

## THE PROBLEM OF GOOD GOVERNMENT.

Up to this present year of grace every country of Europe is face to face with this old problem of good government. France has passed through most strange vicissitudes—revolutions bloody and bloodless—*coups d'état* and *coups de théâtre*, and coups of every kind, and yet is now feeling at the roots of old and new ideas in the almost vain endeavour to find the right and do it. Germany is living an expensive and hazardous life—a large standing army, an autocratic Bureau—a discontented people, breeding Socialism; which is met by a gagged press; that is, more discontentment, and a consequent increase of danger to the State. A single glance at Austria, Italy, Russia, and Turkey will show that in those countries they have not even decided upon the goal and the way to it. They are walking among shadows and over broken ground, hoping to happen upon something good and permanent. Even England does not feel secure, or as if she had reached finality in matters political. The people are not satisfied with the present, and are afraid of the future. Great questions press for discussion and settlement. The people are sure that they have a Constitutional Government, but in these days of brilliant legislation they can hardly define the term "Constitutional." Changes are possible, and the wise refuse to prophecy, they only wait.

The United States had—with one exception—the best opportunity ever recorded in world history of solving, in a practical way, the problem of good government. There was an old-world to learn from, with its heaped up good and bad—institutions based on right, and institutions based on wrong—records and predictions to be used profitably. A Republican form of Government was adopted, of course, and yet, after more than a hundred years, scarce a nation in all the world finds political administration more difficult than the United States. The country is just a seething cauldron of political iniquity. The centre of Government has no vital connection with the extremities, and the unwieldy fabric gives promise of falling to pieces of its own weight, just as the old Roman Empire did.

The "one exception" I spoke of is Canada. When it passed into the possession of England it was peopled by only a few French-speaking people, living for the greater part in or near the cities of Montreal and Quebec. They were Roman Catholics of the best and mildest type, thoroughly Gallican, and holding to all the traditions of France with regard to the temporal supremacy of the Pope. They were not numerous enough to be called a nation, nor had they any of those qualities out of which a great people may be made. The way which British statesmen should have taken was plain enough. The French were but settlers here, existing mainly to support the Church. Here was a new world waiting for the thrift and enterprise of the Celt, and a field into which the over-crowded West might pour its millions, and the question of the day was, How shall the foundations be laid?

It was unquestionably right, and therefore just, that the conquerors should deal gently with the conquered, particularly in all matters of religious faith and practice; and England had other difficulties on her hands which made her anxious to be rid of trouble in Canada. Still, we of this day know that it was a grave blunder to have given so much power to the Roman Catholic Church in the Province of Quebec. It was taken as a British Colony; it was a home in which people might live under British rule and law, and surely the first and last care should have been taken to make it thoroughly British in its character. This was not done in the Province of Quebec. It was left in the hands of the priests.

Protestantism—speaking of it in a political sense—represents and teaches the claim of men to freedom of thought in all matters temporal and spiritual—the right of individual judgment and action based upon individual responsibility. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, represents and teaches the very opposite of that. Its primary object is to blot out direct responsibility, and to put into the hands of a few the right to control the minds and judgments of the many. Definite propositions are laid down stern and inflexible, to which the people must adapt themselves, and by which they must be governed. That hierarchical idea can never be made the foundation of a great and prosperous nation. That is demonstrated by abundance of theory and practice. Anyone travelling through the Province may tell where the hierarchical idea is in the ascendant by the prevalence of sloth and dirt and poverty. There is scarce a sign of thrift or of enterprise, the houses are miserable, and a fertile soil is running to waste.

In consequence of the exceptional advantages given to the Roman Catholic Church in the Province of Quebec, life has flowed westward, finding in the Province of Ontario freedom from the intolerance and the dead-weight of ignorance imposed upon them by the Roman Catholic Church where it had the power. The genius of Protestantism is toleration—of Roman Catholicism, intolerance. (If proof is wanted for the statement, let me say that at a meeting held in Montreal awhile ago, for the purpose of forming a "National Society" on the basis of complete toleration, a Roman Catholic stated that while personally he could accept that, the Church of which he was a member

never could and never would.) The genius of Protestantism is individual freedom and the prosperity of the whole—of Roman Catholicism, the obedience of the individual, and the whole, and the prosperity of the Church. The genius of Protestantism is in the direction of popular education—while the whole aim of Roman Catholicism is to keep the people ignorant. I speak of Roman Catholicism as represented by its ecclesiasticism; for large numbers who nominally belong to that community would have it otherwise—they would have industry and enterprise and popular education, and they know that their great enemy is the Church. And to legislate in favour of that Church—to put enormous power into the hands of such a body of men as they who represent the Roman Hierarchy here—was a grave blunder, which has been the fruitful root-soil out of which many evils have sprung.

The division of the country into Provinces I take to have been the greatest of those evils. It is true that it seemed necessary at the time, in order that the West might no longer be dragged back by the East—true also that it meant accession of territory and increased material strength—but it was a policy based upon the exigencies of the hour, and not an effort to secure the lasting good of the country. Sir John A. Macdonald, who did more than any other man to carry the measure, declared it would only last fifteen years. That is bad policy and worse patriotism which will legislate for fifteen years. No people can afford to build a political edifice which the builders tell them can only stand fifteen years. It may do for professed and paid politicians, giving them a show of work and keeping up popular excitement, but it will not do for a nation. If we build slowly, we should be sure that our work is good and will be permanent. Ten out of the fifteen years have gone, and there is a growing feeling that the blunder must be undone—the political power concentrated, and Canada made into a nation.

As a result we are the most governed, and very nearly the worst governed country in the world. We have four Parliaments—each with its Senate and Lieutenant-Governor, some of them Conservative and some of them Liberal, and all of them in some mysterious way representing British Royalty and upholding the sacred Constitution; and over those one Parliament at Ottawa, with its Senate Chamber, trying hard to please all parties, and trying harder to please and do well unto itself. This division of power is the cause of great weakness, for each Province is really self-governing, and the Dominion Parliament can have little or nothing to say in the administration of Provincial affairs.

The cost of this awkward and cumbrous machinery is enormous, for each M.P. or M.P.P. draws his pay. This probably is necessary, if not imperative in a young country like Canada, where accumulated wealth has not yet created a leisured class, but surely an effort should be made to reduce the number of those whom it is needful to pay for their services. It can scarcely be that four millions of people need 673 or more legislators. It is an expensive luxury, and one that we can ill afford.

And while there is much to be said for this indemnity—to put it in a mild way—to our political representatives to the effect that it enables us to command the best talent in the country—it is beyond question that great evils arise out of it. It puts a premium upon idleness and incapacity. Young men are tempted to give up the hard and dull work of business, or a profession, and take to politics as a way of living. In many cases the "indemnity" and the "mileage" and the small patronage they are able to dispense make up more in money than they could ever hope to earn in any other way. Others, possessing capacity, are fascinated by the excitement and great possibilities that pertain to political life, and enter it with enthusiasm—only to wake up by and by to find that ambition and achievement are not the same thing, and that the best years of life have been wasted in a strife for the impossible—but it is too late to turn to the business or the profession, and they become mere partizans and place-hunters, and political alms seekers in general.

And then, mark the shiftings and changes to which our leaders have to lend themselves. Sir John A. Macdonald dare not be too explicit about the protective tariff in Ontario for fear of giving alarm to the people of Nova Scotia. Mr. Mackenzie has to wink at bits of jobbery here and there, and to shake hands with the Catholics now and then just to get their votes. A clean and consistent political course is simply impossible for either party, unless it would sacrifice present prospect of place and power. Neither party dares to deal in an out and out way with the Ultramontanes, and neither party will dare to deal decisively with the question of Orangeism. The policy of each is simply tentative—a living from hand to mouth, from session to session. The party in Opposition only anxious to create difficulties for the party in place, and the party in place only anxious to tide them over.

To form a Dominion Parliament Cabinet is enough to drive any man mad. The poor Premier is not free to choose the most competent men of his party, but each Province must have its representative. Imagine the Earl of Beaconsfield or Mr. Gladstone having to form a Cabinet in that way. A lot of able men have come from Scotland, but