

THE NATIONAL MONTHLY OF CANADA

VOL. V.

TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1904

No.

TOPICS OF THE TIME

The People Are Responsible

POLITICS nowadays is a science. Within the past decade or two it has been so thoroughly systematized and organized that a technical importance has been given it which it never had before. Its scope, too, has widened. Formerly there was only the politics of the nation or colony as a whole, but to-day we have federal, state or provincial, and civic politics, with a complexity of organization in each. It is impossible to escape political influence in some way or another; whatever may be one's personal inclinations, it is a factor in our life to be reckoned with. And since men are giving themselves up to it, and are studying new systems and evolving new methods, are, indeed, in some places adding it to their list of school studies, modern politics may in a way be quite properly called a science.

It is the more unfortunate, therefore, that an influence so widespread should have lost something of its usefulness through deterioration. Pure politics is still the dream of the idealists, but, say the best we can of existing conditions, we cannot say that pure politics has yet been very fully realized. In our own country and the country nearest us, political corruption is from time to time revealing itself, and there is reason to believe that much exists unrevealed. Ward politics has become in the United States a force of tremendous and growing power, and various newspaper and magazine writ-

ers within the past year or so have shown a state of affairs astonishingly serious. Only recently one of the chief officials of St. Louis confessed that for the past twenty-five years hardly a bill had passed the Council without being paid for; the members had each and all received large or small bribes for their votes. Civic affairs in many other American cities have been shown to be almost as bad, and as municipal politics and its methods are more and more affecting the larger field of federal politics, there is an element of the baser sort all the way through.

In Canada we may congratulate ourselves that no such extreme of political corruption has yet been reached; but the evil is here too, in lesser proportions. If it were not, we should not be having election trials such as those which have awakened so much interest of late in Ontario.

These paragraphs have no special reference to the General Election or to the recent campaigns of either party. They are being written before the results of the election are known, and will not appear in print until some weeks after, and, therefore, are meant only to apply to the situation in general, without partisan bias or reference of any kind. It is quite beside the point to attribute the political corruption in Canada to whichever party one is opposed to. It is in both parties, and is due not to the policies of either, which in the long run are usually