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THE REVOLT AGAINST PARTY.

A CORRESPONDENT, whose authority is the highest, tells us that a revolt is beginning in earnest against the dominion of Party, and that men are asking on all sides to be shown some way of escape from the Party system. He refers, no doubt, to men who think for themselves. Over the masses, who do not think for themselves, the hold of the Machines is still evidently strong. Three or four "Independents" have been elected. On the other hand, the Machines have been successfully set up in the North-west, a new country with interests of its own, where the old Party division is absolutely senseless; and the people there have allowed themselves to be driven into the sheepfolds almost as submissively as the tamest political sheep of the old Provinces. In Quebec there has been a Nationalist bolt; but this can hardly be regarded as a promise of independence. The election, even by increased majorities, of Party candidates of the most tainted character, and the large number of votes polled by others not less disreputable, is a mournful proof of the ascendancy of Party ties and passions over morality in constituencies which we have no reason to believe inferior to the rest. In the case of one constituency the two Party organs actually coalesced against an Independent candidature, like two gamblers who, though they hate and cheat each other, unite in drawing their revolvers against an outsider if he threatens to touch the stakes. Still, this very incident shows that the Parties are alarmed by the growth of revolt. In the Press, independence has of late been unquestionably gaining ground. Of all the Toronto dailies one alone is now an organ. Let the motives of the *Mail* for its change be what they will—let them be as low as its bitterest enemy imagines—the fact remains that its proprietors, who may be supposed to understand their own interests, find independence their best policy. That public morality is really awakened, the utterances of Dr. Grant and Mr. Macdonnell are eloquent and impressive proof.

Certainly, if anything could breed reflection on this subject, the spectacle of the late faction fight must have done it. As preludes to the contest, both parties had gerrymandered—one in the Dominion, the other in Ontario; and both had bedevilled the franchise. Each flagrantly abused, for a strategical object, the prerogative of dissolution. It is very generally believed that on one side the dissolution was precipitated by the fear of disclosures. That there has been a lavish use of corruption, in the shape of promises of jobs, is certain; and there is reason to believe that there has been no small amount of downright bribery. When the Prime Minister assembled the manufacturers in the Queen's Hotel it was, in fact, to tell them that if they would vote for him, and subscribe to his election fund, he would regulate the fiscal policy of the country in their favour. In this he acted as other Party leaders act; but he would have done less harm to the country, and even to public morality, by handing each of those present a draft upon the Treasury. The Opposition, with less of

the means of material corruption in its power, purchased the Rielite vote by professions which no stretch of charity can enable us to regard as honest, since they had been recently condemned and repudiated by the leader himself in the most emphatic terms which the rich stores of his eloquence could supply. The battle was waged on both sides with appeals to the narrowest passions and the most selfish interests. For weeks, respect for truth disappeared, and a tempest of mutual calumny raged. The English language broke down under the fury of the combatants, and it was necessary to invent a hideous jargon to give full expression to their rage. It was not possible, we were told, to "whip mutinous Sepoys with daisy chains, or to purify Sodom with rosewater." It is as mutinous Sepoys and denizens of Sodom that the Party system trains one-half of the community to regard the other. Is it possible that the political character of a nation should fail to be depraved and degraded by these orgies of hatred, falsehood, and corruption? Can the sense of common citizenship remain unimpaired by the periodical excitement of passions hardly less malignant than those of civil war? Can a Government which issues from such a caldron be expected to be in any tolerable degree an embodiment of public reason, patriotism, and justice?

We need not slay over again the philosophic reasons which have been invented to show that a division of the community into two parties, with bosses and wirepullers, is an eternal ordinance of nature and the only conceivable basis of government. The theory that each of us is born a little Conservative or a little Liberal, belongs to the comic opera. The shades of political temperament are innumerable, and it would be as easy to bisect the rolling waves as to divide the community into halves upon this principle. Age, as a rule, is Conservative, youth is sanguine and disposed to innovation; yet there are no such Tories as the youth of an aristocracy. If the division into two parties is the mandate of nature and indispensable to government, why does not each party recognise that fact, and instead of vilifying the other and striving to destroy it, treat it as, equally with itself, an essential part of the Machine? Faction is a sort of war, and satisfies the barbarous love of fighting which lingers in us, while it also tickles the love of sport. These are its only roots in nature. Its supposed universality as the basis of government is an ignorant generalization from a limited period of English history, and of the history of those countries which have copied what is called the British Constitution. While organic questions are open, combination is natural, and the sacrifice of independent opinion on minor questions to the great object may be moral and rational. When organic questions, the list of which cannot be inexhaustible, have been settled, party degenerates into mere faction. Parties are thenceforth held together, not by principle but by habit, passion, and corruption. The wirepuller then becomes master of the State. Independence of mind, high intelligence, and unbending integrity are excluded from public life as unfit for the service of faction. By a process of natural selection, fatally sure in its operation, the opposites of these qualities are advanced to power. Legislation, especially legislation relating to the franchise and to the distribution of political power, instead of being regulated by the public good, becomes part of the game of faction. Public appointments become bribes, and public works are turned into a fund of corruption, while a swarm of knaves deserts industry for the service of faction, and prepares to live at the public expense. Sinister interests and fanaticisms of all kinds, by putting up their votes to auction when the contest between the parties is close, compass their ends at the expense of the community. There results, in short, the scene which is now before us, and he who thinks that this scene can be prolonged forever with impunity, must fancy that Parliamentary institutions are protected by some supernatural power. In England, the parent and model of the party system, we see the integrity of the nation now the sport of faction, and likely to perish in the fray. To all which must be added the growing instability of Governments, which arises from the inevitable splitting of factions into sections, not one of which is broad enough to form the basis of a Ministry. In Australia you have three Ministries in six months. Nor is government much more stable in the Parliamentary countries of Europe, except in Germany, where, though the hydra of faction has already nine or ten heads, at least, it is at present kept under control by the personal power of Bismarck. In England herself the two parties have split into four or five, not one of which is strong enough to govern