

MONTREAL LIFE.

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LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

WE, of Quebec, are accustomed to swallow in silence the sneers of the people of Ontario, who have, in the past, pointed the finger of scorn or pity—not always without reason—at the wastefulness and corruptness of our Provincial and municipal administrations. Quebec has been used by our western friends as a term signifying the quintessence of leprous uncleanness in politics. There has been much in the history of this Province, God knows, to justify many of the harsh things they have said about our public men, our political ideals, and our people. But people who own conservatories should have a care in what direction they point their catapults, and I think the time has come for our fellow-citizens in Ontario to “dry up”—if I may be permitted the use of this homely but expressive phrase—about the political rottenness of Quebec. Was there ever in Canada a series of more disgraceful election scandals than those ventilated in Ontario since the elections of March, 1898? If so, I have yet to learn of them. These scandals have reached an extreme, and it is to be hoped a culminating point, in the West Elgin case.

HERE is a case in which there is evidence of the most serious wrongdoing. The Premier of Ontario promises a full investigation. The commissioners meet to probe into the matter, and then it transpires that the ballots—the only clues to the alleged frauds—are missing. All the explanation that is forthcoming from the Provincial officials is that they must have been accidentally burned in the furnaces of the Parliament buildings. The commissioners also find the nature of their instructions such that the man from whom the seat is alleged to have been stolen cannot appear as a party to the investigation, although his counsel claims to be in possession of facts material to the eliciting of the truth. Surely Mr. Ross and his colleagues do not expect to be strengthened in the country by such incidents as these. If they are the victims of accident they are indeed unfortunate, for a great many people are likely to put a harsh construction on the facts. And until such events as this—scarcely less sensational than those reported from Kentucky—become rarer in that “unco guid” Province with its “unco guid” capital, it will not be in the mouths of Ontario people to say one word against the fair name of Quebec.

THIS West Elgin case is likely to form the great bone of contention at the present session of the Ontario Legislature. The parties there are more evenly divided than ever, and, although the new Government has announced a progressive policy, which entitles it to credit and may win it the confidence of the people, everything goes to show that for the present, at all events, Mr. Ross and his colleagues are going to have no thornless pathway. Sensational and far-reaching events are not beyond the possibilities of the next three or four months in Ontario—events in which the people of Quebec will be by no means uninterested, for the result of the neck-and-neck political race that has been on for two years in the most populous Province of the Dominion must have an immense influence on that other race soon to be called in the Federal arena. The Ontario Conservatives are fighting as they never fought before; but the Liberals of that Province are as astute as the Boers and as strongly entrenched. The men who, for so long, have held their position at Toronto against successive Conservative generals and all kinds of weapons and ammunition, may be depended on to make the most of every advantage

Providence or political foresight has favored them with. In this connection, I may point out that the Ontario Liberals know enough to encourage and promote the newspapermen serving in their ranks. Some of the ablest members of the Legislature—Messrs. Graham, Pattullo, Stratton, Pettypiece and Preston, for example—are the editors and proprietors of influential country newspapers. The Conservatives, both at Ottawa and Toronto, are neglectful of their newspapermen. The Liberals know better.

THE following letter reached me too late for use last week. It was evidently suggested by my paragraph two weeks ago on the inauguration of a Presbyterian “mission” in this city to Roman Catholics. The communication needs no comment, as its writer defines his position quite clearly, and LIFE’s opinion has already been stated:

Dear Sir,—The religious war, which is being waged with such misplaced zeal in the pulpits and press of our fair city, is assuming truly alarming proportions. Were any tangible results to follow this theological fighting, were peace and goodwill to spring from the ruins of the vanquished creeds, or the conqueror to reign forever more—dispenser of happiness to the followers of a universal church—then, in God’s name, might the good work go on, and haste the millennium. But, since the hour when the first “non serviam” was thundered from Heaven’s heights down to the church-divided, faction-torn days of the 19th century, there have been as many beliefs almost as individuals; and just for so long and weary a stretch of time have wars—wordy and otherwise—been waged in the name of religion, without the slightest particle of good resulting to the long-suffering world. It was once asked what would Christ do if He came to Montreal? I do not wish to be profane when I answer that He would require a mighty Habeas Corpus Act—an all-powerful search-warrant—to produce the religion founded by Him, whose first words to His lonely Apostles in the cenacle were “Peace be with you.” And in His name, let us have peace. “What matter if, at different shrines, we pray unto one God?” Why waste time and eloquence to prove that Peter was in Rome, or that he was not; that St. Paul was his superior or his vassal, that priests should or should not marry. In my humble opinion, when the day of reckoning comes, all such issues will be set aside. Let everyone live his life as best he may, doing unto others as he wishes others to do unto him, helping a weaker brother to loftier aims, walking in simple, child-like faith in the way whose beauties were first pointed out by a mother’s gentle hand, scattering brightness in dark places, and cheering the weary ones of the world. This may not be orthodox, but it is practical religion, and could it only become universal the world would be all the better for it. I write this with all due respect to the learned and saintly clergymen who have taken part in the controversy in question, but I still think that so far it has done little good, and may do untold harm. Let each go his own way, and if that way leads to Anglican St. George’s, Catholic St. Patrick’s, or Methodist St. James’, what matter, so long as the churchgoer is satisfied in his respective pew? If not, he will, of his own accord, look elsewhere for the truth. It required no remonstrance to make a Manning or a Newman, nor did it need a “mission” to convert a Chiniquy. Mine, I know, is the humble voice of one crying out in the wilderness of a great church-studded city, but others may re-echo my words, and in time put an end to a useless, if learned, controversy. Yours, etc., Eric Gordon.

VERY interesting little pamphlet is the first annual report of the Orthopedic Hospital in Toronto, a public institution devoted exclusively to the treatment of the lame, crippled and deformed. I learn from the report that this is the only hospital in Canada of its kind. Hospitals set apart for this special work have long been fully recognized as a necessity in Great Britain and the United States, but, until July, 1898, there was no institution in the Dominion of Canada devoted to this work alone. Already there have been 172 admissions to the