

Through a Monocle

I DO not know whether the politicians have been making any good resolutions this New Year, but there are few people who have more obvious opportunities. If, for example, the members of the House of Commons would resolve to live up to the old English saying that "the House of Commons is the best club in Europe"—translating it to the best club in America—what a relief they would bring to the gentlemen and ladies of Canada. Possibly the rowdies would not like it as well. Still the rowdies are an insignificant section of our population, and are more noisy than strong even at election time. In the "best club in America," one gentleman would not apply insulting language to another. One gentleman would not make nasty insinuations against the private character of another. If a man's private character was so bad that he had to be denied admittance to the "club," that would be done with the greatest attention to decorum and in a perfectly dignified and gentlemanly manner. The debates conducted by such a "club" could be read by any gentleman or lady in the land without fear of finding there a ruffianly expression or a vulgar epithet.

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In "the best club in America," a gentleman's word would pass at par. This means that no gentleman would ever say what he did not know to be true. The members of the "club" would become so habituated to this attitude that it would never occur to them to question a statement made by another until they knew that he had been misinformed—in which case they would break the news to him with the utmost delicacy. Under no circumstances would they imply that another gentleman was wilfully misleading the "club". Another great gain would be that no gentleman would knowingly bore the "club". No member would get up with a pile of scrap books before him and a heap of blue books on the floor and compel the "club" to sit and listen to a weariness hodge-podge drawn from them both, because the said member would not take the time or did not possess the ability to condense into fair compass what he wanted to say. If a man could not accomplish this simple feat, he would not ask the attention of the "club" at all.

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A VIRTUAL POINT.



Emigration Agent: "Cancel your passage? Why?"
Doubtful Starter: "Chap's just told me that when it's one o'clock here, it's only four in the mornin' over in Canada!"
Emigration Agent: "Well! Well! And what difference does that make to you?"
Doubtful Starter: "Catch me goin' to a place where yer've got to wait all that time for dinner every day!"—The Bystander.

"The best club in America" would be sensitively jealous of the honour of its members. It would not permit a man to continue to frequent its club rooms who was under suspicion of financial laxity and who did not take immediate measures to clear his name. If one member made degrading moral insinuations against another, both members could not remain in the "club". If the insinuations were true, the exposed member must retire; while, if the insinuations were groundless, the slanderer must go. That the insinuations should hang in the air and both members go on as if nothing had been said, is unthinkable. Accusations of dishonour of any kind would be at once probed and decided. They would never be permitted to lie over until it suited the convenience of one or other of the parties to press for an investigation. There would be more than the honour of either member at stake—there would be the honour of the "club".

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Those who do not regard the phrase "club man" as a compliment—and they are many—will note that their Parliament cannot begin to live up to the standard of honour—be it high or low—that is set by clubmen for themselves. No club in the world would be guilty of the hypocrisy of seeking public approval by abolishing its "bar," and then sneaking through underground passages to the "bar" of a neighbouring club to get liquor. Yet honour is a quality which Parliament could do with very well. One marvels that any Parliament can command public confidence without it; and still the miracle seems to be common enough. We insist upon the probity of our errand boys; but we put up with a Parliament that is constantly being exposed and is constantly unrepentant. We have become accustomed to the fatal idea that we cannot expect much from politicians. This would prove fatal to representative government if we knew of any substitute.

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Yet is not this very idea the parent of some of the degradation of Parliament? We wonder sometimes why men of honour fall so quickly into the common ruck when they are sent to Ottawa. They were public-spirited and high-minded citizens when we nominated them; and now we cannot distinguish them from the herd. What has happened? In many a case, only this—another member has taken advantage of a mis-step on their part to accuse them of dishonesty or lack of good faith, and we have become so used to believing the worst that we hear from Ottawa that we have believed it without any hesitation. "Give a dog a bad name and it will hang him." These men of honour found that their good faith became valueless when they entered the halls of Parliament—that mistakes of judgment were always regarded as deliberate crimes—and they either threw up the task in disgust or decided that they might as well have the gain as the name. What some of us should be able to do is to elect men to Parliament whose high character we know, and then keep our faith in them, no matter what their opponents may charge or appearances indicate. If they have the "stuff" in them, this will bring it out. And it would pay us better to be deceived in a scoundrel or two than to never give a good man a chance.

The Weavers

SIR GILBERT PARKER'S latest novel, "The Weavers," has been the special object of comment abroad, every English reviewer having traced the principal characters to real prototypes, despite the forewarning of the author that no prototype existed. The young hero, David, crusading for Egypt, is identified with General Gordon; the genial old statesman Windlehurst with Lord Beaconsfield, the aspiring young Eglington with both Lord Randolph Churchill and his son Winston. The hero of Gertrude Atherton's "Ancestors" is a young Englishman, surpassingly able, whom the London press has pointed out as also bearing a marked resemblance to Winston Churchill. If the book is prophetic, says the "Daily Chronicle," he may find himself one day boss of San Francisco and later on President of the United States. The two types in the two novels are so different that if they are both cut from the pattern of Mr. Churchill, it is evident that Sir Gilbert Parker and Mrs. Atherton have distinct opinions of his personality.—The Argonaut.