exercised in a considerable number of instances, especially in the case of widows and orphans with small means, and much hardship prevented. All mortgages are assessed at their full nominal value, except where it is satisfactorily shown that owing to depreciation of the security or other cause such value has been diminished. In the case of mixed mortgages—that is, mortgages which are secured on both real and personal property—the amount of the mortgage chargeable with land tax is taken to be the assessed value of the land included in the security, the interest derived from the balance of mortgage being liable to income tax.

The income tax is generally assessable on income, with the exceptions of the rents or profits derived from the direct use or cultivation of land, and interest from mortgages of land. All incomes are exempt up to £300. This amount is taken off the incomes of all taxpayers, so that persons with a net income of £300 would pay nothing, while one with an income of £350 would pay tax on £50 only, and so on. The system of graduation may be described as the total exemption of small incomes up to £300, a tax of 6d. in the pound on moderate incomes between £300 and £1,300, and on larger incomes over £1,300 at 6d. in the pound on the first £1,000 and 1s. in the pound on the excess.

The rates of the taxes are as follows :—

Income tax—

On the first £1000 of taxable incomes after allowance of exemption of £300 and life-insurance premiums up to £50	...	...	...	6d. in the pound.
On incomes in excess of £1,300	...	...	...	1/- in the pound.
Companies (no exemption)	...	...	...	1/- in the pound.

Land tax—

Ordinary land tax (on the unimproved value)	...	1d. in the pound.
Graduated land tax (in addition to ordinary land tax)	... $\frac{1}{8}$ d. to 3d.	in the pound.
Mortgages (on the capital value)	...	2d. in the pound.

The net assessed incomes, after allowing all exemptions, amount to £5,522,200; the net assessed taxable value of land and mortgages, after allowing all exemptions, is £70,117,760. There are about 9,000 income tax payers in the colony. The land tax yields £350,000 a year and the income tax £250,000.

MR SEDDON'S COLLEAGUES.

The following tables give the names of Mr. Seddon's colleagues:—

THE BALLANCE MINISTRY—1891-93.

Name.	Office.	Remarks.
Hon. J. Ballance ...	Premier	Jan. 24, 1891, to death, April 27, 1893.
	Colonial Treasurer	Jan. 24, 1891, to death, April 27, 1893.
	Minister for Native Affairs...	Jan. 24, 1891, to Feb. 4, 1891, succeeded by Sir A. J. Cadman.
	Commissioner of Trade and Customs	Jan. 24, 1891, to death, April 27, 1893.
	Commissioner of Stamp Duties	Feb. 4, 1891, to May 28, 1892, succeeded by Mr. Reeves.
Sir P. A. Buckley ...	Attorney-General	Jan. 24, 1891, to May 1, 1893.
	Colonial Secretary	Jan. 24, 1891, to May 1, 1893.
	Postmaster-General ...	Jan. 24, 1891, to Feb. 4, 1891, succeeded by Sir Joseph Ward.
Hon. W. P. Reeves	Minister for Education	Jan. 24, 1891, to May 1, 1893.
	Minister for Justice ...	Jan. 24, 1891, to May 28, 1892, succeeded by Sir A. J. Cadman.
	Commissioner of Stamp Duties	May 28, 1892, to May 1, 1893.
Sir John McKenzie	Minister for Labour	May 31, 1892, to May 1, 1893.
	Minister for Lands and Immigration and Agriculture	Jan. 24, 1891, to May 1, 1893.
Sir A. J. Cadman ...	Commissioner of Stamp Duties	Jan. 29, 1891, to Feb. 4, 1891, succeeded by Mr. Ballance.
	Minister for Native Affairs	Appointed Feb. 4, 1891.
Sir J. G. Ward ...	Minister for Justice	May 28, 1892, to May 1, 1893
	Postmaster - General and Electric Telegraph Commissioner	Feb. 4, 1891, to May 1, 1893
Hon. J. Carroll ...	Member of Executive without portfolio, representing the Native race	Mar. 16, 1892, to May 1, 1893

THE SEDDON MINISTRY—1893-1906.

Sir P. A. Buckley ...	Attorney-General, Colonial Secretary	Took office May 1, 1893 re-signed Dec. 20, 1895.
	Minister for Marine	May 1 to Oct. 13, 1893, succeeded by Sir Joseph Ward.

Name.	Office.	Remarks.
Hon. W. P. Reeves	Minister for Education ...	May 1, 1893, to Jan. 10, 1896, resigned.
	Commissioner of Stamp Duties	May 1, 1893, to Jan. 10, 1896, resigned.
	Minister for Labour ...	May 1, 1893, to Jan. 10, 1896, resigned.
	Minister for Justice ...	July 20, 1893, to Sept. 6, 1893, succeeded by Sir A. J. Cadman.
Sir John McKenzie ...	Minister for Lands ...	May 1, 1893, to June 27, 1900, resigned, succeeded by Hon. T. Y. Duncan
	Minister for Immigration ...	May 1, 1893, to March 2, 1896, succeeded by Hon. W. C. Walker.
	Minister for Agriculture ...	May 1, 1893, to June 27, 1900, resigned, succeeded by Hon. T. Y. Duncan
	Commissioner of Forests ...	May 1, 1893, to June 27, 1900, resigned.
Sir J. G. Ward ...	Colonial Treasurer ...	May 1, 1893, to June 16, 1896, resigned.
	Postmaster-General ...	May 1, 1893, to June 16, 1896, resigned.
	Electric Telegraph Commissioner	May 1, 1893, to June 16, 1896, resigned.
	Commissioner of Customs...	May 1, 1893, to June 16, 1896, resigned.
	Minister for Marine ...	Oct. 13, 1893, to June 16, 1896, resigned.
	Minister of Industries and Commerce	Jan. 20, 1894, to March 2, 1896, resigned.
	Colonial Secretary ...	Dec. 21, 1899, to June 10, 1906.
	Postmaster-General ...	Dec. 21, 1899, to June 10, 1906.
	Electric Telegraph Commissioner	Dec. 21, 1899, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister of Industries and Commerce	Dec. 21, 1899, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister for Railways ...	Jan. 5, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister for Public Health	Nov. 8, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
Hon. J. McGowan ...	Minister for Justice ...	Jan 23, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister for Mines ...	Jan. 23, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
Sir A. J. Cadman ...	Minister for Justice ...	May 1, 1893, to June 20, 1893, resigned.
	Native Minister ...	May 6, 1893, to June 20, 1893, resigned.
	Minister for Justice ...	Sept. 6, 1893, to Feb. 20, 1896, succeeded by Hon. W. Hall-Jones.
	Minister for Mines ...	Sept. 6, 1893, to Dec. 21, 1899, resigned

Name.	Office.	Remarks.
Sir A. J. Cadman ...	Minister for Railways ...	Jan. 1, 1895, to Dec. 21, 1899, resigned. Dec. 21, 1899, till death.
	Member of Executive Council, without portfolio	
Hon. J. Carroll ...	Member of Executive Council without portfolio, representing Native race	May 1, 1893, to June 10, 1906.
	Commissioner of Stamp Duties	Feb. 20, 1896, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister of Native affairs ...	Dec. 21, 1899, to June 10, 1906.
Hon. W. C. Walker	Member of Executive Council	Feb. 20, 1896, to June 20, 1903, resigned.
	Minister for Immigration...	March 2, 1896, to June 20, 1903, resigned, succeeded by Mr. Seddon.
	Minister for Education ...	March 11, 1896, to June 20, 1903, resigned, succeeded by Mr. Seddon.
Hon. W. Hall-Jones	Member of Executive Council	Feb. 20, 1896.
	Minister for Justice ...	Feb. 20, 1896, to March 2, 1896, resigned, succeeded by Hon. T. Thompson.
	Minister for Public Works	March 2, 1896, to June 10, 1906.
	Minister for Marine ...	June 22, 1896, to June 10, 1906.
Hon. C. H. Mills ...	Commissioner of Trade and Customs	Oct. 29, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
Hon. T. Thompson...	Member of Executive Council	Feb. 22, 1896, to Dec. 21, 1899.
	Minister for Justice ...	March 2, 1896, to Dec. 21, 1899, succeeded by Hon. J. McGowan.
	Minister of Industries and Commerce	March 2, 1896, to Dec. 21, 1899, succeeded by Sir Joseph Ward.
	Minister for Defence ...	June 22, 1896, to Dec. 21, 1899, succeeded by Mr. Seddon.
Hon. T. Y. Duncan	Minister for Lands and Agriculture	July 2, 1900, to June 10, 1906.
Hon W. Montgomery	Member of Executive Council	July 19, 1893, to Nov. 7, 1895, resigned.
Mahuta Tawhiao Potatau te Whero-where	Member of Executive Council	May 22, 1903, to June 10, 1906.
Hon. A. Pitt ...	Member of Executive Council and Attorney-General	June 22, 1903, to June 10, 1906.

On the death of Mr. Seddon, Mr. Hall-Jones was appointed Premier until Sir Joseph Ward's return to the colony. Sir Joseph then took the Premiership, and formed a new Ministry.

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