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THE MACHINE AT OTTAWA.

THE people of this country are governed not by brains, nor by any one man or set of men, but by a Machine. The Machine is superior to everything else in the country—to private talent or public spirit. The private Member, the Cabinet Minister, the Government itself, are as helpless before the Machine as the Hindoo before the car of Juggernaut, the great majority of politicians being ready to worship the Machine though it crushes them.

At one time—far back in our political history—the politician or party leader controlled the Machine; now the Machine controls the politicians and party leaders. The political history of our country shows how a people, ordinarily intelligent and active about their private business, can live under a public evil, in ignorance of it or reconciled to it, simply because it is old—has come to them by inheritance, as it were.

Because party government had done good in England, and served its purpose, ages ago, it was introduced into Canada, where it was as out of place, and as unsuited for all practical purposes, as an English stage coach would be for the navigation of the St. Lawrence.

In England the form of government was made to suit the age and the needs of the people. Lords and Commoners existed before the House of Lords or the House of Commons. Cavaliers and Roundheads figured and fought before the organisation of the parliamentary parties that afterwards represented them and came down to our times under the degenerate names of Whigs and Tories.

In Canada parties were formed to suit the form of government; not the form of government to suit any parties. There never were any class distinctions in Canada that required separate chambers in the Legislature to perpetuate and protect them; yet Legislative Councillors and, later, Senators were created to fill up a second Chamber. The constitution of Canada is a work of art—the work of “many men of many minds”—but the chief glory, the initiation of the great work, is to be credited to a British nobleman, Lord Durham. The noble lord is praised to the skies by the politicians for his successful struggle against nature in engrafting kings, lords, and commons on a country that had only commons. It never seems to have struck the worthy nobleman or his admirers that it would have been easier to have left the second Chamber out of the Constitution than to have manufactured a class to fill it. However, Canada has been treated no better or no worse than other new countries in this respect. In England, the Constitution, the form of government, is a garment that has, it would seem, to be cut and altered from time to time to fit the wearer; it seems to be the rule for the Colonies to cut and alter the wearer from time to time to fit an English suit of clothes.

The Canadians, like all practical people who have a living to earn in a new country, trouble themselves very little about the political doings of their rulers. If Lord Durham had introduced the English stage coach into Canada instead of the British Constitution, and had sent the people to work building a road along the banks of the St. Lawrence for the convey-

ance of mails and passengers through the country in his stage coach, no doubt they would have speedily suggested to him that it would be cheaper for the country and better for the mails and passengers if he would send his stage coach home and take to a flat boat or a canoe. But in Lord Durham's day the people were so busy building roads and houses that they had neither time nor inclination to attend to the weightier matters of law and government on which the comfort of their homes and the prosperity of their country depended, but left these matters to the idle and the vicious, the British nobleman and the village politician. Although the people are now having a rest from road building and house building, their apathy and indifference as to how they are governed has become chronic, and has left the country a prey and a paradise for designing politicians.

The abortive Canadian-British Constitution—with new fly-wheels which Lord Durham and his associates introduced into the country, would have shaken itself to pieces in a few years from the innate rottenness of the materials used, if the politicians had not put life into the old patchwork Machine by their continual struggle for office. To help themselves along in their struggle for the flesh pots of office, the politicians organised their followers into parties; and have tried ever since to humbug the million into the belief that this struggle for power for the sake of the pot is “Party Government,” and a good thing for the people as well as the politicians. The Machine, fed by the taxes of the people, patched and painted up from time to time by the politicians here and in England, has grown into the great, grinding, cumbersome, blind, soulless, useless, and unwieldy thing that has its headquarters at Ottawa and its hindquarters all over Canada to-day.

No one man, no party, no time, no place, is solely responsible for the Machine; it exists and acts now of its own volition, doing good seldom and evil always, without reason and without regret.

It is generally supposed that Sir John A. Macdonald, the leader of the “In-Party”—the parties in Canada being simply the “Ins” and “Outs”—runs the Machine. It is more correct to suppose that the Machine runs Sir John. No matter what party or what leader is in power, in this generation, the Machine is supreme. Sir John is only a product of the Machine. He was made, moves, and has his being, in the Machine; and adores his maker: believes, of course, that Machine government is a divine institution; no better, purer, greater, or other form of government possible in Canada. Even though the Machine be expensive, cumbersome, and occasionally cruel—even though he has to look on occasionally to see the great, big, unwieldy, senseless mass roll on and crush a favourite corn, Sir John, so long as he is its nominal director has to love, to worship, and sing the praises of the Machine.

The House of Commons of Canada, under Machine rule, has become one great expensive puppet show, kept up for the entertainment of the few at the expense of the many. Here are mock debates and discussions going on for three or four months out of the year, where puppet speakers from all over the country, after speaking their little parts, always vote the one way—as the Machine directs.

What a criminal waste of time it is for two hundred of the principal men in the country to spend a quarter of their political existence at Ottawa doing nothing but speaking and voting by rote! Many of the Members feel their uselessness, but, never knowing a different state of things, blame every thing else but the Machine for it. As party men they think it treason to speak or “kick” against the Machine. Has not “Party Government” given England the great and glorious liberty the people enjoy—in political print—to-day? Has not Party Government produced the British Constitution, wealth and progress, the National Debt? Has it not made England a Nation?—as well say, Has it not made England an Island?

The influence and effect the Machine produces on the new Member at close quarters is peculiar. For the time it makes him cynical. His first idea, as he finds the Machine grasping him, throttling and stifling his originality and freedom, is to kick against the Machine. But his older political associates explain to him that this is because he is not “heartily in accord” with the Machine. They tell him that he must not consider the Machine as something with intelligence, that he can control, guide or affect in any way, much less improve. That he must, to be happy, go with the Machine, run after it, follow its windings; but never to think, under any consideration, of turning the Machine out of its course—the