

The Evening Telegram.

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HONESTY

In Public Men.

Let Not Designing Men Be Commended, Rather Let Them Be Condemned.

The influence which a good citizen exerts among his fellows is incalculable. A citizen who has acquired influence in a public way and in public office should ever be guarded in his actions, in his speech, and in his writings, lest the latter should beguile others in error or false doctrine. In stirring times this is to be the more desired: since many men learn to lean on others' opinions and declarations. To none is it of more importance than to that portion of the people who are entering upon the duties of full citizenship. To them it is of the first importance that prominent public men should be above suspicion in all affairs of Government, in speech, and their own conduct.

For the inexperienced in matters relating to government may be easily deceived by specious reasoning. Specious reasoning is to be deprecated at all times, but when it is indulged in by, and in the behalf of, designing politicians, men in public life, for the purpose of beguiling the unwary voter it should be severely condemned.

A young man will often vote as he feels, until he learns by experience to distinguish the sheep from the goats, the true statesman from the false braggadocio, the honest man from the charlatan. To draw such distinctions may sometimes be difficult—and will be whilst chicanery obtains—but there are occasions when the charlatan is so conspicuous that he does not require to be labelled.

True instinct is all that most men need on such occasions. In stirring times opportunities are afforded of finding out the sort of stuff that is in our public men. And it is well that stirring times occur, if for no other reason than to weed out the mountebank, and the barnacle in public life.

We will not dispute that boastful remark that "a mountebank will undertake anything"; nor can it be predicated that a charlatan in public life will go far without having his tricks exposed.

If a man of 21 or over who has not yet cast a vote, either through indifference or because of youth, were to turn a discerning mind upon the men who occupy the high positions in our country to-day, what would be his estimate of their worth? What probabilities repose in them for good? What probabilities of harm? It were fruitless in such an enquiry to enumerate all that they have done, and all that they have not done. He would test them in such a way as to discover their bent, their ideals, their principles, having particular regard to their conduct as public men. He would take them on their own ground and enquire how, and in what manner they have carried out their own policy. For example, he would take the Branch Railways as the most important item of the Government's policy. He would read the speech made by Premier Morris in the House of Assembly thereon. In it he would find these words:—

"I have made an estimate and have had esti-

"mates made of the likely extent of these branches. Some differ from me and think my mileage 'too high. I do not think so. But to be perfectly safe I will put the estimate at 250 miles. This at \$15,000 a mile will cost in round figures \$4,000,000, creating an interest charge of \$140,000 a year. In other words, when all the lines are built the interest on the cost will be \$140,000 a year." Again in the same speech Premier Morris said:—

"We claim fairly and reasonably that we 'have saved on this Contract with Reids One million dollars to the Colony, as here we have a contract for four million dollars, which would have cost five millions on the lines of the 1893 Contract."

That Voter would then look up the accounts. There he would discover that the Premier, who spoke those words, had borrowed four million dollars to pay Reids. He would also discover that the same Premier borrowed two million dollars more—to pay Reids. Then he would discover that the Branch Railways were not half finished, that the Reids are demanding still more money, and that the Premier's words as to cost were no better than fairy tales. Then he would discover that Premier Morris made grievous miscalculations as to the mileage, and frightful miscalculations as to the cost. And then he would discover that Premier Morris's own party received astounding amounts in arbitration fees, in sops, and in other ways. And, at last, he would discover a most unwholesome fact, that Premier Morris is a very great and most particular friend of the Reids who got the contract.

That Voter would sit down, and could you blame him if he said: "Sir Edward Morris may have obliged us with 'Railways, but he has obliged the Reids more. He is too great a friend of the Reids for our country's good. If he can make a mistake of about six million dollars on one contract is there any limit to the mistakes he could make 'if we elect him again.'"

That Voter talks common sense; but he decides that Premier Morris is perhaps only a bungler in figures, and is not big enough for his position.

And that Voter, making due allowance for the exigencies of political emergencies, decides to probe the question as to whether Premier Morris is an honest man. Does he speak the truth? And he takes up another important matter—which all knowing men have considered and digested—that matter relating to his Minister of Justice. "Let me see," says the Voter, "how Premier Morris acquitted himself there."

He reads the articles in the newspapers. He sees it written in plain words: how the Hon. D. Morison had a timber property for sale; how that Minister wrote to R. W. Strong that anyone who purchased that timber property could keep it intact, and in the meantime could steal the timber from adjoining Crown land; how that Minister told the Governor that he thought the law allowed him to steal timber against the law (for that is really what Morison thought—perhaps because he was Minister of Justice); how Morison deliberately made a false assertion when he said that; how Premier Morris knew it was a false assertion made deliberately; how Premier Morris wrote to the Governor and told him it was all right; and how both have been charged with wilfully deceiving the Governor, and yet they say nothing in defence.

That Voter stops. He thinks. Surely a Premier was not guilty of such deception! Surely he did not help his Minister of Justice to deceive the Governor! Surely if a man does that he is capable of anything! And that Voter reflects, and his mind goes back to the remark: "A mountebank will undertake anything."

And that Voter reflects further: "Surely," he says, "if a Premier is a friend of the Reids; if he is capable of being a partner with a man like Morison (whom all can condemn) in deceiving a Governor; surely he is not asking me to vote for him! Surely he has some sense of decency!"

And that Voter, not boasting of "political sagacity," but with only the acumen of an ordinary man—which is so often pregnant with the essence of common sense—having rational ideas of what is bluff and what is fact; what is honesty and what is rascality—will wonder how that Premier and that Minister of Justice can address an audience of men of common sense, and expect their votes! Thus and in such a way does a Voter discover the sort of stuff that is in a public man.

If men in public life, occupying the highest positions of trust, whose integrity is the only guarantee against wrong-doing, can be guilty of such wilful deception, what possibilities, aye, what probabilities of harm repose in them? Do they ask for votes? Yes. And can you vote for them?

That is the question before the men of Newfoundland to-day. That is the question that concerns all men, and the vital interests of the country. It concerns the old and the young. But more particularly does it concern the young voter who will, perhaps, cast his first vote on the thirtieth of October. His career is before him; he will now for the first time perhaps exercise the full rights of citizenship; his ideals are of manly fibre—the sort that expects of men high in public life more than is expected of men in private life—and his ideals will assuredly demand integrity in our public men. If the people do not get that they get nothing. Worse still, the continuance in office of men having base ideals of honour and common honesty is subversive of law, of stability, of common decency.

If what is done may not be undone, let not designing, unscrupulous men be commended, rather let them be condemned, lest a worse thing befall this country at their hands.

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to Young
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national, patriotic spirit, unbounded
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and we will recognize nothing
We are admonished here of a
fundamental law relating to the
vital as well as to the nation.

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in representative government,
yet the political strife between

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