

wind. Much of the available power is wasted in Party altercation, and in order to secure a prolonged term of office for the "Ins," and the greatest amount of discomfiture for the "Outs." The Ministry is always thinking more of itself than the country, while the Opposition is prepared to sacrifice everything, so that it may render the Ministry unpopular, and hasten its own return to power. There would seem to be in the eternal fitness of things no reason why a nation should be crucified between two parties in the Legislature. Corporate and other bodies conduct their business on the reasonable basis of the members taking sides on the merits of each question as it is brought before them, but our legislators are not concerned with the merits of a question so much as with which side of the House it happens to emanate from.

Thus we have the Party in office always taking some step to serve itself; the Party out of office always throwing impediments in the way, and doing its best to ensure that that particular piece of legislation shall be turned out in a form as discreditable as possible to its originators, unless, indeed, there happens to be a chance for the Opposition to snatch a triumph out of it, and to make it redound, in some shape or other, no matter what, to its own glory.

Owing to the same cause much of the work of each session is retrogressive. It consists in one side picking to pieces what the other side have done, and so, in addition to maimed and imperfect Acts, we get a good many futile enactments, which only land us where we were years ago. From the same cause—that is to say, from a desire on the part of the Government to retain popularity—a good many petty and "faddy" bills are passed, to please this or that clique, to oblige monopolists who have votes, and to make things pleasant all round. On other grounds there is much waste of work, and the produce of real value is small in bulk, now do the people always get the full benefit of this, little as it is. Somehow or other it happens that there is a great mortality among Acts of Parliament—some are strong and vigorous, come into immediate operation, and create a stir in the world; others pass through the House and out of the House, and are never heard of afterwards. It seems nobody's business to put them in force, and so they linger on the statute book, until perhaps the other side comes in and repeals them by the score.

At the end of the session just concluded, as of every session, the quiet observer will note how the House has failed to touch all the real evils of everyday life, and at the same time there is grave doubt whether the most important Acts of the session—*e. g.*, the Insolvency Act, the Banking Act, and the Pacific Railroad business,—may not turn out to be costly blunders, whilst the rejection of the Deceased Wife's Sister's Bill is a positive mischief, as a denial of simple justice. Let any one ask himself what he would best like done for him, and the reply would in most cases embrace the parts which our legislators have left untouched. Practical helps to the enjoyment and prolongation of life are just the kind of things Parliament will not do for us. Its time is wasted on reforms, which nine times out of ten are blunders; in effecting changes in out-of-the-way things, with the fallacious idea that to change must be to improve, and that the new is inevitably better than the old; or in dealing with some sensational topic over which the country has temporarily gone mad. Thus it comes to pass that an impression prevails that Parliament is only a great taxing-machine, which collects the revenue and disburses it with reckless prodigality. Whether the past session will prove more or less profitable than others which have preceded it, remains to be seen. It has turned out a good many bills; but number is not the point. Quality and vitality alone count; and I am afraid that when it comes to be garnered and brought into use, it will be found that we shall scarcely have got an average Parliamentary crop.

Quevedo Redivivus.

THE POLITICAL DESTINY OF CANADA.

BY JAMES LITTLE.

(Concluded from our last issue.)

"Legislation, according to the well-understood wishes of the people," has existed in no greater degree since that much-boasted-of reform, Responsible Government, was inaugurated, than before; in fact, not so much so. Up to 1847 the wishes and interests of the people were attended to; since that time they have been totally ignored. It can't be shown by Mr. Bourinot, or other laudators of Responsible Government, that a single one of all the great financial and other important measures with which the country has been brought to its present poverty-stricken state, was ever submitted to the people for their decision, *pro or con*, at the polls—that a single member was instructed by his constituents to vote for changing the municipal institution of the country from District to County and Township Councils—to vote to be taxed to pay the Rebellion losses—to vote two millions of dollars into the pockets of the landlords of Lower Canada—to vote for Confederating the Provinces and purchasing those that held out—to vote for the expenditure of \$36,000,000 in building a railway along the finest navigable river in the world, out of its natural route, and increasing its length a hundred and fifty miles—to vote for the expenditure of \$30,000,000 in the enlargement of the Welland and St.

Lawrence Canals for the benefit of the grain growers of the Western States and a few shippers from this port, and at a dead loss to the country of \$2,000,000 a year—to vote for purchasing the North West territory at a cost of \$1,500,000—to vote for expending \$150,000,000 in building a railway across the continent with other colonization railways in the North West—to vote for expending from \$12,000,000 to \$15,000,000 in building a railway from Burrard Inlet, 127 miles, to the Rocky Mountains, in British Columbia, to "save from insolvency" a few fishermen and miners in that Province—to vote authority to the Government of the day to print \$12,000,000 of paper promises in order to furnish them with funds to squander at home, or pay interest on the money they have borrowed abroad for the same object—to vote for another batch of paper promises of \$8,000,000 to drain the country of specie to pay interest and bolster up our credit abroad—to vote to employ an oily-tongued ambassador to England at a cost to the people of \$10,000 a year to shape our political destiny and misrepresent the state of the country and condition of the people, and thus mislead and wheedle the London capitalists into lending their money to enable the Government to continue the indulgence of their squandering propensities—or can it be shown that a single member of the present House of Commons was instructed by his constituents to empower the Government to enter into negotiations with the British authorities for the withdrawal of 10,000 of our young men from the industries of the country and embody them in a standing army, prepared to fight the Zulus, Afghans, or other tribes whose territory may be coveted, when called on by England. Nor can they show that a single one of all these undertakings which burden the people with taxation, and are sure to end, sooner or later, in repudiation, was ever submitted to, or called for by the people before it was determined on and embodied in the Acts of the Government of the day. Sir John and the *Globe* have now, however, set this question of "representation according to the well-understood wishes of the people" finally at rest, so that it is but a waste of time to discuss it farther. Sir John has given the people plainly to understand that they need give themselves no further trouble about legislation—that it is none of their business. In the recent debate on the additional \$8,000,000 of paper promises to be issued by the Government for circulation, he—as reported by the leading organ of his party, the *Mail* of Toronto—scouted the idea, which some member had the temerity to suggest, that the interest of the people and the banks was to be considered, declaring, in emphatic terms, that "*the Government are the people*," and the *Globe*, in an editorial only a few days back on the currency question, says "the Government organ apparently holds that the men entrusted with the management of the public business should not aid in forming public opinion, but should watch it, and be ready to take any course that may enable them to retain office. This is a pernicious doctrine, and we doubt much whether the people of Canada will applaud a Government composed of declared time-servers." There is the *Globe's* view of the duties of those the people place in power. It is "a pernicious doctrine" for the servants of the people to watch public opinion and be ready to act on it, and they are only "time-servers" who would pay any attention to the "well-understood wishes of the people." And this ignoring of the people's rights and interest in the legislation of the country has, as I have shown, been invariably acted on since the establishment of Responsible Government by both political parties, Grit and Tory, when placed at the head of affairs.

A contributor to the Monthly, Mr. Granville C. Cunningham, has a well written article headed "Federation, Annexation or Independence." He commences by saying that "Indications are not wanting, that the discussion of the above questions, with regard to Canada, will ere long be brought within the domain of practical politics—people are beginning to see more clearly every day that the position in which this country stands to the rest of the world is not a permanent position; the current of events is rapidly drifting us toward one or the other of those propositions, and, ultimately, perhaps, sooner than many think, one or the other we must assume." In these observations I of course entirely concur, but I as entirely dissent from his views regarding the change which he advocates in our political condition, namely Imperial Federation, to better that position, and it is surprising to me that he does not see that his chief argument, which I shall quote, is decidedly opposed to the change he advocates, and as decidedly in favour of Annexation. He says "If England were to go to war to-morrow with any of the great powers of Europe, it is evident that Canada, as a part of the British Empire, would become an object of attack for the power with which England was at war. It would at once be necessary for us out here to put our army on a war footing, to fortify and protect our seaports, and to have everything in readiness to repel an attack which might be made at any moment, while England, on the one hand, could obtain no support as a matter of right from Canada, while she would be unable to call on a Canadian army to assist her in the field, while Canada, on the other hand, could derive no honour nor glory from the war; while she could reap no benefit from it, yet would Canada require to incur all the heavy expense necessitated by modern warfare, in order to protect herself against possible and probable attack, in order to guard her ports from invasion, and this, not from any desire of her own to take part in the war, but simply because she is a portion of the British