

MONTREAL LIFE.

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LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

THE decay of manners in Parliament is one of the signs of the times. The more you widen the franchise, the more do men of undesirable qualities and antecedents enter the House. One man can spoil the manners of a multitude, and although you have in Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Sir Charles Tupper two men of really fine demeanor, with a large sense of the proprieties of Parliamentary life, you have also a number of persons who would be flung out of a schoolboys' debating society for their insolence and ill-breeding. In fact, the boys in such a school would adopt an admirable expedient for clearing the atmosphere and the room. They would simply "punch the head" of the offender and he would disappear from view. I am not greatly concerned about the decay of manners in the House of Commons, because, after all, there are worse things than the growth of a spirit of public suspicion and contempt for Parliament. Parliament can acquire far too much power if it is thought too highly of. At the same time, it is very unfortunate that a few persons can degrade the standing of the Parliamentary body. A really exciting debate, with speeches where invective rather than vulgarity reigns, has much in its favor. But recent scenes at Ottawa are simply wearisome. They impress nobody with anything except the conviction that certain members of Parliament ought to be left at home.

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WHILE on the subject of Parliament, something ought to be said about the long speeches. I confess frankly that I do not read them through. A man who cannot state in two hours all the thoughts his intellect has on any given question for consideration by the general public is little short of an interminable bore. A technical address, legal or otherwise, is different. It requires the passing in review of all the points which fortify the argument. Sometimes, therefore, a lawyer in Parliament transgresses the rules of brevity from pure forgetfulness that he is not speaking in a professional capacity. When he has so transgressed once or twice, an intimate friend ought to call him gently aside and explain to him the imminent danger of becoming a public nuisance, if he keeps up the train of his lengthy exhortations. I assume that every public man, however great, has some intimate friend who can, at a critical moment, prevent him from making an ass of himself. But, perhaps, the assumption is wrong, because the evil of long speeches, both in our Parliament and in our Provincial Legislatures, has been steadily growing until men of quite inferior calibre actually think themselves entitled to take up from two to six hours of Parliamentary time with a long drawn-out statement of their views. I hope the newspapers will do their part in correcting the evil, by simply not reporting these gentlemen. There is, of course, Hansard, which groans every year with long reports that nobody reads except members of Parliament. But the daily paper is the most powerful regulator of Parliamentary loquacity. There is no better remedy for the inflated vanity of a would-be orator than a report something after this fashion: "Mr. X. then made a few remarks on the question."

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ONE does not require to be in the confidence of either party at the present moment to know that each is busily counting up its chances. The elections may be held in June, or in October, or next year, or never, but the fact remains that just now the election agents are figuring on the details, considering the outlook and making estimates of the result of an appeal to the people, supposing one took place in the near future. To

those who, like myself, do not care a brass farthing which party is in power, seeing that in the main there is practically no difference between them, it is very amusing to hear the doubts which the practiced electioneers on both sides have of their own prospects. They know well that a popular movement at any time can overturn a strongly entrenched Ministry, or the most promising Opposition. How far such a trend of feeling may operate at the present time I do not pretend to say. It has become a fashion for profound political and economic philosophers in these days to deprecate abuse of party politics. They say you should seek to elevate the political conditions of your country and not to stand by idly and sneer at proceedings of which you may not approve. Now, all I wish to say to persons of this description is that they had better stop writing books, leave the warm fireside in their quiet libraries and rush out to attend a ward meeting. Then they will know whether the advice they so freely give to others is advice that they are prepared to follow themselves. We may just as well confess the fact that, since the appearance of what is practically manhood suffrage in Canada, we are face to face with conditions that nauseate every decent man who wants to take a part in politics. I am not either deploring the fact, or pointing out a remedy, but merely making a statement of fact. When the condition is generally recognized that will be the time for urging a reform movement. At present, a man who frankly admits the corruption of our politics is as a voice crying in the wilderness.

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I COMMEND to those who are offended when you speak disrespectfully of party politics, a study of the conditions which surround the University of Toronto, and its fate as compared with that of our own McGill. There is nothing in the world wrong with the University of Toronto except its State connection. After a long existence as a State university, the controlling spirits of the institution dislike to give up the connection because it implies dignity, authority and influence. It was the State connection which differentiated Toronto from every other college in Canada. But it has involved the baleful effects of party wire-pulling and mischief-making. The party politicians will not leave anything alone into which they can poke their fingers. The consequence is that Toronto University, which ought to be one of the most distinguished and powerful institutions on this continent, is crippled in its finances, is ineffectively governed, and suffers in public opinion on account of matters which can be directly traced to political interference. I doubt if you could get a \$10 note for Toronto University just now from any private individual. I am told that Upper Canada College is shortly to be divorced entirely from all State control, and that as soon as this is effected an endowment of \$100,000 for the institution will be forthcoming from benefactors. We know how it is at McGill. We do not claim to be perfect, and, doubtless, mistakes have been made. But everyone knows that no political party is in control of the university or using its patronage for entirely ulterior purposes. Nothing is more maddening than to have education mixed up with the Jake Smiths and Tim Browns of politics. Such a condition drives good men away, puts a premium on scheming of all sorts, and men like Sir William Macdonald would turn in disgust from any institution where the Principal could not discharge an ordinary janitor on account of the political influence behind that janitor. Of course, you may say that party politics may be good but that a university is not the right sphere for their display. Well, I have lived a long time in this world and I have never discovered any place where party politics can be developed to the public advantage.