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CHRISTMAS comes but once a year, but the influence of the day, as it is now usually observed in Christian countries, it would not be easy to overestimate. The coldly critical mind which sets out to search the historical records for proof that the 25th of December is really the anniversary of the "one great event of all time," which it is designed to commemorate, will no doubt come back disappointed. That question must be settled with Julius I., and the theologians of the Fourth Century. It need give little trouble to those who are wise enough to enter into the spirit of the day, without being too curious in regard to the history of its institution and observance. It is well that while the uncouth revellings of earlier times have given place to the quieter pastimes and more chastened joys of these soberer days, the spirit of gladness which is so healthful and so appropriate to the anniversary of the season has not been wholly lost. The essential element in the true Christmas observance is, we suppose, its unselfishness. The fact that for days and weeks and often for months before its arrival the coming of Christmas turns the thoughts of parents and children, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, towards each other, and sets their wits at work devising pleasant surprises, and their hands busy preparing those home-made gifts which are often so much more expressive than the most costly purchase; this very fact has, in itself, a softening and educative influence which we could ill afford to lose. It supplies, in these days of all-absorbing toil and business worry, a much-needed counteractive to the selfish drift which, there is some reason to fear, is becoming more and more the characteristic of modern life. But there may be a large intermixture of this same selfishness even in our gift-making and family festivities. The best form of Christmas celebration provides a wholesome corrective for this tendency also, in that it bids us remember the poor and destitute, and do, according to ability, something for those who have no loving friends able and willing to gladden their hearts with tokens of kindly remembrance. In this respect the children's Santa Claus, the universal gift-distributor, is the embodiment of the true

spirit of the Christmas time. Moralizing is not exactly in our line, but perhaps we may be permitted to remind our readers in this connection that the man or the woman who has not done something to cast at least a momentary gleam of brightness upon the lot of some over-wrought and discouraged parent, or some starveling child, growing up without a childhood, in perpetual hunger of body and spirit, will not have entered into the highest enjoyment of the true Christmas.

WHO is to be the next Mayor of Toronto? What is to be the character of the civic councillors, the men to whom the citizens determine to entrust the commercial, financial and moral interests of the city for the coming year? It is safe to say that in no year since the incorporation of the city have there been so many and so grave matters of the greatest importance to come under the purview of the civic authorities, as those which will press for consideration and action during the next twelve months. We have but lately enumerated some of these weighty matters. It is not necessary to recapitulate. They are in the minds of all thoughtful citizens. The occasion evidently demands, and will severely tax, the brains and energies of the very best men the city can produce. Nor should the fact be lost sight of that one of the most important of the many questions coming to the fore is that of devising some wiser, more efficient and more economical system of civic government to replace the present, which is seen on all hands to be cumbersome, inefficient and wasteful of time and money. The first practical suggestion that forces itself upon the mind is that the citizens themselves should determine to select and elect their councillors on the sole ground of fitness. They should now, if never before, rise above all selfish, personal or party considerations. Neither friendship, nor favouritism, nor an amiable desire to oblige, nor anything but the merits of the candidate estimated with reference solely to his personal character and his ability to discharge the duties of the office, should be allowed to enter into the question. It cannot, we think, be out of place to add that in regard to the first and highest office, the mayoralty itself, the way seems happily clear. The present incumbent of the chair has performed its duties with so much dignity, ability and integrity—even those who were not originally his supporters being judges—that there can scarcely be two opinions, one would suppose, in regard to the wisdom of re-electing him, if he is willing to retain the position. It is not easy to point out in what respect a change could be for the better, while there are very many chances that it might be for the worse. It would be a great mistake to suppose that this or any other civic position is an honour which must necessarily be passed around. All civic offices are places of trust and of service, and the fact that any officer has proved himself a trustworthy and capable servant of the city is the best possible reason for reappointing him.

MR. MEREDITH'S speech before the Young Men's Liberal-Conservative Association of London, on Monday evening, takes away the reproach of silence which has been for some time past urged against the leader of the Opposition in the Local House by both friends and opponents. The speech certainly does credit alike to Mr. Meredith's ability and to his moderation. Whether it will satisfy the party for whom he speaks as a war manifesto, and a programme for the coming campaign, is more doubtful. He certainly finds weak points in the defences of the local Administration, and presses home the attack on those points with skill and courage, but it is not so clear that any breaches he may have made are large enough to give much hope of success in a general assault. The fact is that provincial politics in Ontario now offer too restricted a field to enable any leader of ordinary ability to arouse the enthusiasm which alone can carry a weak Opposition along on the lines which lead to success. So long as Mr. Mowat and his Cabinet continue to manage the affairs of the provincial municipality with a fair amount of ability and economy, and avoid any grave blunders in policy, or abuses of trust, it will be very hard to wrest the sceptre from their hands. The public is either too easy-going or too philosophical to make a supreme effort to overthrow a Government which seems to be doing

very well on the whole, in order to replace it with another which there is no good reason to suppose would on the whole do very much better. If there were but some one great issue on which the Government could be arraigned; if even the numerous slips and laches and minor abuses, which Mr. Meredith pressed home with so much clearness and force, could be gathered and compressed into one glaring, concrete blunder or political crime, it would afford a ten-fold more hopeful weapon for assault. A handful of pebbles flung with all the might of a strong man will inflict but slight damage; while a single ball of granite, of the same weight and hurled with the same force, might crush the skull of a giant. Thus it is that one arises from the reading of Mr. Meredith's speech with the feeling that several of the charges are well put and deserving of attention, but that, at the same time, the speech as a whole will fail of any great effect as a rallying-cry.

AMONG the charges on which the character and policy of Mr. Mowat's Administration were arraigned by Mr. Meredith, some deserve more attention, and should call forth more resentment, than is likely, we fear, to be aroused. The people are, unhappily, too well used to such things in politics, and too little moved by them. Whether or not the guilt of purposed centralization can be justly brought home to them in the matter of the licensing system, there can be but one opinion among honest men, with any sense of propriety, as to the use made of the power so gained, in Hamilton and elsewhere. The evidence given by Mr. Lottridge in court and the "unofficial" letter of Mr. F.W. Manning, read by Mr. Meredith, are not new documents, but that does not in the least detract from their significance. Anything more indecent than the spectacle presented of a License Inspector appointed by the Government going the rounds with the virtual proprietor of forty or fifty saloons, to canvass the licensees managing those saloons on behalf of the Government, it would be hard to imagine, even in party politics. So long as that Inspector remains undismissed and unproved; so long as that Mr. Lottridge's "private" circular note, warning the hotel-keepers in advance of the visits of the Inspector, is not shown to be a fraud or a forgery; so long as the writer of the letter signed "F. W. Manning," which was quoted by Mr. Meredith, remains "chief officer" of the License Department—it is mere trifling for the *Globe* to call such charges "ancient and long-exploded." We have on previous occasions given our reasons for being unable to agree with the censure which Mr. Meredith pronounces upon the policy of the Education Department in the matter of the French schools. With regard to the other, and, in our opinion, much more damaging, criticism of the amendments to the Separate School laws it would, perhaps, be amiss to say much while the question of the meaning and force of the most obnoxious of those amendments are *sub judice*. But it must be clear to every unprejudiced mind that Mr. Meredith is right when he says that the Act by which the assessor is required to take the statement that a given ratepayer is a Catholic, as *prima facie* evidence that he is a Separate School supporter, whatever may be its strict legal interpretation, must have in practice the effect that any Catholic who may desire, as many no doubt do, to support the Public Schools, is thereby compelled to take the initiative, and to accept all the unpleasant consequences of so doing. This law, says Mr. Meredith, ought to be repealed. We greatly mistake the state of public opinion in the Province, if it be not such as will force the Administration at an early day, either to bring about its repeal or to let it quietly drop into disuse. But while emphasizing as strongly as we can those of Mr. Meredith's charges which appear to us to be weighty and well substantiated, we cannot dismiss the subject without reference to the lamentable weakness of his position in reference to the Separate Schools themselves. Surely a public man, and the leader of a party, who is so fully persuaded that these schools are a mistake and an evil, should not content himself with meekly accepting them as perpetual. It cannot be that the free citizens of Canada, in accepting a compromise federal system, shut themselves up forever in the iron cage of an unchangeable constitution. We do not live in the days of the Medes and Persians, nor are our Catholic fellow-citizens wholly unamenable to reason, or destitute of a sense of justice.