

THROUGH A MONOCLE

I WISH that the battle for civil service reform could be fought in the open. That is, I wish that the politicians of the baser sort who are opposed to it, could be compelled to come out and do their hostile "worst" where the people could see them. Then they would not hinder civil service reform; and they would accomplish a great parliamentary reform by securing their own elimination from public life. Still the last thing the most of them will do, is to fight in the open. They prefer to "snipe" from ambush. They do their opposing in whispers, in threats against the political leaders who propose such measures, behind the sealed doors of the caucus, and by mutilating and weakening a bill rather than daring to strike at it boldly. They are men who stab—not men who swing the broadsword. If they could be forced into the daylight where the people could learn which they were, their influence would be gone. No political reformer need fear their menaces then. Now he has good reason to fear them, for they often control the machinery of the party and can forbid a leader's promotion.

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WHY the public men who are taking their political lives in their hands to fight for a genuine reform of the civil service, do not disarm the cowardly bravos who threaten them by turning the light of publicity upon their tactics, I cannot imagine. I do not believe that I would permit a man to stab me in the back if I knew that swinging about on him with a lantern would put him to flight. Just one frank speech from the best civil service reformer on each side of the House at Ottawa, telling what opposition he has to meet from men of his own party, would utterly annihilate the hungry-fingered, patronage-seeking brigade in this section of their field of operations at all events. The way they would scuttle for cover would make the most amusing sight of the year. Once a searchlight of this open publicity sort got to swinging around, you could not find an anti-civil service reformer with a search warrant. Every politician caught above ground would wear a label declaring him to be the original civil service reformer from "Reformersville."

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THAT there has been disagreement in the Liberal party over the bill introduced by Mr. Fisher, no one doubts. There are some members who would like to go farther; and there are others who are exasperated at the political necessity of moving at all. It all depends upon what methods a man pursues to win political success. Those who get elected and gain advancement by fighting for high principles, are sincerely for civil service reform; for there is no more annoying and humiliating part of their duties than the distribution of patronage. But the men who win because they propose to "shake the plum tree" for the benefit of "the boys" naturally do not like to see a particularly appetising side of the said Plum Tree cut away. Each man is fighting for the forces in political life which are bearing him forward; and it is for the people to decide which of these forces they would like to see prevail.

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THE report that Mr. Fielding would like to have gone farther than this bill, sounds reasonable to me. Mr. Fielding is that sort of public man. Even his opponents usually give him credit for being a clean politician. Mr. Fielding's integrity, his unshaken democracy, his business-like devotion to duty, are among the assets of this country; and it will not do for us to permit them to be aspersed without reason. He may or he may not succeed Sir Wilfrid Laurier. There are a lot of men in the Liberal party who hope that he will not. But if their reasons for this hope could be made public in every case, I imagine that his claim to be the "heir-apparent" would be established. What he lacks more than anything else, is the ability to "show off." He is not a good "spot light" man. He does not deal in humbug; and the public prefers its political heroes to possess some of the traits of Barnum. Mr. Fielding should get up and rant and roar on some sentimental subject occasionally. That would make him about solid.

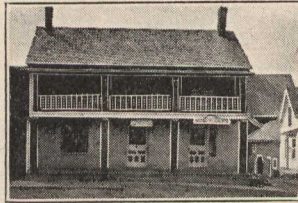
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MR. FISHER, the minister in charge of the bill, is another clean man, though he may be a trifle narrow and "old maidish." But he would be a better compromiser than Mr. Fielding. It takes a good compromiser to be a successful politician in Canada. Sir John Macdonald was a prince of the clan. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has just shown his deftness in this regard over the elections bill. Mr. Aylesworth

would have stood by his guns; but the Premier chose the smoother path. The Premier knows the political game a lot better than do most men in Canada, and I would be the last man to question his judgment; but I cannot think that the retreat on the Aylesworth bill has strengthened the Government in the eyes of the people. If the bill was wrong, it should never have been introduced. If it was right, the Government surely should not have yielded to obstruction what they refused to argument. Giving way to obstruction looked exceedingly like weakness; and there is nothing which will damn a Government so quickly in the eyes of the average man as weakness. It was weakness that prepared the late Balfour Government for burial in the deepest grave of the century. Nothing but confessed and obvious weakness. However, the Premier probably thinks that he can take risks with the sort of Opposition he is dealing with.

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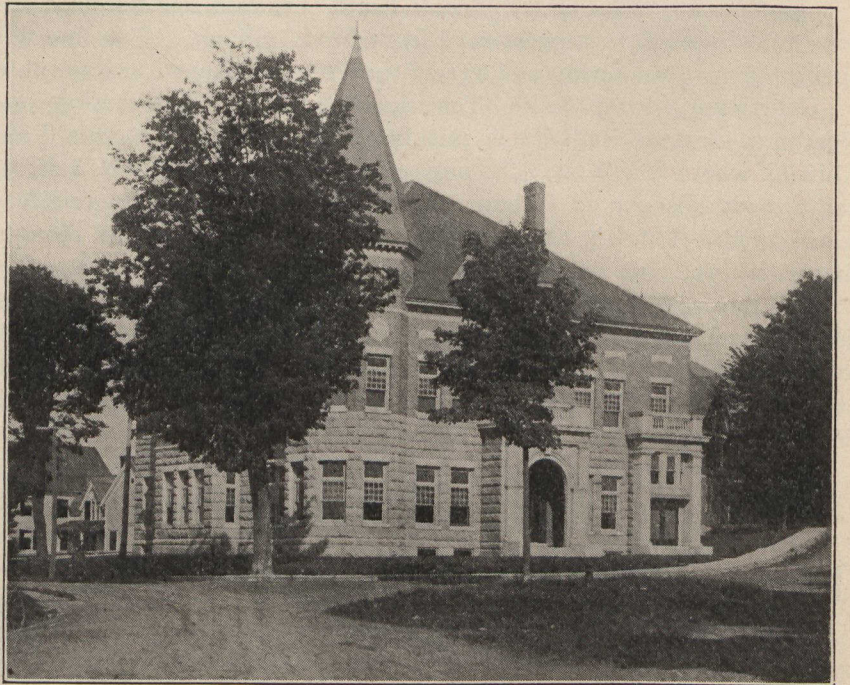
A Border Library



Beebe Plains
A Boundary Post-Office

THE world has heard much of border enmity and warfare. Down in the Province of Quebec, however, there is found as pleasant an instance of border amity as may be seen in the Dominion. It is sometimes difficult for the traveller to tell whether he is in the green state of Vermont or the eastern regions of Quebec. At Rock Island, in the latter district, there is half of a free library, the corresponding half being found in the neighbouring state. The Haskell Free Library, as it is called, was founded by Mrs. M. M. Haskell and her son, Colonel H. S. Haskell, members of one of the old families of Vermont who have shown the zeal for learning and that desire to open the gates of intellectual opportunity to the young which are characteristic of New England.

On Tuesday, January 21st, 1908, the Haskell Free Library and Opera House, together with practically a cash endowment of \$50,000, the income of which is to be used for its maintenance and perpetuation, was presented by Colonel Haskell to the Three Villages, Derby Line (Vermont), Rock Island and Stanstead Plain. The manner of effecting this transfer was by means of the special state law for the incorporation of libraries. The Board of Trustees to whom the care and management of this gift are entrusted consists of the following gentlemen: Colonel Haskell, Dr. John C. Colby, Dr. Erastus P. Ball, Messrs.



Haskell Free Library, built on the International Boundary Line between Vermont and Quebec, by Colonel Haskell of Vermont. The boundary line goes through diagonally

Benjamin F. Butterfield, Ora M. Carpenter, Harry B. Stewart, Tracy S. Haskell. The building, as may be seen from the illustration, is one of architectural dignity and beauty, and the interior is furnished with a subdued and scholarly taste, in keeping with the purpose of the gift.

The value of this donation to the higher life of the community is not to be estimated in coin of the realm, although its foundation and maintenance may mean an expenditure of one hundred thousand hard dollars. Such a building may inspire many a village lad or girl with a desire for wider opportunities, may open the "ivory gates and golden" into the ideal republic, the commonwealth of the imagination.

At Beebe Plains is a unique post-office, of which is published a small illustration at the head of this article. The international boundary line runs through at the pillar between the two windows. A partition divides the public offices but the office in the rear is shared by Uncle Sam and Johnny Canuck. Mr. Dow is deputy for Mr. G. H. House, Canadian Post-Master, and also for Mr. C. F. Bailey, United States Post-Master.