

to this phase of the question would perhaps explain how groundless are any criticisms that are directed against so-called sectionalism."

"Well," he said, "somebody got under his belt."

"Ponderous tommyrot, anyway. But that's a very absurd argument. The B.N.A. gave to the provinces certain representative rights. Of course it did. But it never intended that the member for Great Bear Lake, if we ever get one, should spend the time of the Commons in telling the member for Cod Co., N.S., how the Yellow-Knives keep huskie dogs from chewing shaganappi for breakfast. Parliament has no time to be a session of the Royal Geographical Society. I hope we have departmental experts who can look after all these local colour questions."

Ibbotson read again from the same letter:

"Under our system, that of party government, a private member has little influence to initiate legislation. As a matter of fact, in these days particularly, it is impossible for a member—I care not what his measure of ability may be—to succeed with any measure of legislation for the advancement of social or other conditions without enlisting the initiative of the government. In the first place, a member introduces a bill in the nature of a reform measure. He cannot even have it considered unless the dominant party permits it. True, he can introduce it, but there are methods to sidetrack it should it prove to be an embarrassing subject to the Government, and these methods are not infrequently resorted to."

"What's your opinion about that, Mr. Ibbotson?"

"The worst of it is—it's true. That's why some of us begin to think that party government is a menace to the country."

"What would you substitute?"

"Business administration; the referendum; the dominance of ideas; election of men who don't represent a party that changes its front every time

there's a new set of conditions, but men who stand for certain measures of national administration that are well known to the people independent of party. I admit there must be division of opinion. But that's only useful to the country when it concerns public matters. For instance, the Naval Aid Bill never should have been a party measure; neither should Home Rule in Ireland. These are problems that develop clear outside of a party altogether. It's asinine to claim, for instance, that the Tory party in Canada has ever had or ever can have anything like a monopoly of Imperial sentiment. Both parties know how to wave the old flag in an election if they consider the old flag a good vote-producer. They've both done it. Both parties believe in getting the goodwill of the farmers, and if the Conservatives to-day could square free implements with the anti-reciprocity wave that put them in power in 1911—do you think they wouldn't consider it?"

"But there is no need. The Liberals have already declared for free implements."

"WELL enough. But when in power they didn't move very fast in that direction. I'll admit they reduced the tariff on implements. But even the Conservatives would have come to that as a matter of party policy."

"Besides," Ibbotson added as his eye caught another soul-searching passage in the letter, "there are loads of questions upon which there never can be any really sensible difference of opinion except in the details of working them out. I mentioned some of them in my unfortunate speech. There are others. Now, here's a real illuminative passage that sums up the whole situation in this country so far as it concerns people and parliament."

He read with considerable emphasis:

"There is a necessity in Canada to-day for progressive and advanced legislation, and I assume that the Government, if they felt that the people were demanding action, would take it

The truth is, there is a singular lack of public spirit and conscience throughout the whole breadth of our land, and it seems to me this lack is growing more noticeable year by year."

"Now," he concluded, pointing impressively at the tip of my nose, "how in the name of patriotism, whatever that is, can this country ever get a national conscience without a parliamentary conscience? If the men who, because of their public and personal fitness, are chosen to represent the people can't as a community on Parliament Hill develop such a conscience, how can they expect a heterogeneous community scattered over thousands of miles under all sorts of conditions to do it?"

"Parliament is an index, you say? So it is. But for half a century almost Canada has been sending men to Parliament as party representatives. Hundreds of these men have been the best men in Canada. Is it likely that all they have said and done in the best of fifty years, no matter what degradation may have been going on in the country and the party, has left no mark on Parliament to make it not only represent the country, but also to conserve the best elements of our national life for the good of the people?"

"No, the House of Commons is not merely a barometer of public opinion. If Parliament as a whole believed the dangerous doctrine that it has no power to initiate reform in the interests of the people, it should step down and out. And it's only because some members—and too often it's some of the wisest and most experienced—believe that under a party system no private member should initiate a reform measure off his own bat; that they also believe, very logically, that a party has no right to inaugurate a reform unless people ask for it."

Having said which and some more, but not for publication, Isaac Ibbotson gathered in his overshoes and buttoned up his Sparks St. overcoat to go back to Parliament Hill.

A Fine Winter Picture of a Clever Out-of-Doors Artist



C. W. Jefferys, President for the second year of the Ontario Society of Artists, has had his crack at the snow-painting problem in this picture, "A Winter Afternoon." He has done it with the shrewd sense of a man who has spent a long while getting the value of colour and form and distance out-of-doors. This picture was got from the top of a high hill north of Toronto. It has all the qualities of contrast, fine composition, clever handling of great distance, effects of snow shadows and play of lights that characterize the best work of this essentially out-of-doors painter. The effect is a cold feeling of immensity resembling a solitude, yet inhabited by man.