

MONTREAL LIFE.

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TELEPHONES:
Montreal . . . Main 1255
Toronto . . . 2148

LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

THE list of New Year's honors contained the name of only one Canadian—Mr. Malachy Bowes Daly, Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, who will henceforth be Sir Malachy Daly. The new Knight is much better known in the Maritime Provinces than further west, although he is a native of Quebec. Both he and his wife (a daughter of Sir Edward Kenny) spring from titled stock, and it is to be presumed that this was the chief reason for conferring knighthood on a gentleman, who, however estimable, was never truly eminent, and for nearly 10 years has dwelt in the subdued light of a position that affords no opportunity to do anything remarkable—anything outside of dull routine. But, although Canada came in for so small a share of the sugar plums from the Royal Christmas tree, this is probably only a calm before the storm, and I venture to predict that shortly we shall see such a downpour of titles, on the devoted heads of Canadians, as we have never witnessed before. My reason for thinking so is that this contingent business, in its very nature, affords an opportunity for bestowing, right and left, what the Liberals were wont to call "tin-pot honors," and, at the present juncture in the affairs of the Empire, the authorities in Downing street are not likely to neglect any chance of making "the colonials" feel like "doing it again." The war is sure to bring in its wake a wholesale creation of "Sirs" and "Milords," and we may be very certain that in the general jollification "the colonials" will come in for some of the scraps and crumbs.

ALL this is preliminary to the thought that Canadians are rapidly becoming a nation of "tuft hunters." It is only natural that paltry distinctions, which in aristocratic centres would attract no attention, should render their possessors quite notable in a raw, half-baked country. I am not casting any slur upon Canada, for this is my land and I love it, but in all honesty it must be admitted that, compared with the Old Country, the Dominion is rough and provincial. Hence, titles shine here with the effulgence of a village belle's diamond, and similarly attract an amount of attention out of all proportion to their absolute value. There are people in Canada who would give pretty nearly all they possess for knighthood; yet, I am not aware that men (or women either) set less store upon wealth here than elsewhere. But they certainly set more store upon superadded honors, that go no deeper than the name by which men call them; and the moment Mr. Bobolink Blatherskite becomes Sir Bobolink, he takes thought and adds many cubits to his stature. We have almost reached that stage where we shall think that a man cannot be truly successful or great so long as he is plain Mr. So-and-So. I hazard the statement that there have been more titles granted to Canadians in the past decade than there were in the first twenty-three years after Confederation.

SO great has been the change—so completely have our public men given themselves up to the worship of imported honors—that hypocrisy has been resorted to, in some instances, to cloak the desertion of past principles and professions. All Canada is now familiar with the story of Queen

Victoria's compelling unwilling "colonials" to accept knighthood. I suppose there were dire threats of "the Tower," or some such revival of the gentle means employed by the sovereigns of two or three centuries ago. The public has not been taken into the royal confidence in this matter. We do not know what punishments were promised if the proffered honors were refused, but from their effect they must have been such as to leave no room for further argument.

IN this connection, a strange story reaches me from Ottawa—a bit of, perhaps, hitherto unknown evidence that Sir Wilfrid Laurier, democrat as he was up to the time of the Jubilee, found his title on the Queen's table at Windsor and could do nothing else but pick it up and wear it, or break an old lady's heart. It is said that many of the Premier's most confidential followers—members of the charmed circle—recognize the delicate position in which he was placed, and in deference to his wishes, and to avoid giving him needless pain, always forbear to address the wearer of the Cobden medal except as "Mr." Laurier. Whether this is a story invented for use amongst the farmers, I cannot say. Let us be charitable and accept it as gospel truth. Let us picture the excruciating agony that racks the Premier's heart and makes him fairly squirm every time he hears the hated words "Sir Wilfrid." We shall then be able to form some faint conception of that terrible quarter of an hour at Windsor castle, when the great democrat had to choose between life-long suffering and the disappointment of a monarch and a lady; and chivalrously, but with tearful eye, chose the path of self-sacrifice.

IT is somewhat amusing, and certainly instructive, to read The Toronto Globe's list of articles sent with the soldier-boys on the Sardinian by thoughtful friends and public-spirited citizens. Thousands of cigarettes, thousands of pipes and packages of tobacco; boxing gloves, punching bags, etc., in sufficient number to stock a prizefighter's gymnasium; whiskey by the case, and even Bibles and bon-bons! Such a list, unearthed in some old library three or four centuries hence, will give posterity quite a comprehensive idea of our times and manners. What a learned essay on the civilization of the ancient Canadians some scholar would be able to evolve from a mere inventory of these articles in, let us say, the year 3000! I think people who object to the sending of so much tobacco and so few Bibles are, perhaps, unreasonable. Let us send the men what they want—not what they don't want; and if tobacco is really more acceptable than religion to the majority in a haphazard body of Canadian men—representative of the generality of our population—why, this fact need startle no one, because it is well-known already. Therefore, the Soldiers' Wives' League of Montreal, in sending along 20,000 cigarettes, 1,000 pipes, 6,086 pounds of tobacco, and only 144 Testaments, did quite the natural thing. Mr. Robert Barr says that Canadians prefer whiskey to literature. I think Mr. Barr has, perhaps, stated his convictions too sweepingly, but if we don't want the world to form the opinion that, as a people, we are fearfully and wonderfully constituted, let us keep the lists of gifts to our volunteers out of print.

FELIX VANE.