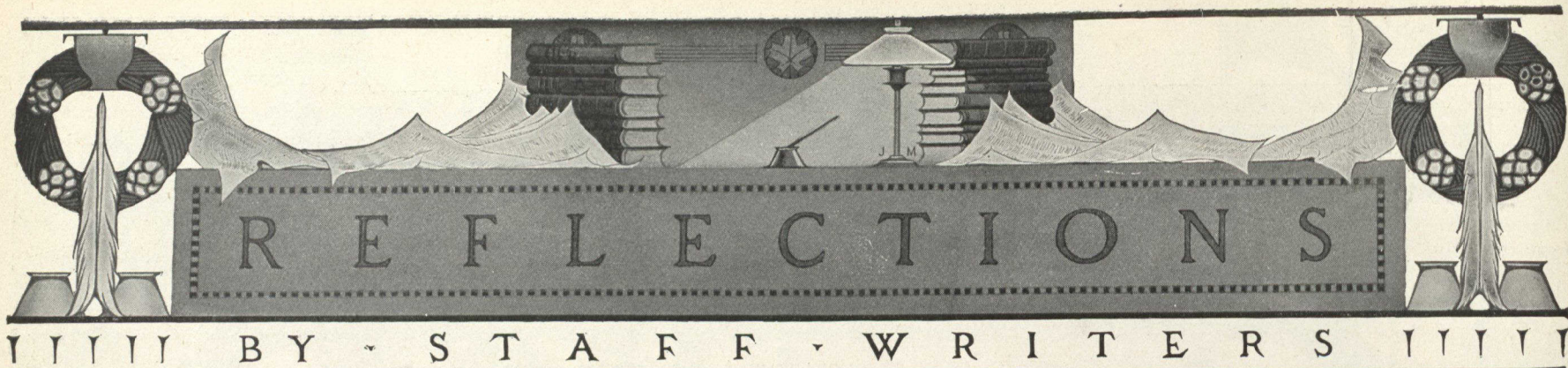




THE EVE OF A GREAT BATTLE

CANADA is on the eve of one of the greatest political battles which we have ever seen. The events of the past few weeks have brought the battle closer—how close no one seems able to say. For twelve years the Liberals, under the leadership of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, have ruled at Ottawa and for eleven of that twelve years the Opposition has been weak and at times dispirited. During the past twelve months there has been a change. Rightly or wrongly, the Opposition have made up their minds that the next general election will be their opportunity. About a year ago they began to organise. In the House, they formed themselves into a number of committees, one for each department of government, and one for each great point of discussion. They instituted a systematic and persistent campaign against the Government in the House and outside. Events, commercial and political, have favoured them in a remarkable way and to-day they are almost haughty in their views as to the outcome of the great battle.

At the recent provincial elections in New Brunswick, a Liberal government was defeated and a Conservative government installed. On June 8th, there will be two other provincial elections. In Quebec, a Liberal government is going back for re-election. At the previous campaign in that province, the government of the day sprang a surprise on the Conservative Opposition and as a consequence there were only one or two Conservative candidates. Only seven of those elected were not direct supporters of the government. On this occasion, the Conservatives have been given a better opportunity and while Premier Gouin will be sustained, the Opposition will be considerably strengthened. No other result is to be anticipated. In Ontario, Premier Whitney's forces are in spirited fighting trim and his majority will not be dangerously impaired. The point in this recital is that anything which has occurred or is likely to occur in the provincial campaigns is in favour of the Conservative Opposition at Ottawa.

On the other hand, Sir Wilfrid Laurier is the most experienced and most successful political leader that Canada has had since the death of Sir John A. Macdonald. His intellectual vigour has been well maintained in spite of his advancing years. He has a splendid fighting force behind him, though some of his former lieutenants have been gazetted out of the service and others have grown grey and rheumatic. It is not to be supposed that he will be much less brilliant than he has always been, or that he will allow his opponents full choice of weapons and position.

The battle will not be an unequal one. The advantages and disadvantages are fairly well balanced. The result will mainly rest upon whether or not the people think it is time for a change. This is almost the only point which the sluggish body politic ever seriously considers.

JUDGE LONGLEY AND INDEPENDENCE

FROM newspaper comment on the Canadian Club banquet in New York, one would conclude that His Honour, Judge Longley, formerly Attorney-General of Nova Scotia, had made a strong argument for Canadian independence. His remark was merely incidental to his main argument that Canada would never seek political union with the United States. He said that he thought the destiny of Canada was to be "an independent nation in alliance with the Empire." There is nothing so very startling in that. Canada is yearly coming closer to that position. Every move we have made in our Imperial relations in the last hundred years has tended in that direction. The other day, Great Britain laid down the principle that all treaties hereafter to be concluded, affecting any one of the self-governing colonies, must first receive the sanction of the colony whose interests are affected. Is this not another step in this direction?

In a recent speech, at Pictou Nova Scotia if we are not mistaken, Judge Longley went much farther and advocated independence for the Dominion. Yet nobody need take His Honour too seriously. He

has never shown himself a prominent leader, politically or socially. His views on a number of questions have always been exceptional. His attitude towards the larger public questions has been mainly academic, and his political career non-constructive. He represents no body of public opinion.

Yet it may be that Judge Longley, in the main, is more nearly right than some of those who shout imperialism from the house-tops. The French-Canadians are thoroughly opposed to any sort of legislative or administrative union with Great Britain, beyond what at present exists. So long as this element in our national life possesses influence—and that means another century at least—our tendency will be to acquire more and more of independence. It will, however, be an independence within the Empire, not without. In this Judge Longley and Ambassador Bryce are apparently in agreement. In this, both French and English Canadians are practically in agreement. Why, then, should we get excited if Judge Longley or any person else arises and says that the growing national spirit tends to make us an independent nation within the Empire or in alliance with the Empire? Are we so provincial that we are to be frightened by a particular word? Even Mr. Kipling noticed that tendency when he wrote:

A Nation spoke to a Nation,
A Queen sent word to a Throne:
"Daughter am I in my mother's house,
But mistress in my own."

THE COMMUNITY AND THE BOY

LAST week, Judge Piche of Montreal was called upon to try a boy for theft, the complainant being the boy's mother. It developed that the child had been sent to school before he was four years old and had a bad school record. The judge lectured the mother for sending him to school to get rid of him and for not taking proper care of him. He called the boy out of the witness box and asked him to promise to go home, behave properly and learn a trade on condition of being given another chance. The boy promised and the judge dismissed him. That judge has sense.

The problem of the boy we have with us always. The parents do not always take as much care of him as they should. When he goes to school, the teacher with her class of fifty or sixty pupils to look after is able to give him scant attention. Playgrounds are not numerous and no one seems to care what becomes of him. He runs wild, goes wrong morally, is neglected physically and too often turns out badly. Our system of education does not provide any remedy where the home training fails.

There is no easy solution of the problem. Yet it is one which every large city must face. In the village and township, children are not herded together so closely, and plenty of air and close contact with nature make life fairly wholesome. The boy raised in the fields has a better chance than the boy raised on a paved street. More playgrounds for the city boys and experienced directors of physical training and games are a necessity if the criminal classes are to be deprived of recruits. Open-air schools and excursions to parks and country might also be made a part of every city school programme. Teachers should be directed to give more attention to moral and physical development. To this end, classes might be taken in rotation to the city parks and open portions of the suburbs where the children would get fresh air and a glimpse of nature. Something along this line is being attempted in London and other large English cities and a similar system might be worked here to advantage.

THE MORBID MINORITY

SHERIFF CAMERON of London, Ontario, has displayed firmness and discretion in refusing to allow the slayer of Lloyd to be placed "on exhibition." Those who are well acquainted with the