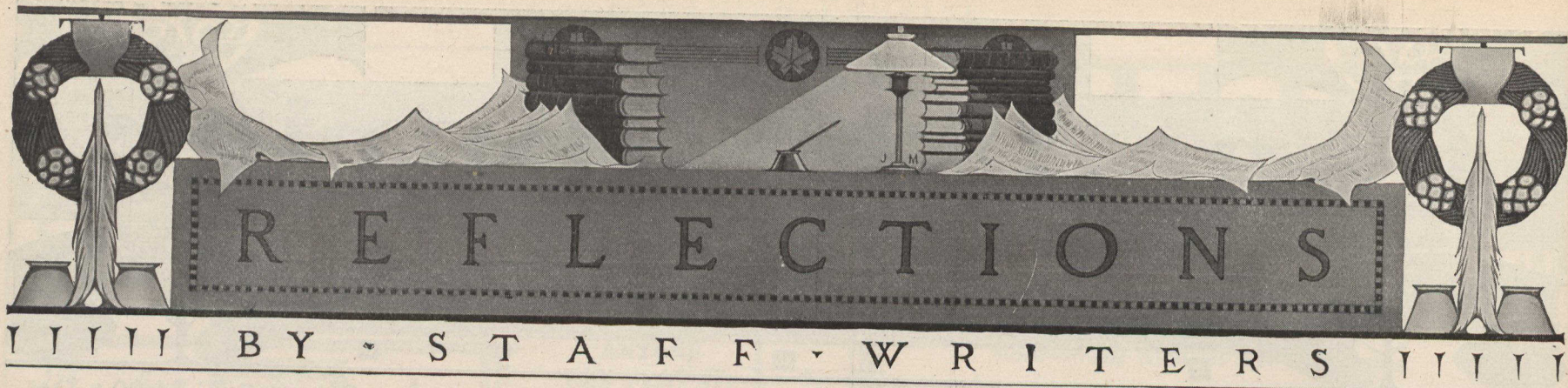




THE NORTHERN TRADE ROUTE

THAT much-discussed question of a northern trade route to Liverpool, via Hudson Bay, a twin of the successful St. Lawrence route, is receiving more attention. If its difficulties can be overcome, and even a limited use made possible, Canada stands to gain a great deal. There is little wisdom in the attitude taken by such men as Mr. J. H. Plummer who, in a recent interview in London, condemned the route as "commercially impracticable." This is only a relative term. What is commercially impracticable to-day is quite possible to-morrow. No doubt there are great difficulties in the way. It has been repeatedly declared in the last century that the St. Lawrence route was impracticable for fast vessels. Yet it looks as if the experiences with the Empresses, the Victorian and the Virginian were likely to lead to twenty-knot boats being put upon the Liverpool-Montreal route. Already passengers from the United States are taking the St. Lawrence route in preference to the New York route and its freight traffic is expanding with great rapidity.

There are several problems to be solved before the Hudson Bay route is a factor in Canadian transportation, but the problems are neither so numerous nor so forbidding as they once were. It has been proved that steel tramp steamers may safely essay Hudson Strait, without the assistance of adequate charts or light-houses, for several months in the year. It is but reasonable to conclude that further experience, the improvements in the charting, and the building of light-houses will extend the period of navigation in these never-frozen waters.

The question of a suitable harbour is another problem. Without ice-breakers to keep the entrance and channel open, Churchill is possible only to November 1st. A harbour on the west side of the Nelson, near its mouth, may be feasible. Last year, the Nelson did not freeze over above Seal Island until January 10th, owing to the rapidity of the current. Below Seal Island, which is more than twenty miles from the mouth of the river, there is seldom or never a complete freeze-over. The current, the tide and the salt water prevent it. The only features which present difficulty are the low, shelving shore and the enormous and constant silt depositing. Yet these are not insurmountable.

The bugaboos of the Hudson Bay Route are steadily decreasing in number. They may never all vanish, but it is just possible that those which remain will not prevent the limited use of that outlet for the products of central Canada. If people were to be frightened away by bugaboos, then Canada would have remained forever a barren and inhospitable waste, fit only to be the habitation of buffalo, caribou, musk-ox and polar bears.

POLITICAL DEGENERACY

OUT in the West, elections are much the same as in the East. The two parties fight out their differences in a manner equally enthusiastic and equally crude. The present contest in Saskatchewan is characteristic. The Premier started off his campaign by charging that the Opposition candidate in Regina has been guilty of misconduct while in municipal life. The *Winnipeg Telegram*, the leading Conservative paper so far as Western politics are concerned, states that he used language "that would be more suited to the tongue of a Tammany thug than to the Premier of a Canadian province." The Premier's conduct and language may have been bad, but no one will accuse the *Telegram* of setting him a good example. Again, it speaks of "the resources which have been stolen from it [Saskatchewan] through the treachery of the Hon. Walter Scott."

Not only does the language on both sides betray all the absence of dignity which distinguishes Canadian elections, but the attitude of the people shows a complete lack of confidence in the rulers of the day, no matter what their political name may be. A despatch from

Moose Jaw declares that the Opposition, "as in 1905, will take every pains to see that the election is not stolen. Three years ago an armed guard stood watch over the ballots at the city hall night and day for two weeks. The same precaution will be taken this year." How low we have fallen, when we cannot trust each other to preserve even the sanctity of the ballot! Are we really any better than New York or St. Petersburg?

Again, the Opposition members from Ottawa are going about the country talking of the "carnival of graft," of "fake and bogus homesteading," and accusing all and sundry members of the government, past and present, with dishonorable conduct. In the Province of Quebec, the Hon. Jean Prevost, lately member of the Gouin cabinet, is accusing the Premier of improper conduct and promises to drive him out of public life within six months. In New Brunswick, there has been a fairly successful effort to prove that leading ex-statesmen were guilty of using public funds for private purposes.

The whole political panorama gives one the impression that our political standards are extremely low and that the language of our public discussions has fallen to the same level. It would seem as if public honesty and integrity had largely vanished from our midst, and that public discussion of political principles had been displaced almost entirely by an exchange of Billingsgate language which is disgusting and debasing.

If some means are not adopted looking to better political conditions, the result must be a still further recession from public integrity and public dignity. If all our public men are to be called thieves, then only thieves will remain in public life. Surely, it would be possible on the part of publicists and journalists to raise the discussion of political questions to a higher level by concerted action. Surely also, there are enough strong, pure men in public life to make a distinct effort to eliminate crookedness from electoral campaigns and departmental administration. If Canada is to attain that greatness which seems to be awaiting her, there must be a speedy and radical change in political conditions.

AMBITION AND ABILITY

CANADIAN municipalities, like many individual citizens, have sometimes more ambition than ability. Strange as it may seem, the larger the city the less the ability. At least twice recently, some one ventured to show that Winnipeg's system of bookkeeping was faulty in some important features. In Montreal, a foreman is accused of padding pay-sheets, and drawing money for names which did not represent employees. In Toronto, it has been shown that the system of bookkeeping is old-fashioned, the system of auditing practically useless, and that the municipal statistics are quite unreliable.

In the matter of water-rates, it is being shown that the Toronto rates (other than metre rates) are quite inadequate and that a readjustment must be made. Bad bookkeeping has been the cause of the trouble. In Montreal, on the other hand, bad bookkeeping has kept the rates too high. Recently these have been reduced but only after a five-years' agitation. On a rental of \$300 a year in 1907 a householder paid \$22.50 for water; now he pays \$15.00. In Toronto, on the same rental, the householder would pay from \$5 to \$8 according to the number of taps and persons in his house. No doubt these Toronto rates are too low; and it is well known that the system of inspection is inadequate and that many users pay only one-half what they should pay.

In the matter of street management the cities are equally careless. The work done in Montreal and Toronto by the various contractors is seldom up to specifications. In neither city is the city engineer's office as efficient as a similar office would be under private control. The writer was told of a case where an inspector was warned by a householder that a new roadway was being scamped. The com-