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FINANCE AND INSURANCE REVIEW.

MONTREAL, MAY 31, 1878.

**THE CANADIAN MONTHLY—PARTY
GOVERNMENT.**

The number of this popular journal, which has just come to hand, is, we presume, the last which will be issued under the old management. It is hereafter to be amalgamated with *Belford's Monthly*, under the style and title of the "Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review," devoted to science, literature, art and politics, and is to be under the sole editorial control of Mr. George Stewart, junior. The article in the last number on "Current Events" is mainly occupied with a severe censure of party government, which is the great bug-bear of those who arrogate to themselves the designation of the "Canada First" party, although we scarcely imagine that they seriously believe that there are any number of Her Majesty's Canadian subjects who desire the prosperity of other parts of the Empire in preference to that of Canada. These tirades against party

government are very senseless, for there is no possible way of carrying on parliamentary government, except through the instrumentality of party. It must not be imagined, however, that those who are most attached to party government are blind to the evils which are the necessary consequence of the system. Party leaders in all periods of our history have committed errors of judgment, which have entailed loss of popularity, which has sometimes been irrecoverable, but generally, when they are men of ability, only temporary. It has been most truly said by Lord Macaulay that "these two parties" have never been the whole nation, nay "that they have never, taken together, made up a majority of the nation. Between them has always been a great mass which has not steadfastly adhered to either, which has sometimes remained inertly neutral, and which has sometimes oscillated to and fro." There cannot be a fairer representative of this class of the population than the renowned *Times* newspaper, which has, during a long series of years aimed at giving expression to the public opinion of the most influential classes in the United Kingdom, and which has maintained its entire independence of political parties. If the writer of "Current Events" were to confine himself to a declaration that he saw so many faults in both the Canadian political parties that he found himself unable to give his adhesion to either, we should have no complaint to make, and we should, moreover, be ready to admit that his monthly criticisms of the acts of both parties would be calculated to be of great service to the public. Among the evil consequences of party the greatest, probably, is the want of candor displayed to those of the opposite party. It is not sufficient to criticize the policy of a hostile party, but it is the invariable practice to charge its supporters with being influenced by dishonest intentions and motives. There are periods, too, when party feeling, always strong, among those actively engaged in the political conflict, becomes intensified. We are passing at present through one of those periods. A general election is at hand, and, throughout the entire Dominion, the rival parties are appealing to the great mass of the people in whose hands are the scales, and by whose votes it will be decided by which of the rival parties we shall be governed for the next five years. We have admitted that there are inherent imperfections in party government, but they are as nothing to the inestimable benefits which it confers; and, notwithstanding the bitterness of feeling

exhibited by the party leaders towards each other, it may be hoped that it is more apparent than real. We have had an opportunity within the last few days of perusing a book, recently printed for private circulation, entitled "Waifs in Verse" by G. W. Wicksteed, Q. C. The author, who is universally admitted to be one of the most valuable public officers that Canada has ever possessed, and who this year will have been fifty years in the service, has been induced, at the earnest solicitation of his friends, to collect and print the poetical pieces that he has thrown off from time to time at his few leisure moments. One at least of these "Waifs" was written fifty-seven years ago, while the Queen's Birthday 1878—Toasts—Governor-General and Countess of Dufferin, and a National Anthem, were all written within the last few weeks. Our reason for noticing this little volume on the present occasion is that we were much struck by a remark in the preface, which, coming as it does from one who has had as good an opportunity as any living man of knowing the real sentiments of Canadian politicians of all parties and nationalities in the old Province of Lower Canada, in United Canada, and in the Dominion, since Confederation, possesses great value. No one who has the honor of Mr. Wicksteed's acquaintance will for a moment doubt his sincerity, and his opinion is, therefore, most valuable: After stating that "I have, under divers ministers, drafted, consolidated, revised, amended, or had some not unimportant part in almost every possible bill which has originated in the House of Commons, and have worked with and for almost every minister and every member of note," Mr. Wicksteed proceeds as follows:—"I am proud to say that the best and ablest on either side have ever treated me with the utmost consideration and confidence. I am by nature and habit non-partizan and inclined to look on both sides of every question, and this was well, for no party man could perform the duties of my office with pleasure to himself or satisfaction to the House. Party spirit has run high, and members have said hard things and accused one another of all sorts of abominations in the heat of party strife; but this I can say,—no one of any party has ever asked me to draft or help to draft a bill, clause, amendment, or resolution which I do not think he honestly believed to be for the good of Canada, independent of party, and I feel sure that the foremost men on either side, whom I am proud to call my friends, might and would in their calmer mo-