

The Toronto World

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THE PEOPLE'S CASE.

By their training and habits of thought, the judges have made the question mainly one of the guilt or innocence of Mr. Stratton. That was to be expected, and it was one of the objections to removing the case from the legislature. The judges have acquitted Mr. Stratton and condemned Mr. Gamey, and if there were no more in the case than a personal quarrel between Mr. Gamey and Mr. Stratton, the judgment might be accepted as final and conclusive. On public grounds, however, the fate of Mr. Gamey and Mr. Stratton is, perhaps, the least important of all the issues involved. The evidence has disclosed a state of affairs which no honest and intelligent citizen of Ontario can regard without misgivings, be he Liberal or Conservative, friendly to the accused or friendly to the accused.

A year ago we had a general election, one of those occasions on which a government is supposed to render an account of its stewardship to the people. No great issue being raised, the people rendered a doubtful verdict. On the whole, there was little more than a register of the party vote, a trial of strength between party names and traditions. The Province being equally divided on these lines, the verdict was doubtful. A majority of the popular vote was against the government, but it held office by a bare majority of the member-elect. Public opinion, having exhausted itself in a strictly party struggle, became powerless, and the heeler, spolieman, managers of saw-offs, political brokers and intriguers took the field. Their operations are partly disclosed in the evidence in the Gamey-Stratton enquiry.

Little is said about them by the judges, except as they bear on the guilt or innocence of Stratton and Gamey. We should have been glad of any helpful deliberation on that situation. But no judgment would have removed from the mind of the electors the sense of weakness and humiliation caused by these exposures.

All the talk about the "sovereign people" was turned into force, cant and humbug; a self-respecting man could not repeat the watchwords of democracy without a sensation of nausea. Sovereign people! Sovereign heeler; sovereign plotters and intriguers, using the Parliament Buildings for the transaction of their miserable business; sovereign lawyers sawing off one charge of corruption against another. By such means was it being decided how this province was to be ruled for four years. And we are told that on this great question discussion is to be closed by a judgment on the comparative merits and demerits of Mr. Gamey and Mr. Stratton.

We have said that there was no great public issue in the last election. By this we mean that there was no division of opinion on any public question. There was, however, a question of common honesty on which there ought to have been no division, and on which the government ought to have been condemned. This was the West Elgin carnival of crime, followed by the burning of the ballots. The electors ought not to have forgotten or condoned that offence, and Liberals ought to have joined in the condemnation. By allowing the matter to be pushed aside, they produced the virtual deadlock which once more gave power and importance to the heeler and bootlers, and made them, instead of the people, the arbiters between the two parties. The lesson is to get back to the principles of responsible government. Fight the political battle on great issues, such as will appeal to the judgment and conscience of the people. Hold the government, be it Liberal or Conservative, responsible for all the wrongdoing that occurs under it, and keep on defeating governments until the will of honest citizens is obeyed. If this be done, the time spent in the inquiry into the Gamey-Stratton charges will not be wasted.

MR. STRATTON ACQUITTED.

The discussion on the report of the Gamey-Stratton commission will, we

think, demonstrate the fallacy of the notion that political feeling could be eliminated from the case by removing it from the legislature. The removal was only temporary. The case remains, as it was, in the political arena, and the two parties will continue to take sides upon it. The friends of the government will make the best possible use of the judgment, as politicians must be expected to do, and as the opposition would have used a judgment against Mr. Stratton. The judgment will itself become a subject of controversy, and after being thoroughly threshed out by discussion, will have to stand upon its merits. It will not be accepted as final, and we do not suppose that any judgment would have been accepted as final. A political case cannot be made non-political by any device known to man, nor can it be removed from the real and final tribunal of public opinion. The judges have made a charge to the jury, and in the hands of the jury the case now rests. The jury will disagree, as all but the most fervent believers in judicial infallibility expect.

A few of the points of difference may be here indicated. Many persons will be unwilling to accept the judges' opinion that the evidence of Mr. Hammond was of no importance. Grave charges had been made in the legislature. The government had promised in the most solemn manner that they would be thoroughly investigated. Was it of no importance that Mr. Stratton, who was at once the accused person and a member of the Ministry that had given this solemn declaration, should ask a witness if he could not forget some parts of his evidence? The judgment does not destroy the impression created by the extraordinary manner in which the Globe interview was obtained, and the impression will still remain that this interview and its surrounding circumstances constitute an important piece of evidence.

The manner in which the question of patronage is dealt with will not put an end to discussion. It is quite true that governments are accustomed to give offices to the party friends, and to convert as well as to original supporters. That, however, does not prevent the charge that there was a bargain and sale of political support for patronage. Earl Grey, one of the authorities quoted by the commissioners, says:

"It is when men support measures or a party, which their judgment condemns, for the sake of office, or when they make appointments, knowing them to be wrong, from favor or to purchase political support, then their conduct is to be regarded as corrupt. The same action may, however, be best, and largely increase the credit of the Northwest, but not to increase taxation. I also guarantee my plan to provide all needed construction and branches, to be owned by the government, but without adding any cost to the people. I am prepared to meet the Railway Commission or Committee and prove the above."

Canada shall build its own next Pacific Railway and its eastern terminus must guarantee that the produce of the West shall go to the Pacific coast, and for fiscal reasons, for national reasons and for Imperial reasons, the government should safeguard the interests of our country that no public works should be undertaken, where an interest guaranteed, where an explicit declaration is not given that the acts and conduct of the government in Canada and to Canadian ports.

A. E. D.

ALAS! THE POOR DEPOSITORS.

Editor World: An item from Montreal under this head, giving an interview with the general manager of the Sovereign Bank, appears in your issue of this morning.

The moral Mr. Stewart wishes the public to draw from the Ames suspension is to put their money in chartered banks rather than in the hands of private individuals, however sound and reliable.

Good advice surely, but it savors rather of kicking a man when down, whereas in Toronto we are inclined to feel that the Sovereign Bank is in this connection it appears to me our banks do not appear in any too favorable a light.

Even now, instead of coming forward and helping the public they profess to have such sympathy for, they fold their arms around them and manifestly "It's none of our funeral."

For years past our banks have been sending their money to New York and other Yankee cities and withholding it from brokers and others here, and I think the public would be well advised whether we grant charters to our banks to assist our neighbors in such an invidious manner, or whether they are given with a view to assist business and build up our country.

Personally, I would rather lend my money to a reputable firm here than put it on deposit in a Canadian bank, in looking the fountain and source of evil in the Parliament Buildings, the Rev. Dr. Carman takes a different view from the Globe, which finds the germ in the Human Heart. There is doubtless a measure of truth in both explanations. The source of crime and wrongdoing of all kinds is to be found in the imperfections of human nature. The Rev. Dr. Carman and his brethren in the churches are entrusted with the duty of mitigating the evil on that side; but it is also found necessary to maintain courts, armies, policemen, parliaments, governments and other bodies to deal with human nature in its present imperfect form. If a burglar breaks into your house, steals your goods and slanders your protest with a pistol, it is poor consolation to be told that the heart of man is desperately wicked, and that the burglar is only manifesting, in an exaggerated form, the human imperfections which you share. We have certain specific remedies for these specific evils, such as jails for burglars.

The specific remedy for political evil, such as Dr. Carman complains of, is the removal of the ministry under which the evil is committed. It is practical, mild, and on the whole efficacious. It is the remedy indicated by the party system, under which we are governed. It is the remedy involved in the term "responsible government." It is not essential to the working of this system that an opposition should be free from human imperfection. It simply means that when things become intolerably bad under the domination of one party, the other party must be called in, and must be judged and dealt with in exactly the same way. If it does wrong it must also be turned out of office, and

so on until a reasonably good government is found. This is party government at least, it is the only way in which party government can be made to serve the ends of the public. There is very little use in general denunciations of public men, unless those who denounce are ready to apply the remedy. The facts brought out in the Gamey-Stratton case, the deal by which Cap. Sullivan and his government official made \$8000 out of public property, the intrigues in the Parliament Buildings, all go to show that the present ministry has outlived its usefulness and that the remedy furnished by the constitution ought to be applied.

A GOVERNMENT PACIFIC RAILROAD.

Editor World: The most reasonable and rational policy now for the Dominion government in regard to transcontinental railway construction is to continue and complete the Intercolonial as soon as possible, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and make it the Intercolonial Pacific railway.

Let Canadians, irrespective of Province and irrespective of party, look at the present situation in the light of an illustration, in a border city in the United States, some years ago, the authorities decided to light the city by means of a large number of high iron towers, with from three to five large lights upon each. The said towers to be erected about every three or four crossings through the city. The plan was signed and in time fulfilled; towards the end of the term the same plan was put into operation. The city was then called for, and finally let to another party. When I was in the city last there were two systems of expensive towers erected in opposite corners of the crossroads. The city had paid for two systems of towers, wires, with iron towers to five large lights upon each. The said towers to be erected about every three or four crossings through the city. The plan was signed and in time fulfilled; towards the end of the term the same plan was put into operation. 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