

REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

A Minister's Grave Errors.

LAST week, in the House, Sir Wilfrid Laurier read from the *CANADIAN COURIER* the three letters written by a cement manufacturer and published in one of our July issues. He did this to emphasize a contention made in these letters that the reduction in the duty on cement made in June last was due to the Saskatchewan elections and not to any unusual state of affairs in the cement market.

Premier Borden, in his reply to Sir Wilfrid, touched slightly on the topic, and said:

"My right honourable friend has spent a very considerable portion of his speech in reading from a public newspaper a series of letters on the reduction of the duty on cement."

On the following day, the Minister of Finance replied at greater length to Sir Wilfrid, and said:

"The right honourable gentleman made the charge that the Government reduced the duty upon cement by reason of the fact that there was an election pending in Saskatchewan, and for the purpose of influencing that election. . . . He read a letter from a manufacturer of cement published in an obscure journal based upon the grossest misrepresentation. . . ."

Later on in his address, in a burst of mock heroics, the Minister of Finance added:

"Is it fair that, on the strength of an anonymous communication, a charge involving my personal integrity should be made against me on the floor of the House?"

Mr. Macdonald, of Pictou, then asked him if the Prime Minister had received such a "letter signed by a responsible person in the terms published in the *COURIER*." The Minister of Finance replied, "I am not in a position to say that. All I can say is that he said yesterday, as I understood him, that it was anonymous."

May I be allowed to point out to the Minister of Finance that the quotation from Hansard made above shows that Mr. Borden did not call these documents "anonymous letters." Moreover, I should like to add that if the Minister of Finance doesn't know who wrote them he has lost the cunning which distinguished him when he was a newspaper reporter. The letters were written by an Ontario manufacturer of cement and were not anonymous. The Minister of Finance was bluffing when he used that term. The originals are in Mr. Borden's office, and the Minister of Finance can see them whenever he desires to come down to facts.

Again, I should like to point out to him that it is improper for a junior minister to contradict his leader. Mr. Borden spoke of the *CANADIAN COURIER* as "a public newspaper," while the Minister of Finance refers to it as "an obscure journal." Any delight which may come to him from having tried to injure the feelings of the management of this journal should not blind him to the gross breach of etiquette towards his leader of which he has been guilty. We hope that Mr. Borden will excuse this impertinence on the part of his junior colleague, making due allowance for his inexperience.

Progress of Vegetarianism.

VEGETARIANISM is being forced upon the people of Canada and no one seems to know the reason why. When the wholesale dealers are asked they curtly reply "Beef is scarce." They try to put the blame upon the farmers and declare that these men who live upon the land are not producing the quantity of foodstuffs which is necessary to sustain Canada's rapidly growing city population.

Mr. Patrick Burns, known as the beef king of Western Canada, has been telling the people of that district how much he regrets having to charge them high prices for the beef which he sells them. Mr. J. W. Flavell and other packers in the East have voiced the same kindly sentiment. Indeed, the sorrow and grief of these distinguished citizens has been, at times, painful to behold.

Under these circumstances it is exceedingly regrettable to note that a Winnipeg paper gives space to a letter from a man who apparently does not appreciate the lamentations of Mr. Burns. This man claims to have been buying meat from "Pat" for thirty years. At the beginning of this period the farmers were getting from 6½ to 7½ cents a pound live weight for their cattle, and householders were paying 12½ cents for the best cuts. In the hot weather this price went up to 15 cents. Now, says the critic, the farmers are getting 6½

cents per pound live weight and the householder is paying 35 cents per pound for the same cuts that he got thirty years ago at 12½ cents.

Not satisfied with this whack at a prominent citizen, the critic goes farther and says that the advent of abattoirs and cold storage plants drove the price of live meat from 6½ cents to less than 4 cents per pound, so that the poor farmer either had to go out of cattle raising or starve at the business.

Truthful Correspondents.

A FEW days ago, a friend startled me with the question, "Can you name a paper which has an Ottawa correspondent who tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" My friend found it necessary to read two papers of opposite politics to get a fair idea of the recent debate on the address. I explained to him that no Ottawa correspondent was expected to be truthful and honest. His salary depended upon his concealing such truth, fact or argument as might displease the partisan readers of a partisan paper. I also explained that this did not make the Ottawa correspondent an outcast; on the contrary, it put him on a level with M.P.'s and even cabinet ministers. He is a superior person.

I have not met my friend since, but hope to discuss the matter again when he has had time to think it over.

British Troops in South Africa.

HOW far Canada has gone in providing for her own defence and in relieving the United Kingdom of a portion of her military burden is exemplified by the present situation in South Africa. For several years now the Imperial authorities have maintained an army of 12,000 men in that portion of the Empire. A few days ago the announcement was made in the British House of Commons that this force will be reduced to 6,500. The cost of maintaining this huge force in South Africa has been very considerable, and no doubt the Government has been influenced in its decision by a desire to reduce expenses. But even after the reduction is made the annual cost of maintaining an army of 6,500 men must be considerable.

It is not many years since a similar garrison was maintained in Canada. The first of our present militia regiments was formed about 1860, but it was not until fifteen years later that the British Government felt justified in withdrawing the last of its regiments from this country. Even then it maintained naval garrisons at Halifax and Esquimaux until about 1900. During the past twelve years Canada has provided for its own land defences and has supplied its own naval garrisons.

This is mentioned simply to emphasize the point that during the past half century Canada has been working steadily towards a self-reliant and autonomous policy of national defence. Those who know Canadian history best fully realize how inevitable such a policy has been and how equally inevitable is the natural development of that policy in the future.

The Patronage Evil.

THE other day, the president of one of the Conservative Ward Associations in the city of Toronto made his annual address and boldly proclaimed his own success. He held up a type-written list containing the names of over two hundred men from that ward who had got government positions during his year of office. He then went on to express regret that there were a number of old men in the ward for whom he had not been able to get "jobs" because of the age limit set by the Dominion Government. However, he still had hope that he could get this embargo against old men raised and that these men would be provided for.

What claim had these two hundred men? Only one, viz., they had voted Conservative all their lives. To this pretty pass have we come. Vote blindly for your party for twenty, thirty or forty years, and then, if you need it, the patronage committee will get you a government position!

No wonder that *The Civilian*, the organ of the civil service, says that political patronage induces "corrupt elections and an ineffective public service." If the ward organizations of our cities exist only

for the purpose of filling the service with men who have no merit other than having voted "straight" all their lives, how can we expect clean elections, an honest expression of the public will, or an effective public service? If the men who work in the customs department and the post office are to be selected by the patronage committee of a ward organization, how can we expect the business affairs of the country to be looked after?

Political patronage is costing the people of Canada fully twenty-five million dollars a year in excessive prices for supplies and in inefficient labour in public departments—and who cares? Apparently neither Mr. Borden nor Sir Wilfrid Laurier does. It is quite certain that the average member of Parliament, Liberal or Conservative, doesn't. The ward politicians do not. The newspaper editors do not. Who does?

A Muck-Raking Week

THERE are times when the House of Commons at Ottawa somewhat resembles a trunk sewer. After the customary patriotic magnificence of the opening on November 21st—last week, the first of debate was one of them. Of course, a sewer is a very useful institution. One of the finest descriptive passages in Victor Hugo's greatest work concerns a sewer. And if last week's flushing of the national outlet for alleged corruption has the effect of getting the disorders out of the national system for a while, the people may begin to be thankful.

As usual, neither side of the House is to blame for turning on the sewage—and both sides are to blame. The debate on the address from the Throne is the kind of thing that permits a lot of members in Opposition to relieve themselves of rancours they have been accumulating in the interval since last session. There is no reason why the editors should have a monopoly of muck-raking. Opposition members will see to that. It is an axiom—that a Canadian Government is fundamentally iniquitous. It is the function of the Opposition to demonstrate this, as early in the session as possible, and as often as possible afterwards. The people at large may have some lingering respect for Parliament. The young men of Canada may be excused for believing that the first week in Parliament should be a patriotic spectacle, not of cheers and flag-waving and sentimentality over the Empire, but of real business tackled in earnest by a body of men whose time in session costs the people of Canada a large number of dollars a minute.

But the first business of our Parliament is to prove that the Government is rotten; and that the Opposition was always so. Evidence accumulates on both sides. Sir Wilfrid led the muck-raking brigade in a rather dignified way. The Premier retorted with the "tu quoque" argument, which is Latin for "you're another." Afterwards the Hon. Frank Oliver took the lid off the Macdonald election referred to by Sir Wilfrid. Siftons and Sullivans had been arrested by the Conservative Government of Manitoba. They had been jailed. The Liberals resented the jailing. Two members from Quebec had made a pilgrimage to Macdonald, finding out things. Hon. Robert Rogers riddled the pilgrims. According to the report, he landed with a straight left on the "solar plexus." He read three affidavits referring to the arrest of Sifton, who, he said, "had been employed by the Liberal Government for years, and practically performed no work, except that of debauching the half-breed vote." Augustin Chaboyer (a half-breed affidavit) swore that he had been offered a bribe by Sifton who had supplied him with liquor to give to other half-breeds. Mr. Carvell, of New Brunswick, asked if the man took the money. "He took the whiskey," answered Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Carvell rose to reply. A metropolitan newspaper report described him "as qualified to reprove sharp political practices to almost exactly the same extent as Satan is to reprove sin." He designated Mr. Rogers' speech as "bluster and threats."

During the course of his diatribe Mr. Arthur Meighen, of Portage la Prairie, accused Mr. Carvell of being worse than wrong if he were allowed to use the word.

Mr. Arthur Boyce, discussing the same election referred to Philip Wagner, once Edmonton interpreter, who, he said, had been promoted by the Liberals after being convicted of malfeasance in office. Hon. Frank Oliver very impulsively retorted that Wagner was less of a thug than Mr. Boyce. (Tu quoque again—from the other side.) Mr. Oliver was requested by the Speaker to withdraw the allegation; which he did.

The spectacle was regarded as highly diverting by the back-benchers, because, for two days, the debate had been deadly dull. And there is some foundation for the rumour that when it was all over, some French-Canadian members in the corridors banded together to sing, "O Canada! terre de nos aïeux!" A. B.

Two Great Rebukes.

(Toronto Evening Telegram.)

ASSUREDLY Hon. W. T. White's description of the *Canadian Courier* as "AN OBSCURE WEEKLY" is the most thrilling and impressive rebuke that has been addressed to an Anglo-Saxon publication since R. C. Lowry, of the New Denver Ledge, alluded to the *London Times* as "THAT SHEET."