

THROUGH A MONOCLE

THEORETICAL AND OTHER POLITICS.

IT is a pity that we have not more men in Canadian public life with minds like that of Sir Richard Cartwright. I am moved to make this remark just at the present moment by Sir Richard's adventure into the rare atmosphere of constitutional politics at a time when all the rest of us are fairly choking with the dust of the arena of practical politics kicked up by "the mob's million feet." I think that last is a perverted quotation; but, in the absence of my library during the summer season, I do not like to blame it positively on anybody. Still, isn't it Tennyson? However, in any case, Sir Richard Cartwright goes calmly up to Toronto and starts a discussion on proportional representation when we are all holding our breath in anticipation of a bad collision on the line at Ottawa with many casualties. And this is exactly like Sir Richard. He has always had a detached view of politics. General elections were necessary nuisances to him—they had to be gone through to get a Parliament together for him to address. But I do not think that he ever liked them; and I think that he would admit himself that he never shone in them.

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BUT his is the kind of mind which explores the entire politico-economic domain and prepares the basis upon which general elections are finally fought. We have too few men engaged in this sort of work in this country. Somebody has confined us in the cock-pits of our constituencies and bade us "fight it out"; and at it we have gone every time they called "time" at Ottawa, amidst much

scattering of feathers and shedding of "boodle"—the politician's blood—without enquiring whether this was a good thing for the country or for us, or if there might not be a better way of arriving at the collective mind of the people. There is something simple about the idea of a one-man constituency. It is the first way of doing the thing which suggests itself to any one. They want a Parliament, do they? They want us to knock off work and select members for it? Very well, then. We will take up the chore; and the easiest way in which we can manage it, is surely to divide ourselves off into about equal sections of the number of members required, and let each section choose one member.

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BUT is that the best way? One obvious weakness is that a popular majority may easily be outvoted by the accident or design of "hiving" a good deal of it in constituencies where it is wasted. Another is that permanent minorities are created which never get a "look in" at selecting a Member of Parliament. I know constituencies where the minority party never think of winning—they just run a man to look after the "patronage" in case their party wins in the rest of the Dominion. Now this is not good for that particular minority. Something like alternation in responsibility is essential to good government under our system. A third objection is that we have no provision by which a member of Parliament may stand out in rugged independence against a wave of public opinion, unless he is prepared to die for his temerity. Now it ought to be possible for a "member," who is backed by an earnest minority of importance in the

country, to keep his seat, though, of course, he could not hope to rule the majority.

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THEN, as we know in our cities, the smaller the electoral divisions, the smaller—as a rule—are the men they choose. That is what the epithet "ward politician" means. It means a politician who has his strength in a ward—a small body of voters; and we regard that simple statement of fact as an expression of contempt. If it were not admitted that smallness is transferrable from the constituency to the representative, there would be no more disgrace in being called a "ward politician" than in being described as a "national politician." An illustration of the advantages of large constituencies is that a man has, at all events, got to be better known in our cities to be a Controller than to be an alderman; and it is a wholesome influence to require that a public man so live that he can be seen over a large area and yet not suffer by the necessary elevation.

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THEN the small constituency lends itself to the triumph of the Personality. This is not always or altogether a bad thing. Personality tells in Parliament; and we should be influenced by it in selecting our representatives for that body. But with the carelessness which exists amongst our people regarding issues and public policies, it is dangerous to give a winning personality of the minor order too great a chance. There are men who are so well loved in their immediate neighbourhoods that they would get hundreds of votes on "any old platform" or as the candidate of either party. They would only have to stop their friends on the street, say—"I am after that Parliament job down at Ottawa—give me a hand," and they would get every last vote in that district, except from some party cranks who had an eye on a local post office berth. Now this is lovely and human and all the rest of it, and speaks well for the possessors of this magnetism; but it is not always the best way to select a statesman. Let it work for what it is worth; but do not make your constituencies so small that such a genial character can practically round up most of the voters in them and win an election by his fund of good humour.

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HOWEVER, all I started out to say is, that we should not make a fetish of our existing political machinery. We should encourage men like Sir Richard Cartwright to study it with a critical eye and see if they cannot suggest improvements; and then we should consider their suggestions from a national and not from a partizan standpoint. Sir Richard hardly received fair play this time, I think, from the Conservative press. They were inclined to talk as if he were proposing a deep and dark scheme for making two Liberal votes spring up where only one properly grew. Yet he was doing no more than discussing, with local applications, a world movement for proportional representation. Still I suppose that if I were to express my preference here and now for the Continental "group" system of political combinations, some one who chanced to know me—and to know what a bitter partizan I am—would begin to worry his brains to find out in what way this idea could help my party. I say "my party." It has a friendly sound. But I wonder which party it is. And, by the way, you might think over that "group" system idea. You will see how much better it would represent the various sorts of opinion in the country than our present wooden, bi-partizan arrangement in which every man must either be a Liberal or a Conservative—or an Ismaelite.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

Association of Canadian Clubs

THE third annual conference of the Association of Canadian Clubs, held at Winnipeg recently, seems to have been a decided success. Representatives were present from a great number of places throughout Canada. Some resolutions were passed and should have a good result if followed up.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: Hon. President, Chas. R. McCullough, Hamilton; President, W. S. Carter, B.A., Chief Superintendent of Education for New Brunswick, Fredericton; Vice-President, Mrs. C. S. Douglas, Vancouver, B.C.; Prov. Vice-Presidents, Nova Scotia, D. McGilivray, Halifax; New Brunswick, H. A. Porter, St. John; Ontario, Gerald H. Brown, Ottawa; Quebec, Geo. E. Lyman, Montreal; Manitoba, R. H. Smith, Winnipeg; Saskatchewan, Chas. Hodgkins, Regina; Alberta, R. B. Bennett, K.C., Calgary; British Columbia, D. Von Cramer, Vancouver. Honourary Secretary, Amos O'Blenes, Moncton, N.B.



THE CANADIAN CHAMPIONS AT BISLEY

Private Clifford, winner of the King's Prize, and Corporal Trainor, who won the King's Prize Bronze Medal for second place, being chaired round the camp. In the background veteran John Deslauriers, mascot of the team.