

Through a Monocle

THE municipal politician has been occupying the stage recently. He comes in between Santa Claus and the annual upset of the "water wagon," and partakes something of the character of both. He is usually quite a different sort of individual from the parliamentary politician. One great saving grace he has, in that he seldom takes himself so seriously. He feels more conscious of his precarious position as a servant of the people, and is not half so inclined to act like their task-master. He deals with matters that come closer to the people, and so is more constantly and carefully criticised. The member of Parliament gives himself lofty airs as understanding the great measures, which his master mind considers very much better than any of the mere voters who sometimes presume to ask him questions; but the municipal politician cannot pretend to know more about broken sidewalks than the people who trip over them or to have any special knowledge on the subject of street cars. He is simply one of us, elevated for the time to the position of our executive committee; and we know at once when he makes a misstep.

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Yet in many ways it matters more to us whom we elect to our municipal councils than whom we send to Ottawa or the provincial capitals. When we have settled the great question whether the Liberal or the Conservative "caucus" is to rule at Ottawa, we cannot mitigate the result a great deal by electing any particular man to the back-bench we are asked to fill. If we happily hit upon a giant, or a Bourassa, or a Weldon of Nova Scotia, or a D'Alton McCarthy, it does matter; but usually we do not aim so high. But the calibre of the men we elect to our municipal bodies is revealed in the sort of civic house-keeping they do for us. Do they give us good water?—smooth and clean streets?—good police protection?—effective fire protection?—decently low taxes? When a city or town is badly governed, it should change its board of aldermen. They lack either wisdom or courage or both. Some municipal councils get a bad name because they have not the courage to tell their constituents that they should accept a higher tax rate—and why? If they had the pluck to give their burg good government and make them pay for it, their names would be called blessed for ever after.

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One sort of man whom municipalities should shun is the politician who proposes to make the local council a stepping stone to a seat in Parliament. With him, all will be for the party and nothing for the State. He will use the petty "patronage" of the municipality to strengthen himself with his political friends and with the people, and will spend the town's taxes with an eye to political prestige rather than the comfort of the townsmen. It would be better to have a frank government of our municipalities on party lines than to have that government employed by individual partisans to line their personal nests. It is perfectly legitimate for a man to win the franchise of a town in Parliament by having served it faithfully and successfully for years as councillor or mayor. That was the way in which Joseph Chamberlain won his spurs. But these are not the methods of the man who would leap into the saddle by simply resting his foot on a civic office.

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The action of the Countess of Yarmouth for the nullification of her marriage is another of a long series of object lessons in the folly of trying to mate the American girl to the European man. Those who were lucky enough to see a play of a few years ago, called "Her Lord and Master," will understand the position as touching the English husband and the American wife better than they could learn from many books; and, when the European husband is a Continental, the difference is more striking. "Wed a maiden of thy people" is as good advice now as it was when old Nokomis gave it to Hiawatha; and "wed a husband of thy people" would be even better

advice, for the wife is much more helpless in the hands of an unsympathetic husband than is the husband when yoked to a wife he does not understand. I have used the word "understand" purposely; for that is the explanation of the whole trouble. People brought up amidst differing conditions, with different ideals and different rules of conduct, do not understand each other. That is the chief barrier between them.

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The American wife and the English wife are two different sorts of people. The American wife is free, self-assertive, mistress of herself and her house, controlling her husband in the matters they have in common nine times out of ten. The English wife is constrained by many rules of decorum and usage, is seldom very self-assertive, is submissive to her husband in most things and is controlled by him in matters regarding which the American wife would never even think of consulting hers. In the case of the Continental husband, the difference is even greater. It is easy to believe that Count Boni de Castellane thinks himself a good husband. Our girls—that is the girls on this Continent—should go to live for a time in the homes of the people with whom they expect to marry, and get their point of view, before they sign the marriage contract. That is, they should do this if they expect to be happy. If all they want is a title, they can take it; but then they should not complain of the consequences. If they think that they can get a European title attached to an American husband—both the best of their kind—they will be doomed to disappointment.



"A Verray Parfit Nobel Knight."

The Swedish trustees of the Nobel bequest have this year awarded the International Prize for Literature to Mr. Rudyard Kipling.—Punch.