

THROUGH A MONOCLE

PARLIAMENT MEETS.

THE new Parliament is getting seriously down to business at last. The short end of the session—which some incurable “grafters” wanted to regard as a whole session with a whole sessional indemnity—which we had before Christmas, simply served to get us accustomed to seeing the leaders in their new positions, and to become aware of the fact that some new faces had appeared in the background. A few of the leaders are new to Ottawa, of course, but not to our political life. One of the advantages of the man who does not go to Ottawa, is that he can see our politics large—can take a national view of it—can watch men in the Provincial as well as the Federal field. Too many good men suffer from shortness of vision as soon as they get fixed at Ottawa. They cannot, for the life of them, see beyond the limits of the two Parliamentary Chambers. Parliament Hill becomes Canada to them; and, when they think of either party, they think only of the hundred odd men who sit in the House of Commons. Even the Senators are allowed little more than an honorary membership.

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NOW the Parliamentary parties are the smallest part and the least influential section of those two great organizations which divide our politics between them. You may think it heresy to say so, but there are more big men—yes, big party men—outside Parliament than inside its walls. Even so staunch a Parliament man as Mr. Borden recognized this fact when he brought in three of his best Ministers from the Provincial arena. Sir Wilfrid Laurier did the same thing when he formed his first Cabinet, by summoning to his side Sir Oliver Mowat, Mr. Fielding, Mr. Sifton and Mr. Blair. Then, as for the great mass of Independents who find harness irksome and make exceedingly poor material for the daily use of Parliament, they can turn a general election; but they would be hard put to it to command a single vote on the floor of the House. Except in support of a definite issue, Independence cannot very well organize, and so cannot become a factor in Parliament—unless there be parliamentarians shrewd enough to see the wisdom of winning the confidence of men whose confidence is vital on election day.

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IN any case, the new Parliament—whether or not it be less self-centred than its predecessors—now gets to work. We are told that by dint of arduous and continuous sittings the Cabinet have got their “estimates” ready; and we know that certain of the Ministers have been swinging the “axe” with a will. Thanks to the Civil Service Commission, the shadow of the “axe” has not frightened as many households as might otherwise have trembled. But it would be idle to pretend that this new Government has not permitted some of its members to feast upon such “spoils” as they could reach without waiting for their appetites to stale. We hear of “patronage societies” already; and we see the holders of the most pitiful jobs marched out to execution in line. In this matter, there has been a marked difference between different Ministers; but it is surely a subject on which the Cabinet as a whole might feel some collective responsibility. It is a poor business for a great Government, raised to power on a majestic wave of patriotic feeling, to chivy helpless workmen out of their starling jobs.

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SEVERAL big questions await the initiative of the Ministry. The worst is now known about that colossal bungle—the Fisher census—and the Ministry cannot long put off the plain duty of giving the West its just representation in Parliament. Parliament dissolved on what was properly the eve of a new redistribution of the constituencies; and this fact has not been dispelled by the disappearance of the Government responsible for it. No one imagines that this new Parliament can run out its natural term. That would be flagrantly unfair to the West—and growing more unfair every year. Yet no one will ask this new House to dissolve before it has had an opportunity to put its policy in order and present an intelligible programme to the people. If the Government is wise, the redistribution which it makes will form no part of that programme. What I mean is that it should be so obviously fair and just that it will not be an issue at the elections which must follow it. This Government could do

worse than establish an independent body, wholly outside of Parliament and outside of politics, whose duty it would be to properly redistribute the constituencies.

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THE Naval Issue is, perhaps, the one most in men's minds. I know what the COURIER thinks about the navy; and no one can say that you have not fought for your convictions with vigour and courage and yet with “a sweet reasonableness” that must have made you many friends. I hope that you will keep up the fight, at all events so far as to insist upon immediate and effective naval action of some sort. Parliament must not be allowed to play with this question. The issues at stake are too momentous, the menaces which call for action are too imminent, the patriotism of our people is too fervent and profound, for Canada of all British countries to be found wanting when “Der Tag” dawns. As far as politics go, neither party is in a very good position on this question. Both have had and will have their difficulties. It is not for any of

THE WOES OF A TORY M.P.

By A TORY M.P.

THROUGH hearing the conversation of seasoned politicians, I long ago came to the conclusion that both political parties in Canada are everlastingly fighting for something they do not want. Ask members of parliament on the right of Mr. Speaker, and they will tell you their lives are blighted by the curse of patronage. Ask members who were on the right but are now on the left of Mr. Speaker, and they will tell you that the change is delightful—they are no longer harassed by the importunities of place-hunters—their life is one of blissful rest made all the more enjoyable by being able to sit back and revel in the luxury of seeing the hated enemy worried by the same cares and vexations that once afflicted them. But wait until the next election campaign comes on and you will see the honourable gentlemen to the right of Mr. Speaker moving heaven and earth to remain in power to be still further afflicted with the perplexities that now make life a burden. You will see, too, the honourable gentlemen to the left of Mr. Speaker “tearing passion to tatters” in the hope of dislodging the enemy and taking upon themselves again the petty vexations that they professed to have rejoiced in escaping. Each side clamouring for what it does not want.

Undoubtedly patronage is a curse to any political party, and the party in power should have the prerogative of saddling upon the defeated party the burden of filling the offices. That should be one of the penalties that the conquerors should be privileged to impose upon the subjugated. But it cannot be. The winning of victory carries with it responsibility—not surcease of responsibility with its concomitant sorrows. The burden cannot be shifted from the shoulders of the conquerors. Some one whom the people of a constituency can get even with must be accountable for the appointments as well as the policies of the conquerors. That responsibility cannot be lightly thrown upon a civil service or any other commission. The people won't stand for it. No matter how independent and non-partisan it may be, the party in power cannot escape responsibility for its acts. The patriots who fought the battles of the party for forty years are not to be set aside in that way. Why should they spend their time and money and drive their horses to death, election after election, if the spoils are to go to men who entered the service recently or, for that matter, worked against the grand old party that saved the country in many a crisis? No sir. The man they elected cannot evade responsibility by any such makeshift. He cannot escape punishment at the next election for appointments which he had no hand in making. The workers in the vineyard are not to be deprived of their rewards by any such sham or delusion as a non-partisan commission.

THEREFORE the present system must hold; members of parliament or defeated candidates representative of the government are intensely human, and the first law of their nature is self-preservation. None of them care to go down in the battle, victims to a new system not understood by the people. They know they will have the name and

us to “shoot out the lip” at any one else. Let us not dwell upon our differences; and let us, above all things, keep clear of the odious treason of trying to snatch a political advantage from the differences of others over this problem which is presented to budding Canada on the hard conditions of the question of the Sphinx—We must solve it or we must die.

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AS for measures of material progress, the Government will, of course, go ahead. “Full steam ahead” must, indeed, be the signal now for every Canadian enterprise. Population is flowing in on us faster than we can handle it—wheat is being grown on the prairies faster than we can market it—industries are springing up on all sides—our lure of virgin natural opportunity has dazzled and then drawn the entire world. In my opinion, there is more danger of Parliament spending too little than spending too much. This is no time to be niggardly. The presumption should be always in favour of every promising enterprise which goes to Parliament asking for encouragement. The question should not be—Can we afford it?—but—Can we afford to miss it? Of course, fraudulent and foolish schemes must be exposed and exploded. We need not “plunge.” But we must go upon the theory that we have lots of money, and that this is our supreme opportunity to invest.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

they, therefore, by way of compensation, demand the game.

Here at Ottawa, members of the Conservative persuasion nod silent but hopeless assent to the principle of non-partisan appointments, but recognize that it is a condition, not a theory, that confronts them. The question with them is “what will they say at home.” No matter who makes the appointment, only one man will be blamed and that man is the member supporting the government from the constituency affected. They would unfeignedly rejoice in being rid of the whole business, but their constituencies will not acquit them, and so they are now engaged in the bloody task of cutting off heads and the thankless task of putting new heads where the old ones were. Questions of national moment take second place. The press may talk of the navy and the tariff as setting the government party by the ears. Be not mistaken. The thing that worries them most is patronage. Life at Ottawa for them would be one continued round of pleasure if only “la marine” and the tariff engaged their attention.

Who wants offices? Well, you would be surprised if you knew them and the offices they wanted. Sir James Whitney stated in 1905 that office-seekers had an idea that all he had to do was to reach up to a pigeon-hole and pull out the offices which they demanded. His federal colleague from Dundas, the gentle, humorous story-teller, Andrew Broder, put it up to a man who asked for a job.

“Yes, I can give you a job,” said Andy, “but it means long hours and hard work.”

“Well, I'm used to that. What job is it?”

“Getting a job for all the men who want them.”

“But I can't do that,” said he.

“Neither can I,” said Andy.

STRANGE it is that in these days when the rewards of independent action and industry are so great, that strong, lusty men should be willing to tie themselves up to “government jobs,” which means generally the deadly routine of office work, sometimes purely mechanical, oftentimes with slim chances of promotion. But the desire for “government jobs” is a public craze. Probably the limit was reached when a member received a letter from an inmate of a penitentiary asking first for a release and secondly for a government office. There is a man who does not know when he is well off. Already in the service of the government, he pesters the government for other service.

One word in behalf of the party that is accused of a bloodthirsty desire to chop off heads. There is not a member of parliament here who likes the business of headsman. If he asks for the head of an official, it is generally because the party in his constituency demands it, and if they demand it depend upon it some blame attaches to the official. Speaking of my own particular constituency, I can say that there are several Liberal office-holders whose heads not one solitary Conservative has demanded. They are men who gave up political activity just so soon as they obtained public offices. There are others who were not quite so wise, men who never dreamed apparently that there was any