

# THROUGH A MONOCLE

## IN DEFENCE OF MONTREAL

**M**ONTREAL is getting its civic hair combed by a Royal Commission. Naturally it does not look very pretty while the work is being done; but it is expected to be the better for it by and by. I notice that one Toronto paper takes occasion to refer to Montreal, in anticipation of the work of this Commission, as "the worst governed city in America"—or was it "in the world"? When handing out compliments like this, why spare words? Why not say "in the universe"? Even Mars is not likely to put in a denial during our lifetime. Now Montreal, like most cities on this municipally misgoverned continent, does have civic scandals and might be served by more public-spirited aldermen at times. But to say that it is the worst governed city on the continent, in view of the revelations of San Francisco, the history of New York, the "gang rule" of Chicago, the carnival of corruption in Texas which brought about government by Commission, to mention no other cases, is very, very Torontonian. There are certain elements in Toronto which are thankful every morning that they are not "even as this publican"; and they never seem to read the Scripture they vaunt so constantly, else they might find out what becomes of people in that frame of mind.

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**C**IVIC misgovernment is the result of citizen preoccupation with other things. We have reduced everything to a cash basis on this continent; and when we are plundered by our public trustees—be they town councillors or cabinet ministers—we ask only, "How much did he get away with?" We are not affronted by the betrayal of trust involved. Now, so long as we take this view of the matter, we are not likely to get relief. A city council would have to be a gang of burglars before they could rob a city of enough money to make each citizen feel the loss very keenly in his own pocket. His share of any loss through "grafting" is quite likely to be counted in cents; and, if it goes to dollars, they will not be many. Hence if he is going to sit down and put the loss in money which he would suffer, if he took time from his private business to fight civic corruption, over against the loss he will feel if he just lets it go, he is very apt to decide that it will pay him better to leave the "grafters" alone.

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**I**N other times and other places, men felt unfaithfulness on the part of their public trustees as they now do unfaithfulness in their wives. That was and is the spirit which keeps public life pure. Purity has never yet come, and it never will, on a cash basis. There have been conditions of society in this world when men did not expect their wives to be pure unless they were watched. In the Musee de Cluny in Paris are shown instruments with a lock and key with which men in other days sought to make sure of the fidelity of their wives. Now where men were content to take this view of feminine purity, it was certain to be a rare virtue. But men, thank God, are no longer ready to take so lenient a view of the very basis of family life. To-day men will kill when their wives' purity is menaced; and they would kill again if any one sought to present the matter to them on a cash basis. When something of this spirit enters our view of public life again, we will get public purity. When we would feel it an intolerable insult to even discuss how much a false public trustee "got away with," the only question being the monstrous fact of his faithlessness, then will the basis of public life become steady as is to-day the basis of family life.

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**I**F Toronto is going to be free in its criticisms of Montreal, that last named city might possibly retaliate. Like all big men and things, it is good-natured and it takes a great deal to stir its wrath. A good-humoured tolerance is, indeed, one of its sins in the eyes of the "just so." Montreal does not mistake itself for an enlarged young ladies' boarding school nor does it live in accordance with any neatly printed set of rules. It is something of a cosmopolitan city—that is, something of a real city and not an overgrown village—and its people have learned to bear and forbear. No one section of them expects that all other sections will see life just as they do. Long experience has taught them that they will not. Hence "live and let live" has become one of its working principles; and, as a result, Montreal is

easily the gayest city in Canada. It refuses to take life as seriously or as sadly as some of our communities regard it a duty to do.

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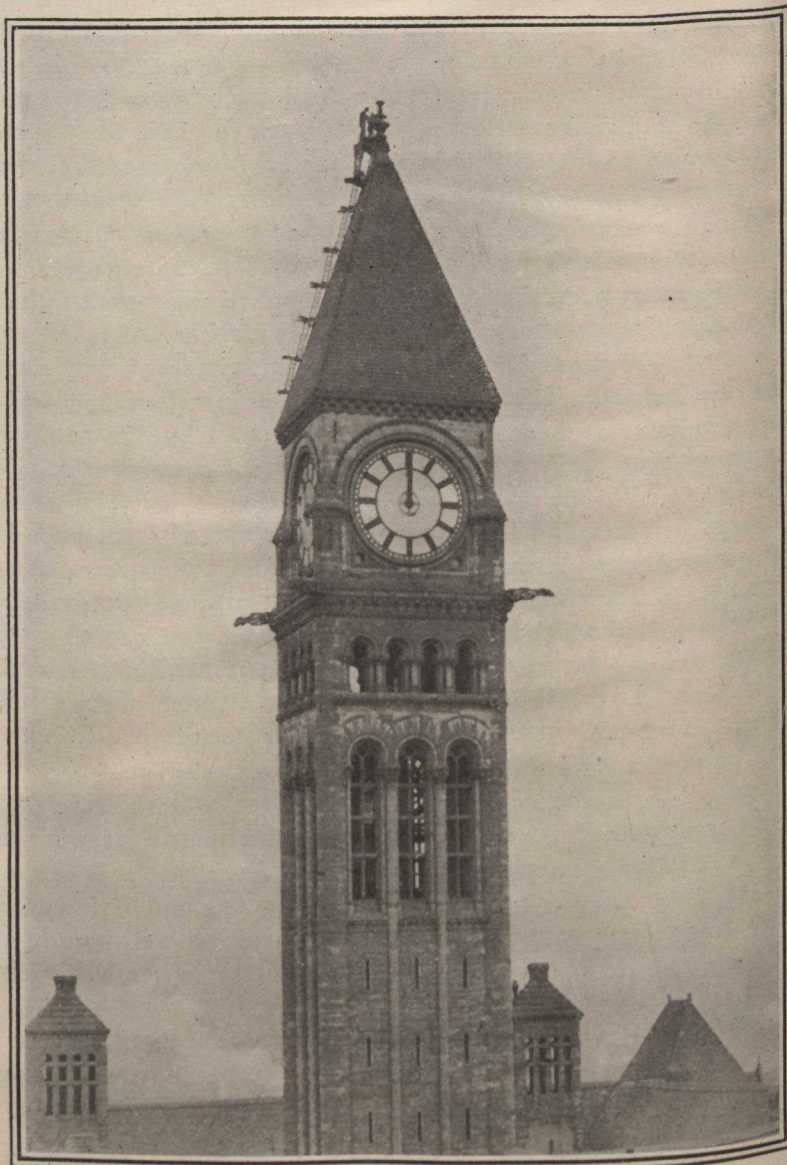
**T**HEN Montreal's division into more or less opinion-tight compartments is a good thing temperamentally. You cannot submerge the whole city with a single wave of strife or gloom. Toronto got all wrought up recently over a Biblical discussion; but such an affair in Montreal would leave most of the city calm. They would hardly know that it was going on. Montreal has its Workman as Toronto has its Jackson; but Montreal, except for a man here and there, is not worrying about it. Montreal, if it were inclined to return Toronto's criticisms, would say that the Queen City is narrow-minded, that it is intolerant of other customs and other manners, that it regards its own opinions as a divine standard set up by which all other peoples are to be judged. But then Montreal would hardly say such things out loud. It is too polite. The gracious manners it has inherited with its French population would forbid anything so bald and wounding. Its only audible complaint of the "narrowness" is an involuntary exclamation when, as it journeys amicably along the Canadian highway with its sister city, an edge of the "narrowness" cuts into its cuticle. As Irishmen love "dear, dirty Dublin," so do Montrealers love dear, dirty, good-natured, fun-making, light-hearted Montreal! It does not carry the weight of the world on its shoulders; but it has room for the breadth of the world in its heart.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

**E**VERY time the British Empire League in Canada holds a meeting, it says something definite. It usually meets once a year, and the resolutions are usually drafted by its energetic president, Lt.-Col. G. T. Denison. This year's "thunder" was moved by Sir James Whitney, as follows:

"The British Empire League in Canada wishes to express its gratification that the Canadian Parliament has unanimously declared it to be the duty of Canada to assist the Empire in naval defence, and hopes that steps will be speedily taken to give effect to such declaration."

## THREE HUNDRED FEET IN THE AIR



During a fierce electric storm a few weeks ago, the Tower of the City Hall, Toronto, was struck by lightning. The ball on the top of the tower seemed to have attracted the fluid. It ripped off a few of the tiles and caused general damage. To effect repairs, a scaffolding had to be erected step by step from the base of the roof. Our picture shows the scaffolding completed and two men at work on the injured pinnacle.