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Citizenship

A GOOD citizen is not born ; he is made. There are good citizens and poor citizens ; there are even some who are bad. Most men are so busy making a living for their wives and children that they have little time to develop the "citizen" side of their nature. Many of them scarcely ever think of themselves as citizens. It is a sort of abstract relation, and consequently is either not understood or is neglected.

During the past few weeks, in nearly every province of Canada there have been municipal elections. A new town council and a new school board have been chosen. This voting for the candidates for each is part of the duty of a citizen. Some take the duty seriously, some flippantly, some selfishly. It is a wonder amidst so much carelessness that so many good men are elected. A few trenchant critics in each town keep the most selfish and most incompetent candidates out of the field. These critics and a few more persons who take the situation seriously, set up a wave of public opinion which overwhelms the least satisfactory of the aspirants for office. Consequently when the votes are counted, seventy-five per cent. of those elected are men ambitious for their town, ambitious to do something for the public good and ambitious to be in good repute among their fellow-men.

This "town" citizenship is understood by the majority of voters. The government of the town is always in sight. The mayor and councilmen move about the streets every day. The street cars, the sidewalks, the water-works, gas supply and street lighting—these are problems in full view of the voter every day of the year. The police, the firemen, and the town hall are further constant evidence that the town is governed, and that those who govern it are elected by the citizens for that purpose.

When, however, the provincial or general elections come on, citizenship seems more indefinite. The "state" is such a vague conception. Is the government in the provincial capital really chosen by the people of the province ? Is the House of Commons really the result of a deliberate choice on the part of a million thinking men ? Are these legislators chosen after calm and serious thought on the part of all the voters in the country ? Are the citizens really aware of their power, of their duty, in relation to these larger governing bodies ?

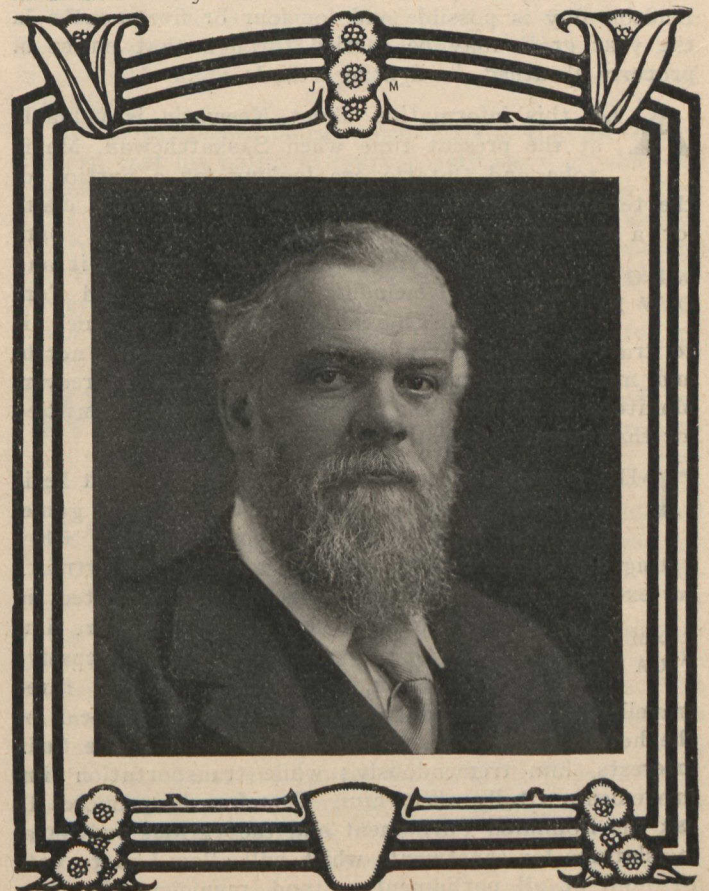
These are questions which are easy to ask, but difficult to answer. The state gives every man protection and freedom ; it preserves and maintains social order ; it administers justice ; it determines the progress of Canada as a whole. The state is all powerful. Yet what is the state ? It must not be confused with "government," which is merely the machinery through which the will of the state is expressed. The state, on the other hand, is the indefinite thing created and maintained by the citizens thereof. If all the citizens were to die, there would be no state. The state is the people. The state is society as a whole.

Each of us is determining day by day what the state shall be—in other words, what Canada shall be. Our

fathers decided that it should be a confederation of provinces—a Dominion of Canada. They have handed it on to us and said, "Develop it ; extend it ; guard it ; make it great ; keep it British." We are working away, consciously or unconsciously, at the problem. We added Prince Edward Island and British Columbia. We have changed the "North-West" into Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. We have builded railways across the continent. We have tried to be true to the destiny moulded for us. This we have done as citizens.

We have all worked at the problem. Some of us have done more, some of us have done less. The mechanic who raised a family and voted according to his conscience has done his part. The farmer who sent his sons to the West to "break" the undefined prairie has contributed. The railway builder who laid the bands of shining steel has performed his share. The manufacturer who watched his little factory grow and grow and grow has added his mite. We have all done something, for good or ill, because we are citizens, because we are the state.

To make good citizens of our neighbours who are not good citizens, should be our aim. Let us set them a good example, give them good schools, good newspapers, good teachers and leaders, so that they will be conscious of the duties they owe to themselves, to the future generation, to the state. If we were all ideal citizens, what an ideal country this would be !



THE EARL OF ELGIN

Who, it is said, will soon relinquish the Portfolio of Secretary of State for the Colonies.