

THE CIVILIAN

VOL. VII.

JUNE 26, 1914.

No. 5

Mr. Fowler, M.P., Blatherskite.

By F. A. G.

On the 29th May Mr. Fowler, member for Kings and Albert in the Canadian Parliament, did,—

“Cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Confound the ignorant and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears.”

The following are quotations from his speech:—

I have had a great deal of trouble from persons anxious to be promoted, or to get higher salaries. Sometimes, in the kindness of one's heart, one will recommend a man for a higher salary simply because he asks one to do so, and one has known his father, or mother, or sister, or brother, or some of his relatives, although at the same time, while making the recommendation, one knows in one's heart that the man is getting from two to four times more than he would get if he had to struggle in the world, as the rest of us have to do. . . . Some one suggests four hours a day; they do not put in two hours a day in actual work. They probably straggle along to the office about ten o'clock in the morning. If the Civil Servant happens to be a man, he lights his pipe and smokes and reads the morning paper until about half-past eleven. Then he looks at the clock, and says: “It is eleven-thirty, and I must go to lunch at twelve, so I had better go now, as it is not worth while working only half an hour.” He goes to lunch and returns at two o'clock. He probably smokes and reads the afternoon paper until about three-thirty, and then he looks at the clock and says: “It is not worth while working now until four o'clock, as it is only half an hour until then”; and he knocks off for the day. This is a sample of the poor Civil Servant. . . . We hear of the high cost of living. In what respect has the cost of living increased? Flour is cheaper; groceries are no higher, and in many instances lower than they were; clothing is as cheap. The only increase, perhaps, is in the matter of rent.

There is no doubt that to the average man of intelligence there is a disposition, when a composition in literature is intended either to convince the understanding, to persuade the will, or to please the imagination, to prefer that the ideas be inculcated in the cultured and ornate language of the flowers, in the graceful and refined vocabulary of Addison, or the courtly phraseology of Scott. There are epochs, however, in the experience of a class, as there are in the case of an individual, or of a nation, when, in sheer desperation, one is inclined to imitate another style,—the shrill, stern, biting satire of Swift, or the truth-scalding periods of Carlyle. This is one of those occasions.

Irresistible and unconstrained emotions of sympathy will lead Civil Servants, who have not yet lost all individuality, to offer their condolences to the people of Canada in their present infirmity. That Canadians number among their “Conscript Fathers” one who has such a reserve force of selfishness, stupidity, mendacity, and slander as is disclosed in the above quotation is but one more illustration of the strange and explicable anomalies and paradoxes that confront and confound the human race.

This is not the first speech Mr. Fowler has made in abuse of the King's Service, and he is not to get away with it.