Glimpses of the Political Field

It there is one time more than another that a political party needs enlightened guidance it is at the time of its weakness or misfortune. The day of defeat is the day to prepare for future victory. To place itself on a solid footing, a party must discover why it is weak and why it is denied the confidence of the people. The Liberal party of Ontario to-day lies prostrate beneath the weight of public opinion. Its surest constituencies are in the hands of the enemy. Five of its leaders enjoying cabinet recognition have been left at home. Obviously, there was something seriously wrong in the government to cause such an upheaval of public opinion. But the Liberal organs, notably The Globe, are not ready to admit that the Ross government has suffered for its sins. The Globe does not find fault with the government; it finds fault with the people. It takes the view that the public is a fool.

The strong, courageous advice of Liberal newspapers at the right time would have gone for to spare the Liberal party from many of the infamies which the Ross government committed in its name. But the Liberal press was not courageous. It defended the government when condemnation was in order, and by pretending to voice the best Liberal sentiment of the province, paved the way for Wednesday's disaster. Even in defeat, The Globe clings to the theory that the Ross government represented all that is best in the Liberal party. Instead of boldly analyzing the election returns and bringing out the real causes of the government's overthrow, it arrives at the convenient conclusion that the Liberal leaders are all right, but that the public is a fool.

The Brockville Recorder, if not more sane, is at least more humorous in its attempt to explain the landslide of Wednesday last. The Recorder, which is the organ of Hon. George P. Graham, M.L.A., does not call the public a fool. It offers the highly original theory that the weather was responsible for the fate which befell the government. In the cities and towns, where the Conservative strength lay, The Recorder explains the voters were all able to get out, but in the rural districts, which are largely Liberal, it was simply impossible to get to the polling booths, and on that account thousands of good Liberal votes could not be recorded. "Had the weather been more favorable," The Recorder adds, "the result would certainly have been very different in many constituencies." We are supposed to have a variety of corporate votes in Ontario. We have the temperance vote, the prohibition vote, the liquor vote, the Catholic vote and the Orange vote. To these it would appear from G. R. Graham's explanation, we must now add the polar bear vote. The polar bear vote appears to have gone solidly against the Ross government, while electors more sensitive to storm and cold stayed at home. Mr. Whitney will see the desirability of pulling off future elections in midwinter, and standing everlastingly in with the polar bear vote.

Hon. George W. Ross shows a strange reluctance to impart his views on the election result to the public. To some of his intimate friends he has been more communicative. He has stated to them, so it is said, that the one regret of his public career is that he allowed North Renfrew to be disfranchised for a year and a half. Personally, he was opposed to the long disfranchisement, but he allowed himself to be governed by the views of local politicians. If North Renfrew is the premier's only regret, it canont be said that the election returns have brought home to him those truths which appear on the face of them. There ought to be many regrets in Mr. Ross' reflections on his last six years of office. The disfranchisement of North Renfrew was a serious, a very serious, offence, but it is hardly comparable with the other public acts which went to swell the people's account against Hon. G. W. Ross. Mr. Ross should first of all regret that he held the retention of office above and before all other things. From this false conception of public duty sprang the wrongs which the people have just avenged.

One of Mr. Whitney's first important acts after the selection of his cabinet will probably be the appointment of a strong commission to investigate the financial state of the province. This he must do in justice to himself. The departing government claims to have administered the different departments with scrupulous honesty, and it claims a substantial surplus. These assurances may have been given in good faith, but Mr. Whitney cannot afford to accept them without proof. In order to judge the merits of Mr. Whitney's administration the public must know the state of things when it began. The actual situation will be disclosed by a commission, and it is to be hoped that it will be so constituted as to ensure a free acceptance of its verdict.

Mr. Whitney's majority in the new legislature will be so great as to give perfect freedom to his hand in the selection of his cabinet in the re-organization of the public service, and in the general carrying out of his policy of reform. Mr. Whitney will be strong enough to keep at arm's length any evil elements in the party, and at the same time to refuse the support of men who supported the Ross government in the late elections. It has been stated that if E. A. Evanturel had carried his constituency he would have hastily offered his support to the Conservative government. Fortunately, Mr. Evanturel was not returned. There is ano her Ross government candidate who fared bette at the hands of the people, and who may now feel disposed to forget h past and seal it with seven seals. We refer to E. H. Rathbun of East Hastings, a Conservative, and until a few weeks ago a member of the Albany Club. Mr. Rathbun's conduct is excused on the ground that he was forced to run by the joint pressure of the Ross government and the government at Ottawa. This may be true, but since Mr. Rathbun chose to respect private rather than public interests he can have no claim to recognition in a party which is the creation of a sound, wholesome public opinion. We do not know that Mr. Rathbun has any intention of giving an "independent support" to the new government. If he does offer such support it is to be hoped that Mr. Whitney will not regard it as imposing any claim to recognition on his party. The man who abandons his party to fight for what he deems a great public principle is worthy of respect and admiration. He honors any party in supporting it. It will hardly be suggested that E. H. Rathbun, in entering himself as a candidate of the Ross government, was inspired by an overwhelming regard for the public interest.

North Toronto stands high among the constituencies which distinguished themselves last Wednesday. Dr. Beattie Nesbitt did not roll up such a magnificent vote with the sole aid of the Conservative party. He must have secured the support of at least a thousand Liberal and independent electors, and to these the greatest praise is due. They were led to believe that the Liberal candidate was a superior kind of being who honored the constituency in offering to represent it. No one will challenge the somewhat fulsome tributes that were paid to Hugh Blain as a public citizen. It is proof of the enlightened opinion of the North Toronto electors, however, that they did not pronounce on the respective merits of Hugh Blain and Dr. Beattie Nesbitt as if the latter were contestants in a beauty show. North Toronto affirmed the principle that a man is no better and no worse than the cause which claims his sympathies. The question was whether the Ross government should be returned or defeated. It is difficult to see why the personal qualities of Hugh Blain should affect the determination of the Ross government's merits. Mr. Blain chose to offer his reputation as a private citizen as a reason why the Ross government should be returned. The electors of North Toronto naturally replied that they were dealing with the Ross government and not handing out merit marks to esteemed private citizens.

It might be well for the opposition at Ottawa to seriously consider whether or not the time spent in discussion of the estimates is well spent. The practice for years has been for oppositions to give a miscroscopic examination to his majesty's supplies. Sometimes the critics were inspired with a genuine desire to serve the public interest, at other times their only purpose was to make party capital and occasionally their opposition was conceived in sheer cussedness. Whatever may have been the intention, it is a question whether the interests of either the public or the party have been served by dogged resistance to the estimates. Rarely if ever does criticism result in the striking out of the offensive appropriation. Not once in five years does a question raised in discussion of them in the estimates reach the dignity of an issue in an election campaign. If there is any effect whatever from a party standpoint it is to injure the opposition and assist the government.

Local hostility is bound to be awakened by the criticism since every item in the estimates is popular in the community to which it is applied. It is a question if fine criticism in committee of supply imposes the slightest restraint on a government. A government does not care how much criticism is urged against isolated appropriations. It rather welcomes such criticism. The only restraint which it respects is that imposed by the danger of swelling the cumulative effect of the estimates. A total terrifying in its proportions is more to be feared than a thousand instances of over generosity to favored communities. Opposition criticism of details will never reduce by a dollar the aggregate amount of the estimates. The beginning of a new parliament would be good time for the opposition to recognize this fact and abandon the time-honored custom of attacking estimates simply because they are estimates.

Two years ago the Dominion parliament enacted a law compelling Canadian railways to carry members of parliament free. Since that time the railways have been issuing passes as usual. Pretty much the same rules and limitations are printed on the backs of the passes, and altogether, the member of parliament is made to believe that he is as much indebted to the railways for his transportation as he was before parliament compelled them to carry members and senators free. A member of the upper house has reached the conclusion that it is time for parliament to protect its dignity and to accept transportation in such a way as to make it a matter of right rather than privilege. His proposal is that the speakers of the respective houses shall issue identification cards. These cards the members will present to conductors instead of the passes which they are now using. It is surprising that a move of this kind was not made earlier. Several members have had difficulty with conductors because of the latter's refusal to ignore the limitations printed on the passes. Some of them have even left the train rather than pay their fares under protest. The movement which is taking shape in the upper house will be welcomed by both senators and members, who feel that the railways have acted in a high-handed way in pretending to limit passes which parliament has authorized as the unconditional right of every member of parliament.

A member of the house of commons the other day referred to the amount of furniture that was being placed in the rooms of the buildings, and wanted to know by what means these furnishings were supplied at the expense of the country. He did not get very much satisfaction. His question, however, recalls an incident which happened three or four years ago. A prominent member managed to get a roller-top desk, valued at $100, at the expense of the country. The desk, of course, was to adorn and equip a room in the parliament buildings, to which he and two or three others had access. But it so happened that at the end of the session the member who was the means of getting the desk for the room had it carted to his hotel. Later, it was shipped to the rural home of the member in question. The member died a few months later, and the roller-top desk was included in the inventory of his assets.

For many years, probably since confederation, the house of commons has followed the practice of having oil paintings of its speakers hung up on the walls of the reading room and corridors. The paintings are on stilted and colossal lines, which makes them anything but historic or interesting. It is about time that the house adopted a new method of glorifying its speakers. It should get down to the small and the natural, instead of adhering to that which is offensively artificial. All the official portraits should be mere medallions of the head and bust, which would be just as effective in frames 18x22 as huge gilt frames 5x3 feet, which now adorn the reading-room. In a few years there will be no wall room left if the house adheres to the absurd custom of making tons of gilt the distinctive feature of the honor it pays its high officials.

FALLS FOUR STORIES TO DEATH.

New York, Jan. 28.—Evan Thomas, former president of the New York Produce Exchange, was killed to-day by falling from a fourth-floor window of his apartment in West Ninth-street. It is supposed that he had a sudden attack of vertigo, as he had complained of heart disease.

Chemist Dies in Explosion.

New York, Jan. 28.—Joseph Glatz, a chemist, widely known in the drug and chemical trade, is dead at his home in Brooklyn from the effects of an explosion of chemicals in his laboratory. He was engaged in chemical research, and in the manufacture of glycerine, and was a member of the Royal Chemical Society of Great Britain.

Japs After the Dollar.

Tokio, Jan. 28.—(2 p.m.)—The American steamer M. S. Dollar, en route for Vladivostock with a cargo of provisions and forage, was seized yesterday by the Japanese in the Pacific Ocean, east of Hokkaido Island.

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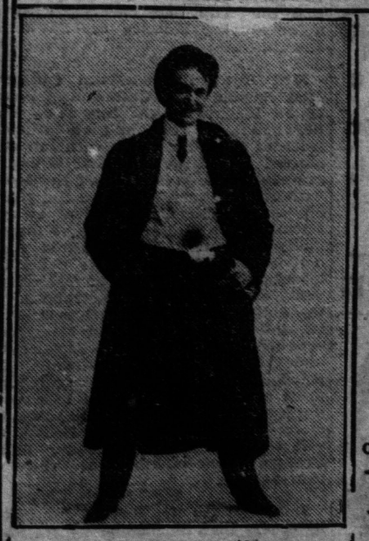
GRAND Opera House

EVENINGS BEST SEATS 75-50-25 - - - MATINEES BEST SEATS 25 FEW ROWS 50



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