

lingness to look upward, and a deeply rooted contempt for that which has been neglected. There can be no use in disguising the fact that the purely secular instruction given in our public schools means a rising generation of unbelievers.

The born genius is sure, sooner or later, to acquire the best education and that most adapted to his powers, but we appeal for the early education of the many. Instruction alone, as imparted everywhere nowadays, ministers to pride, and this is its prime result. Education, properly understood, engenders, above and before all things, humility, because its elemental principles relate to self knowledge. If our children in their earliest years were taught to know more of themselves and less of their books and "branches," they would come in time to think less of themselves and of their attainments and more of their books because able to estimate their value aright, and would read or not read them as an educated and discriminating intellect might dictate.

Charlottetown, P. E. I. FREDERIC E. J. LLOYD.

ON THE SELECTION OF EPITAPHS.

THE voices of the children at their play came to me through the open window; the birds are singing in the budding trees; the young grass is fresh after a week of showers, and the strong May sun brightens all it shines upon. This spring day seems the beginning of all things. Earth is created anew. What can be in closer accord with it than the dreams of one and twenty? What more natural occupation can there be for such a day than looking forward joyously into the coming years and planning them in hope and ambition? Amid such gladness it is not a sad thought to remember that there must be a winter to follow the spring; that the dreams and hopes and plans and ambitions must all come to an end. That time seems very far off; and the natural horror at the thought of dissolution is lessened by the aspect of the earth this bright May morning. To die is, then, merely to have our dust laid in the bosom of this strong fertile mother, and become, in another way, a part of ever active life. The day is too sunny to permit of gloom anywhere—even in the dreamer's brooding heart.

Still, after many or few such May days, there must be an end, a final scene; and a final spot where these limbs, now so full of warm blood, shall be laid at last, cold and inert. The custom is to mark the place by sculptured marble or graven brass; and words are carved to keep alive the memory of him who sleeps beneath. Sometimes we choose them for ourselves, wisely and humbly, or crying out wildly against God; more often we choose them for tablets and inscriptions we can never read aright for the falling tears. Often we err in our blind love, and, feeling how weak words are to tell our loss, perhaps our remorse, we deal our dead praise which they whom we delight to honour would be the first to disclaim. Seeing, then, that those we leave behind may be in error regarding us, it seems much wiser that we should, each and all, choose our own epitaphs. No man can know another as he knows himself. It is also well that we should choose them early. Then living so that the chosen words shall sway every word and action when the time comes for using the epitaph, we shall seem to have a special right to those words. For when the time comes for the narrow house, built for each son of woman before he was born, and the white tablet to bear his name and year shall be set up, then the chosen words will come of themselves. No others will seem so fitting. They need not even be carved on tombstone or cenotaph. It will be enough if, when I vanish from this world of action, my name should always be coupled with those words; or if when those who knew me best think of their absent friend, the unseen inscription graven on the tables of memory shall rise to their lips.

The strongest reasons for choosing our epitaphs early in life is that only by so doing can we hope in any measure to deserve them. Only after long years of strenuous endeavour could we dare to have placed above our crumbling dust the legend of what we hoped and agonized to be and do. Only after long and severe trial could we deserve to have the painful story of failure and disappointment blotted out, and our small measure of actual attainment made enduring in stone or metal. It would be kindlier to record what we struggled to do than what we actually performed. But to merit remembrance we must have accomplished something of good. That is the measure of us, as men: achievement for this world, that is the imperishable part of us. As the stern old Norse poet sang a thousand years ago, "Man dies, races die; but one thing I know does not die, the fame of good deeds, well done."

There is no lack of noble words to choose from. Great men of old said and sang many sentences which serve. For a faithful soul in an unbelieving age, what could be more fitting than this:—

Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshak'n, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.

Or for one whose life had been made one perfect harmony by love for a worthy woman? Or for the man who has taken for his earthly love some great cause, some over-pure ideal?

It is not even needful that the words should come from the trumpet tongue of a Milton. A homely phrase, such as friend uses in familiar talk with friend, will suffice. What are we that the words of a poet should consecrate our ashes? One who had seen him fall tells a woman of

her young lover's death in battle. He ends gravely: "He was a good boy and a brave boy, and he met his death like a man." Read in its setting, in the simple tale from which it is taken, it moves the reader deeply, and must have taught not a few of us the divine worth of tears.

The voices of the children on the lawn ring joyously; the birdsong is as blithe as ever, and a soft mist has come between me and the May sun, which only adds a glory to the yellow-shot green sward and the faint crimson of the maple buds.

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THE LESSER EVIL.

THERE is a certain class of men in the Province of Quebec who are at present, doubtless, a good deal concerned as to the disposal of the votes at the coming election. They are the honest Liberals, a body considered, we are aware, to have no concrete existence, but whose number we still trust may be reckoned in integers. The horns of the dilemma are represented in the main, the one by business, the other by constitutional irregularities; but there are certain considerations which modify each, and increase the difficulties of choice. We confess ourselves that we see little ground for hesitation, at least as to the considerations which should lead towards the decision.

If the perfect honesty of the Conservative Government could be guaranteed, that Government should emphatically be supported. But it would be rash to guarantee, or even to assume, that such would be the case. To find a leopard suddenly changing his spots would suggest some insidious soap advertisement, not a genuine reform. The question is rather by which party the less swindling is likely to be done, and, as it may be worked out on the theory of probability, the answer becomes one of mathematical calculation rather than politics. If a person can settle this in a way satisfactory to his own mind, he can have no doubt as to how to cast his vote. It is really a form of opportunism; you have the choice of two roads beset by different bands of robbers, and you must choose the less unscrupulous of the two. Some robbers we know insist on taking your clothes, but there are others of a softer clay who are content with your purse. It is a matter of business, not of morals, to seek the latter.

Our ideas on government are very warped. Quite an old view of the office of Government was that it was intended to secure the greatest good of the greatest number. Of course we still hold the same to be true, but with a limited application, expressed by the slight addition of the words "of our party" after number. Another definition or characteristic "by the people for the people" remains a cheerful sarcasm. Government now means a combination which collects as much as it can from the people and borrows as much as it can from outsiders. From the united sum it ostentatiously scatters some crumbs in the direction of the useful, if vulgar, herd; and devotes the loaves towards satisfying a not very unique form of greed. The puzzle is that people submit to it; that they can be openly robbed and yet approve the robber. The arguments that secure this end are as ingenious as they are bold. One is that if people were being robbed they would not submit to it; ergo, they are not being robbed. Another is this, "if you, individually, are gaining nothing by this form of government, your case is a little singular; your fellow men are amazingly prosperous. If you suffer a little it is for the general good; we cannot invent a system which will exactly meet the ends of all." You accept the argument, involving adhesion to a system which meets the ends of about one in every thousand. The blind are not led by the blind but by those whose eyes are very wide open; but they reach the ditch as inevitably as if they followed their kind. There are those who wander away from the road, forgetting their surrounding and oblivious of everything till they find themselves lost in the middle of some swamp. Even so the people of Canada will awaken some day to find out how far they have departed from the road of sound government.

Meantime the honest man need not refrain from the struggle; his influence and vote may not count for much, but they may do something as a protest against irregularity and fraud. The depth of evil is not often reached when he is justified from abstaining altogether; it can seldom be said with truth that there is nothing to choose between two parties. If purity of government is the first aim, he must cast in his lot with those who are least far from the ideal. This brings us to the question, whether or not purity is the first aim. Will not the net result be better if your own party succeeds? Is not the existence of the constitution of more importance than many dollars? The questions are far too wide-reaching for a general answer; but in certain instances they are more easily settled; in the case of Quebec we say "No" to both.

First as to party. The Liberal Government came to power on two questions: Financial Reform and Riel. If these were still paramount and vital questions with the party they might still deserve support. But so far as the first is concerned the failure of the late Government of Quebec is abject; and Riel, with all due respect, is a "back number." Enough mud has been thrown to satisfy the most exacting manes. In classic time three handfuls were enough to lay any ghost; and we have been handling

it by the cart-load. In fact this is pretty well realized, for whereas Riel had once a leading part on every bill, he has been of late relegated to the supers, and in the last little drama he did not appear at all. The French-Canadians are not happy in their heroes; for years they have sacrificed much for a half-insane rioter in the West; they now abandon his memory to support an accomplished robber in their midst. The case appeals to them perhaps like the live jackass and the dead lion; though it is as ridiculous to refer to Mr. Pacaud as a jackass, as to Riel as a lion. However, these be your gods, Quebec! Are they to be weighed against Governmental purity?

Then as to the constitutional question. It is not very puzzling. The power that appoints can dismiss: that is an almost universal principle. But whereas dismissal may, and often does, involve a stain on the reputation, it is not exercised, as a rule, before the period of appointment has run out, except for cause. Governments are appointed by the sovereign power, not by the people: that power can unmake them also at will. The power of the people is exercised in virtue of its power in granting supplies; as Government cannot proceed without money, only those Governments can continue which have the support of the people. It is not well to upset a Government that has that support; to disturb it in any case is bad, to disturb it while it has the support of the people is criminal. It is a waste of public time, of public money, the ruin possibly of public credit; it may be of most serious consequence in private business. A Governor must feel very sure of his ground before going to extremes. Was the Governor of Quebec justified in dismissing the Mercier Government? Was he sure that the people disapproved? He was not sure, and cannot be sure till the elections are held; but he was justified in asking the people what they thought. Governments are destroyed, as a rule, through stupidity, or rashness, or extravagance. The charge against Ministers of paying private bills out of the public funds is not a usual one nor a light. It would seem to justify, if anything would, a pause for two or three months for a moral stock-taking. Some people feebly wonder if Mercier is guilty; we would answer in the words of Johnson: "Sirs, you may wonder." The stable door is open, the horse gone and the guardian has the key.

If the shareholders of a firm pay a manager a salary to conduct the business, and he gains illicitly from the firm twice that salary, the shareholders, as a rule, recognize but one course of action. The work of the Government is only a certain part of the people's business, which certain men are deputed and paid to do. The object is to get the work done as cheaply and as thoroughly as possible. That is from a business point of view. The people of Quebec have discovered that their business is not thoroughly done, and that the managers they trusted are dishonest. They have now an opportunity of setting things to rights. They have six weeks to consider, and four years, possibly, to repent.

F. W. F.

THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH CLUB DINNER.

ON an evening in December the Club (now named "The Miquam," from an Algonquin word for a large stirring spoon) assembled for a quiet dinner in a private room of the Windsor Hotel.

The Club is an informal organization, composed in equal proportion of French and English, subdivided again on political lines into Conservatives and Liberals. Among their ranks, in some member, could be found the representative of every school of national thought prominent in the Province of Quebec.

After the dishes had been removed, the chairman introduced the topic for the evening as follows: "As you are aware, gentlemen, the purpose of this Club is to secure the freest possible discussion, from all points of view, on the questions of the hour. No topic can be of greater interest to every Canadian than that chosen for this evening, viz.: 'The Future of Canada, Ideal and Possible.' There is little need of my stating that however radical or opposite may be the views presented, no member of this Club need fear to give offence. We hope to hear from all, and, while prophesying in advance many points of probable divergence, let us hope we will not be without some common ground of agreement. I will first call upon our French Ultramontane friend on my right to give us his opinion."

"My ideal future for Canada," said the gentleman referred to, rising, "is an independent French and Catholic republic on the banks of the St. Lawrence. I uphold this view as being to my mind the most effectual method for conserving in its purity the Roman Catholic religion. I would further be in favour, as you know, of giving public education entirely over into the hands of the church authorities, and, as the church's wisdom is more than human, I would be for allowing her voice to be heard in many other matters, sometimes called temporal affairs. A united Canada cannot last. The Ontario people do not understand us of Quebec; they do not appreciate us; we have as little in common with them as we should have with the natives of Timbucto. But, understand me, gentlemen, while you have my ideal, I would not advocate any sudden or violent measure to bring this about; I am perfectly willing to work and to wait, and meanwhile have no objection to considering myself a fairly loyal subject of Queen Victoria."

The chairman, with a mischievous desire to see the