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About Men and Things

And Public Men in Particular.

(By SCRUTATOR.)

Nature heal o'er head, and, holding the sun take its last look at scenes of plenty and prosperity in poor old Terra Nova. Our fall from bounding wealth and unlimited resources to pinched and shrunken poverty and cowering bankruptcy is as certain and as fatal under our present wasteful policy as the fall of Lucifer, the morning star, from heaven. And the exclamation of the laborer, as he tolls in the rock-ash and elsewhere, in a hopeless bondage to the public debt, may be as despairing as the anguish of the lost angel.

IN THE LURID LIGHT OF THE PAST.

Let us hope, however, that, in cleaning up the present political swamp, we are entering upon a new phase. The present pioneering, colonizing, and liberating has passed; that of administering has opened. In the lurid light of the past, the new task is one that is more congenial to the Anglo-Celtic temperament. For if it be true that "there is a Drake or a Captain John Smith in each one of us," it is also true that there is an Alfred the Great or a George Washington. Always on the heels of the colonizer has followed the Governor and often the colonizer became the Governor. In line

with tradition, then, it is not logical that the present time should see a quickening of interest in politics on the part of right-minded people, especially those who find themselves in the midst of unscrupulous and dishonest elements? An examination of the patronymics of those who compose our Assemblies, our Bar, and our Pulpits, would be enlightening, if not startling, to the lovers of our traditions.

UNFIT FOR THE POSITIONS THEY OCCUPY.

We have "fallen upon perilous times." Practically we must look to the future; and here the present generation can do much. Let there be a conscious education of the coming generation for leadership. That is the only thing that will save the situation. Two many of our present "leaders" have been weighed in the balance and found morally and in every other respect utterly unfit for the positions they occupy. Politics, the professions, diplomacy, call for the peculiar quality of leadership we had during the second half of the last century. Propaganda is not the way; that is a method that repels cultivated sensibilities and defeats its own ends. Rather there must be a rebirth of interest, all along the line, that shall evolve a natural body of leadership in the days to come. Impartial administration of Anglo-Celtic principles by Anglo-Celts, or those who have assimilated the spirit, will save the situation. It is the traditional way. In the present critical age we must train to save what we have gained.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN A DEPLORABLE CONDITION.

Ever since 1903 the public affairs of the colony have been in a deplorable condition, going from bad to worse all the time. It is, therefore, impossible to fix the entire responsibility upon the present administration, or its immediate predecessor. The greater responsibility rests with those who have created the confusion which successive administrations have been tinkering with and merely pretending to remedy. Whatever attempts at stabilization might be made, it was always more doubtful what permanence they would achieve apart from a settlement of the question of ways and means.

IN VIEW OF RECENT REVELATIONS.

Most of us to-day, in view of recent revelations, have scant admiration for the party system of Government. Its crass excesses and blind habits contributed to bring immeasurable disaster on our time. "We see," says one of the keenest observers in the realm of journalism here to-day, "good and bad in all parties. In each of them we see elements of truth; in each some of the falsehood and pretence of a whole universe soaked in lies since the World War." How can educated persons allow themselves to be made

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the marionettes of any capricious and abdicating judgment of particular situations, questions, and persons? That is a thing which has always baffled the critical mind. Less than ever do we admire party competition in the present triplicity. Denying the right of the pot and kettle to monopolize the whole kitchen by their mutual enmities, the new-fangled pan romps in—deriding the seasoned smut of the other two, and claiming to be the superior utensil.

"WHERE ARE WE AND WHITHER TENDING?"

The people of Newfoundland to-day are taxed more heavily than ever before in their history—so heavily, indeed, that the Government are leaving no reserves for any emergency that might arise. And there appears to be no prospect of any alleviation of the burden, for almost every day fresh schemes are launched from the departments of the public service, which entail not only immediate additions of staffs and new financial outlays, but the certainty of an increase of liability as the years go on. The cost of living is becoming a nightmare to many of the population. There never was a time when public rearmament was more urgent, especially in the interests of those whose margin of income over bare necessities is slender and insufficient.

TAXPAYERS' MONEY POURED OUT LIKE WATER.

The proportion of Government expenditure to domestic income is several times as great as it was before the war, which means that a far smaller proportion of that income is available for provision for old age, for savings and business enterprise, irrespective of all those with fixed incomes having insufficient margins for food, clothes and rent. The Government appear to be quite unconscious of this. Week by week, month by month, the taxpayers' money is poured out like water in schemes which appear to have merit, but which the country cannot afford. That the Government believe they are acting for the general good, I do not deny; but they seem to be convinced that their mission in office is to think out how they can spend the public money on vast projects regardless of results. This very fact lies at the root of the whole difficulty. With this attitude of mind it is hopeless to expect that any serious curtailment of expenditure will be undertaken.

NO HOPE FOR CURE EXCEPT IN THE CONSTITUENCIES.

To my mind, there is no cure for the present state of affairs except in the constituencies. Deliberations of committees of the Legislature, without effective power, are mere waste of time. The only hope lies in the sound judgment and good sense of the electors. They alone have the power to insist that a halt should be called to the policy of prodigality that is draining the colony's resources and the colony's power. With this conviction, let the leading citizens form themselves into a committee for the purpose of promoting the views here expressed. The joint action and influence of all the forces that hold public economy to be one of the most crying necessities of the hour will have to be used if agitation is to be effective and ultimate success achieved. The situation is very grave. Delay may be fatal. It is with confidence I appeal to the public in this alarming crisis. As Edmund Burke says: "When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle."

THE COLONY'S DEBT AND DIFFICULTIES.

The Newfoundland constitution provides that the budget or tax revenues of the island shall be sufficient not only to pay current expenses of the Government, but also to pay interest on the public debt and to provide for a reasonable sinking fund for the amortization or discharge of the public debt. Or to put it in another way, Parliament is bound to see that the Government of the Colony is so economically and efficiently administered that the interest and principal of its public debt is properly taken care of. This provision has been habitually violated by inefficiency or graft,

whichever way you choose to put it, of successive Newfoundland Governments since 1903. During the great boom here from 1914 to 1918, when the revenues of Newfoundland were the largest in its history, the Newfoundland Government rolled up unpaid obligations of sixty million dollars.

ACCUSATIONS OF MISGOVERNMENT.

It is a fact that accusations of misgovernment are made not only by the Imperial authorities, but by the Newfoundlanders themselves. Not very long since a St. John's newspaper openly accused an ex-Prime Minister of taking a bribe of a quarter of a million dollars to "put through" certain contracts that were of importance to interests which I need not directly mention here. The powers that be know all about these things, yet nothing has been done, to punish grafters or make them deliver up the money plundered from the public treasury. Under such circumstances, is it any wonder that the whole public service has become demoralized and the word "Premier" a synonym for corruption and fraud?

THE RIGHT AND DUTY OF THE PEOPLE.

Let me say, in conclusion, that, when parties become subversive of the ends for which they are established, or incapable of restoring the Government to the principles of the constitution, it is the right and duty of the people to dissolve the political bonds by which they have been connected therewith, and to organize new parties upon such principles and with such view as the circumstances and the exigencies of the country may demand.

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Work for a Million Men

WONDERFUL POSSIBILITIES OF BRITAIN'S WASTED WATERWAYS.

To the average Briton the word "Canal" conjures up a vision of a low-rope, a lagging horse shod by a slower donkey, and a shouting, bow-legged, stick-whittling lad whose mother sits on the helm of a barge with a baby on one arm and a half-drowned stocking on the other.

During the last eighty years our canals have fallen largely into disuse. In many instances they have fallen into actual decay. Yet, strange to say, during the last forty years or so France has expended something like one hundred and twenty millions sterling on her internal waterways. Her canals interconnect all her chief rivers. It is easily possible to penetrate into the remotest districts without resorting once to road or rail. On the Continent there are canals capable of floating barges with a carrying capacity of over a thousand tons, whereas the biggest barge we possess is hard put to it to carry sixty tons.

The Way To Cheap Food.

Moreover, we possess less than 200 miles of artificial waterways capable of taking a barge of even sixty tons; whilst, of a total canal mileage of some 4,000 miles, half will take a boat of sixty tons, and the other half bulk at anything exceeding twenty! Is transport so cheap in this country that we can afford to give our water transport possibilities the cold shoulder? Ask the farmer or market gardener. He finds that unless his farm or garden is close to a "big town," food-stuffs from Denmark, Holland, France, and even from America and the Argentine can be run up the Thames, Mersey, Clyde, or Humber as cheaply and often expeditiously as he can transport them to the same town by rail. In other words, he finds that foreign produce can undercut him because it has been transported by water and not by land. Give our farmer the same chance—cheap, expeditious, reliable transport, and the balance will turn in his favor. A quickened market will produce a quickened and increased supply, which will not only benefit the farmer but increase the security of ourselves and our posterity. At the same time, a cheapened

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transport will reduce the price of foodstuffs.

What, then, should be our policy during these times, when we hear so much talk about "work of national utility" which will prove a paying national investment when better days come round?

This, to deepen and widen our existing canals; to construct new trunk canals linking up all our rivers and great ports; the reconstruction of existing canal docks and the construction of many others; the establishment of convenient delivery stations, quays, subsidiary waterways or backwaters linking up remote agricultural districts with the main waterways; the enlarging of all existing locks; the widening of bridges—in short, such a transformation of existing conditions that a farmer's possession of a fleet of barges to carry hay, corn, potatoes, fruit, dairy produce, fodder, and so on, to and from canal stations, will be as such a matter of course as his present possession of half a dozen wagons.

Have we so little imagination that we fail to see this country intersected by thousands of miles of canals, on which ply roomy barges, clipper built, linked to a wire which stretches on and on endlessly, alive with electrical energy, typical of the new electric forces of an awakened people?

These electrically propelled barges will enter and leave hydraulically controlled locks which a child can manipulate take mountains in their stride, cross rivers by fine aqueducts, skirt every town en route, and establish there docks, wharves and warehouses which will give the most inland place a handshake with the ocean and the whole earth.

Fads and Fashions.

A loose, short cape effect is used for the front and back of the waist of a crepe-afternoon gown.

Very little cut-out work is used on the new pumps which have practically displaced the sandal.

A beltless evening gown of pinkish tan velvet has its yoke and circular sounce stamped with gold.

A hat of green Milan is faced with black duvetyne and trimmed with a twisted roll of gold ribbon.

Bias bands of green and beige plaid flannel are used in trimming a one piece frock of green flannel.

A large black hat of horsehair is trimmed across the back with flat white gardenias and green leaves.

Such shades as blotting-paper pink, cobalt blue, and greens are favored for the new light topcoats.

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