

FROM THE GALLERY

Marcella's words, as she obtains her first view of the British House of Commons, recur to us as we look down from our gallery corner into the arena of the Canadian Chamber.

How is it possible for any one, unless he has been trained to it for years, to make any effect upon such a crowd?—so irresponsible, individualist, unfused—so lacking in the qualities and excitements that properly belong to multitude. Half the men down below seem asleep under their hats; the rest indifferent. And are those languid murmurs what the newspapers call "cheers"?

Colonial Parliaments are fashioned after the Imperial House—passion and procedure are the same;—it is only a difference of place and detail. The strong men of the Colonial Governments would be leaders of the Imperial forces, did birth or environment permit. We have our Salisburys, Gladstones, Chamberlains and Churchills in every Colonial Chamber; they rise or fall, step steadily up, or drop by mighty descent into political death. They are opportunists, who grasp to success, or weaken to a failure; they show themselves petty politicians or broad statesmen—men of mark or miss. The power is the same, only the place differs.

Nay, further, if there be a question of degree, perhaps the greater vitality belongs to the Colonial Chambers, since here is manhood more nearly in touch with nature, clearer eyed, keener visioned, with the rude and indomitable "strength of the hill" within.

It is a night off;—there are many such wasted days and nights in the Canadian Parliament, where cloture is not enforced, and members may drag dry speeches to an interminable length.

A chartered bore is on his feet; his voice, thinly monotonous, drops into the silence of empty benches, save where the dozen members on either side are reading, chatting or slumbering in weary indifference of the persistent voice. The speaker continues the even tenor of his way, not one whit disturbed; he has held the floor for four hours; if he elects to continue for twice four hours, there is none to say him nay. So long as the *Hansard* men are present to duly record his words; so long as he can blazon the same triumphantly before his constituents when election time comes round,—what cares he that the time and service of the House wait upon his will? This "talking to constituents" should be managed in a way less expensive and tiresome. The game is altogether too costly for Canada.

Through the warm, misty, twinkling atmosphere we look down at the one or two leaders of Government and Opposition who pass in and out, relieving one another at intervals, but always on guard against surprises of sudden divisions.

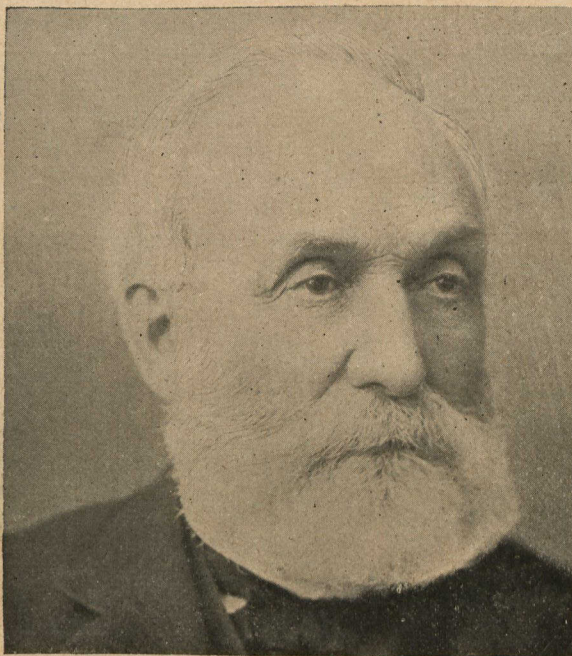
The monotonous voice has droned them into a placid amiability. Hon. David Mills is in one of the Government seats, telling a good story to Sir Adolphe Caron. The Minister of Finance enters in time to hear the last of it, and for a few minutes the three heads are close together and three genial laughs may be heard. Nicholas Flood Davin has settled down among a group of back bench Reformers—a sure promise of fun. The Comptroller of Customs leans against the Speaker's chair, rousing him from poppyland. The press gallery is playing chess,

reading, drowsing, while still the monotonous voice "talks to constituents."

Let us hie away out of the warm, sleepy chamber down the corridors into the reading room and the library, peeping into half-open doors and catching glimpses as we go.

The smoking-rooms are well filled with men deep in checkers, chess and cards. The reading-room holds a unique little group. Hon. David Mills, having finished his story, is now in close converse with Mr. D'Alton McCarthy and the member for East York; this is one of the under currents, possibly. The library, still and warm, has its lovers moving about in mute admiration, with here and there members consulting *Hansards* and histories in the pretty alcoves, or ladies bending over the latest magazines, while they wait for their especial M.P.

Down in the restaurant a cosy supper party is in progress. Upstairs, in the private rooms, are little gatherings of friendly



SIR MACKENZIE BOWELL.

groups. The messengers, officials, attendants—the whole large staff that wait upon Her Majesty's faithful Commoners—are in lazy amiable leisure, all because of that drowsy chamber and droning voice.

A night on;—a field night as it were, since the charge may be sharp, the attack sudden, and none know what an hour may bring forth.

Looking down from our gallery corner, we see the benches filled; almost every member in his place; the page boys flying about in obedience to sharp finger snaps; there is a rustle of paper, a consultation of big tomes, a general air of alertness and decision.

The leaders are in full array on either side. Sir Charles Tupper, Bart., is in his seat; they have given him the place of honor—the chair and desk of past leaders. Here it was Sir John Macdonald sat, and that third, but not lesser, Sir John. The warm, luminous air quivers as we look, obscuring for an instant the present occupant, and we see in succession the forms and features of the statesmen who have gone. They leaped to the battle; they charged and defended; the fascination of the House, its power and passion, was upon them. Yet, now our pulses chill as we think of those white-covered graves out under the winter sky, down by the stormy sea and in still Cataraqui.

The mist passes, and again we see clearly. Sir Charles Tupper is in fighting form; he

adopts no finesse; he holds no reserves, but hits straight and without meditation. He is aggressive, combative; he rouses the Opposition instantly. The debate grows spirited, swift and sharp; leader answers leader; the press pencils are flying; the hours are not leaden, but mercuric.

We glance from face to face in endeavor to gauge the power and possibilities of the men to the fore,—wherein lies their strength or weakness; which shall stand and fall in the days to come.

The Opposition leaders—Hon. Mr. Laurier, with that indefinable magnetism, that out-giving sense of absolute personal honor and sweetness so instantly felt by those who come within his radius; his staunch lieutenant, Mr. Davies, his face graven in lines of precision and nicety; Hon. David Mills, argumentative, honorable and kind; Sir Richard Cartwright, combative, provocative, a foe worthy Sir Charles Tupper's steel; these and a score of chief aides on the one side.

Across the aisle—Hon. Mr. Foster, keen astute, clever, an epitome of political ability, with eyes showing rarely kind and sympathetic; Sir Charles Tupper, wondrously aggressive and strong; Sir Adolphe Caron, smiling, insouciant, indomitable; the Minister of Railways, ruggedly resolute, a loyal man of friendships, a strong man of hatreds; Hon. Mr. Dickey, whose face, so finely honorable, refined and intellectual, bespeaks instant confidence, and Hon. Mr. Wood, his confrère in all good qualities. These are but a few of the men upon whom our glance rests with intent to divine their political influence.

For faces tell, or is it the atmosphere—the 'aura' of which theosophists speak—that impresses each of us to a greater or less degree with the characters of those we meet?

This man is a trickster; we do not know it by any outward dealing, but we feel it. This one is hard, this one unstable. All the roughness here does not alarm us, because of the kind heart which we instantly divine; while scanning this face we know that here is one who may blunder in tactics, but never in honor.

Faces and personality are woful gossips. They tell secrets about us of which we do not dream.

The debate has closed with a snap and sparkle. The House empties itself speedily from out the warmth and glow into the storm of a Canadian winter's midnight.

We pause as we descend the hill to glance back at the graceful pile, standing with turret and spire relieved against the blackness of the night sky. The snow swirls in in white gusts about the beautiful stone; it is cased, garnished, hemmed with soft lines and narrow banks of white; yet the warm glint shows mellow through the winter tracing, while beadings of twinkling lights shine brightly out, and the beacon light in the tall tower keeps watch over it all.

FAITH FENTON.

Faithful women err in this, that they think themselves the sole faithful of God's creatures.

I believe that we can get nothing in this world worth keeping, not so much as a principle or a conviction, except out of purifying flame or through strengthening peril.

Love is real: the most real, the most lasting, the sweetest, yet the bitterest thing we know.—Charlotte Brontë.