

REFLECTIONS

BY STAFF WRITERS.

A RATHER good story is being told in the Clubs of Toronto about two gentlemen who were each more or less closely connected with reputed combines. The year 1906 revealed more on this subject than any previous year.

OUR FUNNY
SELVES

A publisher of school books had a house built and in it he had considerable plumbing done by a well-known firm. Just about the time when it was necessary to pay for the work, the investigation into the plumbers' combine occurred. The publisher naturally doubted whether it would be wise to pay the bill without a protest. He thought it only fair to himself to point out that the plumber was under suspicion and that before the bill was paid there would need to be an investigation. The plumber bore it patiently and thus the matter stood for a long time. Then came the Text-book Commission and an investigation into the publishing business—the improperly called "School-book Ring." There were some disclosures which, if they did not show a combine, gave reason for believing that there was an understanding which was almost as effectual. The plumber thought that this would be a good time to again render his bill. He did so. It was paid promptly and without a demur.

A LL good citizens who desire better political conditions in this country should raise a cry against patronage committees and patronage evils. It is this question of patronage which makes our political life lower than that of Great Britain.

PATRONAGE
EVILS

It is the present method of appointment to civil service positions which breeds partizans, ward-healers, ballot-switchers and crowds of hungry office-seekers. Take the patronage out of the hands of members of legislature and parliament and away from cabinet ministers and there will be better legislatures and a better House of Commons.

At the present time, if a sheriff or postmaster or any other kind of civil servant is to be appointed, the patronage committee meets together and makes a recommendation to the members. In other words, a half dozen party workers choose a party worker to fill a position for which he has no qualifications. The member is worried to death with applicants of all kinds, pressing upon him their claims—not their qualifications. The grandfathers, uncles, cousins and other male relatives are urged to see the member and worry him into taking notice. The member's time is thus taken up with interviews which are mostly useless and which prevent giving attention to the duties of his position.

The practice is rotten, if one may be permitted to use the word. It fills the civil services with unsuitable men; it degrades the members who distribute the offices; it detracts from the importance and nobility of public service; it leads to a distorted view of the purposes of the voting power. It is maintained by low grade politicians who would be estimated at their proper worth, if the public were free to judge them as they should be judged. It fills our legislatures with men who have no idea of dignity or decency of language or argument, who are continually harping on questions of slight importance and who have neither the sense or the ability

to apply themselves to the work for which they were elected.

Civil service reform and the abolition of patronage committees is the crying need of to-day.

THERE seems to be a dearth of men willing to serve as town councillors in some of the Ontario towns. When the yearly nominations are held, they close without sufficient candidates. In the town of Renfrew this has happened two years in succession. In another town it has occurred in each of the last seven years. Another nomination is required, and new candidates must be induced to come out. The work of the council is thus delayed several weeks.

In the town of Milton, they have a meeting of rate-payers before nomination day and a committee is appointed to see that sufficient and proper candidates are nominated. The consent of each is obtained, of course, before being put in nomination. The plan is one worthy of earnest consideration in towns where good men neglect or refuse to take office.

That there should be a dearth of public-minded citizens is probably due to the fact that good men hate the personal canvass. They would sooner be considered to be lacking in public zeal than be found buttonholing their fellow-citizens and asking them for votes. If the public would make it known that they will vote for the best man independent of any canvass, better men might offer themselves. But, after all, this is almost too much to expect of us. John Smith asks us for a vote. We know he does not deserve it, yet we hate to refuse him because it might hurt his feelings. Hence we weakly promise. It is not very creditable but it is human nature. Fortunately all the voters are not so weak as some of us.

FROM the Maritime Provinces there is a steady migration of girls to the United States. The stream of ambitious young men from the Provinces by the Sea now runs toward Western Canada, but the ambitious young women still go to the States by the hundred. Such is the lament of the St. John "Globe" and other journals. They conclude that if the young men go away, the girls must go too; otherwise, how are they to find mates?

Speaking to a Nova Scotia audience several years ago, I advocated a policy of keeping the young men at home. I didn't think then of the argument, that it would also keep the young women at home. I advocated the founding of Canadian clubs, and the spreading of the sentiment that young men have no right to leave the country that gives them a birth-right and an education. The Canadian club movement in Toronto in 1896 was based partly on a desire to kill the old feeling that the smartest young man in the community was he who went to the States. There were smart young men staying at home, and we wanted to increase our numbers. Perhaps it was egotistic and selfish, but it aided in strengthening the national feeling.

For forty years, the Maritime Provinces have sat back and grumbled. In that period they have lost—what? About half a million of the finest young men