

Corridor Comment

WHEN Sir Wilfrid Laurier drops his manuscripts on his desk, turns his chair and focusses his attention upon some new speaker in the House of Commons, seasoned parliamentarians forthwith credit the fortunate young man with being a "Comer." The "Old Chief" is an infallible barometer. His diagnosis doesn't err. He knows the symptoms of



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Hansarditis from indications of effective debating ability. The former cannot move him; the latter always finds him at attention. In the middle of a rather dreary and academic discussion on a proposal to establish old age pensions in Canada, a hardy annual, the other day, the veteran Liberal leader unexpectedly relinquished the schedules he was studying and leaned forward in evident interest and attention. A slim, auburn-haired young man, with unusually striking brown eyes, was talking on the other side of the House. And he was saying things; saying them quietly, but as if he meant them; saying them, withal, in utter disregard of party obedience to the Minister in charge.

The young man is a successor to Sir John A. Macdonald in the representation of Kingston. Incidentally he is the nostrum—"cure-all" or "kill-all" as you will, according to your party, gentle reader—which has turned his native city upside-down, or downside-up—again as you will—politically within the last few years. Note the pictures, before and after "taking":

Behold Kingston, ancient capital, historic spot, place where in reality there are sermons in stones, stories in brooks and history in everything. A city which loves political fighting, and where everybody fights politically. A city which is no respecter of persons, when the great "John A.", his fame abroad in the land, fought tooth and nail for the seat, sometimes getting it and sometimes not. A city which revelled in gory political warfare, and was happy. With the passing of the distinguished Conservative statesman in 1891, Kingston solemnly makes up its mind to be Liberal, and keeps it up pretty well, too. In vain the Tories fight, and fight, and fight. Victory, the Blue Bird of Political Happiness, takes the little Grit boys to the Fairyland of Office both at Ottawa and Toronto. Thus, in June, 1908, the first curtain falls.

Then look on this: It is December 4, 1911. Things political have been a-doing, and even Kingston has moved. A Tory has once more gone to Ottawa. Sir John A. Macdonald's seat is again filled by one of his party. But stranger far, and more exceeding wonderful—a Tory is being sent to the Legislature at Toronto a week in advance of polling day. Kingston Liberals, once powerfully triumphant, have ceased to fight.

The answer is William Folger Nickle—not very old, not very big, not very noisy, but possessor of qualities that count and a personality that wins. Born in Kingston, brought up in Kingston, graduate of Kingston's university, football player on Kingston's team, pillar in Kingston's St. Andrew's Church, trained in the fiery school of Kingston politics, having made his first speech as a mere lad on Sir John's platform, he appears on the scene when the late E. J. B. Pense, having triumphed in two or three successive and strenuous campaigns, looks invincible. He wins by 350, and commences a brilliant legislative record at Toronto. A prime mover and member of the Milk Commission, father of the bread bill, he specializes in things that actually improve the condition of the people. Is making good progress towards cabinet rank when along comes the federal call, with a big issue at stake. He boldly and skilfully faces the situation.

Kingston still has a couple of strong Liberals. There is Hon. William Harty, unbeatable for a dozen years and more. He retires. Then there is J. Macdonald Mowat, nephew of Sir Oliver, popular and long in training. Yielding to the imperative party summons, Mr. Nickle resigns his Legislative seat and comes out against this popular young man and old school-fellow, entrenched with the government patronage and influence of the Military College and Penitentiary, to say nothing of the Harty locomotive works. He takes the nomination but eight days before the election, and again wins by 350. The political one-man transformation of Kingston is complete.

Mr. Nickle is a young lawyer of good ability and sound judgment, but the characteristics which, more than any others, are credited for his winning Kingston—or Kingston's winning him—are his sterling integrity, his practical ideals and his inevitable sympathy with the under-dog.

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PARLIAMENTARY deliverances have much ordinary fallability. Members have largely tabooed the effort for oratorical effect, and the plain-spoken contribution to debate is recognized as the acceptable and telling one. Nevertheless many "bulls" and mixed metaphors occur, always to the unsympathetic and sometimes boisterous enjoyment of the listening members. So old a parliamentarian as Mr. Hugh Guthrie, K. C., last session informed the House that his political opponents had "stepped upon a coiled adder, and dropped it like a hot potato," while Mr. David A. LaFortune, another King's Counsel, gravely informed Mr. Speaker that he had "only one word to say, and I will say it in two words." Probably the best of last session's contributions was that contained in Mr. A. S. Goodeve's classic description of the Hon. W. S. Fielding's announcement of the fateful reciprocity arrangement. "He placed his Pandora's box upon his desk," declared the British Columbia man, "opened it, and out stepped the Trojan Horse." The new Parliament has already contributed its quota of members possessing peculiar oratorical qualities. Richard Bedford Bennett, of Calgary, drives Hansard to the tall timbers with his fusillade of words and two-hundred-odd-per-minute delivery, while Aikins, of the many initials, who succeeded Hon. Clifford Sifton in Brandon, holds the record

of poetical quotations. Foster, the baby member, who defeated Sir Frederick Borden, and Armstrong, who takes Sir Allen Aylesworth's constituency, possess the strongest lung power and prevent the House from feeling lonely over the absence of Hon. William Paterson. But the maiden speech of Webster, the vanquisher of the doughty Hon. George P. Graham in Brockville, took the palm. In the course of his two-hour deliverance Mr. Webster traversed a wide field. Canada for the Canadians, he opined, was "the greatest battle-cry ever unfurled." He did not propose to "conduct a post mortem over the dead corpse of reciprocity." Entering upon the agricultural field he noted that "Canadian cheese has climbed to the top of the ladder," and, in a burst of eloquent patriotism, proclaimed that "if the firmament of Heaven was a blackboard and the Rocky Mountains a piece of chalk, space would not suffice to write what this great country might become." Nor was the pathetic touch missing. "There is no more sadder sight," wailed Mr. Webster, "than to approach a big city and find all the chimneys lying dead."

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A STORY of the retort courteous comes from the Speaker's gallery. Prior to the Christmas recess a vigorous debate was in progress. The gallery was well filled by interested ladies. Dr. Neely, the Humboldt Liberal, had the floor, and had been interrupted several times by more or less embarrassing queries from the alert and militant Major Currie. According to the story, which, by the way, is vouched for by one of Ottawa's fair society devotees, Mrs. Neely, who occupied a seat in the gallery, turned to her neighbour and enquired: "Who is that man who keeps interrupting?" "That man," smilingly responded the lady who had been interrogated, "is my husband."

H. W. A.

Automobile Shows.

MONTREAL, Toronto and Ottawa all hold automobile shows this month, the dates being: Montreal, Feb. 3-10; Ottawa, Feb. 13-20; Toronto, Feb. 20-28. And there is every indication that the number of exhibits and the attendance will be in keeping with the rapidly increasing importance of automobiles.

The Toronto show will be held in the huge Armoury on University Avenue, and the Montreal show in the spacious Drill Hall, on Craig Street. A feature in both of these places will be an immense Union Jack formed of electric lights, and it is said that these flags will be the largest copies of the nation's emblem ever seen. Montreal announces another innovation—a ladies' orchestra—which is expected to greatly increase the interest in the show.

There will be noticed at this year's shows a great improvement in the finish of the cars on exhibition, as the Canadian manufacturers seem to be agreed that buyers desire the finest appearance as well as the greatest durability and efficiency.

THE NEW TYPE OF BUSY, BUSY BEE.



Deaf Old Gent: "My hearing must be improving. I can distinctly hear the hum of a bee."