

SOME STRONG PLAIN TALK BY AN HONEST LIBERAL

W. E. Raney's Earnest Address on "Christian Citizenship"—
Sincere and Out-spoken Criticism on Party
Conditions and Methods.

Mr. W. E. Raney, secretary of the Private Bills Committee of the Legislature, and a Liberal, delivered an address at Toronto Junction on Monday on "Christian Citizenship," from which we take the following:—

By way of expiation of their sins of the past few months, and as an earnest of better things in the future, every member of the Ontario Legislature ought to be sentenced to learn by heart Emerson's essays on Politics, Character and Manners. If there were some power competent and wise enough to impose and enforce such a sentence, what legislation—or, perhaps, what absence of it—we should have in 1904. Imagine one of the Government members standing upon his legs and thundering at the Opposition this choice Emersonian sentiment:

"Every man's nature is a sufficient advertisement to him of the character of his fellow. My right and my wrong is their right and their wrong. Whilst I do what is fit for me, and abstain from what is unfit, my neighbor and I shall often agree in our means and work together for a time to one end. But whenever I find my dominion over myself not sufficient for me, and undertake the direction of him also, I overstep the truth and come into false relation to him. . . . This undertaking for another is the blunder which stands in colossal ugliness in the government of the world. It is the same thing in numbers as in a pair, only not quite so intelligible. . . . We think our civilization near its median, but we are yet only at the cockerowing and the morning star. In our barbarous society the influence of character is in its infancy."

And imagine this sentiment being received by the Opposition with thunder of desk pounding. How the practical politician, who might chance to be in the gallery, and hear these things, would marvel! To him such talk would be the crackling of thorns under a pat. There would be no substance in it. It would give no promise of fishing concessions or timber limits. But in the face of such sentiments how much of the oratory of 1903 would be instantly shamed into the limbo of forgotten things.

But we have no power competent to compel the legislature or the political parties to abandon the ghosts and phantoms of things for the realities. The only possible appeal from the legislature is to public opinion, and public opinion appears at this moment to be in such a state of imp collapse as scarcely to warrant us in hoping that Philip sober will attend to what Philip drunk refuses to listen to.

THE LEGISLATIVE SPECTACLE.

Surely there never was a more extraordinary spectacle than we have had at the Queen's Park this year. Men divide in politics on well-defined lines, as the free traders against the protectionists, the capitalistic class against the operatives, and so on. But in the matters which have troubled the political waters of Ontario these latter months, there has been no party principle involved, or if there has been, as in the appointment, for instance, of a commission instead of a committee to investigate the Gamey charges, it has been a principle, in which each party found itself taking ground in opposition to its traditions—and yet in every case the party line being marked out by the leaders, the party-members of the legislature, the party newspapers, and, so far as it has given tongue, the rank and file have followed "like dumb-driven cattle." And it has been done with such vehemence and so much braggadocio, so much heat and sound and fury, that one might imagine we were back in the middle ages again, and that some great theological doctrine were involved. It is beyond question that if the Premier, instead of proposing a commission, had stood by his first thought of sending the matter to a committee of the House, every Liberal in the House would have applauded his action. What the Opposition would have done in that case may or may not be matter of conjecture. Or, if the Government had offered to allow the Opposition to name one of the judges, that also would have been justified by the Liberals in the House as the proper thing to be done. But the Government, having decided upon a commission and having determined to name both the judges, every Liberal

must accept the action as logical and orthodox Liberalism on penalty of excommunication by bell, book and candle. And not only must Liberals accept the method adopted for ascertaining the guilt or innocence of the accused Minister, they must in like manner loyally accept the result and shout themselves hoarse over the triumphant vindication of the Provincial Secretary on the theory apparently that the Government is entitled to the confidence of the party as long as it can keep all its members out of the penitentiary. One is reminded of Bishop Whately's remark that he who would desire to have an accurate description of party spirit need only go through Paul's description of charity, reversing every point in the detail.

NO REAL PARTY ISSUES.

There is a widespread feeling that we in Ontario are approaching a new political order of things. It is admitted that there are practically no issues dividing the parties as at present constituted for provincial purposes. But though there is little or nothing holding the political parties together or apart, but names and traditions and the cohesive power of spoils, present or prospective, partisan intolerance is, if anything, more fierce than ever before. If an independent journal expresses an honest opinion it is a treacherous newspaper. A Liberal will frankly say what he thinks to other Liberals, and a Conservative to other Conservatives, but if a Liberal or a Conservative stands squarely upon his legs and straightens his spinal column, publicly calls a spade a spade, and tells plain unvarnished truth to his political friends, he is a Judas Iscariot, and he is already hanged himself. And the singular and at the same time the hopeful thing about the situation is that the intelligent people of the province have for the most part nothing but contempt for the party fireworks. They may endure them for some time longer, but at some point their patience will break and then we shall have a fresh order of things.

It has been well said that the desperate problem of modern democracy is the creation and expression of public opinion. Public opinion is the conscience of the whole people, uninfluenced by selfish considerations. Grafters and spoliemen cannot therefore be its exponents. On the contrary it is the one thing that they have to dread. Public opinion prompts the attack of public abuses without hope of personal gain. This necessary absence of selfish motive accounts for the difficulty of maintaining an effective organization for the expression of public opinion.

But though public opinion in Ontario appears at this moment to be in the jelly-fish state of development, I am satisfied that it is really not so bad as that. There is a brain and a heart and biceps that can be developed and trained. And there is work to be done to keep the back-bone straight and the muscles hard, once public opinion has been awakened from the chloroform of partyism. Party men of standing in the community and in the church will express mild surprise if any attempt is made to apply the ordinary rules of honor and honesty to elections and to political methods generally, as though truth had no relation to government. We are in the habit of pointing the finger of scorn to the politicians of the United States.

FOETID FOG OR PERJURY.

The newspapers and magazines have made us familiar with the shame of Minneapolis, and St. Louis and Delaware and Rhode Island. But in the scandals which have disgraced the public affairs of the United States this at least is to be said, when disclosure came the people learned the truth, and in many cases the guilty men, some of them millionaires, are now serving terms in prison. Here, on the other hand, a great political scandal is enveloped in such a foetid fog of perjury that even after the report of a Royal Commission the people are left to guess whether the Government attempted to bribe a member of the Opposition or whether the Opposition entered into a criminal conspiracy to overthrow the Government. This much, however, is certain, that members of one party or the other were guilty of a great crime. The \$2,000 handed into court by the impetuous Mr. Gamey is corporeal and incontrovertible evidence in the fact. In the language of the newspapers on both sides, "Where did the money come from?" I had no intention of attempting to answer that question, but if the public opinion of the province could be expressed, free from partisan influence, it would not be necessary to argue further about the report of the commissioners. It may, for instance, have been a mere coincidence that at the very time that

certain gentlemen were acting as go-betweens in the negotiations for the conversion of Mr. Gamey, one of them was being assisted by officials of the Government and the Liberal party to acquire for \$250 Government property worth \$9,000. It may have been a mere coincidence that while another gentleman who figured in the case was confiding to persons in Rochester his peculiar reasons for being there, the Minister was asking a witness to forget "irrelevant" testimony. These things and many more of a like nature may have been pure coincidences, and the question simply is how many coincidences of that kind would be required to lead an intelligent and sensitive public opinion to a conclusion?

And, unfortunately, the Gamey-Stratton scandal is not an isolated circumstance. It is only the latest and worst of a series of events of the most discreditable character, for which the followers of the political parties have been called upon to apologize. Some of us have grown tired of the role.

Then, what is to be done about it? There is only one remedy. Public opinion must be aroused—created, if need be, and organized. Honest men must publicly denounce dishonesty, not in the other party—that is too easy—but in their own parties. That is to say, we require not only honest men, but honest men. The miserable inuendo recriminations of the parties have no relation whatever to a true public opinion. And not only must we have men of honesty and bravery, but we must have men of energy and perseverance. Eternal conflict is the price of good government.

I do not forget the penalty that is visited on the party man who has the courage to tell the whole truth. But if none of us are willing to incur the penalty then we deserve to be condemned to listen forever to the beating of the hollow party tom-toms and to be governed forever by men whose only motive is their utter contempt alike for us and for public opinion.

One of the great party journals has declared that there can be no remedy for the existing evil conditions until the best men in both political parties unite to shake off "the discreditable following." There is no hope of such momentous heart-thumping within either of the parties, but, though such a movement would get no aid or comfort from the political parties, I am notified that the real leaders, men like the Premier and the Attorney-General, would be only too glad of a movement that would relieve them of "the discreditable following."

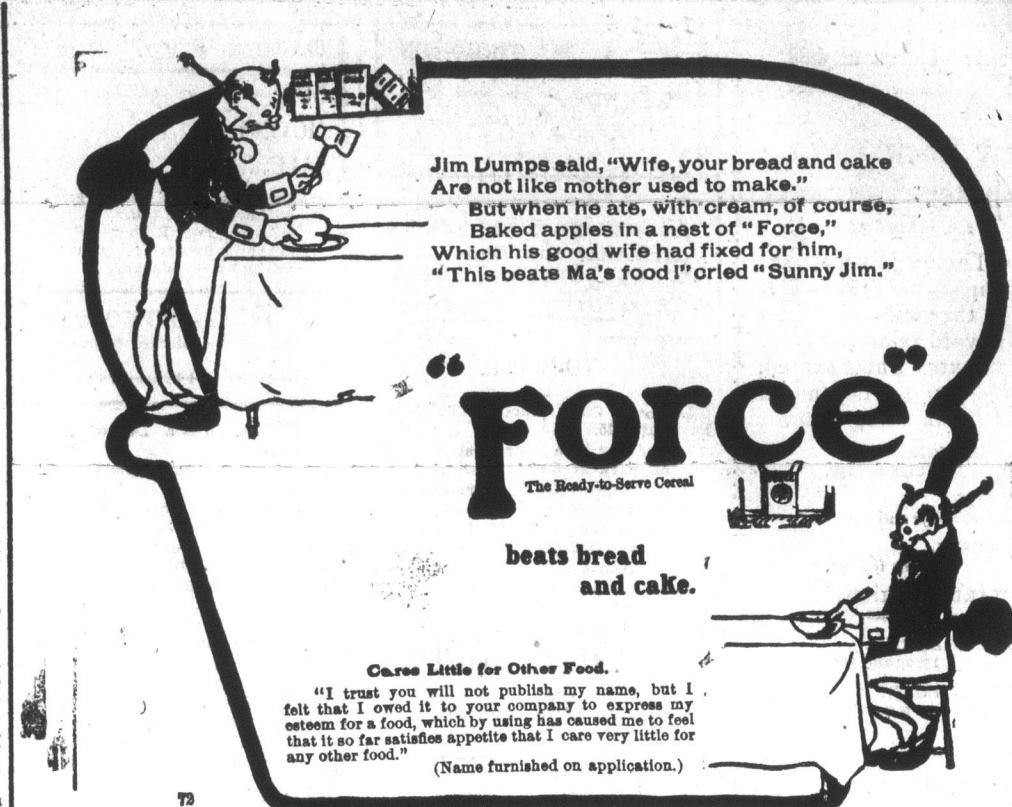
LICENSE ADMINISTRATION.

Mr. Raney's address contains an explicit declaration of dissatisfaction with the management of Provincial affairs by the Ross Government. He condemns the ascendancy of the machine element in the councils of the Government and of the Liberal party. He is disgusted with the administration of the License Law. He backs his censure of the work of the License Commissioners with detailed reasons. The village of Sutton, in the constituency of the Hon. E. J. Davis, has decreased in population. On the 1st of May, 1902, the License Commissioners of North York found that the census returns made it necessary for them to cut off one of the three licenses then existing in the village. The hotelkeepers were Conservatives and one was a Liberal. For obvious reasons," says Mr. Raney, dropping into the cynical vein, which seems inevitable when practical politics are under analysis, "the good tactician of the village, until after the coming of the Provincial elections, all three were accordingly granted an extension that would carry them over polling day. During this time it is said that one of the Conservative hotelkeepers got a light and became very active in support of the Liberal candidate, who, as is well known, was, and is, a Minister of the Crown. On the expiry of the three months the Commissioners had to act. The solution would have been obvious but for the fact that the Conservative hotelkeeper, a man named Sheppard, had, by common consent, the best hotel in every way in the village. It was, moreover, the hotel most patronized by the travelling public. But political exigencies forbade the cutting off of the Liberal or the Conservative, and Sheppard was sacrificed. Then immediately there was a storm. Conservatives, Liberals and persons of no politics other than a sense of fairness protested. The problem was much discussed, until a happy thought occurred to some one. Jackson's Point is within the limits of the village, and in the summer time there are more people at Jackson's Point than there are in the village proper. Let us take a new census to correct the errors of the previous census. Done!" The census was taken, and by counting the Jackson's Point summer visitors and some of the people of the village, it is said, three times—once where they slept, once where they worked, and once somewhere else—the population was found to be sufficient for three licenses, and Sheppard was promptly restored to the license-holding class.

Is North York an exception? Mr. Raney gives us to understand that it is not. "This year in West York," he says, "a pretence was made of giving the temperance people a voice on the Board of License Commissioners. The administration of the law in West York had become a scandal. One man with pronounced temperance views was appointed on the Board of Commissioners. But he was only one of the three licensees at the time, where the law has been flagrantly violated for years, and where there is no need for more than one hotel, if there is need of any." East York also presents its instances of bad administration. "Down there," to quote from Mr. Raney, "they renewed ten licenses within an area of a square mile, in and about the town of East Toronto, which would be well served by two or three hotels."

It is not necessary to be a Prohibitionist to be revolted at such maladministration. It is necessary only to be a decent citizen, without pecuniary interest in the liquor traffic, and without a stake in machine politics. A law is a law, and is made to be enforced. The License Law demands especial honesty of motive in its enforcement. Its avowed purpose is to reduce the drink evil to the smallest practicable proportions. Administered with honesty and moral force by no means to be despised, License Commissioners occupy an important position. Their post is in a sense a public trust. They are bound to protect the material interests and convenience of the public. In addition, they are to a considerable extent guardians of public morals. To them is committed the practical regulation of a serious social problem.

Mr. Raney, looking about in his own district, declares that in East York the Commissioners acquiesce in an unduly large proportion of licenses; that in West York they insist on increasing the number of licenses, in the face of local protest; and that in North York public convenience is openly disregarded, and that recourse has been had to an expedient grotesque as it is immoral. His statement shows the North York Commissioners in an especially unfavorable light. According to him, they have in the Sutton case (1), used their post exclusively to advance partisan interests; (2), entirely disregarded justice and the public interest, and (3), connived in, perhaps assisted in, a lying census and an evasion of the law.



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The administration of public affairs is undergoing a serious deterioration. Electoral honesty has been assailed. The Crown Lands Department, once the pride of Ontario, has been plundered by machine politicians and greedy officials. The Liquor License Law, which touches serious questions of public morals, is badly administered. It is not a Conservative who says these things, it is a sound and life-long Liberal. The public service of the Province needs to be put on a sound basis. Mr. Raney not only makes the diagnosis, he prescribes the remedy. "The blame rests primarily with public opinion, that is to say, with us."

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