

Ontario's Premier—A Real Farmer

Toronto, Canada, Dec., 1919.

By JOHN R. BONE

ERNEST CHARLES DRURY, the new Premier of Ontario, is a real farmer. Not long ago he was addressing a meeting of Toronto University undergraduates who had asked him to their society to present the farmers' point of view. During the evening one fresh student asked how it was if farm life was so arduous Mr. Drury could spend so much time going around the country addressing meetings.

"If you had been up at 5 o'clock this morning and had been fifty miles north of Toronto," he replied good naturedly to the questioner, "you would have found me milking eight cows, so that I could get ready to come down to you tonight."

A sense of the injustice under which farmers have been laboring, an intense earnestness combined with natural ability of high order, are obviously the qualities which have brought Mr. Drury to the position of first citizen of Ontario. In the beginning of his campaign of agitation, when all around him among his own class he found apathy and indifference, he would quote frequently the lines of Kipling:

The toad beneath the harrow knows
Exactly where each tooth goes.
The butterfly upon the road
Preaches contentment to that toad.

Drury is of the crusader type. He has the square jaw of a fighter and his eye brightens with the light of an enthusiast. Like all crusaders he is so convinced of the justice of his cause that he has absolute confidence in its ultimate triumph, no matter how dark the present outlook may be. During the reciprocity campaign of 1911 in which he took an active part, he made this declaration: "If we do not get reciprocity now our demands will be urged with redoubled force. It will not be for reciprocal free trade we will ask then. We will ask that Canadian duties be removed irrespective of other nations. This movement, strong with the righteousness of its cause, is going to sweep with uncontrolled force over this Dominion and if anybody gets hurt it will be his own fault."

In 1911 four men out of five regarded this as mere rhetoric. But now it seems that in it Drury spoke with the vision of a prophet.

It must not be supposed that because Drury is a working farmer he is unacquainted with the amenities of city life, or that he is overawed by the responsibilities of public service. His father was the first Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, and since his grandfather, a yeoman from Warwickshire, England, where the family had tilled the land for centuries, blazed a trail a hundred years ago through the forest to the west of the shores of Lake Simcoe and settled on Crown Hill, the Canadian branch of the Drury family has been active in many public movements. The present scion of the house is little more than 40 years of age. As a boy the lure of the university opening the door to professions, which was open to him, had no attractions. He decided what he wanted to do was to take a course in an agricultural college and come back to the farm.

By the time he was 25 years old he was beginning to take a part in public affairs but always with the main

idea that the farmers must be organized to act in unison. On one side of him he saw a neighbor who year after year voted "Grit." On the other side was a neighbor who just as consistently voted "Tory," with the result that each man's vote killed the other although their interests were the same. He forthwith set out to show these two men that one or both of them must be wrong and that instead of pulling against each other, thereby effecting nothing, they ought to pull together and achieve some result.

Drury's first efforts at organizing the farmers took the form of trying to resuscitate an organization known as the Dominion Grange which had been muddling along for years. With its small and inactive membership Drury quickly acquired dominance and at an early date was elected master. This position he held during the reciprocity campaign of 1911 when for the first time his name began to be spoken about outside his own home community. City men, however, paid little attention to him. They regarded him as a crank of a farmer with some ability but without influence or potentialities.

His position as master of the Dominion Grange brought him in touch with other farmers' organizations throughout the country, particularly the new and aggressive movements developing among the grain growers of the Canadian West. Then all the various farmers' organizations affiliated into a National Council of Agriculture of which Drury became the first general secretary. It has been in this national position that he has figured in recent years.

Drury's political ambitions have always been directed towards Ottawa and federal affairs. To him the tariff has been the one big issue. Drury looked forward to the day when he would get into the Dominion Parliament and lead a storming party against the citadel of Protectionism. So it came about that in the recent provincial elections Drury was not even a candidate. He was, however, in a real sense the father and leader of the provincial movement, for it was he who, recognizing that the old Dominion Grange was ill suited for political action, had been largely instrumental in organizing and molding the new instrument of warfare known as the United Farmers of Ontario which combined within its objects the dual purposes of a co-operative society and of a political party.

If Drury or any farmer had imagined that the United Farmers of Ontario would have so great a measure of success that it would be called upon to form a government, Drury might have been in the fight as a candidate. But all any of the farmers hoped was that they should elect a block of members strong enough to make its influence felt on the government, perhaps holding the balance of power.

But when the United Farmers of Ontario members-elect held their first meeting and found they were required to select a leader who would form a government, practically only one name suggested itself to their minds. That name was Drury's. For the time

being, therefore, Drury has given up his fight against the tariff to devote himself to the administration of a great province.

Like many Ontario farmers Drury has been a great reader. A coal oil lamp with its soft yellow illumination, a warm stove and a shelf of books, provide coziness for many a long winter evening. But in Drury's case it was more than coziness that was sought. His active mind was continually grappling in theory with problems that some day he might have to face in practice.

"Ernest's ambition always was to have a real library of the best books in the world," is the testimony of his wife, "but as long as he had to work the farm he would never trust himself with the temptation."

Nevertheless his reading has covered a wide range and Prof. Sissons of the University of Toronto says his equipment would qualify him for a professorship in English in almost any university. As a mere boy he mastered Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations." The modern writers he is familiar with, but the books he comes back to again and again as old friends are the Bible, Shakespeare, Macaulay, and Dickens.

Blessed with a retentive memory, his wide reading stands him in good stead when he is on the platform. His English being impeccable his speeches display a culture not equalled by many public men who have vastly greater pretensions. It follows that on the platform he makes a good impression. He speaks easily and convincingly and apparently enjoys it although often suffering reaction afterward.

Drury is deeply religious and it would be impossible to understand his character without keeping this fact in mind. He is the guiding spirit of the little country Methodist church which stands near his home. There every Sunday afternoon he teaches a Sunday school class of boys, attends to the furnace, and sees that everything having to do with the activities of the institution runs smoothly. He uses neither liquor nor tobacco.

His farm consists of 250 acres, the old homestead which he has worked with the assistance of one hired man. It is a mixed farm, specialized to some extent in alfalfa, clover, and dual purpose shorthorn cattle.

Physically Drury is a large and powerful man who can endure much. Mentally, any one who thinks that being a farmer he is not a quick thinker will get a surprise. In public debate he has more than held his own with the keenest controversialists in the country. He has a contempt for office seekers, time servers, opportunists and for greed. He is a believer in the Wilsonian idea of open diplomacy, in fact his frankness often appalls his friends. In manner he is friendly and genial.

He loves the fireside circle. If you inquire in the town of Barrie, which lies near Drury's home, you will find that Drury belongs to no clubs, societies, or recreative organizations of any kind. "The only time I ever saw him having any fun," said the livery man, "was when he was out sleighriding on the hill with his boys. But there are always stacks of books coming to him through the postoffice, blue books I think most of them are."

Editors Who Sway the People

By ELLIS C. HOLLUMS

A STAUNCH believer in prohibition of intoxicants as an economic as well as moral need, Robert G. Hiden, president and editor of The Birmingham (Ala.) Ledger, holds the distinction of being among the first editors of daily newspapers in America to take a firm stand against John Barleycorn. Mr. Hiden was the first editor in Alabama to commit his newspaper to the prohibition cause, and he has continued his advocacy of the reform until The Ledger enjoyed the privilege of expressing its approval of the world-wide prohibition movement now under way.

Mr. Hiden's modesty is such that he permits the use of his name in connection with his newspaper work only upon rare occasions, and even then when it can hardly be avoided. For this reason, his intimates and those who are associated with him only are aware of his activities in civic and state causes.

He is a native of Virginia, and began his newspaper career as a reporter on The Richmond (Va.) Times, now The Times-Dispatch, which then was owned and published by the late Joseph Bryan. He became city editor and then managing editor of this newspaper, resigning that position to become associate editor of The Birmingham News, under the ownership and direction of the late Gen. Rufus N. Rhodes.

Upon the death of Gen. Rhodes, and the consequent change in ownership of The News, Mr. Hiden acquired a large interest in The Birmingham Ledger, becoming associate editor and vice president of the paper. Subsequently he became president and editor and persistently and consistently pursued the fight for prohibition in Alabama, which ultimately resulted in the adoption by the state legislature of state-wide prohibition laws.

Mr. Hiden's method of reaching the people of Alabama was solely through his newspaper. Making no pretense of being an orator, he delivers addresses only when he cannot avoid doing so. But his writings on The Ledger's editorial page have made it one of the most widely read and quoted in the South.

When Mr. Hiden began the fight for prohibition, The Ledger was practically alone among newspapers in

the state. He caused the paper to carry the fight to its advertising columns, and excluded all advertising of liquors and beers. The paper lost a large volume of business that the additions to its circulation did not immediately offset. However, this did not cause the editor to deviate from his course.

Circulation began to climb finally and local merchants began to see the logic of Mr. Hiden's arguments.

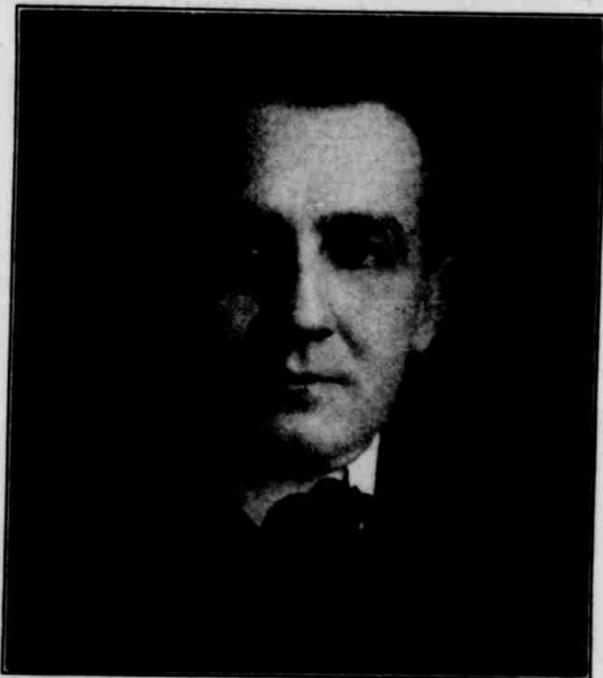
Illustrations from the Saturday night crowds on the streets of Birmingham were used in The Ledger's columns to point out the need for a saloon-less city. The homicides, robberies, street brawls, immense police court dockets, which gained for Birmingham the nickname "Bad Birmingham" fifteen years ago, were utilized to drive home to the people of the city and state the lesson that liquor was hindering the progress of Alabama.

The manufacturers of the Birmingham district saw the light when Mr. Hiden's paper gathered production figures. These showed that the Monday production of local plants was heavily reduced, and it was shown that the receipts at saloons the previous Saturdays were mainly responsible for the losses.

The Ledger's fight ended in victory for the prohibition forces in 1907, when the first prohibition legislation was enacted into law in Alabama. A loss later resulted, and in 1915 saloons enjoyed a few months' sale of intoxicants. The fight was carried to the legislature that year, and resulted in complete victory, which was further clinched in the 1919 legislature, when the federal amendment providing for nation-wide prohibition was ratified.

Being a thorough-going advocate of conservation in the use of newsprint, the editor of The Ledger carries it out even on his editorial page, and uses as few words as possible to convey his thought to the reader.

Being not himself an old man, Mr. Hiden is a believer in youth. He has gathered about him in all departments on The Ledger a staff of youngsters. His general manager has yet to greet his thirtieth birthday, and his managing editor is about the same age.



ROBERT G. HIDEN

Leads in the fight to make the South dry.

All other executives of The Ledger likewise are young men with the same capacity for enduring work that is possessed by the editor and president.

Mr. Hiden frequently works fourteen and sixteen hours a day, and seldom less than ten. His vacations are few and far between and when he takes a rest, he prefers to follow Izaak Walton's example. He usually spends a short while each winter at a Florida resort where the fish bite freely, and one can wear old clothes, and be thoroughly comfortable—that is, when he takes any rest at all.

The Ledger is an organization of youth, with all the vision, enthusiasm and "pep" of youth. One of the reasons for its coming out victor in fights for civic betterment which it wages when occasion demands, is the southern gentleman who is its editor and president.