

must rest on some support firmer than the transitory wishes of a majority of people. Under our modern English Constitution we cannot secure that the House of Commons shall even debate the gigantic constitutional innovations which it is prepared to enact.

Another great and most dangerous effect of our present system of government is that it stimulates instead of mitigating the influence of Party. Under the present conditions, neither the Unionist minority in Ireland nor the Home Rule minority in England exerts its rightful influence. The Referendum gets rid of this defect in our scheme of representation. For example—in the question, “should the Home Rule Bill of 1893 or a like measure pass into law?” Now if every man had a vote each would have its true weight. Both the Unionist minority in Ireland and the Home Rule minority in England would each exhibit its true strength.

Before introducing the Referendum into Canada it would be wise to return to some countries in which the Referendum has been introduced and see if it has not been a distinct success. In Switzerland the Referendum has been the form of government for a number of years. The direct results have been so many and so various that any answer, except on broad lines, would take a book instead of a paragraph. The great thing it has done has been to develop a feeling of social solidarity and brotherhood. One Swiss statesman wrote, “that every time they had a Referendum voting they had a real and vital communion or common action for the common good; and whether the measure was defeated or passed, it resulted in an accession of knowledge to the common people for future action.” To-day Switzerland has more practical community of interests, with perhaps less of noisy agitation, than any country in the world. Mr. Pomeroy, President of the National Direct Legislation League, says: “There is not to-day a single public man in Switzerland openly opposed to the Referendum, and of course not a single party.”

Nor is Switzerland the only country in which the Referendum exists. In France there is a Direct Legislation League, which is actively agitating, and the French cities have a large amount of municipal Direct Legislation. The same is true of Belgium and Holland, to a certain extent of Prussia and Austria, and to a limited extent of Italy. It is still more true of Great Britain where municipal matters are very frequently voted on, and parliamentary elections are to-day in reality a Referendum on one great national question—even more so than the Presiden-