

Ward Representation might be that which has already been favourably brought before the Council by ex-Alderman Pepler, one of the best men who has ever given his services to the city, and whose special fitness for the Mayor's chair, we venture to think, should not be overlooked at the present moment. Mr. Pepler's scheme, in brief, made provision that each ward should radiate as nearly as possible from a common centre to the outskirts of the city—a plan that, besides getting rid of the present "pocket wards," would secure in each ward a representation of all grades, in position and influence, among the electorate. With an efficient Council, a well organised and partly paid Executive, and a strong and incorruptible Chief Magistrate, also well paid, to watch over, direct the deliberations, and see to the proper carrying out of the decisions of the body, assisted, if need be, by a Vice-Mayor or President of the Chamber, the public might then feel assured that the city's affairs were in good and trustworthy hands, and that, if an approach had not sensibly been made to a municipal millennium, at least we should no more hear of such disclosures of rottenness as were revealed in the recent report of the Water Works Commission.

In the matter of the city assessments, it is some gratification to be able to point to the good working already of the Local Improvements Scheme, and to commend the equity which underlies the principle of the frontage tax. This principle in fairness, we think, should be extended so as to throw the whole city assessment on the land. Some more efficient plan should also be wrought out by which personal property, however invested, should pay its just and unevaded proportion of the city's burdens. To this, we trust, our next city government will give its attention, as well as to the matter of laying out and maintaining the new city drives and parks on some such plan as is now followed in carrying on and levying the rates for local improvements. The new Corporation, we trust, will also actively address itself to the consideration of some well devised scheme of sewerage and sanitary reform, and to providing the city with that imperious need—a good and abundant supply of water. The care of the new representatives will also be needed, and their public spirit called forth, in supervising the erection of the new Court House and City Hall, and in guarding the large expenditures of money already authorised by the city. The growing municipal indebtedness will moreover soon be a matter of public concern, and it is expedient that some plan should be originated for economising the large annual outlay to banks for interest. It will also soon become necessary, in the public interest, to treat afresh with the Street Railway Company, or to acquire its rights; and the same may be said in the matter of lighting, both for street and house consumption, which we are of opinion should be supplied, or at least be controlled, by the municipality. In every direction, and to the consideration of every subject, the new Council will require to call into exercise thought, prudence, and economy, as well as efficiency, honesty, and vigilance. If these are secured, the present public interest in the city's administration will prove to be wise; and in its continued manifestation there will also be wisdom.

G. MERCER ADAM.

DISALLOWANCE AND THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.

For many years the advocates of what is called Provincial Autonomy have raised a loud and bitter cry against the Federal power of Disallowance. For many years the supposed objectionable nature of that power, and its supposed tendency to interfere with provincial rights and privileges, have been favourite themes with a certain class of political writers. For years the alleged abuse of Disallowance by the Government in office has been one of the favourite topics of the opposition stump speaker. In nearly every election, Federal or Provincial, Disallowance has been made an issue of more or less importance. At times indeed, in certain of the provinces, the indignation aroused by the exercise of this power—either in particular cases, or in accordance with a particular system—has been so great as almost entirely to absorb the attention of the public, and for the time being to overshadow all other political issues whatsoever. The Disallowance of the "Streams Bill" in Ontario, and of the railway charters in Manitoba, are cases in point.

This more or less general feeling of dissatisfaction seems to have found its expression in the Provincial Conference lately held at Quebec. One of the avowed objects of that Conference was to concert means to protect and secure the autonomy of the provinces, and more especially to abolish or curtail the veto power now possessed by the Government of the Dominion. Whether any action will be taken as the result of this Conference remains to be seen. If Disallowance is to be put an end to, one of two things will have to be done: Either the Dominion Government must be induced to abandon the exercise of the power in question, or that power must be taken away from it. The former result can be brought about only by the

return to Parliament of a majority of members pledged to oppose Disallowance under any and all circumstances, and ready to impose their views upon the Government of the day. To achieve the other result, an amendment of the British North America Act would have to be secured from the Imperial Parliament. Whether either of these things will be brought about for some time to come is a little doubtful; but that an attempt will be made to bring them about seems almost certain, and therefore it is quite proper to take into consideration both the possible success of the attempt, and some of the probable consequences, should it chance to prove successful.

Should Disallowance cease to be exercised, some of the provinces at any rate would be profoundly affected by the change. In Manitoba, for instance, if the Provincial Government were to be relieved from Federal interference, and enabled to carry out their railway policy without let or hindrance, the future of the province would no doubt be very greatly changed. But of all the provinces none would be more seriously affected than the Province of Quebec; and the effect which such a change would have upon the political future of that province forms, I think, one of the strongest arguments against its introduction.

To do away with Disallowance would be to play the game of the French in Quebec, and to strengthen the hands (now none too weak) of the Roman Catholic Church. It would be to render the position of the English inhabitants of Lower Canada—already unpleasant enough—considerably worse. It would be to still further endanger the rights and privileges of this English minority, and to deprive them of such slight protection as they may get from the existing order of things. In common justice to the minority in Quebec, the right of Federal Disallowance should be retained as a part of our political constitution, so long, at any rate, as our present system of provinces continues to exist. A very slight consideration will show this to be the truth.

A little over twenty years ago the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec formed one province—the province of Canada. This province had but one legislature. The English formed a majority of the population of the province, and a majority in the legislature. The English inhabitants of that part of the province called Lower Canada were, it is true, less in number than the French inhabitants of the same part of the province, but the disproportion was far from being so great as it is to-day; and inasmuch as there was but one legislature for the province, the numerical inferiority of the English in Lower Canada was a matter of comparatively slight importance. In short, before Confederation, the English inhabitants of the present Province of Quebec were politically at no disadvantage compared with the French in the same province.

But Confederation greatly changed all this. Upper and Lower Canada were separated and became distinct provinces, each with a legislature of its own. The English of Quebec, instead of having for their sole legislative body a parliament in which English members were in the majority, had thenceforth to take many of their laws from a legislature the majority of whose members were French. This at once put them at a disadvantage. Their political power and influence immediately sank. They were a minority in the population, and a minority in the Provincial Legislature. Had they lost no ground since then, the change in their political situation would have been disagreeable enough, but as a matter of fact they have lost a great deal of ground. Their population has been almost at a standstill, while the French population has enormously increased. Their representation in Parliament, whether Dominion or Provincial, has been less in each Parliament than in the one preceding. Twenty years ago they had a fair share in the public offices; since then that share has yearly been growing less and less. In every part of the province, numerically, politically, indeed in almost every respect, they have lost more ground than could be recovered in double the time.

It is evident that with but ten or twelve representatives in a legislature which has a total of sixty-five members, the English in the Province of Quebec are not in the most favourable situation for defending their interests whenever such interests come in conflict with those of the French majority. It is equally plain that even if the majority sincerely wished to treat the minority with perfect fairness, they would be almost sure to occasionally abuse their power, and to do injustice, perhaps without meaning it. And of course if such occasional abuses of power might under any circumstances have been expected, notwithstanding the restraint imposed by the Federal veto, they might certainly be expected to increase if the restraint referred to were to be withdrawn; so that with every disposition on the part of the French majority to be just and fair, much could be said against allowing this veto power to be in any way weakened.

But if the French majority are not disposed to do justice, if they are prone to wilfully abuse their power, the need for Disallowance becomes much more evident; and it is but too plain that such is the case. There