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TELEPHONE 887
Montreal . . . Main 1235
Toronto . . . 2115

Life in a Looking-Glass

LAST week I had a word to say about the contrast between public life in England and in Canada, and pointed out that politicians in this country dread defeat because too often it brings in its wake loss of livelihood, loss of reputation and loss of friends. A concrete example of a most striking character has been brought to my attention. So long as Sir Adolphe P. Caron's political star was in the ascendant, no man had a larger personal following. Whether at his hotel or his club he was surrounded by "friends" who bowed and scraped to him, and could not show him too much deference. But disaster came, and presto, change! The sycophants deserted him to a man. He wandered into his old haunts, unheeded by the very individuals who, when he had favors to bestow and all the prestige of a Minister of the Crown, would have stumbled over one another in their eagerness to be recognized by him. At the club, none asked him to join them; at the hotel, his meals and rest were no longer disturbed by the officious clamor of courtiers.

BUT Conservative stock has risen a trifle, and behold another change. During the last few days Sir Adolphe has been in town. He is no longer friendless and forlorn. The ward-healers amongst the Conservatives, and the floating element who seek always to attach themselves to the winning side, scent the possibility of a change at Ottawa. Sir Adolphe has announced his intention of re-entering active political life. His old adherents are commencing to edge their way back to his side. They want to be prepared for all eventualities, and it can at least do no harm to be decently civil with the man. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was received with a little more courtesy and attention during his visit here than he has been accustomed to of late. One would imagine that old friends, who had deserted and almost cut a man in the hour of his misfortune, would experience some awkwardness in approaching him with cordiality and effusiveness as the clouds show signs of lifting. Not a bit of it. Human nature is capable of almost any feat if put to the test, and it is surprising with what ease people are "off with the old love and on with the new," when policy dictates such a course.

BUT how the politician must despise the sycophants in his heart, even while he is forced to submit, with a smile and a pleasant word, to their unctuous hypocrisy! This is one of the unceasing trials of the successful public man—to tolerate, and not only to tolerate, but to court, individuals who pretend what they do not really feel. The politician who hopes to attain, or to hold power, must school himself to this most repulsive of tasks—a sort of hypocrisy in itself. He must at least appear to forgive and forget. He must conciliate men whom he cannot respect. Sir John A. Macdonald was a past-master of the art of not making enemies. Sir Wilfrid Laurier has wonderful tact in dealing with individuals. All our most successful public men have known how to make themselves acceptable to adherents who would be traitors in the hour of reverse. Those who have not learned this lesson have not, as

a rule, amounted to much in practical politics. The Hon. Joseph Martin could not, or would not, learn it, and there was no room for him in a Government that set out with "sunny ways" emblazoned on its shield.

SPEAKING with a McGill professor last week, I was surprised to learn that although the magnificent collection of books in the Redpath library is, in some departments, unsurpassed or unequalled in Canada, in others it is inadequate to the present needs of the University. And the University, it appears, is too poor to keep pace with all requirements. This is the best proof that McGill is fulfilling its purpose, for, as President Angell, of Ann Arbor, has said, a university, if it does its duty, is always poor. In other words, the needs of a progressive university are always in advance of its resources. There is probably no educational institution in America that has received such generous support from the community in which it has its being as McGill. This, we know, is the day of the wealthy university, especially in America, where rich people have vied with one another in their princely gifts to found and endow colleges of various kinds. But there is this difference between McGill and most of the richly-endowed universities of the United States; that, whereas, in the case of the latter, the benefactions have proceeded from single individuals, here they have come from a large number of persons. Chicago University owes its existence to one man—Mr. John D. Rockefeller—and so with other wealthy institutions in the United States. But McGill has been magnificently supported by a great many of Montreal's rich people. It should be a source of satisfaction to those who have poured out their means in the cause of higher education to know that the University has made such good use of its opportunities as to require fresh aid from time to time. McGill is a growing institution, and, like a growing boy, keeps getting too large for its clothes. If the University had buried the talents entrusted to it by the rich men of Montreal, the best evidence of the fact would be unoccupied buildings, an unused library, and professors with not enough work to keep them busy.

NO nobler use for money that has been honestly obtained from the general public could be imagined than the endowment of institutions through whose agency it can be handed back to the people at large. If millionaires justify their existence in the eyes of the world it will be by a wise use of their means for the welfare of humanity, and not merely for their own pleasure and profit. A great mass of money in the hands of one man can be made to go further in doing good than the same mass if divided amongst a great many individuals. The millionaire can, if he wishes, be a power for good, more concentrated and therefore more puissant than fifty men of modest fortune with diverse aims. The other day I came across a striking passage on the power of money in an address of the late Frederick Douglass to a colored audience. "You have been accustomed," said the famous negro orator, "to hear that money is the root of all evil; on the other hand, property, money, if you please, will purchase for us the only condition by which any people can rise to the dignity of genuine manhood; for without property there can be no leisure, without leisure there can be no thought, without thought there can be no invention; without invention there can be no progress." The language of this passage is remarkably terse and