

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

More Shocks for Democracy.

LAST week I pointed out that the Honourable Adam Beck was abandoning his faith in democracy and was declaring in favour of municipal government by commission. It was a sad story, but it is nothing to the story which I have to relate this week. If there is one paper in Canada which has eulogized DEMOCRACY, in season and out of season, whenever occasion demanded it and whenever it did not demand it, when democracy was right and when democracy was wrong, that paper was the *Toronto Evening Telegram*. It has always been the greatest defender of that wonderful modern doctrine that the People are right even when they are wrong.

Many years ago someone defined Democracy as the sacred right of the people to govern themselves wrongly. The editor of the *Toronto Evening Telegram* read that definition early in life and he has never forgotten it. Every public man who denounced the corporations and capitalistic greed was a hero to the editor of this most successful of Ontario's newspapers. So well has he succeeded in his advocacy of the absolute rights of democracy that no person in Ontario is inclined to invest a dollar in any public service corporation which might possibly come under provincial or municipal envy and control.

Yet last week the people of Toronto were startled by two editorials in the *Telegram* which looked to be the beginning of a recantation. In the first of these the editor writes, "If the influences that dictated the defeat of Thomas Hogg yesterday are to dictate the choice of heads for the Waterworks Department, the Electric Department, the Street Railway Department, and other great branches of the public service, the city's experiments in public ownership can end in nothing but disaster." Then he adds plaintively, "Toronto will have to get rid of the aldermen or the aldermen will get rid of public ownership."

On the following day there appeared another editorial from the same pen again lamenting that the great principle of public ownership was subject to the vagaries of democracy. He intimates that the elected representatives of the people are poor, miserable beings who have neither sense nor knowledge nor reason. He concludes, "The performance of the 1912 City Council is a final warning to Toronto that public ownership cannot be made to come unless the aldermen are made to go."

The Best and the Wisest.

STRANGELY enough, the editor of the *Toronto Evening Telegram* is not alone in his belief in the failure of democracy, especially in the realm of municipal government. All over the continent there is a tendency to do away with the elected representatives of the people at the city hall. It seems impossible to get a business administration in civic affairs under the system which has been in vogue on this continent for nearly one hundred years. Instead of government by the best and the wisest, as Mazzini defined it, we have government by the foolish and the worst. Toronto has certainly failed to emphasize the intelligence of its citizens in the election of its civic rulers. The immediate cause of the outbreak of the editor of the *Telegram* was a six weeks' discussion at the City Hall regarding the appointment of a new Parks Commissioner. The amount of lobbying that was done in connection with this four or five thousand dollar job was something enormous. In the end a man who had been a clerk in the department and who has never been known as an authority on parks, received the appointment. Indeed, lobbying for appointments and lobbying for increases in salaries seems to be the greatest part of the daily work of the civic employees.

St. John, N.B., and several western Canadian cities have already followed the lead of one hundred and sixty United States towns and cities, and have declared in favour of municipal government by commission. The rapid extension of the franchise to all classes of the community which was the characteristic of the last half of the nineteenth century, has bedevilled the system of municipal government by elected representatives. So far as the government of cities goes, democracy has proven itself an abject failure. We are now going back to an enlightened oligarchy, known as a commission. This

commission may be elected for a term of years or appointed for a definite period of time. It may be subject to the direct vote of the people or subject to the legislative control of an elective council. The practice varies in different communities. But in every place there is but one aim, to get away from government by the mob and to get back to government by the best and the wisest.

Coal Strikes and Democracy.

DEMOCRACY'S failure to usher in the millennium is amply shown in these days of industrial unrest. The million coal miners in Great Britain and a hundred mine owners have paralyzed industry and commerce, caused a greater loss of wealth than did the French Revolution, and have brought considerable suffering and privation into thousands upon thousands of homes. This situation led the *London Chronicle*, a Liberal newspaper, to comment upon the attitude of labour which it summed up in the phrase, "I decline to discuss; I command." It states that this has been the motto of tyrants for over eighteen hundred years, and is now the motto of the miners' unions.

Here are a million men for whom much has been done in recent years. They were given old age pensions. They were provided with State insurance against sickness and unemployment. They have

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the opening
chapters of

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A NEW
MYSTERY
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IN

NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

shared in the general progress of the conditions of labour. Yet they suddenly decide to name the wages at which they shall work, without patiently seeking for a chance to arbitrate the difference of opinion.

Their wages are too low, no doubt. They are entitled, in these days of high prices, to higher rates of pay. Still they have no right to refuse arbitration and no right to cripple a whole nation's activity. Civil war of this kind is as great a crime as civil war of any other kind. And a democracy which produces it, under as free a form of government as the world has ever seen, cannot be a perfect democracy.

The Sinfulness of Sin.

ACLEVER Toronto preacher recently made the striking statement that "the world does not seem able to realize the sinfulness of sin." From this thought he proceeded to explain the luke-warmness of the pew, the laxity of religious observances among Protestants generally, and the decrepitude of evangelical Christianity.

Is it true that people do not realize the enormity of their sins as their fathers did? Is it true that the message of the Bible has less significance for modern Christians? Does Christ seem unnecessary to the western world of to-day? If so, the preacher was right. Or is it merely that the priest has less power to frighten the people with the fear of "wrath to come" than he had in the days when general education and freedom of thought were less universal?

Here is a question which interests me considerably. I cannot make up my mind on it. There is no doubt that certain kinds of sin are not so unpopular as they once were. Certain phases of conduct that once were regarded as sins are not so re-

garded now. Yet surely the greater sins are as well recognized to-day as they ever were.

Is there a possible explanation for the preacher's lament in the attitude of the Church toward wealth? May it not be that the Church has yielded to fashion and the money-bags to such an extent that it has set a lighter value on certain kinds of sin? However, the subject is too big for a mere "reflection," and I leave it to the consideration of the more thoughtful and more patient readers of this page.

Manitoba Bearing Up Manfully.

MANITOBA had a provincial surplus last year of half a million dollars. Next year it will have an increased subsidy from the Dominion and an instalment of "back pay" amounting to over one million dollars. Thus the Postage-stamp-province-that-was should be rolling in dollars. The Roblin Government will be hard put to it to devise means for using all this money advantageously.

Of course, such prosperity could not be expected to occur without comment from those less advantageously situated. The *Halifax Chronicle*, following the lead of some of the Opposition critics in the House of Commons, compares Manitoba and Nova Scotia in this respect. The conclusion it reaches is that Manitoba is being favoured above the Eastern provinces by the Dominion Government.

The *Winnipeg Telegram* replies that the Dominion subsidy last year was only about \$200,000 more for Manitoba than for Nova Scotia, and thus dissolves the argument that the Dominion Government's generosity has created Manitoba surplus. It adds that Manitoba has no mines or crown lands to draw upon as Nova Scotia has, and therefore the surplus is all the more creditable to the western province.

Apparently, the truth is that Manitoba collects more revenue from railways, corporations, succession duties, lands title offices and such sources than does Nova Scotia. The profits of business in the West are on a "new country" basis and hence they will stand a rate of taxation which the "old country" basis in the East will not bear.

The Manitoba people are bearing up manfully under all this criticism and slyly figuring out how much the advertisement is worth. That the world should declare that province well-managed and wealthy is a sweet morsel which rolls well under the Manitoba tongue.

The Biggest Welcome League.

CANADA to-day needs to be organized into one large welcome league. Every day hundreds of new citizens are arriving and some one should extend to each the right hand of fellowship. The duty lays upon every one of us and not alone upon railway officials and immigration officers. Will you join the League, and take the first opportunity to welcome some new-comer and do what you can to help him get located favourably?

Down in New Brunswick, the other day, I was discussing immigration with several people, and all told me the same story. "Whenever a New Brunswick gets a chance, he fleeces an immigrant," said one man. Of course, the charge is too sweeping, but nevertheless I heard several reliable stories of how local politicians and government officials had stood in together to sell worthless land at high prices to unsuspecting English immigrants. The New Brunswick Government, being so largely concerned with local politics and petty patronage, has never taken steps to keep its new arrivals out of the clutches of political leeches. As a consequence many men who might have become good New Brunswickers have left the Province in disgust.

Perhaps the other provinces are equally guilty. I mention New Brunswick simply because these stories are fresh in my memory. In the West, the "tenderfoot," whether from New York, Toronto or England, is sometimes treated in the same way when opportunity offers. Yet I have never heard of a case where an immigration official deliberately steered an immigrant into the hands of a local shark. Nor yet have I heard of it in Ontario. In British Columbia, they sell you fruit lands at a high price, but they are good fruit lands.

A great big Welcome League, with all the better citizens taking an interest in looking after the new arrivals and warning them against the pitfalls would be a splendid feature. It would prevent many a case of dissatisfaction. It would cheer many a lonely heart. It would be a great help to the immigration department. Its effect upon our future immigration would be tremendous.

Let each of us determine to do his part as opportunity offers this spring, and the League will be a reality.