

IRISH CANADIAN CATHOLIC JOURNALS

ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The Old Fear of Politics

The "Freeman," of St. John, N.B., skirinishes around the fringe line regarding the issue from a Catholic standpoint of the elections now in course of progress. Under the caption of "Non-Partisan Advice," it says:—

We shall soon be in the throes of a general election. In Canada the spirit of party will be excited, and the spirit of party is an unclean spirit. Every effort will be made, every muscle strained by the two great political factions to ensure the triumph and dominance of the political creeds which they each follow. Scrupulousness of statements, of methods, of motives, will be for the time discarded and cast aside as unsuited to the needs of a political contest. Every device known to the partisan newspaper fraternity will be employed to misrepresent the utterances, belittle the popularity, and vilify the characters of political opponents. Facts favorable to the opposite party will be ignored or deliberately falsified, and the actual chances of success of either side will be discounted with scorn by their opponents. All this for the purpose of deceiving the electors and disgusting or discouraging them.

The electors are after all the court of last resort, and every means must be employed to match a partisan victory from their decision. That is politics as our party journals understand them, and mean employment indeed it is, and suitable to venal pens. At the same time, with this crusade of journalistic mendacity and misrepresentation, a campaign of effective personal work is organized and carried on by the men who are hangers-on and party-healers, and politicians on a small scale. In its employment of the meanest canvasses and its appeals to the innate mercenary-ness of humanity this campaign is, perhaps, on a still lower plane than that which the party journals are conducting. They have to work openly; their methods can be seen and examined, and the issues they raise fairly met; but there is no way to meet and overcome the labyrinthine crookedness of the political agent working in secrecy except by counterplotting of a similar mean character.

There is thus induced at election times such a vitiation of the moral atmosphere of the community as must disgust every self-respecting man. In fact the evils attendant on party system are now so obvious and weigh so strongly on the public conscience that the fear is that politics will be left to the men who make a living by them, while the reputable portion of the community will, as in the United States, withdraw entirely from active participation in them. We may not indeed get that far, because the opportunities for public plunder will not for long years be so great as in the United States, but we shall certainly have, and are having, our proportionate share of the evil.

This acute danger of intense partisanship is a real danger to the warm-blooded Celt. It is difficult for him to take things in moderation. He is apt to believe that all is good on his side, and all unmitigated badness on the side opposed to him. He is not likely to stop and think, as he should, that as there are good people on the other side so there must be a fair amount of good in the principles of that side. Unmitigated badness is found nowhere above ground. Men are good and bad, but no party has a monopoly of either quality.

All this is commonplace truth, we admit, but it is surprising how apt some people are to lose sight even of the commonplace under stress of unusual excitement. It follows, therefore, that a deliberate respect for the political opinions of our fellow-men should be entertained by all. If these opinions agree with yours, so much the better for you and the more encouraging to both; if they are opposed to yours, you must bring yourself to realize that they are not on that account necessarily immoral or unpatriotic, or even ill-founded. You have not the monopoly of political infallibility. Your neighbor may be brighter, shrewder, better informed than you, with a wider insight into issues and a calmer judgment to decide upon them. He is simply exercising his right of private judgment as to what is best for the country, and this is one of the sacred prerogatives of Canadian citizenship. He is protected in the enjoyment of the privilege of thinking for himself by the fundamental law of the country. Restrain, then, the bumpiness which might lead you to believe that in matters political you are the law and the prophets, and your opinion the only one deserving of consideration.

Catholic Candidates

The "Catholic Register," of Toronto, casts aside the skirmishing tactics and indulges in a little fusillade of philosophy peculiar to the new surroundings in its sanctum. It is opposed to the idea of Catholic candidates, except those who are prepared to swallow the dose prepared by one or other of the two political parties. Quoting reasoning this, in the light of some of its utterances the Toronto "World" lately claimed to have seen a letter marked private in which the writer urged that Catholics should be very quiet—that their nomination as candidates for Parliamentary distinction would injure the Liberal party. It is very easy to mark a letter

private. It is difficult, however, to base an argument upon its contents. The fact that it is to be considered private by the receiver should make him unready to show it. That others are made aware of it is evidence that either the writer or the receiver was not very anxious to keep the matter secret, perhaps both. We have not seen a copy of the letter. We are not so much in the confidence of the Toronto "World" that we can get a glimpse of letters which should never have been written, or if written should have been treated with the greatest confidence. Nor are we prepared to relate to others—our general readers—all that we have heard and seen. It is not the first time that the Toronto "World" has treated private correspondence in this manner. What was gained by the receiver showing the letter does not appear; nor can we see that the "World" will coax our people over by such a trumped up case as seems to be contained in the letter.

What is wrong about a Catholic candidate? We know no Catholic, Liberal or Conservative, entering the field simply because he is a Catholic. A man who would try that experiment had better keep out of politics—he is not in his right place. He is posing for a martyr, and he had better go off to China. Our Catholic politicians have some sense—as much sense as the writer and receiver of the letter referred to. Let us take an example. In Central Toronto our esteemed co-worker, J. J. Fox, Esq., M.P.P., was offered the nomination by the Conservatives. No one supposes that he was selected merely because he was a Catholic. Nor was he told that his candidature would be an injury because of his religion. Mr. Fox, however, has declined, preferring to remain in the Provincial Legislature. There is another case in point in the same riding, Mr. L. V. McBrady, a young and rising Catholic lawyer, is a candidate for the Liberal Convention. He does not seek it because he is a Catholic. He seeks it because he is a Liberal, and has worked well and successfully in the cause ever since he came to man's estate. He is of the right age to enter politics. His thirty odd years are much more in his favor than against him. He is about the same age as the candidate for a neighboring constituency. He is a ready, forcible speaker; and in this capacity he has won ringing praise from nearly every portion of the province. He is going not as a Catholic, but as a Liberal to the Liberal Convention. He goes there with the encouragement of strong men in the party, and with the best wishes of countless friends. The convention do do itself honor if it selects Mr. McBrady. Who shall say that his candidature is an injury to the Liberal party? As with all others seeking Parliamentary honors, Mr. McBrady's religion is out of the question. Let him stand upon his merits as a Liberal.

Catholic Appointments

The London "Catholic Record" discusses some features of the bigotry manifested by Protestants in opposing Catholic appointments. It fails to recognize the fact that much of the ostracism thus exercised is due in no small measure to the lack of unity amongst our people and their indifference in regard to public matters generally. There is also a kind of a Provincial rivalry in regard to national representation in Ottawa against Quebec, and the Provinces down by the sea against both—which has contributed in no small degree to help on the shrewd Catholic party men to continue their trade of exclusion. We, however, give our readers the views of the "Record" on the subject, in order that they may form their own conclusions.

We publish in another column a communication from an "Ontario Catholic" on the subject which forms the heading to this article. Our design in pointing out the shortcomings of the Government in regard to Catholic appointments was to make it aware that it was pursuing a course which, if persisted in, would ultimately alienate its Catholic supporters. This, if heeded, instead of weakening the Government, would add materially to its strength. It was the want of this independent action on the part of the Catholic press which in former times enabled Sir John Macdonald and the Tory party to utterly ignore the Irish Catholic element in Ontario in the distribution of the patronage, although the vast majority of the Catholics had for several decades fought shoulder to shoulder with his Protestant supporters, and thus achieved many notable victories for the Conservative cause. He was able to retain the adherence of the Irish Catholics to his party by pointing to the fanatical and intolerant utterances of George Brown and his followers against the Catholic Church. This means the Catholics were for many years prevented from seeking any new alliance. So that when they were following in the one beaten track of what was then the Orange ascendancy party, Sir John when an election was over, and he was safe for five years, treated his Catholic supporters with indifference.

Such a condition can never again exist. The Catholics of Ontario will treat the parties seeking their support on their merits, and no party, or individual representing any party, is considered unworthy the confidence of the Catholic electorate, support need not be expected from that source. The subsidized press of any party will have no influence on the Catholic electors in this day of

widespread newspaper literature. The journal that is independent and fearless in its denunciation of wrong-doing will never be the upholder of it, nor the apologist for "liberalism," no matter under what guise it may appear. And he who, as a member of a government, forgets to apply true Liberal principles in his conduct to any portion of the electorate will soon find that portion of the electorate in undivided antagonism to him.

We could not point out individual cases where injustice has been done, as suggested by our correspondent. No one desires to have his name paraded before the public as one who is disappointed in his ambitions. It would make him a target for gibes and jeers as a disappointed office-seeker.

In the case of Catholics the office seldom seeks the man. It is with the greatest reluctance, apparently, that office is bestowed upon him. With the professors of any other creed, or even he who is without creed, or Christian faith, it is different. In such a case a vacancy occurs, and it is filled at once. But when a Catholic is an applicant there is fear and trembling because Protestant prejudice must be considered; and, if the appointment is bestowed upon a Catholic, it is grudgingly given that all merit of the gift is lost in the manner of its bestowal.

That is not the way in which the Protestant minority in Quebec is treated. What is given there is given freely and in no niggardly spirit. When a Catholic is asked for advice let the Government recognize his merit by cheerfully making the appointment. But, if Protestant prejudice is such a sensitive plant that it must be considered whenever a Catholic is thought of, it had better be considered before Catholic speakers are requested to appear on a platform, and before Catholic electors are asked to support the party.

In England the question of a man's creed is now hardly thought of. When Lord Gormanstown—a Catholic—was some years ago sent as Governor-General to New South Wales the question of his creed was not considered by a Tory Government. Why should the Catholics of this province—who are so numerous and influential—play second or third fiddle to those whose only qualification is an inordinate amount of cheek? 'Tis high time to shake off the incubus that has fastened upon us and snatch it once and for all. Let us straighten our backs and stand erect. Let us demand a fair share in the administration of public affairs, not by virtue of our creed, but by virtue of our merits. We ask the fair-minded majority of this province to deal with us as the minority in Quebec has been dealt with. We do not, as we have said, ask preferment on the score of our religion; but we ask that we be not crowded out of public life because we happen to kneel at a different altar.

But if Catholics must still wear the badge of political serfdom, they themselves will be to blame, for they have the power to right their wrongs—the power to put an end to the bosses who usurp the functions of the electorate and tamper with the most solemn obligations of the franchise.

A BOER LIBRARY.

A trooper of the Dublin Hunt contingent of the Imperial Yeomanry, who was taken prisoner with many others at Lindley, writes a letter to his mother, and a fine circular library consisting of two copies of the Half-Penny Comic, a year old; three pages from an equally antiquated number of Sketch, and three pamphlets about Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, partly printed in English and partly in Dutch. The fact that these well-thumbed pamphlets bear the appearance of having been read and re-read, makes me think Brother Boer knows a good thing when he sees it, and there are a lot of us who would feel all the better if we had some of the pills instead of the pill literature. However, we keep the 'library' in circulation, and like Mark Tapley, endeavor to take as much enjoyment out of the situation as we can.

WON THE SCOTCHMEN.

On one occasion the late Lord Chief Justice Russell went to help the Liberals in a certain campaign. He began his speech with some very badly pronounced Scotch. After the confusion caused by his blunder had subsided Sir Charles Russell (as he was then said) "Gentlemen, I do not speak Scotch, but I vote Scotch." Tremendous applause followed. With this his hold on the audience was secured.

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