

## THROUGH A MONOCLE

### MONTREAL'S MUNICIPAL PROBLEMS

**M**ONTREAL is to vote next autumn on three proposed changes in her method of civic government. One is the cutting of the number of aldermen in two; another is the establishment of a Board of Control after the Toronto model; and a third is an alternative scheme whereby the city executive will be a board of permanent officials under the control of the City Council. The last is the only one of the three which can be said to be popular with the present aldermen. As the civic sin of Montrealers is indifference, he would be a rash prophet who would attempt to predict the outcome of the voting. The aldermen will be very likely to organise a campaign against their own beheading; and it will remain for the citizens to offset this by an equally effective organisation.

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**I**T was a clever bit of repartee on the side of the Legislature to send these "reform" proposals to the people. The people had been calling clamorously upon the Legislature to ignore the representatives they had themselves elected and pass a measure which these representatives notoriously did not want; so the Legislature simply handed the responsibility back to the people of Montreal in the form of a referendum. This gives the people the means of "saving" themselves; but they will have to do the "saving." Those who were most active behind these proposals of reform would have very much preferred to have had the Legislature take the task on its own shoulders. Sir Lomer Gouin and his colleagues, however, realise that in a democracy there is no salvation for the people outside of themselves. If they want any particular sort of government, they must take the trouble to get it.

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**W**E are, perhaps, too much enamoured just now of government by commission. The brilliant work of the Federal Railway Commission has created a strong prejudice in favour of that system of control. But a Commission always implies a greater power behind it. Somebody must appoint a Commission; and then the people must select the "somebody" who does the appointing. Montreal is criticised at times because she keeps the control of her police in the hands of her aldermen instead of creating a Police Commission. But there are objections to both systems. A Toronto man complained to me the other day that the Toronto police were too "military," were too anxious to make arrests, were too machine-like in their work. He said—and he was a philanthropic worker whose name you would know if I mentioned it—that they would put the stamp of "jail bird" on a boy who had been guilty of a very minor offence, when he ought to have been merely warned and sent home. Now Montreal is without this vice. Her police may display a too kindly feeling at times

toward the saloon-keeper who would sell out of hours, but they show the same toleration toward citizens of all sorts—except, possibly, students—and make as few arrests as they can. They had rather send a man who was "celebrating" home any time than take him to the "lock up." Now much of this human way of looking at things is undoubtedly due to the very fact that they are amenable to the suggestions of aldermen who, in turn, are in constant contact with the people.

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**T**HE trouble is that we often judge officials and institutions by the artificial standards set up by a noisy and "pushful" few. These standards usually have a virtuous sound; and the rest of us lack the moral courage to oppose them. They seem to occupy a loftier moral plane than that on which the most of us habitually dwell; and we feel that to attack them is to stamp ourselves as occupying the lower moral position. So we give formal assent. But in our hearts we know that we do not want these stiffer standards to prevail. We are flesh-and-blood human beings and not bound books of meddlesome by-laws; and we had rather that the world in which we live should be humanly happy than super-humanly correct. The consequence is that when we can apply a little quiet pressure in favour of the human standard of official conduct, we do so through our human aldermen or our human members of Parliament; and then we hypocritically line up with the dignified upholders of the "higher" standard in publicly condemning the "politicians" and the "lax officials" who do these human things. This is hardly fair to the men who have done what we want them to do; but it is very human on our part to desire to rank ourselves with the censorious few. The man who condemns always has a moral advantage in the minds of superficial thinkers over the man who condones. For some extraordinary reason, we think that angles are virtuous and curves are vicious.

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**A**NY city which suffers from bad civic government has the cure in its own hands at all times. So long as a government is democratic, the form does not matter much. If Montreal decides to try a Board of Control, it will have to take the trouble to elect a good Board, else its condition will be made worse instead of better. A small body of bad men with immense powers can do far more mischief than a larger body of equally bad men. A corrupt corporation would undoubtedly prefer dealing with the smaller body. It would be less expensive. But there is no magic in the word "Controller" to guarantee civic virtue in the man who holds the position. His single advantage is that he is elected from a larger constituency; and, generally speaking, the larger the constituency, the bigger must be the candidate. Still sometimes men get into the Mayoralty chairs of our cities who would not be too big for the smallest aldermanic seat in the Council.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

## When the Governor-General Reviewed the Toronto School Cadets



Sir James Whitney and others addressed the Cadets on "Empire Day and Empire Duties," after which the Monuments in Queen's Park were decorated