CURRENT COMMENT

Checker Board Assessment.

A bill permitting local authorities to establish their own assessment conditions has been criticized as having been objected to by Sir James Whitney because it would bring in a checker-board system of municipal taxation. Sir James' contention regarding assessment was that all that was needed was to carry out the present law. He refused to see that as the law was not carried out the checker-board system was already in force, every assessment commissioner doing what was right in his own eyes. The law requires land to be assessed at its actual value, and buildings at the amount which they add to the value of the land—occasionally a minus quantity. When an assessor a couple of years ago in Orillia attempted to carry out the act he nearly caused a revolution. The assessors are sworn to do this, but the assessment actually varies from 35 per cent. to 157 per cent. of the actual values. What is needed is a Provincial Board of Equalization of Assessment, which would see that actual values are registered and that the assessors are punished when they violate their oaths of office as they all do at present.

Our Politics and Our Population.

What we most need in Canada is to get rid of the suspicion and distrust which the competitive system in business and the party system in politics have managed to instil into the people. The country people are suspicious of the city people, and the city people are suspicious of the country people. They fear mutually that some advantage may be taken of them. No business run by partners with that disposition between them could succeed. The Montreal Star has suggested that if Canada were owned by a Rockefeller or a Morgan he would work it on a business basis to produce the maximum as a dividend paying concern. He would aim first at population, says The Star, because population would solve the railway question, strengthen the home market, and reduce the per capita national debt. He would hire managers to run the several departments of Government, and if the balance sheet denoted inefficiency "there would be radical changes until the right results were produced." One of the old ways of getting population was to go to a distant land, lay the natives by the heels, and ship them in cargoes to their new "home." A later way was to paint in the most glowing colours the possibilities which a new land presents to capable people, the result being that unimaginative and not over-capable people flock into the new country, find their imagination at fault, blame it on the country, and depart for "fresh woods and pastures new." A population that does not stay when it comes is no advantage. It is still a question which Morgan and Rockefeller have not fully answered whether turning the country into a huge business machine is the proper way to attract population. What people want is a home. "Be it ever so humble." A country which is a business machine may not be as attractive to a population as some theorists fancy. In fact Rockefeller himself is looking in another direction, and the Welfare department that the Standard Oil Trust has organized is largely a confession that the "business-basis, dividend-paying" principle is not without defects. If this be true of a big business may it not also be true nationally?

"P. R." Secures Majority Rule.

The Star yearns for the presence of "patriotic Canadian politicians capable of seeing the great opening for the making of a great Canadian nation." But it neglects to mention that the patriotism of our politicians usually consists in a firm and ineradicable conviction that the only hope and salvation of the country is to get their side into office. The Star perceives the result of this but fails to diagnose the cause. "We are plunging forward," it warns, into group government. Party government is after all a form of group government, and group government in the party form would be unshakeable were pains taken by the party leaders to elicit the real feeling of the people. The people split into groups merely because the established parties fail to give the people what they want, or even to enquire what is wanted. It effects nothing to tell the people that they do not want what they say they emphatically do want. Is The Star absolutely certain that "group government" would result in the sense it means from the adoption of the plan of proportional representation? Proportional representation is the most democratic form of election known, and democracy in the British sense means rule by the majority. The present method of elections does not ascertain the majority, but frequently results in minority government. This is one of the chief reasons why there is such dissatisfaction at present. With proportional representation every phase of opinion finds expression, but the majority rules. Why then should there be any fear of the result from professing lovers of democracy? Are they afraid of the majority ruling, or are they dissatisfied with the principle of democracy itself and prefer government by party manipulation as we have it now, which has brought us to our present shifts? We believe that there is nothing to be feared from majority government which proportional representation would secure, because the people of Canada are quite capable of making up their minds about facts when facts are laid before them, and majorities always arrive at the same conclusions concerning facts. Perhaps, after all, this is the real difficulty that politicians have to grapple with, the difficulty of acknowledging and confessing all the facts at our disposal.

Theory or Practice in Government.

It is an exceedingly serious question The Montreal Star raises, and it should be faced in both angles. Is the future of the country dependent upon "patriotic Canadian politicians;" upon a "business basis" of government, or upon something else altogether? Certainly the politicians have had their opportunity, both sides, turn and turn about, and latterly in combination; and we have had business methods and every form of them for a long time past. Perhaps both the political and the economic or business conditions are wrong. It is an astonishing but actual fact, that as long as the people are satisfied with their economic, social and domestic conditions they pay little attention to government affairs. The government, therefore, that provides the people with acceptable and agreeable conditions is the one that the people will maintain. Governments have failed in this respect because they have listened to confidential and biassed advisers instead of consulting the people. Proportional representation is here again an indispensable means of ascertaining the popular will. If government is to consist of providing the people, not with what they want, but with what a group of politicians, or experts, or Bolshevists, or some other arbitrary minority thinks they should have, it does not take a prophet to foresee trouble. The difficulty with all political theories is that they are unable to cover all the infinite ramifications of human nature and the unlimited variety of national and social conditions. The theories always go to pieces on some unforeseen development. This is why a so-called business administration is generally less successful than it deserves to be. It does not allow for elements in human nature which government of any kind cannot afford to ignore. Pragmatic methods therefore suggest themselves as likely to solve many difficulties, and it does not in the least discredit such methods to describe them as opportunist. Opportunist statesmen have always succeeded when they did not abandon principle. It is because proportional representation is strictly based on the principle of government by majorities, while at the same time recognizing the value of pragmatic sanctions, that it has been successful elsewhere, and is likely to succeed if given a fair trial in Canada. Legislation is usually promulgated as though it covered every possible contingency, when everybody knows there are all kinds of problems and contingencies awaiting discovery in the course of events which have not been anticipated. The more fully representative of the people a legislature is the better able will it be to deal with such situations. When did there cease to be a Jacob's Ladder of stops and compromises between Yea and Nay in ordinary affairs.

Politics Not an End but a Means.

At the foundation of all these questions is the end in view. Government itself is only a means to an end. Legislation is only a means. Politics is only a means. The end is the content, the prosperity, the satisfaction of the people. If Canada, if Ontario, be known as happy places to live in, as countries of good homes and pleasant conditions, there will be no need for immigration officials. People will seek our shores from the ends of the earth. Does a "business government," do politicians in general, sufficiently consider those questions of the private tastes and interests of the people? If they do not, all the legislation in the world will not make a country popular. A mechanical policy may not create comfortable and attractive homes, or cultivate such character among the people as will bring contentment. There is nothing to evoke enthusiasm in standing over a process machine for eight hours a day. Plenty of men will do it for the gain it brings. Men will sing at their work on the farm or in the garden for very joy of life. They may not get such pay as the mechanic, but they have their reward. It is not in the mind of the average politician to balance these things, but governments in the future must take note of them.

Bernard Shaw's Women.

Louis J. McQuilland, a clever Irish writer on the London Daily Express, has been trying to bait George Bernard Shaw. He has chosen as a ground for the performance Shaw's views on women. "G. B. S," says the critic, "rent the veil of the Victorian attitude towards women. He did it in a singularly rude way; but the greater his rudeness, the more advanced femininity adored it. Shaw, in spite of his ostentatious intellectual arrogance, has that respect for women which is founded on fear." Mr. McQuilland says "the women of his plays are not domestic pets; they are household terrors. They have their charm, of course; but they are endowed with that critical common sense which leaves the old-fashioned man agape. He, poor wretch, still cherishes the belief that women are creatures of romance, as dependent on his protection as Amelia was on George Osborne's, or Florence Dombey on Walter Gay's." Mr. Shaw does not idealize women, is the conclusion. "He reveals them as the hard, practical managing dominant sex." Very few men dare confess as much as this, but it is a great discovery for a man to find that his wife knows a great deal better than he does. This is not to say that all wives are like that, or that all husbands discover the truth.

IS IT FRUIT FOR HIS OWN CIRCLE ONLY?

TO OUR READERS.

We wish to draw your attention to the improvement in the appearance and amount and kind of reading matter now appearing in this paper.

Always being anxious to get the best for our readers, we have subscribed to the service supplied by the Canadian Newspaper Service, Limited, whose head office is at 515 Manning Chambers, Toronto. This Service supplies reading material second to none in Canada, and formerly supplied only to the big city dailies. There is something in this paper of interest to every member of the family. The Current Comment and Quiet Observer columns are a condensed resume of the principal events of the week throhghout Canada. For the boys and girls there is Aunt Jane's corner, to which every boy and girl is invited to write letters and to join the Helpers' League. It costs nothing and Aunt Jane is corresponding now with thousands of boys and girls throughout Ontario. For the farmer there is a page of practical farm news and views, and the Helps for the housewife will lighten housework for every woman. The boo kreview department will keep you in touch with all the latest books, and any girls who desire to be advised on any subjects should write to Rosalind.

Read these special articles every week. There is something in each that will interest you all. If there is anything you desire to know or upon which you need advice write to the department in which you are interested, care of this paper, and your letter will be answered in these columns.

THE BRAIN BOX

CONDUCTED BY E. GUNN RAMSAY.

'Mine Own."

"What is your own?

What part can you truly say of yourself, "It is mine own, this part of me, this thought, this plan, this ideal shall survive all the ravages and assault of the world, of time and adversity, and shall come out triumphant? In the words:—

I know mine own shall come to me,
No wind can drive my bark away
Nor change the tide of destiny.

A poet has written of his faith in the ultimate triumph of his ideal.

The word "Destiny" is interpreted today by various people in various ways.

What is your destiny? What would you wish it to be? Do you see it in your mind as the goal towards which all your aspirations and longings are set, that for which you are working, have toiled, and longed? Or do you with fatalistic despair picture some spectral steersman who is guiding your craft towards a harbor unknown, unsought, and probably welcomed?

There was never an occasion in the history of the world when a true self-consciousness was more necessary, self-knowledge, self-searching. The man who has studied himself and who knows his own weakness, his own possibilities for strength, will never easily become a tool in the hands of an unscrupulous party or organization.

You have the right to claim your own.

Your own is your ideal, which though it may be long in coming, if held steadily, steadfastly and purely, can never be lost to you. Some day it will be realized.

Whatever desperate situations arise, however contrary things may appear around you—however others at your right hand or left may fall or falter, will you be resolved that you will play "the game."

It is such resolves our country needs. The biggest need everywhere today is for men and women who will hold firm to their ideals, who will not be blown about by every wind that passes—who cannot be bought or sold for politics, position or price and everyone who joins their ranks and everyone who enlists under their banner, is adding to the strength and integrity of what shall be the backbone of this, or any other nation during a time of trial and testing.

Periodically, to every person, to every community and nation comes a time of testing. The late war was an instance of testing upon a wholesale scale when not only the individual and the nation were thrown into the melting pot to face there the fiery trial which tries out pure gold, but individuals in the man and nations by the group were put to the test.

The opposing forces threw out the challenge against an ideal of "Justice." All the world knows the story —but The Ideal won through—because of the confidence of those who held to it.

"Scotch ale," he remarked. Billy

Be sure of your own ideal. Place it high and then hold on. YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU.

had lost him.

Hamilton's Big Bridge.

A splendid enterprise is the proposed bridge, 1300 feet long, over the Valley Inn Ravine at Hamilton. Big bridges are always interesting and few structures are more useful. The two plans submitted are of the rival materials of steel and concrete. The difference in estimated initial cost is $192,510 in favor of the steel, but from this must be deducted the cost of painting the steel, which is put at $7,000 an application, or for fourteen applications, one every five years for 70 years, the life of the bridge, $22,300, making the difference $170,500. When the everlasting character of the concrete structure is considered and the fact that there will be no outlay for upkeep, as in the case of steel, the difference in an expenditure running to The appearance of the concrete bridge is decidedly more attractive. Good authorities say that the city of Toronto made a great mistake in not making an all-concrete bridge of the Bloor street viaduct. The reason for this was the lack of a concrete engineer in the city hall capable of designing and superintending a structure of such magnitude.

CHEESE CUSTARD.

Four eggs, one-half cupful of grated cheese, one-half cupful of breadcrumbs, one cupful of milk, one-half teaspoonful of baking powder, one-half teaspoonful of salt.

Beat the eggs, add cheese, bread crumbs and other ingredients and pour into a buttered baking dish. Bake until lightly browned and puffy and serve immediately.

The population of Russia is estimated to have decreased 35,000,000 snce 1914, owing to the war, famine and disease.

Wig-wearing was at its height about 150 years back, when even boys four and five years old had their heads shaved in readiness to wear wigs.

FRENCH MUST MARRY OR PAY HIGH TAX

The French government has put a premium upon marriage by imposing a 10 per cent. tax upon bachelors and spinsters.

Spirited discussions were aroused by the provision of the measure taxing women as well as men.

Members of the Chamber of Deputies opposed this clause on the ground that the bachelors were really responsible for the unmarried condition of the women.

LITTLE BITS OF ITEMS FOR ALL

You May Find Something Here That You've Been Wanting To Know About.

HORSE LATITUDE.

"Horse Latitude" is the nautical name given to the belt of calms in the North Atlantic ocean between the region of the westerly winds of the high latitudes and the region of trade winds of the torrid zone. Authorities differ as to the origin of the name, some claiming that it was derived from the fact that old sailing vessels with cargoes of horses were often so delayed on account of the calms that the animals perished from lack of water.

CLASSIFYING AIRPLANES.

Airplanes are classified according to the number of main supporting planes: monoplane, with one main supporting surface; biplane, with two; triplane, with three, and quadroplane, with four.

KEEP MOTHS FROM PIANO.

Crush camphor balls and drop to the bottom at each side of piano, the fumes going up will keep moths out. The same can be applied to wardrobes. If you do this in early spring and several times during the summer no moths will get into piano or wardrobe.

THE EX-KAISER'S SONS.

Friedrich Wilhelm, eldest son of the former kaiser, is 38 years old. The five other sons of the former kaiser, all of whom are able-bodied, but none of whom suffered any injury during the war, are: Wilhelm Eitel Friedrich, 37; Adelbert, 36; August Wilhelm, 33; Oscar, 32; Joachim, 30.

WOMEN OFFICERS IN CANADA.

In Canada women are eligible both for the Federal parliament and the provincial legislatures. No woman has yet been elected to the Dominion parliament, but several have been chosen to seats in the law-making bodies of the different provinces. Mrs. McKinney was elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1917, and in the same year Mss Roberta MacAdams was returned by the overseas Canadian forces. Mrs. Ralph Smith was also elected in 1917 to the British Columbia Legislature and Mrs. Ramsden, a Liberal, was recently returned in Saskatchewan.

NOLAN'S DEPORTATION.

"The Man Without a Country" was Philip Nolan, an officer of the United States Navy in the Revolutionary period. He was implicated in the schemes of Aaron Burr and expressed the hope that he would never hear the name of the United States again. He was taken at his word and placed aboard a ship with the instruction that he was never to come to an American port and never to be allowed to hear or read anything that gave him news of his native land. He was transferred from one ship to another until he died in the year 1801.

Among uncivilized peoples the custom of shaking hands is unknown, and it always affords them a great deal of amusement to see white men engage in the practice.

UNLUCKY THIRTEEN.

The superstition that 13 is unlucky is supposed to be based on Leonardo de Vinci's famous painting, "The Last Supper," which shows 13 figures, the central one being that of Christ. Many people do not regard 13 as unlucky. That it is lucky, they say, is shown by the fact that Christ appeared on earth 13 times after he was crucified.

The earliest astronomical observations of which there is authentic record were made at Babylon.

The Niagara river, obstructed by ice in Lake Erie, ran nearly dry above the falls for a whole day in 1848.

RULES OF MOTORING ARE EASILY LISTED

Care of Car is Regulated by Time or Distance.

One of the big rubber companies attaches to every shipment of brake lining a card containing some suggestions which are worthy of general circulation:

1. Storage battery inspected every two weeks.
2. Grease cups up every 1,000 miles.
3. Springs oiled every week.
4. Oil and gasoline connections inspected every week.
5. Crankcase drained and washed out with kerosene every 500 miles.
6. Universal joints packed with grease every 1,000 miles.
7. Differential and transmission packed with grease or oil every 1,000 miles.
8. Spark plugs cleaned every 1,000 miles.
9. Carbon removed from cylinders twice a year.
10. Valves ground each 5,000 miles.
11. New piston rings every 18 months.
12. See that wheels are in line once a month.
13. See that the water is circulating every time the car is started.
14. Bearings on wheels inspected once a month.
15. Gasoline pipe and carburetor thoroughly cleaned every month.
16. Self-starter inspected every month.
17. Steering wheel and steering knuckles inspected once a month.
18. Test brakes and equalize once a month.

A SHATTERED ROMANCE.

Napoleon's brother, Jerome, in 1803, at 19 years of age, arrived in New York, and soon afterward while visiting Baltimore fell in love with Elizabeth Patterson. They were married with great ceremony by the Catholic bishop of the Baltimore diocese. In 1805 he started for France, leaving his wife to follow. An order was issued prohibiting her from entering France at any place, and she saw her husband only once after his departure. Napoleon had the marriage of his brother annulled, and forced Jerome to marry the daughter of the King of Wurtenberg. Six days after this ceremony the young prince was made King of Westphalia.

THE CONSCIENCE FUND.

During the last century it is estimated that close to a half million dollars have been paid into the conscience fund of the United States Treasury by penitent people from all parts of the United States. The first contribution of this nature was received in 1811, during the administration of Madison. There is a great deal of variety in the character of contributions made to this fund, a large number being from people who smuggled goods into the country without paying import duty, also many who defrauded the government in the payment of their taxes.

NEWS PRINT SITUATION WILL AFFECT COUNTER CHECK BOOKS.

Merchants using Counter Check Books should bear in mind that the difficulty in the newspaper market and the shortage of paper will affect the sales pad situation.

Many paper mills are experiencing great delays in filling orders—and some are refusing to accept orders for current delivery of paper.

The prices of books are bound to advance considerably over present prices, because many of the mills have advanced ther prices of paper from $10 to $25 per ton since January 1st.

The situation may develop to the point that it will be almost impossible to get books at all—or at least within a short delivery period.

The careful merchant will look well to this item—and anticipate his requirements for at least sixty to ninety days ahead.

The modern harp has been evolved from types found among the Egyptians, Assyrians, Hebrews and various Celtic nations.

On an average, New York city has one and a half times as much rain as London.

Rum is made from the scum obtained in boiling down the juice of the sugar cane.

"Worth," in proper names, as in Kenilworth, Edgeworth, etc., signifies that the town stands on a tongue of land.

You can learn a lot from ADVERTISING

The main thing an advertiser wants to do is to tell you plainly just how and why his goods are worthy of your consideration. You can learn a great deal from that alone, because many things you see advertised are the things you buy and use in your regular daily life. By reading the advertisements, you can learn the names and read descriptions of the things that are best and most satisfactory.

But advertising teaches even more than that. All advertisers try to make their advertisements themselves valuable to you.

A good many people have learned a whole lot about good music, good books, good food, good clothes, ways to keep healthy, ways to live comfortably, ways to keep the house and grounds looking well—they have learned all these things and many other things just by reading advertisements.

Read the advertisements right along, and you will learn a great deal that will be helpful and valuable to you as you go through life.