

THE LAST SCENE OF ALL.

The concluding scenes in this remarkable career we must now pass over somewhat briefly. The "Owsestry Grange" conveyed the body of the Premier to Wellington, where all business was suspended, and thousands of mourners thronged the streets and suburbs, awaiting this most mournful epilogue to the great part the dead statesman had played so long and so bravely. The choice of site for the place of burial lay between the West Coast and Wellington; and after some hesitation, and when due consideration had been given to the wishes of the dead man's innumerable friends, Wellington was chosen for the interment. The incidents of the funeral and the lamentations of the Maoris over the grave of the great "rangatira" are described below; and we need linger no longer over these scenes of sorrow. But before we close this analysis of Mr. Seddon's work and character, we may attempt, however inadequately, to suggest one or two points of view from which his amazing achievements may be appreciated, and an approximate valuation of their importance may be made.

THE HUMANIST.

In the first place Mr. Seddon, as he was fond of saying, was a "Humanist," that is, his first care was for the welfare of the people whom he ruled. "All legislation which I have brought to bear upon the human side of life," he said in conversation only a few days before he left for Australia, "is the legislation that counts most with me. There is a great deal of talk about men being Radicals, Conservatives, Socialists and Liberals. I am none of those. I am a Humanist. I desire to improve the condition of the people, to inspire them with hope, to provide for their comfort, and to improve them socially, morally and politically."

He believed that the great aim of a Government should be to provide conditions that would 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," he has said, "and I would rather have this country free from want and squalor and unemployed than the home of multi-millionaires. I have tried to provide such social and economic conditions in this colony as will prevent the helpless subjection of one class to another, which is so widespread in older lands."

This was the spirit in which he issued his manifesto of 1904 on the subject of the preservation of child-life, and in the same spirit he recently formulated a scheme of national pensions. His maternity homes and his Midwives Bill are further indications of this same sympathy for the needs of suffering humanity. But, taking the term in its widest sense, the whole of his legislation is intensely altruistic and humanitarian. If we look for a moment at his record, we see how intensely philanthropic were his feelings and his purposes. But he was no mere theorist, least of all a sentimentalist; and, on the practical side, it is to this "humanism" of Mr. Seddon's that we owe more than anything else the long list of his enactments in the cause of Labour.

THE PATRIOT AND THE MAN.

But Mr. Seddon's policy took a wider survey than this. He was a statesman with no local or narrow outlook; he surveyed and gauged the needs and aspirations of an Empire. He was in the highest and best sense of the term an Imperialist. Feridly patriotic, he was always foremost in urging upon his people the necessity for being prepared to make all conceivable sacrifices for their country. His inestimable services to England during the Boer War we have already recounted. His advocacy of preferential trade, his insistence upon the increase of the naval subsidy, his demand that England should guard the frontier of her Empire in the Pacific against rivals or enemies—all these facts mark him out not only as a firm believer in Imperialism as a creed, but a statesman able to appreciate at their true value the ever-changing conditions of international policy. The Empire was not ungrateful to him. Not only in New Zealand, but in London, he was feted and memorialised in gratitude for what he had done for "the flag." But though so loyal to the Crown, Mr. Seddon was always a man of the people; and when he refused the baronetcy proffered by the King, more than one British critic observed that there are some men who are greater without a title than with it. And, after all, it is as a man that we shall always think of Richard Seddon with the deepest admiration and regard. In one of the many sermons preached on the day of his burial, the story was told how, one Christmas Day a few years ago, friends called upon him, to find that he and his wife were sitting by the bedside of a poor and helpless old man—no relative or even friend of theirs—striving to cheer his dying hour with sympathy and loving care. We know of no incident in the whole of Richard Seddon's eminent and distinguished career that more fitly illustrates the strong humanity, the innate truth and goodness of heart that inspired his life-work; and we venture in all reverence to express the belief that when our lives are weighed in the balance, his name will rank high on the list of those whose record has stood the supreme test of death, because his life was one long utterance of that noblest of prayers: "Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."

WORLD-WIDE SYMPATHY.

MESSAGE FROM THE KING.

The Acting-Premier received the following cable message from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, through His Excellency the Governor:—"I am commanded by His Majesty the King 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."

The following reply to the message from His Majesty the King was despatched by the Acting-Premier:—"The Government and people of New Zealand desire to thank His Majesty for his gracious message of sympathy on the death of Mr. Seddon. The deceased statesman had won the affection and confidence of New Zealanders to a degree unprecedented in our history, and it is most gratifying to His Majesty's subjects in New Zealand to know that our gracious Sovereign appreciates the loyal and distinguished service which Mr. Seddon has rendered towards uniting and strengthening the bonds of kinship between the Mother Country and the outlying dominions of the Empire."

THE QUEEN'S SYMPATHETIC MESSAGE.

The following cablegram was sent to Mrs. Seddon by Her Majesty the Queen:—"Accept my deepest sympathy in your overwhelming sorrow, which the whole of England shares."

TRIBUTES FROM THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES.

The Governor received the following cablegram from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales:—"I heartily join with New Zealand in deeply lamenting the loss sustained by the death of Mr. Seddon, who has done so much for the colony and the Empire."

The Prince of Wales also sent the following message direct 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."

The following reply was sent to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales:—"The Acting-Premier respectfully requests His Excellency to convey to His Royal Highness the appreciation of the Government and people of New Zealand of His Royal Highness' gracious message of sympathy."

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S MESSAGE.

Lord Plunket received the following message from the Colonial Secretary, (Lord Elgin):—"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 all have sustained by the removal of a statesman so distinguished in the history of the colony and the Empire."

The following reply was sent to the message:—"On behalf of Mrs. Seddon and the people of New Zealand the Government desire to return their sincere thanks to His Majesty's Government for their message of sympathy. Our late Prime Minister had won a reputation beyond the narrow bounds of our own colony, and in thought and in deed he was ever wishful to promote the great ideal of Imperial unity. The kind feelings of regret and appreciation expressed by His Majesty's Government will find a response in the hearts of all New Zealanders."

TRIBUTE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH.

Lord Northcote, the Governor-General of Australia, telegraphed to Lord Plunket as follows:—"On behalf of the people of Australia, the Parliament and Ministers of the Commonwealth, and myself, I have to request you to convey to the people of New Zealand our profound sympathy in the loss to them, to Australia, and to the Empire, occasioned by the sudden death of their Prime Minister. Our whole community has been shocked by the news of the death of one so lately our guest, while devoting himself apparently with inexhaustible energy, and spirit to the completion of projects having for their object the increased welfare of the people of his country and the Commonwealth. His services to New Zealand are as well known here as they are valued at their high worth among the people with and for whom his life was spent. They are appreciated not only on this side of the world, where his work chiefly lay, but in distant dominions where his intense patriotism and humanitarian principles, admiration for which is limited by no political boundary, have made him famous among the masterful Empire-builders of our time. Taken suddenly from the midst of important duties, his great place in your community will be impossible to fill, yet his memory will be an example to his successors of the vast good that can be accomplished by the exercise of great ability and earnestness of purpose, animated by love for the Empire and his fellow-citizens."

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY.

The Governor received the following cablegram from the First Lord of the Admiralty:—"I am deeply grieved to hear of Mr. Seddon's death, and offer my sincerest condolence. Would it be agreeable that one of H.M.'s ships should convey the body from Australia to New Zealand?"

CONDOLENCES FROM AFRICA.

The Earl of Selborne, High Commissioner of South Africa, sent the following cablegram to the Governor:—"My Governments of Orange River Colony and Transvaal wish to unite with me in an expression of deep regret at the death of Mr. Seddon, and sympathy with the people of New Zealand. I am sure that the other Governments of South Africa, with whom I have not yet had time to communicate, will wish to join with me also in expressing our sense of the great loss the Empire has sustained."

In the Natal Assembly, the Premier (Mr. Smythe) moved a resolution of sympathy with New Zealand on the death of Mr. Seddon.

MEETING AT HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Sir Charles Dilke presided over a gathering on June 12th representing nearly all sections of the House of Commons, and moved a vote of condolence to the family of Mr. Seddon. He eulogised Mr. Seddon's services to democracy, whose confidence he had won and kept, and deserved, because of his courage and strength and good sense.

Mr. John Cathcart Wason, M.P., seconded the motion, and it was supported by Sir Gilbert Parker, M.P., Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., and Mr. Thomas Burt, M.P. Sir Joseph Ward acknowledged the motion on behalf of the bereaved family, the Government, and the people of New Zealand.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S APPRECIATION.

Mr. Chamberlain, in a letter to Mr. Reeves, says the Empire has lost one of its noblest citizens, and the colony a great administrator.

LORD ROBERTS' TRIBUTE.

Earl Roberts, speaking at the National Service League, paid a tribute to the memory of Mr. Seddon, as did Mr. Fletcher, the President, in taking the chair at the meeting of the New Zealand Trust and Loan Company.

MESSAGES TO MRS. SEDDON.

The following telegrams, among others, were sent direct to Mrs. Seddon:—

MR. CHAMBERLAIN. "Deeply regret irreparable loss to yourself and New Zealand." Chamberlain, Birmingham.

EARL MEATH. "Deepest sympathy. Imperial loss." Received his kind letter on Monday. Earl Meath, Godalming.

LORD STRATHCONA. "Lady Strathcona and I deeply regret your bereavement, and you and the members of your family have our heartfelt sympathy in your great sorrow." Strathcona, London.