

tain features between Mr. Mercier's plea of innocence and those of Sir Hector Langevin and Mr. Chapleau, in the Ottawa investigations. In all three cases, though the most outrageous exactions and frauds were being perpetrated in the departments, the Ministers were wonderfully innocent of all knowledge of the dishonest transactions. The whole guilt rests upon the shoulders of the wicked subordinates. Mr. Mercier's confidence has been, according to his own version of the affair, as heartlessly betrayed by his trusted Pacaud, as was that of Sir Hector by Perley, or that of Mr. Chapleau by Senecal. Perhaps, as Mr. Pacaud had no official position, the parallel would be still closer if in Sir Hector's case we substituted McGreevy for Perley. Another point of resemblance between the two cases last indicated is that in each the money filched from the public chest was put to party, not personal uses. But strong as is the presumption of guilty connivance against the Quebec Premier—and it would perhaps be hard to show that it is any stronger in his case than in that of Sir Hector—it cannot be denied that his explanation is plausible and skilful. He contends that the Government had nothing to do either with Mr. Armstrong or Mr. Pacaud, that Mr. Armstrong never had or made a claim against the Government. The Government simply placed the money in the hands of its Commissioner for payment, in strict accordance with the terms on which the appropriation was made. Mr. Armstrong's arrangement was with the company. The latter having agreed to pay Mr. Armstrong \$175,000 in settlement of his claim, the Government had nothing to do but hand the amount to its Commissioner, to be paid over according to agreement. If, says Mr. Mercier in effect, Mr. Armstrong was weak enough to let Mr. Pacaud have the lion's share of the sum, he has only his own folly to blame. But just there is one of the points of difficulty. The fact that Mr. Armstrong, a shrewd business man, and evidently fond of money, should have consented to hand back \$100,000 to Pacaud, points to the conclusion that there must have been more in the affair than meets the eye. Probably the Commissioners will bring out the facts, and show whether there was not a motive in Mr. Armstrong's generosity, and a method in the whole transaction. In the constitutional argument Mr. Mercier certainly reasoned well and clearly. He took the position we anticipated, in claiming the right of the Government to advise the Governor in respect to the commission. In consenting to the appointment of those named by the Governor he acted shrewdly, either as a matter of policy, or to avoid a disagreeable alternative. The proceedings of the Commission will be watched with interest. Meanwhile the heated discussion of Provincial and Constitutional rights which is going on in Quebec looks suspiciously as if Mr. Mercier anticipated failure before the Commission and was preparing for a struggle on other grounds. Meanwhile it is but fair to withhold judgment in his case, as in that of others, till the evidence is heard.

IN common, no doubt, with most Canadian journals—those, at least, of the non-partisan order—we hail the close of the Parliamentary session with a feeling of relief never before experienced. Ordinarily it is the duty of journals which interest themselves in public affairs to scrutinize the measures and proposals of the respective parties with reference to the political principles involved and to forecast, as they may be able, the probable effects upon the well-being and progress of the commonwealth. This session, as our readers too well know, attention has been of necessity almost wholly absorbed in the investigation of a succession of charges of malfeasance by Ministers and public officials, coupled with outrageous frauds perpetrated by unscrupulous individuals and firms having dealings with the Government. Even now, when both our readers and we would gladly escape from the atmosphere of public scandals which we have been so long forced to breathe, we find ourselves compelled to stop and ask what reason there is to hope that the daylight which has been let in upon the doings which have humiliated Canada in the eyes of the world has driven off the causes of corruption? We are forced reluctantly to conclude that the chief sources of the evil still remain. Somewhat vigorous measures have been taken to repress the streams, but the fountains are untouched. The primary causes, as they exist in a defective political system, are still at work. The English papers, which have followed the investigations with unwonted interest, have pointed out these causes very clearly. The London Times puts its finger

upon the seat of the disease in a single sentence: "The most alarming feature in all these stories of corruption is the close alliance between fraud and party organization." Closely connected with this is the point touched by the *Economist*, which, after describing the workings of corruption as disclosed in the investigations, says: "The only chance of a Department being pure in those circumstances is when it has no patronage to sell." The sum is this. Money must be had in large sums by the party organizations to enable them to win elections. Ministers must have large patronage that they may reward the party zeal which supplies the party funds. The party funds keep the party leaders in power, the party patronage rewards the party zeal. The circle is complete. That political gratitude which has been aptly described as a sense of favours to come is the force which keeps the whole machinery in motion. Have any measures been taken, any pledges given, for the introduction of a better system? Let the uproar which disgraced one of the last sittings of the Commons answer. The Opposition resorted to rowdiness to prevent the passage of an appropriation. The Government supporters responded with rowdiness to prevent the delivery of a speech, or rather the reading of an extract, designed to prevent or delay the making of the appropriation. What was the item? Only a paltry \$4,000 for the erection of a post office in a village or town in which the annual postal revenue is less than half that sum, while towns, represented by Opposition members, whose postal business is ten times as large, have for years asked in vain for a public building. The tactics of the Opposition were desperate and indefensible, yet they were powerless in the face of a majority ready to vote the public money to fulfil a party pledge, or purchase party support. The case is typical, and shows how little reason the country has to hope for any radical reform in the near future.

TO whatever extent the investigations of the present session may have tended towards improving the quality of Parliamentary morals, no one can claim that they have raised the level of Parliamentary manners. Some of the scenes which have been of almost daily occurrence in the Committee Rooms, and by no means rare on the floors of Parliament, have apparently beggared the descriptive powers of the correspondents. Honourable members have again and again hurled at each other epithets and insinuations which would scarcely be tolerated in a respectable bar-room. Some of the newspapers are crying out for a dissolution and a general election. We are not sure that the state of feeling that has been engendered between the two parties, as indicated by such occurrences, would not afford of itself, apart from other considerations, a valid reason for dissolution. One might well despair of seeing any useful legislation reached by two parties so evenly balanced and so intensely exasperated against each other. It may be that during the few months that will elapse before another session, the fierce passions aroused may have time to cool, and that all parties will come together again in the winter in a better frame of mind. In any case it should not certainly be too much to expect that the members of the Canadian Senate and Commons should be at least Canadian gentlemen of the best type, and should treat each other as such. In this connection we cannot refrain from making an observation on a kindred topic. We have more than once had occasion to speak in the highest terms not only of the gentlemanly conduct, but of the high-minded courtesy and fairness of the leader of the Opposition. Generally his example in such respects is such as some of his own adherents would do well to follow. Many admirers of Mr. Laurier were, we are sure, pained to perceive that he deemed it not unworthy of his reputation to garble, in the Langevin debate, a quotation from a speech of the late Sir John A. Macdonald, by omitting its explanatory and qualifying clause, thereby exposing himself to the severe reproof administered by Mr. McCarthy. There is on both sides of the House far too much of that kind of misquotation, for it is nothing else, but we have always believed the leader of the Opposition incapable of it. It may be argued, it is true, that the concluding part of the sentence which he omitted does not disprove the admission apparently made in the first part, viz., that the Government did bribe the people with their own money, but it was evidently so intended, and should in all fairness have been given for what it is worth. We charitably hope that the omission was due to failure of memory, in the heat of debate, though it is but reasonable to suppose that such quotations are usually made ready beforehand.

IT is not wonderful, in view of the history of the Ottawa investigations during the present session, that Mr. Girouard and others should have lost confidence, if they previously had any, in the Parliamentary Committee as a tribunal for the trial of members of Parliament. It is certainly remarkable to one who looks at it from an independent or philosophical standpoint, that in so many instances in which it has become the solemn duty of each member to weigh carefully the evidence presented and form his own unbiassed and righteous conclusion, those conclusions should, with almost absolute uniformity, have followed the lines of political cleavage. This fact certainly suggests another conclusion that it is not pleasant to reach, one that, to say the least, reflects no credit upon human nature as represented in Canadian public life. Yet it by no means follows that more satisfactory results would have been attained had these cases been tried in the courts, since the very same influence, the bias begotten of partisan feeling, would almost surely have been present in the minds of the jurors, and have led to similar disagreements, unless all happened to belong to the same party. The vice is inherent in the party system. The tendency of the juror, whether he be a member of Parliament or a private citizen, to give a public man on his own side of politics the benefit of the doubt, which he would not give to one on the other side, is well-nigh irresistible, though it operates, we may hope, without the consciousness of the individual. Touching this point there was a refreshing, not to say amusing, *naïveté* in a remark made by Lieut.-Governor Angers in one of his letters in his correspondence with Premier Mercier, recently published. To Mr. Mercier's objection to the selection of a certain newly appointed judge as a commissioner, on the ground that he was not long since, before his elevation to the bench, a strong party man, Mr. Angers replies, in effect, with apparently a touch of horror, that the objection is inadmissible, inasmuch as it would imply that the judge in question had not put aside all party feeling when he ascended the bench! His Honour evidently forgot that even judges are but men. The only way to rise above the influence of party prejudices is to rise above the spirit of partisanship. There is reason to hope that some progress is being made in this direction, and it will be strange if the events of the present session do not have the effect of largely increasing the number of citizens who determine henceforth to free themselves from the fetters of partyism and vote only for the best men and the best measures, according to their own unbiassed judgments. Difficulties may arise in consequence of apparent conflicts between these two rules of action, but it is more than doubtful whether any circumstances can justify an honest elector in casting his vote for any man whom he does not believe to be of irreproachable character and high moral principles.

REPLYING to a question by Mr. Davin, Sir John Thompson said, the other day, that the Government must have the fullest information before adopting a change of policy by granting second homesteads in the North-West, seeing that to grant the claims of those who desired second homesteads would involve the giving up of probably two million acres of the public domain. There is a good deal to be said in favour of granting the privilege of taking second homesteads, as one of the most potent inducements for bringing in the settlers, who are now the great want of the North-West. Nevertheless we are glad to see that it has at last dawned upon the minds of the Ministers that the public domain, even in the North-West, is not absolutely illimitable and inexhaustible. The day will most surely come when Canada will vainly regret that the policy of economy and caution in this respect had not sooner commended itself to the Government. The *Winnipeg Commercial*, of September 21, has a vigorous article upon the dissipation of the public domain, setting forth facts that should be known and pondered by every man interested in the future of Canada. Setting out from the fact shown in a return recently brought down at Ottawa, that no less than 42,000,000 acres of land in Manitoba and the Territories have been already granted to railways, the *Commercial* proceeds to unfold the meaning of these figures. It points out that the territory thus given to the railways alone is larger by one million acres than the whole Province of Manitoba, swamps, muskegs, etc., included, while but a small section of either that Province or the Territories is as yet supplied with railways. It is thus seen that "if land grants are to continue until all parts are opened up by railway, at the same proportionate rate as in the past,