

THE BETTER DAY.

HARSH thoughts, blind angers, and fierce hands,
That keep this restless world at strife,
Mean passions that, like choking sands,
Perplex the stream of life,

Pride and hot envy and cold greed,
The cankers of the loftier will,
What if ye triumph, and yet bleed?
Ah, can ye not be still?

Oh, shall there be no space, no time,
No century of weal in store,
No freehold in a nobler clime,
Where men shall strive no more?

Where every motion of the heart
Shall serve the spirit's master call,
Where self shall be the unseen part,
And human kindness all?

Or shall we but by fits and gleams
Sink satisfied, and cease to rave,
Find love but in the rest of dreams,
And peace but in the grave?

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN.

VOTING BY COMMAND.

IN order that Canadians may fully appreciate the importance of the question of compulsory voting, I desire to place before them the following statement submitted to the members of the Select Committee of the House of Commons of Canada, to whose consideration has been referred the Bill of the present session entitled, "An Act to make voting compulsory":—

Relying upon that desire which actuates the members of this committee, the desire to calmly and thoroughly investigate and pass upon the principles involved in the Bill before them, I venture to put forward, in writing, a few extracts from the works of others, bearing upon the subject of compulsory voting in elections for the House of Commons.

The question whether an elector in Canada should be compelled to vote may be discussed from four standpoints, viz.: the moral, the ethical-political, the ideal-political, and the practical-political.

Extract "A," in the appendix hereto, from the pen of Dr. R. W. Dale, a Congregational minister of Birmingham, England, is a good example of the argument on religious grounds.

In extract "B," we have the views of the late Dr. Francis Lieber, as expressed in his "Manual of Political Ethics." The "Encyclopædia Britannica" includes this work when stating: "The political writings of Francis Lieber are held in great estimation by all publicists."

Nearly one-third of the electors of Canada refrained from voting in the elections of 1891, as is shown in quotation "C."

All scriptures, both sacred and the honest profane, are written for our learning; and he is a foolish statesman who acts without informing himself beforehand, from the history of nations and the writings of their best men, what had been advocated under similar circumstances by rulers and philosophers, and how their teachings were borne out and resulted when put to actual test.

Extract "D," taken from that Dialogue of Plato called "Laws," is given as showing the compulsory manner of voting enjoined by this philosopher in his ideal commonwealth for the Athenians, written about 350 years before Christ. This is the philosopher of whom it has been said, that "he has anticipated nearly all the questions that have swelled into importance in the metaphysical and ethical speculations of these later ages."

The only modern instance, we can discover, of the compulsory voting being made use of in state elections is that of the kingdom of Denmark. In 1866, a new electoral law was passed, in which the principles of compulsory voting and proportional representation were embodied. According to the Danish ambassador at Washington, this law has worked well; and according to the "Encyclopædia Britannica" "notwithstanding her dismemberment (in 1864) Denmark has prospered to an astonishing degree, and her material fortunes have been constantly in the ascendant."

Let us return to Canada. Under the Dominion Elections Act it is provided that all persons possessing certain qualifications "on the day of the polling at any election for any electoral district, shall be entitled to vote at any such election for such electoral district, and no other persons shall be entitled to vote thereat." How does this Act work in practice? In 1891, as shown by appendix "C," out of 1,132,201 electors on the lists, only 730,457 voted. This fact might not be so much deplored but for the prophecy of the wise Lieber: "they whose voting is the least desirable are the surest to be at the poll." In Canada the surest to be at the poll are the venal, the bribed, the boodler, the place-hunter, the weak, the worthless, while the brains, the sinew, the substance of the State keep away from the poll. The latter do not answer to the question, What are the duties of your station? as does the elector in Bolingbroke's political catechism: "To endeavour, so far as I am able, to preserve the public tran-

quility, and, as I am an elector, to give my vote to the candidate whom I judge most worthy to serve his country."

The law of the land governs all; it declares that (for good reasons) certain persons (the majority) shall not vote; and declares that certain others—the privileged, the representative minority, the trustees of the Dominion people at large—are entitled to vote. What we want from the Bill is to substitute the words "must vote" for the words "shall be entitled to vote." The reason why they were not substituted at first was the argument that, although all electors could vote, yet some of them abstained; still the machinery of the law would not be affected, inasmuch as sufficient votes would be cast to carry out the intentions and the provisions of the Act. The bare provisions, as expressed in words, perhaps, but surely not the intentions of our law-makers. But we find that the machinery, for want of or from improper feeding, although it works, turns out bad work or inferior work. The work turned out by the electoral machine is not representative of the truest and best manhood of Canada—which it would be in time if the one-third laggards were whipped to the polling booth, and some of the new voters were whipped at it. If the army machine of England was not fed with sufficient recruits of good quality—what would happen? why, at once, a compulsory recruiting or conscription Act would be passed.

We have seen that on religious, moral, ethical, political, historical and practical grounds all electors should vote or be punished. We therefore call upon the members of the House of Commons to pass the Bill making voting compulsory. We ask those members who are ready to punish one of their number, who, having heard the question in the House, declines to vote; we ask them to punish electors in their electoral districts, who, having heard the pronouncements and appeals of the various candidates, decline to vote. In what do these two bodies differ?—they are both representatives, they are both trustees—the electors of the nation, the Commoners of the electors.

RICHARD J. WICKSTEED.

Ottawa, May, 1892.

APPENDIX.

Authorities, Citations, Opinions and Extracts in favour of.

A.—"The great outlines of national legislation and policy are laid down, not in Parliament, not in the Cabinet, but at the polling booths. It is the electors who make war or maintain peace, who repeal old laws and pass new ones, who interfere, justly or unjustly, between landlords and tenants, masters and servants, parents and children. Those who abstain from voting, determine the national policy as truly as those who vote. The responsibility of the Parliamentary franchise cannot be evaded. . . . According to the Divine order civil authority is necessary to the existence of civil society. Civil rulers are 'ministers of God.' But they are not designated to their office by a voice from heaven. In this country the sovereign and the peers inherit their position by birth; the rest have to be selected, directly or indirectly, by those who possess the franchise. It is surely a part of God's service to determine who shall be 'God's ministers,' and for the manner in which we discharge this service we are responsible to God. Not to vote is to act the part of the unfaithful servant who hid his talent in the earth and made no use of it. To vote corruptly is felony; it is to appropriate to our own purposes what we have received as trustees for the town or the nation."—*From the Laws of Christ for Common Life, by Dr. R. W. Dale.*

B.—"The question has been made, whether a citizen, possessing the right to vote, ought not to be legally bound to vote for general elections, as the citizen is obliged to serve on juries. Why, it is asked, should those for instance, who possess most property and receive the full benefit of the law, from indolence, superciliousness or cowardice be allowed to refuse to join in that manner of expressing public opinion or of appointing law-makers which the law of the land establishes? It cannot be denied that affixing a penalty for unexcused omission of voting would have this advantage at least, that the public opinion respecting the obligation of every citizen lawfully to aid in the politics of his country, and the discountenance given to political indifference, would be fixedly pronounced by law. . . . We have treated already of the bad motives and mischievous tendency of political apathy or superciliousness. A man who from indolence or blamable disdain does not go to the ballot-box knows little of the importance of the whole institution of the State, or must be animated by very little public spirit; or he deserves the mantle of lead which Dante apportioned to cowards in the lower regions. There seem to me to be two rules of perfect soundness and elementary importance in politics:—

1. There is no safer means of preventing factious movements of any kind, and the State from falling a gradual prey to calamitous disorders, wherever the franchise is enjoyed on an extensive scale, than the habitual steady voting of all who have the votive right at all primary elections.

2. The moral obligation of depositing without fail one's vote increases in the same ratio as the right of suffrage extends, which right will necessarily more and more extend with modern civilization, so that with increasing civilization this obligation of voting increases. . . . There is

no great principle which has ever actuated mankind that has not had likewise its inconvenience for the individual; so has the main moving principle of our times; but we are not on that account absolved from conscientiously acting upon it and acting it out. Therefore, if we have a mind honestly to join in the great duties of our period, we must act as conscientious citizens, and, if we mean to do this, we must go to the poll. It is, I repeat it to my readers, of primary importance, and the more they read history the more they will feel convinced of it. The more extended the franchise is, the more it must likewise extend to those persons to whom time is of little value, to people who make a feast-day, perhaps a riotous day, of the election time. They whose voting is the least desirable are the surest to be at the poll; but the industrious mechanic, the laborious farmer, the man of study, the merchant and professional man—in short, all those who form the sinew and substance of the State, feel it a sacrifice of time to go to the place of voting, where they are not unfrequently delayed for a long time, by the other class, from depositing their vote, especially in populous places. They are, therefore, the more imperatively called upon to keep constantly before their minds how important it is that they should vote, and not leave the election to be decided by those who have the smallest stake in the society. Let no man be prevented from voting by the consideration of the loss of a day's labour, or the inconvenience to which he may expose himself in going to the poll.—*From Manual of Political Ethics, by Dr. Francis Lieber.*

C.—The total votes on the lists on which the elections of 1891 were run numbered in all Canada 1,132,201, of which 730,457 voted. In 1887 the voters numbered 993,914, of which 725,056 voted.

D.—"The council shall consist of 360 members—this will be a convenient number for sub-division. If we divide the whole number into four parts of ninety each, we get ninety counsellors for each class. (Note. The Athenians were divided into four classes, according to their rated property.) First, all the citizens shall vote for members of the council taken from the first class; they shall be compelled to vote, and, if they do not, shall be duly fined. When the candidates have been elected, some one shall mark them down; this shall be the business of the first day. And on the following day the election shall be made from the second class in the same manner and under the same conditions as on the previous day; and on the third day an election shall be made from the third class, at which every one may, if he likes, vote, and the three first classes shall be compelled to vote; but the fourth and lowest class shall be under no compulsion, and any member of this class who does not vote shall not be punished. On the fourth day members of the council shall be elected from the fourth and smallest class; they shall be elected by all, but he who is of the fourth class shall suffer no penalty, nor he of the third, if he be not willing to vote; but he who is of the first or second class, if he does not vote, shall be punished; he who is of the second class shall pay a fine triple the fine which was exacted at first, and he who is of the first class quadruple. On the fifth day the rulers shall bring out the names noted down, in the presence of all the citizens, and every man shall choose out of them, under pain, if he do not, of suffering the first penalty; and, when they have chosen 180 out of each of the classes, they shall choose one-half of them by lot, who shall undergo a scrutiny; these are to form the council for the year."—*From the Dialogues of Plato. "Laws," Book U.*

E.—Provisions of the election law of Denmark, of 1867: Section 64. Notice is given to the direct electors of the Landsting of their being such, and of the time and place of election. . . . The electors are bound to present themselves on pain of penalty.

Section 74. Every person appointed an elector of the second degree is bound to accept the trust, unless he can plead a legal objection.

Section 75. Every elector of the second degree who makes default or abstains from voting is subject to a penalty of 20 rix-dollars—which penalty is absorbed by the poor-box of the commune or the municipal treasury.

Section 78. The electors of the second degree receive an indemnity of 48 skillings per mile, from their domicile to the place of voting for the Landsting.

Section 80. The electors of the second degree and the direct electors must be present at the place and at the hour of election.

Section 92. Any person neglecting the duties imposed by the present law is subject to a fine of from 10 to 200 rix-dollars: unless a severer penalty has been imposed.

THE Indian papers contain a report of some remarks on the Indian Army by General Von Kodolitsch, who has lately been travelling in India. He said he envied and admired the Indian army. He considered the Indian cavalry quite up to the standard of that of any continental power, and that it was able to hold its own, man for man, against any regiment of the French or Russian cavalry. The sporting qualities of the British officer, he said, particularly struck him during his tour in India, and this sport seemed to give the officers such good physical training for war that, in his opinion, this training in field sport was almost as important as that on the drill ground. He had nowhere seen so much money offered for prizes for rifle shooting as in India. As regards a Russian invasion, the General said the Russians would have no chance of success.—*The Times.*