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THE GOVERNMENT VS. THE MAJORITY

A Disappointed Liberal Prohibitionist Speaks

AND DENOUNCES LAURIER

Lively Letter From Mr. J. T. Bulmer.

"Premeditation haunts criminals and it is in this manner that treason begins. The crime is a long time present in them, but shapeless and shadowy; they are scarcely conscious of it, souls blacken gradually. Such abominable deeds are not invented in a moment; they do not attain perfection at once at a single bound; they increase and and ripen, shapeless and indecisive, and the centre of the ideas in which they live keeps them living ready for the appointed day and vaguely terrible. This design existed for a long time in his mind. It was classed among the possible events of this soul. It darted hither and thither like larvae in an aquarium mingled with shadows, with doubts, with desires, with expedients, with dreams of one knows not what. . . . Hardly was he aware that he was fostering this hideous idea. When he needed it he found it ready to serve him. His unfathomable brain had darkly nourished it. Abysses are the nurseries of monsters."

Sir,—Whoever would read the history of the present administration has only to buy two books—Victor Hugo's History of a Crime and Mangin's History of a Cheat, and therein he will find everything to hand. In the above extract, Victor Hugo sketches with the hand of a master the history of Grit dealings with the plebeians. The government did not become criminals all at once, because they were called to the rank of reformers by the suggestions of their bellies, and it took them some time to see what they could make out of it. This, once ascertained, they then turned around and gave the most opprobrious lie to all the actual zeal that for these many years had filled their bellies and fed them fat on foolish people like myself. Had Sir Wilfrid Laurier trusted the resolutions of the party convention in 1893 away from him with honest scorn, I would have had nothing to say, save that, like Sir John Thompson, he was an honorable opponent. But he did nothing of the kind. He accepted them with his own interpretation, giving them a meaning utterly averse to their plain intention and to the understanding of them which every journal on his own side, from the Toronto Globe down, gave then,—thus preparing the way for the deception of one of one of the parties to the bargain. Now who is to be cheated—the people who voted, or the Government who stood by and profited by the vote? If the solemn and deliberate language of the resolution is to be interpreted by contraries, what rule of hermeneutics shall we apply to the speech of the Premier the other day? If the convention meant precisely what it did not say, have we any assurance that the Premier has not said precisely what he did not mean? The truth is, like his party, he hovers between that which he dares not be openly and that which he will not be sincerely. Hence his promises, like manna, are agreeable to every palate. It appears to me that the government, in dealing with the question of prohibition, have acted from first to last on the great maxim of Charles I., which was, "to put something into his treaties which might give color to refuse all that was in other things granted, and to make them signify nothing." To the credit of the English race, be it said, a scaffold darkening one of the chambers at Whitehall was the end of that kind of dealing with the nation; and may we, in the seventh generation, here in Canada, prove ourselves worthy of our fathers by meeting out to the present government exactly the same fate.

EMINENT ABSURDITIES
Some of the arguments used in favor of the government are grounded on eminent

absurdities. One of them is, that they are more deterred by the smallness of our numbers than they are animated by the goodness of our cause. What a plight an admission of this kind puts them in may be seen from a quotation from the greatest of English patriots—Vane. Said he: "They who seek nothing but their own just liberty have always the right to win it and keep it whenever they have power, be the voices never so strong that oppose it. The honor, the conscience, the very soul of a nation cannot be compromised without ceasing to exist. When you propose to yield a part of them, there is already nothing left to yield." If Vane is right in this the loftiest note yet reached by man for the policy of a nation, then 100,000 votes, or even 1000, voting for liberty and representing the best hope of the country, should count for more than the hireling rout scraped together from the drags of the breweries and distilleries of Quebec voting for the slavery of the liquor shop. Says Guizot: "There is a right back of majorities greater than their numbers, and it is a gross delusion to believe in the sovereign power of political machinery." Said one of the heroes of the Long Parliament, "The best affected and best principled of the people stood, not numbering or computing on which side were most voices, but on which side appeared to them most reason, most safety. The patriots of a nation might be more in weight than the others in numbers, their being in numbers is the virtue." I have purposely made these quotations from the noblest names in English and French history in order to allay the fears of some that we had not votes enough. To put the votes on an equality as respects numbers, is but to repeat the infamous tactics of Pilate when he asked the Jewish mob, "What will ye that I should do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" The majority shout of that mob has not done much for Pilate. Will the Quebec vote do anything more for Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal party? We shall see. Already Quebec feels her position, and with the ashes of her revenge burnt out in the damp of her cooled fury looks around for an apologist. She feels that she is a slice of Normandy towed across the Atlantic without the fructifying seed of the French Revolution in her borders. But for British power the fagot would still burn which the doctors of the Sarbonne before 1793 called "the best light to guide the erring," and men, as to-day in France, would be tortured for opinions. It is not in my heart to say one word against her except of pity that she, like the man who went down to Jericho, should have fallen among thieves. Quebec is the slow still deposit of ages on the granite of the Laurerians which only a convulsion can rive, while we are the rich mud of the Bay of Fundy shifting every flood from one side to the other of the channel.

DRIFTING BACK.

The members we sent to support the government have, in their consciences, sprung a sudden leak and have drifted back into neutrality or joined the malignant of the government. In most of the speeches which I have read they paw and mammoek the question in the interests of the government, like a tavern biscuit. Put a pound in the presence of a deer and he springs at its throat, if he is a true bloodhound. Put a genuine prohibitionist in Parliament, and he would spring at the throat of the present government, or any party standing between him and the suppression of the liquor traffic; but with a lot of mercenary noise makers such as we have supporting the government, Canada is nothing but a rummaging bag into which each man thrusts his hand. Every one of them is ill at ease over the betrayed—feels himself a fraud and knows himself suspected. We sent them there to suppress the liquor traffic, not to lie around the coors of the ministers' like a lot of lame beggars, waiting to pop into any Bethesda which offers. May they live and die in servile condition with the marks in their ears of the borings for which they have held their heads.

A PRETENDER NOT A REFORMER.

Men ought not to speak evil of dignities which are just, yet nothing hinders us to speak evil as often as it is the truth. No man ever had, on taking power, more love and acclamation from the people than Sir Wilfrid Laurier: never any people found worse requital of their loyalty and good affection. I went about Nova Scotia for months before the election picturing him like Condorcet in constructive ability,

like Rousseau in enthusiasm and desire to serve the public, like Vane in heroism and moral grandeur; I even described him like Luther standing between the living and the dead and drawing strength and succor from exhausted springs far up in the Delectable Mountains of trial which the All-wise had set between man and the achievement of every noble purpose. No thought ever entered my mind that, at the head of a Government with boundless patronage, cunningly biding his time, he would come down to Parliament and deliver a message in answer to the solemn vote of the people, more fatal to liberty than anything done in England by the worst of the Stuarts. His answer to our request marks him as a pretender and not a reformer—one who can set a pompous face upon the superficial actings of state, one who can go up and down the St. Lawrence, it may be, amid the bowing and cringing of the people, for nothing he has ever done, and who in Ottawa or anywhere else is only a pompous figure set to no purpose before thirteen other equally insignificant figures. It is not my business in this letter to answer him, only to discover him and his colleagues to the people of Canada, and how that they all lie in the same reeking sewer.

THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION.

Since the Government has yoked its neck with those tigers of Bacchus, let us see in what position we stand. For above fifty years, three of the great denominations of Canada, if not four—but certainly the Methodist, Baptist and Presbyterian—have declared that if ever this question got into politics they might be relied on to support any Government passing a prohibitory act and to destroy any government declaring for the traffic. The great organizations of Sons, Templars and other societies have declared to the same effect, and the whole education of the country has proceeded on the assumption that when the hour struck in the horologue of time for the introduction of a legislative measure, all the reform forces of society would be found supporting the party passing the Act. Parliament has labored, debated, argued, consulted for the public good, and passed a solemn Act without condition of any kind, a quarter million of dollars has been expended by the government taking the vote; a million has been expended in the canvass and stirring the country in a great series of meetings from ocean to ocean, and certainly another million on election day. Write it in letters as high as the Rocky Mountains, that we carried one hundred and twenty constituencies in Canada, with a good majority of all the votes cast, and polled a greater vote in proportion to the whole vote than was ever thrown in any English-speaking country on the adoption of a single measure, not excepting either of the Maine votes on Prohibition. But all this has been frustrated by fourteen men called the government—not men, but indefinable phantoms, carrying out a horrible task in which the Parliament which legislated and the electors who voted have been struck as mute and motionless as though both had been done in outline in tissue-paper.

[Continued on 5th page.]



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