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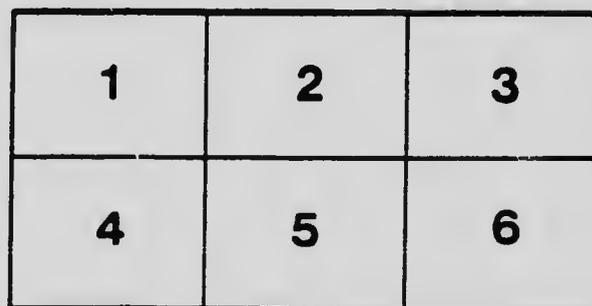
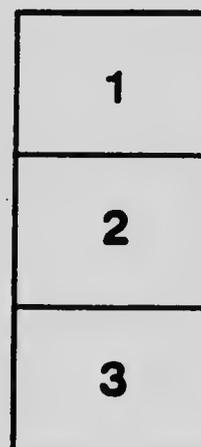
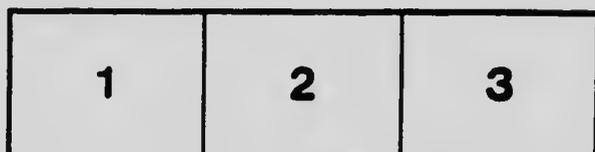
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Politics in Ontario

By

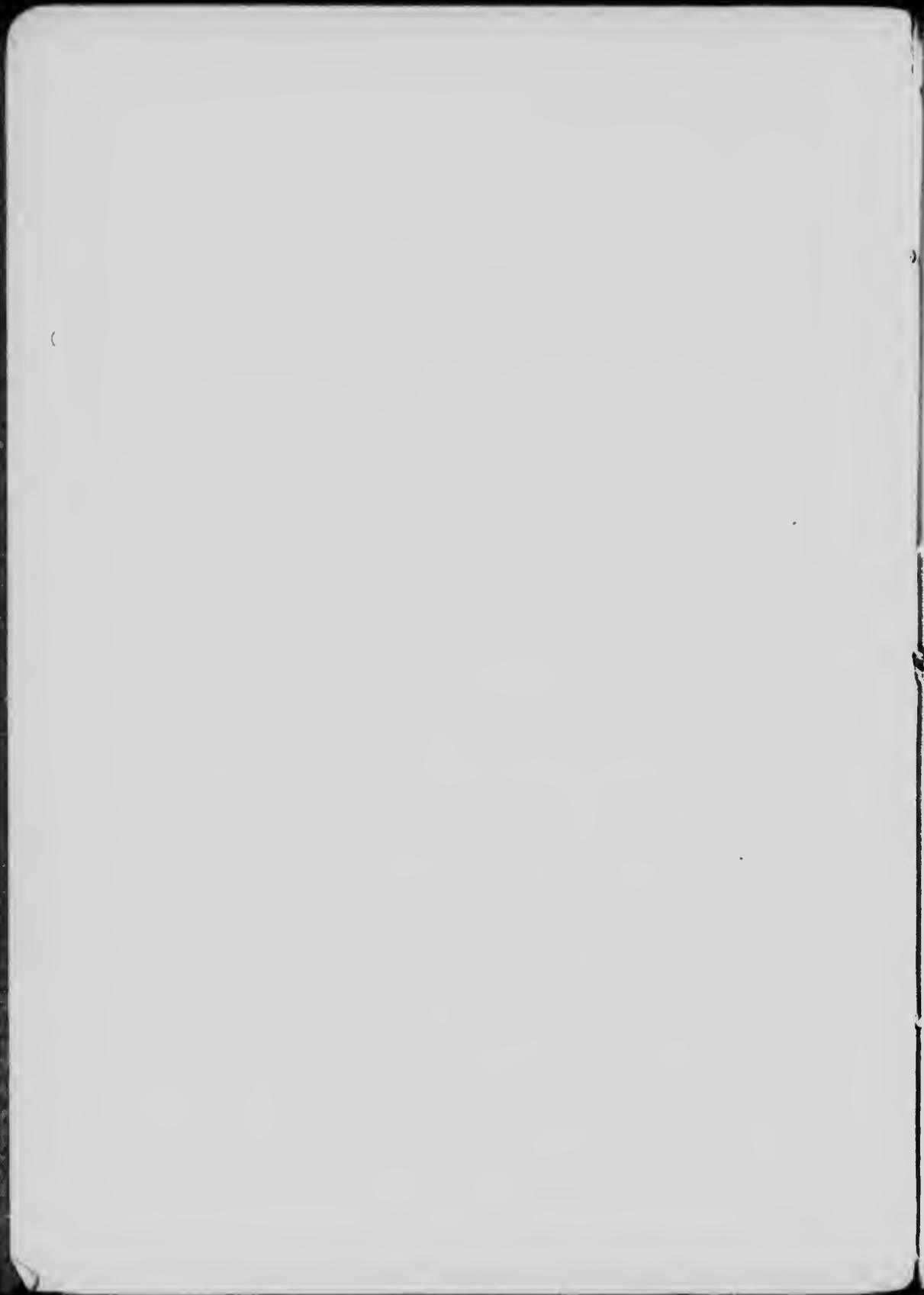
William Henry Drummond, M.D.



Politics in Ontario

By

William Henry Drummond, M.D.



POLITICS IN ONTARIO¹

YOU have been good enough to invite me here this afternoon to spend among you a short season of sweet converse, and at the same time allay the gastronomical uneasiness which naturally affects a visitor from the wilds of Quebec, after wandering for hours through your beautiful streets on a November morning.

You know that I am a quiet, and I hope unobtrusive, practitioner of medicine, and 't is seldom that I venture far from the professional nest, yet there are times when I take a brief respite from the cares of office and endeavour to study outside of the regular routine to which medical men are condemned. This is one of these times, and I trust that nothing I say at this gathering may offend, politically or otherwise, the sensibilities of even one man present.

During the political cataclysms which

¹ An address delivered before the Canadian Club of Toronto, Nov. 21, 1904.

occasionally disturb our beloved country, many facts, genuine and so-called, are presented to the free and independent electorate; discoveries never before dreamed of, from time to time rise to the surface, and from time to time sink to rise no more, but to the close student of political history, there is one fact above all others that fixes his attention and demands his unqualified admiration: namely, the wonderful vigour and vitality of the men of Ontario; for if there is a single characteristic about the men of this richly endowed province that calls for special recognition, it is their vigorous grasp of things, their power of holding on to objects dear to them. True, the birth rate of Ontario is not remarkable—that is, it does not exceed the modest rate of my own province of Quebec; but the male inhabitants of Ontario have, it seems to me, one quality far surpassing anything of the kind in the sister province, and which is simply phenomenal, namely, the power, as I said before, of “hanging on” to objects sacred to them.

Judging by political history, the son of Ontario who reaches the years of maturity, and the right to a vote, never dies. Once

his name has been enrolled upon the glorious roster of his country, his name, if not his fame, is undying. He may pass from this earth, and the place that once knew him knows him no more for months, or even years at a time. There he lies, the noble son of Ontario, perchance in some foreign land where, instead of the butternut of his native homestead, the gloomy cypress guards his lonely grave; but though the dread trumpet remains unblown, yet one blast of the old familiar party horn summons him to the same old polling booth. "Ontario, mon pays, mes amours," is the slogan which calls him to the combat. His ashes may have been scattered to the winds, or his body have become food for the worms, but his vote goes marching on, and his resurrection is as sure as election day. And this, my friends, is not a tribute to him alone, but to the living, energetic politicians of Ontario, who bring to the polls every voter, dead or alive.

I have heard, and there may linger too in your memory, traditions of a poll in a certain town of western Ontario, where, out of a living possibility of eighty, one hundred

and twenty polled their vote on election day.

What an inspiring yet pathetic scene it must have been! The men of to-day and the men of yesterday side by side. Imagine the feelings of the oldest inhabitant as he saw gathered around him, the shades of friends long departed. To many eyes those spirits were perchance invisible (spirits generally are invisible on election day), but, to use a slang expression, "they get there just the same." If these spirits of the departed voters were not apparent to the mortal eye they made their presence felt through the sign of the cross, or rather an X; and perhaps this X was symbolical of the reason for returning to earth, and if they did not rap the table as some spirits do, well, somebody's candidate was, to dip once more into the realm of slang, "knocked on the head," which result proved just as good, or bad, according to the point of view. Sometimes, I understand, the spirits do not all return. Their graves may be distant, or they may have spiritual reasons for disliking the district in which they were wont to register their vote. They say, too, that the dead do not rise in Lake Superior, but in such cases

Ontario can always depend upon self-sacrificing sons among the living, and so we behold them putting off to sea in stormy weather, risking life and meals on a great fresh water ocean, ready to fill the ranks in place of those who have quit this terrestrial sphere.

It is such scenes as these that show the vigour which fills the blood of Ontario's sons, and also demonstrates the value they place upon the right of every free man to vote, first for himself and after that to see that nothing is wasted, dead or alive; for, in the words of the immortal, tho' unknown, bard—

“If traitor hand be on thy throat,
Ontario! Ontario!
Thy silent host must rise and vote,
Ontario! Ontario!

“Though scattered far our bones may be,
On alien shore, or 'neath the sea,
One blast upon the horn, and we
Shall gladly rise and come to thee,
Ontario! Ontario!”

Down in my own province of Quebec we

are not quite so vigorous, we living ones, and as for our dead, they are generally quiet—perhaps they were glad to get away and had had enough of our politics when in this world. For my own part, as a medical man, I would not desire to resurrect even one individual voter—I prefer that they remain wherever they may be, as possibly some of them might harbour a grudge against me, which would be difficult to settle satisfactorily. I remember, however, one case in Montreal where dead voters came to life for a period long enough to cast their ballots. It was in a fight for the mayoralty, and occurred some years ago, and you must remember that in Montreal municipal elections we have little or no party politics. In this case there was a strong move on the part of a portion of our citizens to oust from the Mayor's chair a certain Jean Louis Beaudry, who had occupied the seat much longer than some of us considered proper, and the young men especially went in to do it with a will. The opposite candidate was Henri Beaugrand.

In the up-town portion of the city, which is largely English-speaking, Beaugrand was

very popular, and everything was done to roll up a majority for him. Beaudry had, in the principal booth of this district, a certain well-known Irish contractor, who practically knew every living voter in the neighbourhood. Beaugrand's representative was a popular and bright young lawyer. Towards noon votes were coming in slowly, and our legal friend, knowing that his friends had some desirable votes to poll, which might be objected to by the keen-eyed Irishman, managed to persuade that gentleman to desert the booth in order to partake of a much-needed lunch. The taking of that lunch was prolonged in one way and another until a couple of hours had slipped by, and during this period, a boom struck the polling booth. When the lawyer and his friend returned to the place of balloting, the Irishman casually asked the returning officer if any votes had been cast during his absence, and that worthy answered, "Yes, a few," and passed over a long list. Putting on his glasses, the Beaudry representative went over the names, which brought to his astonished eyes visions of old Montreal and her founders, men who had disappeared

from mortal ken many years before—half-forgotten friends, well-remembered enemies—all were there. “John Dwyer!” said he, “I never heard tell of John, only that he’s dead since he wint to Pittsburgh fourteen years ago. George Blinkinsop? We buried him in ’54! Michael Cassidy! Glory be to God! and he’s here too. The biggest funeral we ever had in Griffintown. Denis Mulhearn? The poor boy was kilt the night St. Patrick’s Hall fell in. Well! Well! Well! this is great work!” And turning to the young lawyer, after carefully removing his spectacles, he ejaculated in a most impressive manner, “Fore God, Bob, I never thought I’d live to see the resurrection!”

Now, gentlemen, these, which may be considered rather flippant references to very grave faults, should serve to teach us that if the dead are capable of such wonderful energy, what may not the living do? And if we supply the same degree of vigour, irrespective of party, to bettering conditions, to bringing out the healthy, honest vote of the country, to choking the dishonest voter and the loathsome, corrupt heeler, and keeping the dead where they belong, we

can put into our municipal, provincial, and federal elections a healthful cleanliness that cannot but conduce to the national good. You have the vigour, the energy, and the knowledge, to some extent, that such things as I have referred to, exist, and we know that votes of the kind I have spoken of are not productive of good to any party of our country; so let us one and all, without question of party, hand in hand set vigorously to work to wipe out the heelers, the pluggers, and grave-robbers, and give ourselves clean politics and clean elections.

