



THE way Parliament has been doing business this session and letting politics "go hang," would indicate that the politicians are as tired of party uproar as the rest of us. Moreover, they are showing that they can do business when their minds are not distracted. Business may not be the thing they do best; but they can do it when all other resources fail. The reason for this neglect of politics is, of course, apparent. The elections are over; and the deft use of the "saw-off" has made it unlikely that we will have many "byes." Consequently there is nothing in politics for the politicians. Now out at the cross roads "general store," this would never put a stop to the fratricidal strife. The people who sit on cracker barrels to settle the affairs of the nation and, when they have time, of the world—take their politics as either a recreation or a religion. They would never dream of forgetting about them temporarily simply because there was nothing to be gained by discussing them. That sordid view of the case does not occur to them. It is their duty to hate a man of the opposite party and disagree with him at sight quite as much the year after as the year before a general election.

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BUT the men at Ottawa wear their party uniforms with a looser shoulder. They do not put up the fine performance they are capable of "for nothing." They want to see gate receipts in the perspective before they will get out on the ice and begin to cut fancy figures—and heads they don't fancy. They may put up a ferocious combat in the House while all the country rings with applause; but this does not mean that they will not go down the broad walk in front of the Parliament Buildings arm in arm or foregather in merry companionship in the restaurant which is not a "bar." This is quite as true of newspaper warriors who stab each other with cold type every afternoon; but who may be found engaged in the friendly rivalry of the golf links at about the hour their cruel thrusts reach the eye of the public. The fact is that no one takes party politics seriously in this country except the fools and the fooled. The difference between these classes is that the fools are themselves to blame for their blindness, while the fooled have been kept in the dark by unkind circumstances.

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PARLIAMENT is a much more engaging spectacle in an off-year. Its members are really not so bitter as they taste; and, when they are not fighting as a part of their professional duty, they make a creditable assembly of representative men. For example, there are some exceedingly good lawyers in the House of Commons; and their

opinions on a legal proposal are as valuable as the country could well get from any other gathering. They may have "a cant toward Betsy"—that is, an inclination to make the law profitable to its interpreters; but it is too much to expect our Parliamentarians to develop unselfishness along with their other new virtues all at once. There are also some good business men in the Commons—quite as good, many of them, as the better known commercial commanders who have seats in the Senate which they seldom occupy. There is, of course, some deadwood. We could hardly expect the party system to avoid calling out of obscurity some men who are better vote-getters than business representatives. But when party takes a well-earned rest for a session, we discover that we might have done worse.

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IT would be interesting to see what the Commons would do if the members all forgot their "tags" for a few weeks, and couldn't remember for the life of them which goal they were playing toward. We would get some novel and honest opinions regarding measures and transactions which would do us a lot of good. If Government members, for instance, would only cut loose and criticise the estimates in the light of the personal knowledge they have of the way in which money has been spent in the past, the "patronage" system would receive a jolt from which it could never recover. Opposition members could return the compliment by frankly admitting merit where they saw it, and congratulating the Government on doing things which they wish in their hearts they had thought of first, and confessing in other cases that it had done no worse than they—the Oppositionists—would have done had they been in office. A Parliament which should set at work to do the best it honestly could for the country, without reference to the "previous condition of servitude" of any of its members, would be re-elected by acclamation.

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BUT it would also be a miracle. We must take such departures from party team-play as we can get and be thankful. The party system, we should not forget, has its advantages as well. It gives us two sets of men competing with each other to see which can come nearest to promising the people exactly what they want. It has killed for ever—it and universal suffrage—the old haughty attitude of the ruling class which once would only unbend enough to give the people what these superior persons thought was good for them. Party comes as near as anything yet devised to affording us prompt and painstaking popular government, though its efforts are diverted by the necessity of thinking of party success first and the fact that the people are a careless lot who will not watch and reward faithful service. Still we get pretty nearly the sort of government in the main as the majority of our people really desire and are willing to take trouble to secure. We would like it to cost us considerably less; but, again, we are not willing to take the necessary trouble to prevent our servants from helping themselves too freely at the larder. But in law-making and law-administration and the principal part of what we call "Government", we get our way fairly well.

N'IMPORTE

TWO UNIQUE WINTER PICTURES



A Pack of Wolves in Algonquin Park.

A unique photograph by Peter McDermott, South River.



A Montreal Snow-Shoe Club preparing for a Tramp up the Mountain.

Photograph by R. F. Smith.