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PERSONAL REPRESENTATION AND THE REPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES.

I.

IT is stated that Bishop Butler on one occasion, after having remained for a long time buried in deep thought, suddenly turned to his chaplain and exclaimed: 'Do nations ever go mad?' We have been left in ignorance of what reply was made by the chaplain, or what conclusion was reached by the author of 'The Analogy.' For my own part, however, I do not hesitate to say that, on this continent at all events, nations do occasionally make an approach at least to the loss of sanity, and that at the time when they have most need of it—in the midst of a general election.

The scene then displayed is not calculated to exalt representative institutions in the eyes of either friends or foes, or to encourage hopes of their future success. It is the occasion on which they are seen in their darkest hue; and yet, if all that is said by vehement admirers of popular government be true, it is precisely the period at which they should shine forth in their brightest colours. If misgovernment be due entirely to the selfishness of kings, aristocracies, or ministers, and purity and patriotism can be found only in the people—as the language of vehement democrats generally seems to imply—surely the favourable contrast ought to be most evident at the time when the people stand forth in their uncontrolled might to decide who

shall bear sway over them. Yet, is it so? For an answer, I appeal to the fact that across the line the scene has degenerated to such a degree as to hinder the more respectable portion of the community from taking any share in it. Amongst ourselves, it is gratifying to know that this depth of degradation has not yet been reached; but, with shame and sorrow, it must be admitted that Canada seems to be progressing towards it. The writs are issued. Candidates must be selected. As no numerous body is capable of acting in an executive capacity, this duty is one which must be discharged by a few. Nominating conventions have not yet been brought to the same pitch of mischiefousness with us as they have in the States; but the leading question with the nominators is the same in both countries. The search is not for the man best fitted to discharge the duties of a legislator, but for the candidate most likely to attract votes. Here is an ex-member: it may be one who has been a minister; who unites talent and experience, and is, unquestionably, fitted to adorn the Legislature and to serve Canada; but, perhaps, he may have spoken freely, and not in accordance with the party traditions on some matter, and, besides, 'a local man' will run much better: so he is set aside. Here is a good local man, but he is involved in a local quarrel which will