

The Commercial

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CHAMELEONIC POLITICS.

To those who last week listened to the eloquent speech of the Minister of Marine and Fisheries at the banquet tendered him by friends in Winnipeg, it must have seemed very clear, that the policy of the present Dominion Government was summed up in the one phrase "The unity of Canada." The gentleman laid down in the clearest and most unmistakable language this work of unification of the provinces in Confederation, and the linking them together by rail as the Alpha and Omega of all the efforts of the Government of which he was a member. He was most emphatic upon this point, dealing in his argument only with a few of the objections against confederation, and any one who listened to his unswerving argument and fine elocutionary powers, might be pardoned if he expected that in every election struggle, Canadian unity would be the only cry uttered by the supporters of the Government, and that only from the opposition could be expected efforts to stir up among citizens of the Dominion the prejudices of race and religion, and other subjects not at all in keeping with a policy of unity.

After dinner speeches are as a rule not taken to mean much, although they are invariably very pleasant utterances, and we may safely say so of Hon. Mr. Foster's at last week's banquet, when we look over the Dominion and view the different influences which are being brought to bear by supporters of both Government and opposition to assist them in the elections next year.

In the Maritime provinces the Government are struggling to make the blue-nose voter believe, that in a trade and traffic way he is a great gainer by confederation, and the perverse voter seems rather slow to believe it. In these provinces only does the Government stand squarely on its policy of Canadian unity, and the results of next year's elections there, will furnish the clearest testimony of the people for or against that policy, to be had in any portion of the Dominion. The fact that the Hon. Mr. Foster, is a New Brunswicker, and representing a constituency there, has doubtless much to do with the view he takes of the Govern-

ment policy, and will impress an un-biassed mind with the belief that his statements are thoroughly honest ones.

When the Maritime provinces are left and Quebec is entered into, the influences at work in politics change completely. Here religious and race prejudices come into play, and the Government find great difficulty in hushing the feelings of that nature which the execution of the leader of the late rebellion in the Northwest has stirred up, and their only chance of so doing lies in conciliating and securing the support of the leading clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus the province which is always demanding the biggest spoon in the confederation pie, has this time to receive extra a dose of religious syrup to coax its support.

But when we enter Ontario the tactics of the Government are changed, not that the pandering to race and religious prejudices are dropped; for, on the contrary, the effort to stir them up is greater, only the weight is thrown on the opposite side, and in an isolated election contest just decided, the organs of the Government were appealing to the most intense feelings of the Orange element, and calling for support against the alleged aggression of French Catholicism in Quebec. They were so to speak, encouraging their supporters with the strains of the "Boyne Water," and exultingly echoing the old cry of "Derry walls and no surrender." They were nursing the same spirit which is found a ready element of discord in Ireland, and in their policy of Canadian unity arraying Ontario Orangeism against the most bigoted section of Quebec Catholicism. Such a method of reaching unity is a curious one, but it may, like the eccentricities of Teddy O'Rourke when personating the learned tutor, be only a part of a system; but, like Teddy's system it has a strange manner of working.

As already stated, we do not question Mr. Foster's honesty, when he places Canadian unity as the great aim of himself in politics; but we fear his colleagues have many other aims inseparably tangled up with it, and it is to be feared that the greatest aim of the whole party at present is to insure to themselves another lease of power at the general elections next year.

But the question arises, what treatment is Manitoba to receive in this curious system with the unity aim? Mr. Foster was wisely silent upon that point,

and confined his promises to his own departmental affairs regarding changes in our fishery regulations. Doubtless he deemed it wise to keep silent, for his chieftain had two weeks previously spoken to the point, and in a flattering manner had told us that no concessions would be made to Manitoba. We have no religious wrangles in this country, and although the din of a rebellion at our doors has scarcely died away, the race prejudices some thought (if they did not wish) it would stir up are dead and buried already. The chieftain knows that we require no special treatment on that score, and our weight in the House of Commons is not worth considering. Manitoba he considers scarcely a part of the Dominion to be kept united, except in so far as it furnishes openings with which to reward party services. This province and the territories beyond belong to the Dominion and not to themselves; therefore there is no necessity for troubling about opinions therein or rights belonging thereto. Their support is of little value and their interests must be made subservient to those who have the power of giving valuable support to a Government in power.

All these different methods of reaching Canadian unity may seem necessary to the Dominion Government, but the treatment which necessitates a policy in Quebec, and another in Ontario which are as irreconcilable as oil and water, and commands unity in the Northwest upon principals of "Hobson's choice" is rather incomprehensible to outsiders, and may not bring about exactly the result it is intended to.

GETTING INTO DEBT.

Notwithstanding the generally acknowledged evils of the bonus system and the ruin that it has brought upon several of the older towns in this province, it would seem that there have not yet been a sufficient number of examples to deter other places from following in the same footsteps. There still seems to linger something of the "boom" spirit among the citizens of some of these places which were not in a position to get into debt during the early days. Bonuses, some of them exorbitant in their amount, have been passed by probably a dozen different municipalities, principally to aid in the establishment of roller flour mills. Although this is probably the least phase of the evil, yet it does not end there. If