

MONTREAL LIFE.

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LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

IT is a marvellous thing that in two classes of controversy which should be conducted upon a high plane, most men lose the instincts of gentlemen and behave like savages. We may accept it as settled that there always will be differences of opinion upon political and religious questions, so long as mankind is a reasoning creation. From the time when our primitive ancestors discussed, in the tree-tops, the prospects of a sufficient cocoanut crop, down to these days when the size of the next deficit and the productiveness of the duty on beer are legitimate causes of political cleavage, questions affecting the future of the clan, tribe or nation have occasioned differences of opinion. And no matter how much outward uniformity there may have been in matters of religious faith and practice, there is no doubt that the inner beliefs of men have always been as numerous as the individuals themselves, whether the era was one of spooks and hobgoblins in every waterfall and tree-top, or an age of dispute as to the necessity of immersion or the efficacy of prayers for the dead. It is difference of opinion that makes horse-races, and without difference of opinion we should lead the grey, monotonous, cold-blooded existence of fish—with never an election or a revival meeting to stir nervous fibres and set our tongues wagging.

BUT difference of opinion is not inconsistent with mutual respect and reciprocal fair play as between man and man. Religious or political warfare is a pretty good test of the real stuff a man is made of, and it is surprising how few can go through the fiery crucible and come out attested gold. Just as some respectable people are so, because temptation and opportunity—those almost invincible allies—have never confronted them, so, many an estimable citizen, to whom, in private life, a mean, dishonorable or unfair deed would not even suggest itself, is, in politics, a boor, waging the most unprincipled and cruel warfare against his fellow men who happen not to think the same as he does on certain questions. If you or I were walking along St. James street and saw one man kicking another about the head, our love of fair play would be almost certain to assert itself, and we should interfere on behalf of the "under dog." British people, in particular, pride themselves on their love of a fair, square, stand-up fight. But, we do not have to go out of the British Empire, nor even out of this small portion of it called Canada, to see politicians metaphorically using boots, sand-bags, bludgeons and stilettos upon their opponents.

AS I have remarked before now, no man has been more shamefully misrepresented, for political purposes, on any and every possible occasion, than Mr. Tarte, and after the occurrences of the past couple of weeks I am able to repeat the assertion with added emphasis. The Minister of Public Works is not exactly a popular hero throughout Canada, and the paper that, for the sake of fair play, puts in its oar to help him forward against the dead set of the current, has little to gain by doing so. I do not think, therefore, that I can be accused of anything more selfish than a desire to do justice and see justice done, in saying a good word from time to time for Mr. Tarte. Neither does LIFE owe political homage to any over-lord, be he Conservative or Liberal. The plain fact of the matter is that the Minister of Public Works, no matter what his faults may be—and, I suppose, like the majority of mortals, outside of Parliament and the newspaper offices, he is not

infallible—has been so grossly abused, misrepresented and badgered, that the sympathy of men who love fair play is being aroused. The attack on Mr. Tarte in Parliament last week, in connection with the Montreal riots, probably marked a turn in the tide. The sick and irritable Minister cannot be driven nearer to losing his temper than he was on that occasion; yet, great as was the provocation, he succeeded in saying nothing that could do him harm, unless twisted and turned beyond recognition by his opponents. I do not know how the rest of the country stands, but here in Montreal there seems to be a decided revulsion of popular sentiment in Mr. Tarte's favor. The prolonged and cruel persecution of the man has aroused the common spirit of British fair play, and from this time forward we may expect some decrease of bitterness in the attacks upon him, for his opponents must realize that there is such a thing as hitting too hard, and that the recoil, in that case, will hurt them as much as the blow will hurt Mr. Tarte.

NOT since they crossed sides with the Liberals, have the Conservatives at Ottawa seemed to be so united, so alert, and altogether in such good fighting trim, as during the present session. The bad temper and irritability of certain members and followers of the Government, on the other hand, shows that the party on the right of Mr. Speaker are chafing under the recent successes of the Conservatives. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's proverbial amiability has shown to his personal advantage in trying circumstances, but his lack of command was never more evident. A strong leader, such as Sir John Macdonald, would have held his followers in leash much more firmly than Sir Wilfrid has done. Sir John often, by a single word or look, nipped an incipient row in the bud. This was good generalship, because the Government has always more to lose by disorder in the House than the Opposition. No Canadian Parliament has listened to more outrageous language than the present one since this session began. There were more exciting scenes in the closing days of the last Parliament, whilst the historic discussions on the Remedial Bill were in progress, but for ungentlemanly language—language that should not be used by representatives of the nation—this has been, so far, a record session. The fact that most of the trouble has been precipitated by members on the Government side, shows that there is either no attempt on the part of those in command to keep their followers in check or that the latter pay no attention to the wishes of their superiors. In the meantime, the session is prolonged, public business suffers, the Government presents a sorry spectacle, and the people lose respect for their representatives.

I HAVE never seen so much reckless driving and disorderly traffic in the streets of any city as in those of Montreal—and I have been in the majority of the larger cities of America. We all know that on this side of the ocean things are not done with as much decorum and precision as on the other side. London, for example, is a model as regards street traffic. If the utmost order were not observed in the thoroughfares of that great city, there would soon be inextricable confusion. We do not require so much precision in our cities, but, even so, Montreal is sadly behind in the matter of maintaining some kind of regulation of traffic at the principal street intersections, and thus protecting the lives and limbs of pedestrians. The other evening at 6 o'clock I had to wait for fully five minutes at the corner of Bleury and Craig streets before venturing across with the lady in my charge. Motormen, draymen and