

(For the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.)

REPRESENTATION OF MINORITIES

II.

It may be safely affirmed that a crisis has been reached in the working of representative Government. Our system of Government is incapable of giving an accurate expression of the popular will. It affords no means of certainty, even after a general election, that the majority in the House corresponds with the majority in the country; lacking this one condition, representative Government becomes a fraud. The popularity of representative Government arises from the impression that the majority in Parliament corresponds with the majority in the country. Where this is not the case, popular Government is despotism in disguise. It is possible for us to have a Government representing a smaller fraction of the popular will than is represented by even the Russian Government. Our Parliament once elected, can remain in office a term even though admitted to not represent one-tenth part of the popular will. Now, if it were known, for certain, that the Russian Government did not represent one-tenth part of the popular will, it would not be safe a single month.

Not being elective, the Emperor of Russia conforms to public opinion for his own safety, and being elective, our Parliaments may override public opinion with impunity. The best artist cannot execute a design, to his satisfaction, without proper tools; nor can the most enlightened nation choose truly representative men without the proper mode. Like an artist with bad tools, after doing our best to choose suitable men, we sometimes discover before the close of one session that the country is misrepresented.

How can it be otherwise, while there are so many men in Parliament who were never named as candidates three months previous to their election. Parties obliged to do something grasp at such men, in the last extremity, as drowning men grasp at straws. Their very obscurity secures their election. But the first session seldom passes, till their constituents find themselves misrepresented, or not represented at all. Electors have too little choice; and this must be remedied by the representation of minorities.

It is said that people, having the franchise, are themselves to blame for being misgoverned. This is not the case. Is an artist, not having proper tools, blameable for not being able to execute a work to his satisfaction. Blame him for not having proper tools, but this being the case, we can't blame him for being unable to perform the work satisfactorily.

As yet, representative Government is but a partial success. The principle is simply admitted. In practice we have no popular Government. It is a false standard. Popular Government is Government of the people by the people. It cannot be Government by the people where the influence of any considerable number of electors is not felt.

Heretofore remedies have been sought for abuses in the extension of the franchise. This may appease the public, but it never cures a single abuse. Every extension spreads the responsibility of bad acts over a larger number of people. The object is not so much to remove abuses as to make people acquiesce in them. The way to avoid the whole consequences of disreputable conduct is to get all the persons directly and indirectly interested involved in the act. But nothing makes men more desperate than the consequences of conscious folly. While there is any further room for extensions popular Government resort to it as a remedy. But when the last, practicable, extension is made, and felt a failure, people yield to any despotic power capable of restoring order. Rome had reached this point when acquiesced in the usurpation of Caesar. Along with a properly extended franchise we require the representation of minorities, to secure good Government. It is better to be well governed with a limited franchise than ill governed with an extensive one. A very extensive franchise is not properly appreciated. After it reaches a certain point, those on whom it is bestowed regard it only as a mean of making money, or promoting their individual interests. It is rebels who usually solicit foreign intervention, and call in mercenary soldiers to aid in establishing authority. So in politics, it is the party which is aspiring to office, or endeavouring to consolidate their power who extend the franchise. Classes to whom the franchise is extended may not be always benefited thereby. The interest of a child would not be promoted by being prematurely taken into a joint stock partnership with his father.

Were all capitalists, compelled to form a partnership with all the laborers, what would be the result? The unwise council that would prevail in such a combination would annihilate the wealth of the world, and I might say too, a great portion of the population, in one or two generations. Well, universal suffrage does for liberty, and good Government precisely what this kind of an experiment would do for wealth. Immoderate extensions of the franchise will produce political convulsions similar to those monetary convulsions sometimes caused by over speculation. "The franchise won't extend" will be as familiar then as "the banks won't discount" is now.

The re-organization of the Senate is occupying a great deal of attention. But I see more real necessity for re-organizing the House of Commons. It does not reflect public opinion; it does not embody the public intelligence. Were the Commons and Senate to differ on any question which could be submitted to the people

without it being known which side each House had taken, it is my opinion that the Senate would be sustained oftener than the Commons, in such cases. The Senate though not elective understands the popular will just as well as the Commons.

The Commons is called the popular branch. This is so only in imagination. The significance attached to the term is a fraud. It does not represent the people; it seldom represents the majority; it may not represent, even a majority of the majority; but a minority of the majority, as shown in my paper of March 27th. Any extension of the franchise at present will be an evil; further extensions, under any circumstance, cannot be beneficial; but give the country a franchise, in which provision is made for the representation of minorities, and the people of Canada will choose for themselves the best Parliament in the world.

W. DEWART.

Fenelon Falls.

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ALEXANDER DUMAS AT HOME.

The election of the younger Dumas to the French Academy, and his recent brilliant reception in that illustrious body, have turned the attention of the literary world to him in a special manner and made him the lion of the season. The following account of his home, his literary habits, and his art collections, from the pen of a Paris colleague, will be of particular interest.

I.

Let us take a look at his writing desk in his splendid mansion. On it the first object which strikes the eye is a sheaf of goose-quills, the only one which the great writer employs. He experiences a certain pleasure in hearing them sing on the blue satin paper which is a favourite with him. The inkstand is a prosaic block of crystal. It is the inkstand of the Countess Dash.

"She left it to me in her will," says Dumas, "and I will use it all my life. But I have changed the ink. I am better pleased with my own, and so are my publishers."

A pile of letters lay on the table ready for the postman.

"They are mostly insignificant," said he. "I receive an incalculable number of them every day, and I have the weakness to answer them. Out of ten correspondents, there are seven unknown to me who ask me something, and one or two who thank me for something. I have a horror of private secretaries. I do not like that gentleman who pokes into your papers, keeps a copy of your correspondence, and who, after having lived on your life, lives on your death by bringing to the papers, on the day of your burial, revelations more or less authentic on your private life. The secretary is really a true friend."

Having finished his correspondence, Dumas works from eight in the morning till noon. Four hours a day have sufficed to produce, in twenty years, the books and the dramas which the whole world has read and applauded. He toils slowly and conscientiously, with artistic minuteness. He copies and recopies with his own hand.

"I always find changes to make, incidents to dramatize, expressions to modify, and idle passages to cancel. These successive revisions, made, word for word, pen in hand, are laborious and even fastidious, but I shall never renounce them, because to them I owe all that I am. When at length I present the manuscript to my publisher, and he takes it from my hands, I am always tempted to snatch it from him and copy it over once more."

II.

The sarge salon which absorbs the whole of the first story, with the apartments of Madame Dumas and her two daughters, contains as sole furniture—an enormous table, on which lie pamphlets, albums and sketches, an Erard piano, a colossal divan, and a small billiard table. Billiards are a favourite pastime with the new academician, and he is an excellent player. His wife and daughters sit in a corner conversing with a friend. Intimate visitors stand around the table, judge the strokes, and launch sallies of wit across the green cloth. Dumas often plays with his painter friends, Vollon, and Meissonier. If he loses, he gives up some of the rare works of his library. If he wins, he receives a canvas from these masters. Thus among the four hundred pictures of his museum, he has acquired several through the favor of the ivory balls.

After the game comes the conversation. The last new book is criticised, the last new drama is discussed. But whatever it may be, or however lively it may prove, it ceases at ten o'clock. At that hour Dumas makes his guests understand that it is time to retire. He yawns, he rubs his eyes. The greater number rush for their hats, others protest, but the master remains inflexible. One by one he puts out the lights, and the recalcitrants find themselves in the dark. They are obliged to grope their way out, hearing the ironical "good-night" of Dumas from the third story, where is situated his bed-room.

Very singular is this apartment of his, perched under the roof, near the clothes presses. On the mantle of the chimney is the bust of Desolée, and in the frame of the looking glass are photographic cards adorned with autographs, invitation tickets, admission passes to race-courses, museums, and the rest. On the walls are hooked drawings, water-colors, old engravings, and the portrait of Marie Duplessis, the original Dame aux Camelias. On mantels and brackets are all sorts of beautiful and fantastic terra cottas.

Beyond the dressing-room stands the bed, large and low, garnished with a rich Smyrnes coverlet. In the depths of the alcove are three frames containing—first, the portrait of General Davy-Dumas, the grandfather of the master; second, the portrait of Alexander Dumas, his father; third a slight crayon sketch representing a person dead. It is the mother of Alexander Dumas fils.

J. L.

THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

Under the late Emperor, the Academy, having become under M. Guizot's influence an Orleanist club, took a sincere delight in electing members who cut the strangest figures when they went—as customs enjoins—to be introduced to his Majesty at the Tuilleries. Napoleon III. was, however, a man of cool nerves, and bore himself serenely in such encounters. When M. Prevost-Paradol was presented, he said: "I am sorry, Monsieur Paradol, that a man of so much wit should not be a friend of mine." "So am I, sire," answered the journalist, who was then bitterly assailing the Empire in the *Courier du Dimanche*. When M. Jules Favre's turn arrived the public expected a duel of epigrams, and were not wholly disappointed. "You succeed a great man (Victor Cousin), who spoke little but thought much," said the Emperor, "and I am happy to say, Monsieur Favre, that before dying M. Cousin became one of my supporters." "I have heard with sorrow that M. Cousin's intellect was considerably impaired at the time of his death," answered the great advocate imperturbably. On one occasion only did a new member pray to be dispensed from introduction at Court, and that was M. Berryer. Napoleon readily acceded to his request. Berryer had defended him when he was tried by the House of Peers for his escapade at Boulogne, and had been rewarded for his eloquent advocacy by being imprisoned at the *Coup d'Etat*. Under these circumstances the meeting between counsel and client might have been tinged with unpleasantness, and Napoleon probably dreaded it most of the two. It lies within a Sovereign's prerogative to quash an Academical election, but this has never been done since Louis XV., at the instance of Madame de Pompadour, rejected Piron. The wit consoled himself by giving the following bit of advice to the Chancellor of the Academy, who came to acquaint him with the Royal decision, and added that he felt embarrassed as to how he should address the member chosen in Piron's stead. "Oh, it's very simple," said Piron, "the man will say to you, 'Thank you for the honour;' and you'll reply, politely, 'It's not worth a thank.'" Piron also composed his own memorable epitaph:

Ci git Piron qui ne fut rien
Pas même Académicien!

HOW PARLIAMENT SILENCES A BORE.

The *Nation* says, in speaking of Dr. Kenealy: "He will do less harm in the House of Commons than anywhere else. The House has a rough-and-ready way of dealing with eccentricities. Every man who comes within the rigid criticism of that assembly soon finds his level. Every newcomer, it matters not what he is, is treated at first with courtesy and consideration. The House always listens with attention, and generally with good nature, to a maiden speech, and anything like diffidence or nervousness it treats with leniency and generous encouragement. But self-assertion or bumptiousness it cannot abide, and it is cruelly intolerant of bores and one-idea men. Dr. Kenealy will meet with studious consideration when he first essays to speak. But if he insists on parading the Orton grievance upon the attention of the House, his reception will be very different from that which awaited him at Stoke. The House has many effective ways of silencing a bore. An animated conversation carried on in every corner by the various members seated in their places soon deadens the voice of even the most animated speaker. A chorus of cries of 'divide,' 'divide,' 'vide,' 'vide,' proceeding from both sides at once whenever the speaker opens his mouth, embarrasses even the most hardened orator. But the most effectual way of bringing a one-idea man to his senses is the process of 'counting out,' and this is probably the course that will be followed with the chosen of Stoke. It is a rule of the House that forty members must be present. When an orator becomes troublesome, a stampede of members takes place from the House to the lobbies, or the smoking-rooms, or the library. Some one gets up from a back bench, and calls the Speaker's attention to the sparse attendance. The Speaker counts the House, finds there are not forty members present, orders the electric bells to be rung and the sandglass to be turned. The stampeded members stand outside till the sand has run its two minutes' course and the electric bells have rung out. The doors are closed, there are not forty members, and the House stands adjourned till the following day, when there is a new order of business, and the orator of the previous night has lost his chance, and may not get another till the following session. It is an effective way of silencing a bore."

HOME AT LAST.—How artless! When the crowded omnibus drives up to a fine three-story mansion, one of the young women getting out invariably remarks, "Home at last!"

NURSES.—In the revised version of "Geneviève de Brabant" in Paris a ballet of nurses, with babies in their arms, followed by a troop of

children in chariots and perambulators, proves a great success.

OLD MAIDS.—An old maid don't know what it is to bend over the children's little white bed, softly pat their heads, and hear one of them growl out: "Now, then, Sam, keep your hands off'n me, or I'll bat you in the eye."

PRETTY FEET.—Kate, in a note from Brooklyn, says that girls with pretty feet always choose the muddiest street crossings, and that when a lady walks along looking for a dry path it is a proof that she wears number four at least.

POESHIE.—He blushed a fiery red; her heart went pit-a-pat; she gently hung her head, and looked down at the mat. He trembled in his speech; he rose from where he sat, and shouted with a screech, "You're sitting on my hat!"

SMOKING.—"My dear husband," said a devoted wife, "why will you not leave off smoking? It is such an odious practice, and makes your breath smell so!" "Yes," replied the husband, "but only consider the time I have devoted and the money I have spent to learn to smoke. If I should leave off now all that time and money would have been wasted, don't you see?"

BRINY TEARS.—An old woman sat on a bench in the Grand Trunk depot yesterday, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, when a portly man full of sympathy, said to another: "Tis sad to see the falling tear. It always makes my heart ache to see an aged person in trouble." Walking up to her he kindly asked: "My good woman, why these tears—why do you weep?" She took down the handkerchief, looked up in surprise, and bluntly answered: "I've got the wust cold in my head I've had for forty-six years."

VARIETIES.

PRINCE BLUCHER, son of the celebrated Field Marshal, died on March 8, at Radnau. He was 78 years of age.

FRANCE is the greatest wheat-producing country in the world. She produced in 1873, 332,209,000 bushels. The United States rank second, and Russia third.

ONE of the most famous sites of the festivity and benevolence of the metropolis is to be brought to the hammer some time in the month of May next—the historic London Tavern.

PIUS IX. says a Rome correspondent, is one of the readiest, one of the most fluent speakers of the day. Give him a text, and, with greater promptitude than the improvisatori can string verses together, he can pour forth on the moment a flood of eloquence. He is a born preacher, and, had his mission been to follow in the steps of Paul rather than those of Peter, he would rank among the first pulpit orators of the day.

A CURIOUS fact is noted by Prof. Hayden in his description of the Blue Range of mountains in Colorado. This is the discovery of vast quantities of dead grasshoppers on the masses of snow lying on the sides of these rugged mountains, where bears eagerly seek them for food. At certain seasons of the year, the Professor says, the air is filled with grasshoppers, apparently flying in every direction, to a height beyond human vision. It is probable, he thinks, that they become chilled in flying over these high peaks, and dropping on the snow, perish.

THE *Débats* publishes an interesting letter from Berlin setting forth that a new war even with France would not be popular with Germany. The Germans admit that France will not sit down quietly under her recent disasters. They know she will, some day, play double or quits: but still they have no desire to fight again. They say that if France and Germany do go to war again some third power will probably step in and reap the benefit. The writer says that what the Germans dread most is not a France with a good and stable Government, but a France handed over by the caprice of a man or to the nervous susceptibility of a woman. A stable Government would probably adopt a national policy, and be prudent; the other kind of Government would pursue a break-neck path, and the dogs of war would be let slip once more.

LITERARY.

MRS. H. B. STOWE is about to publish a new novel, entitled "We and Our Neighbours."

MR. THEODORE MARTIN, *on dit*, will succeed Sir A. Helps as Clerk of the Privy Council.

LONGFELLOW will deliver a poem at the Commencement at Bowdoin College this year, it being the fiftieth anniversary of his graduation from that institution.

It is understood that Carlyle, who has recently contributed to *Fraser*, the articles on the Norwegian kings, is engaged on a paper on John Knox for the same periodical.

MR. WILLIAM BLACK will contribute to the next number of the *Cornhill* the first instalment of a short story in which some of the characters of "The Princess of Thule" will reappear.

THE subscription open in Denmark for the erection of a statue to Hans Christian Andersen amounts already to 18,000 crowns. M. Andersen will attain his seventieth year on the 2nd of next month.

LONGFELLOW has almost ready for the press a translation of the "Niebelungen Lied" into verse, and a sacred tragedy—conceived in the spirit of his "Judas Maccabeus"—which extends to no less than fifteen acts.

It is said that when, some weeks ago, offering the Grand Cross of the Bath to Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Disraeli mentioned that it was Her Majesty's wish to confer a pension at the same time from the Civil List; but Mr. Carlyle declined both offers.

THE tombs of Molière and Lafontaine in the Cemetery of Père la Chaise in Paris have fallen into decay. The French Minister of Public Instruction has written to the Director of Fine Arts proposing instead of simply repairing them, that monuments be erected to these two poets.

THE literature of horrors is to be soon enriched by the publication of a work that has unaccountably hitherto escaped the keen eye of translator and book-maker, the *Memoirs of Sanson*, the hereditary French executioner, who officiated at the decapitation of Louis XVI. It is said that Sanson's son, who was also on the scaffold on the memorable 21st of January, had at the Restoration a secret interview with Louis XVIII., to whom he recounted minutely the death of the last French king. The *Memoirs* have become very rare, even in France. They are written in the turgid and vulgarly sentimental style of a philanthropist whom fate has condemned to officiate at the guillotine. Before he died, Sanson founded a perpetual anniversary mass for the repose of the soul of Louis XVI.