

Le Grand Seigneur With a Plain Creed

Concerning Emmanuel Persillier Lachapelle, Controller, Man of Medicine and Municipal Reformer

No. 32 in the Series, "Personalities and Problems"

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

HE is the grand seigneur, Dr. Emmanuel Persillier Lachapelle, the chairman of police and of fire departments and other things by mutual allotment in the Board of Control of Montreal. Three years now he has been controller, since the revolution of 1910. Four months more and he will go up for re-election, if he feels so disposed. And if the Board of Commissioners for the quadrennium 1914-18 is minus *le grand seigneur*, it will be minus very much more than merely an effective chairman of police and so forth.

Lachapelle is as much a peculiar, indispensable personality in the Board as Lapointe is in the Council. He is not the boss, nor the big stick; but he is the one man who, by his long experience, his impressive personal character, and his earnest investigation of civic affairs would be most deplored if the popular vote should lop him off at next February election.

At first you wonder how a man who is so grandly courteous and is willing to spend affably so much of his time talking about the modern methods at the City Hall should ever be able to adjust himself easily to the multifarious details of a controllership. You marvel that a man who resembles so implicitly *le ancien regime* should talk like an evolutionary revolutionist.

That is character. Along with his talent as a seigneur and his education for the medical profession, Lachapelle is possessed also of a judicial temperament. He is able to weigh things in the balance.

The controller comes of an old French family, some of the earliest settlers in New France, from whom he acquired by easy inheritance the grand manner of which a life in the wilds was never able to deprive his ancestors. He was born at Sault-au-Recollet, in 1845. Most of his life has been spent in education and science. All his medical education was acquired in Canada, at Montreal College, at Laval and Victoria University. He is also an LL.D. of McGill, *honoris causa*, 1911.

His work in medical science was well built upon that foundation. All his practice has been in Montreal. The Notre Dame Hospital is his own organization. He was by turns its consulting physician, medical superintendent and general superintendent. Laval University made him dean of medical faculty and professor of hygiene. A great believer in sunlight, fresh air and simple food, with plenty of wholesome relaxation, he looks the part; for he is always as fresh as a dew-spangled daisy and does not allow city life to worry away his urbanity. He has been many times president of the following list of public institutions:

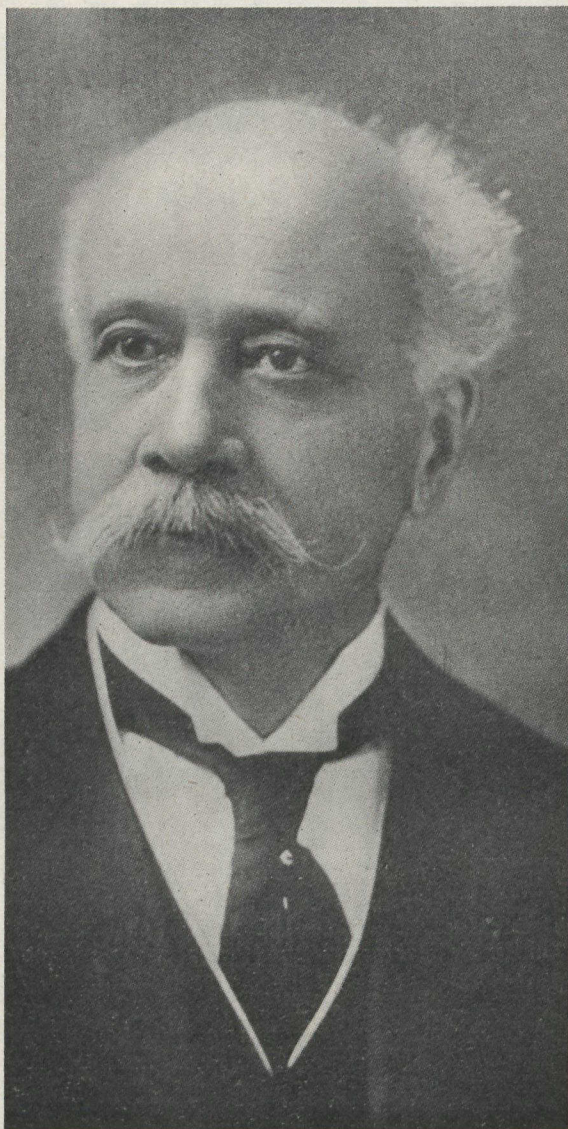
- College of Physicians and Surgeons.
- Provincial Board of Health.
- Royal Commission to prevent the spread of tuberculosis.
- Canadian Medical Association.
- American Public Health Association.
- Society de St. Jean Baptiste.

He was also delegate from the Canadian Government to the second Pan-American Medical Congress in Mexico, 1896.

But not merely in his own profession has the Doctor been honoured by appointment. France, from which his ancestors came, has made him a Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur. He is a member of the Metropolitan Parks Commission, president of the Credit Foncier and a director of La Banque Provençal.

WITH these official distinctions in many walks of life, the Doctor is still a bachelor. He is less like Montreal than he would resemble a small town such as used to be the habitat of Intendants and French governors under the old regime. He has the placidity of temperament and the aristocratic poise of a man whom nature intended for a quiet life. That benign face, white hair and ample grandiose moustache, that deep, slow voice, and the sincere, considering smile, you link them up somehow with governorship in a man who spends much time among flowers or in a laboratory or browsing among books.

But happen into the Board room just before one of the twice-a-day sessions of the commissioners and it is easily seen how much one-sided the notion is. Faultlessly groomed, the Seigneur looks as



Placidity of temperament and aristocratic poise.

though he had just taken part in a grand reception. He smokes congenially and cracks his jokes about the table like a real *bon vivant*. He hurls mild gallantries at the Mayor, who genially returns them with interest. In a few moments the quintette, Lachapelle, Godfrey, Dupuis, Ainey, with Mayor Lavallee at the head, will be deep into the everlasting problem of how to administer this thumping big cosmopolitan Montreal, with such rope as the Legislature has given them from year to year by taking away from the Council. Twice a day, five days a week, and once on Saturday, the Board sit in council; and the rest of the day is spent in the commissioners' offices all bunched together in a corner of the first floor up of the grand ducal palace called the City Hall.

At once it is obvious that the ducal palace and the seigneur are very much akin. That green-liveried functionary with the white gloves at the little desk beside the register in the colonnaded rotunda where the elevators and the grand staircases start, looks as though he had been fetched there from the seignory of Lachapelle. His bow to the controller is amiable with profound respect. And there is no clerk or head of department in all that huge college of Frenchmen and Britishmen doing the civic work of Montreal who does not pay this near-venerable controller the attention due to a very dignified personality.

This, however, is not a particular concern of the controller. It comes as natural as living. Neither is he much concerned now with the science and the practice of medicine in which he was a man of eminence before he became a civic expert. Since he became controller he has quit practising medicine, much to the regret of many good families in Montreal, to whom he was the embodiment of professional skill and the soul of bonhomie. He was 65 years of age when he became commissioner. Personally, he might have preferred to go quietly along the rest of his life as a man of medicine and

adviser to the government on matters of health. But he was picked by the people to undertake civic duties, and he took hold of the role.

The Mayor in that new Board of Control was Dr. Guerin, who was the one Irish member as Mr. Wanklyn was the only English. Irish and French go turn about in the mayoralty of Montreal, which is one amicable method of solving a part of the race problem. The present Mayor Lavallee's two-year term expires next February. Mr. Wanklyn has since gone to be assistant to the president of the C. P. R. at a much higher salary than \$7,000 a year as controller. The others are finishing out the quadrennium, and so far as is known will all three be in the running again.

This embodies a principle which is particularly important to the senior member of the Board. Dr. Lachapelle has been busy these four years evolving a practical theory about city commissionership. What he knows and what the rest of the commissioners know about that business now is somewhat peculiar to Montreal. The original Board tackled a Herculean labour. They are still at it.

Unpopularity with the Council was the first obstacle. The programme of the old 23 was threatened by this new board of commissioners, whose business it was to find something to administer and then—administrate. Oldest on the Board, Dr. Lachapelle knew Montreal rather better than any of the others. He knew something about the City Hall which has been Sir Galahadded against by a good many newspaper campaigns, some sincere and some doubtful. He knows vastly more about the City Hall now than he did in 1910. And if the seigneur of the Board were not a man of great resolution he would probably be weary enough of the knowledge and the job to retire at the next election.

LACHAPELLE does not believe in apostolic succession in a Board. He believes in permanency. For that matter so did the old Council. What had been must continue to be. A quintette of highly paid experts was not supposed to pitch its camp in the City Hall, stake out a block of offices and a board-room, and begin to do business without strenuous and oft-repeated protests from the old guard. They did not expect to. They anticipated a struggle; and they got it. There was a time when something resembling a deadlock kept a good many civic developments hung up in Montreal. Dr. Lachapelle knows all about that. He recalls how, at the very next session of the Quebec Legislature after the original Magna Charta had been given to the Board, they had to ask the Legislature for more power to their elbow. He did not expect to get it without opposition. But the Board got it.

The House of Lords in the Council has been gradually surrendering its ancient prerogatives. Montreal has been growing at the same time rather faster than the Board of Control has been enlarging its scope. When Mr. Wanklyn quit, somewhat because he was tired of the game of bucking, it might have been expected that Dr. Lachapelle, so very much of a gentleman and so mild-mannered and amiable, would begin to think of retiring also.

Not for a moment. The grand seigneur had gone into the game to see it out to the winning goal. He says now, very quietly and with considerable dignified humour, that he believes the Board has begun to establish itself as the real administrative voice of the people. There is much yet to get. But when Dr. Lachapelle compares the powers of the Board now with what they were in 1910 he is vastly encouraged to believe that the day is not far distant when the said Board will have got all that is coming to it in the name of real business government.

Lachapelle is the embodiment of radicalism and patience. Had he not been a radical he never would have gone into the game at all. Had he not been the serene soul of patience and accommodation he would have left it along with his colleagues before the eve of a new election. It was very unpopular—at least it talked that way—to place such a hierarchy in power at comparatively high salaries for a term of four years. But the four years was necessary and Dr. Lachapelle is the one man that knows it best. If there had been a new election for the Board in two or three years the Board would have had to go before the people without a well-estab-