The Quiet Observer

THE ESSENCE OF PARTY POLITICS.

Ven. Dr. Cody, former member of the legislature for N. E. Toronto, has been expatiating on the merits of the two party system, and pointing out how much more desirable it is than having a multiplicity of parties, or government by coalitions or combinations of parties. There will probably be little disposition to disagree with the venerable gentleman on the abstract question. The two party system, whether it be of the ins and the outs or of some more particularly designated diversity of opinion is a fine old British institution, originated when the Barons took one side and King John took the other. The two parties have been modifieid in various particulars since the days of King John. There were Yorks and Lancasters at one time and Cavaliers and Roundheads at another, and they were replaced by Whigs and Tories and these by Liberals and Conservatives and these again by Radicals and Unionists. These changes are going on all the time and sometimes a partisan observer does not perceive all that is happening. Moreover the public has been standing more and more aloof from the parties as it got more influence and authority. The public, when King John and the Barons had their spat did not count. King John thought he was the public. The Barons thought they were it. The public had to lie low like B'rer Rabbit. After eight hundred years the party consciousness still tends towards the exclusion of the public, and still the public stands more or less apart from the parties and has in some cases and in some measures begun to form a party of its own. This is what Dr. Cody deplores. The public should not form a party of its own but should join one of the old parties. This would make everything much pleasanter and would save a great deal of trouble. But the difficulty, of course, is that the obstinate public has actually gone off and formed two or three new parties in addition to the two old ones. There is a soldiers' party and a labor party and a farmers' party, and perhaps others. They all want something or other that the two old parties are unable or unwilling to give. The public in the latter case provides an incentive to partisanship in the shape of new organizations which promise what is wanted. The public does not want a party which says: "You must take what we think you should have." The public wants a party that will give what it desires. And it wants a party that will be clean, honest, efficient and progressive. The public is becoming so intelligent that mere pretensions to virtue are not sufficient. It is the party that does these things that will be successful. It matters not whether there be two or a dozen parties the party that works for the public will win.

WEARING SILK BY MERIT.

Whatever may be thought of the Drury Government it must be admitted that it is doing things which have been advocated by both the older parties for years, but which either occasion or courage was wanting to carry out. The new rule as to the appointment of K. C.'s is a case in point. The appointment of these gentlemen it is universally admitted, should not be made a matter of party preference. Sir James Whitney recognized this so far as to accept the recommendations made by the opposition, but it was not claimed that all appointed really merited the distinction. No general appointments have been made for a good many years, and the Attorney-General expressed his unwillingness to assume the responsibility of making a list. It has been decided to leave the recommendations to the Chief Justice of Ontario and other legal luminaries representing all sides of politics, the understanding being that the distinction will be conferred for merit and ability alone. It is conceivable that there may be objections to this plan from those who regard all promotions and distinctions as the proper reward for political activity alone irrespective of capacity or talent. The better feeling of the community will favor the conferring of distinctions for merit alone. The Ontario bar already bears a high reputation, and the course now adopted is one that will unquestionably enhance this estimate.

EARTHQUAKES IN DIVERS' PLACES.

A tremendous earthquake, second only in recent years to that which wrecked San Francisco in 1906 attracted the attention of the scientific world on December 18. It was thought at first that a submarine field had been the area of the shock somewhere west of the South America coast, but reports came in a few days of the destruction of several towns on the Argentine slopes of the Andes. An Irish reporter must have been on the scene as his despatch read: "Not a single house was left standing, and those not destroyed were left in a badly damaged condition." At all events the disaster was complete and many were killed. Italy also had a shock with fatal results at the same time. In so far as the outer phenomena are concerned much more is known about earthquakes than was formerly the case. The old idea that volcanoes brought about earthquakes has been given up, and indeed reversed. Volcanoes are usually the result of earthquakes. Chemical deposits influenced by the presence of water which gains admission through fissures wrought by earthquake action lead to volcanic action and explosions. Gases liberated in confined spaces and ignited produce tremendous explosions. Earthquakes occur as the result of wrigling or wave-motion in the crust of the earth, due sometimes to planetary or solar attraction, and sometimes to the pressure of the earth-crust itself. The Andes with the Central American range and the Rocky Mountains extend through the Western Hemisphere and thence into Asia joining the great rock-ribs of the northern peninsulas and joining the Manchurian and Tartar ranges down to the Tibetan and Himalayan heights, all these constituting a kind of spinal system or back-bone of the earth. Through the Afghan and Persian ranges this connects with the Caucasian, and so by the Carpathians with the Alpine system. Spurs and branches off this main mountain system seem to be most frequently productive of earthquakes, though like the present shock they are frequently contiguous to it. Certain districts have been found which present evidences of a crack or fault or fissure in the earth's crust, the two edges of which may slip past each other. This was the case in the San Francisco earthquake. What is called Logan's line, after the eminent Geologist, Sir William Edmont Logan (1798-1875), is a fault of this nature running south from Ungava and Quebec into New York and Pennsylvania, and he foretold earthquake shocks in this region. Union shocks have been felt but fortunately so far none of serious consequence. An interesting view held in the East about earthquakes is akin to the tradition of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha and is founded on the principle that all nature, man included, is one whole. What affects one affects all, and man's iniquities and perversity, reacting upon nature, generate conditions which precipitate earthquake and other catastrophes, bringing thereby upon man his own retribution. If all the evil of the world is to be recompensed in earthquakes we have a desperate fate ahead of us.

THE LUXURY TAX AND TAXATION.

Removal of the luxury tax may have quite as unexpected effects as its imposition. It was intended to check extravagance, but it is doubtful whether the purchase of too cheap articles which do not wear as long as one good one at a price less than is paid for the two can be regarded as enconomy. The general effect of the luxury tax as appears to have been officially omitted was to restrict sales, which had not been intended at all. There is no more thorny problem in government than taxation. In fact it is government and sums up everything in its principles. A people satisfied with its taxation methods is a well-governed people as a rule, for sooner or later the expenditures will govern the exactions and call attention to defects of administration. The luxury tax was not producing revenue as anticipated and it was obstructing business. Naturally the course to pursue was to abandon it. The increase in unemployment has in some measure been attributed to the tax, purchasers holding off with the prospects of its removal, and this causing factories in a number of instances to close down. The loss of revenue will have to be made up in some way, or severe retrenchment will be necessary. The budget is already restricted commendably and there are difficult problems ahead for those who plan further economy. As a source of revenue the income tax appears to be growing in favor, although not with the tax-payer. The chief objection is to the unfair manner of its incidence. In proportion to his means the man with small income always has much more to pay than the man with large income. The levy is made on income instead of on margin of available income, and this principle must be recognized if the income tax is to be popular. It requires a certain minimum amount to maintain a household and this depends on the number of persons in it, children, and so forth. The man in lodgings has a larger margin or surplus than the man who keeps house and raises a family. It is the size of the margin that any man has available that should determine his taxable income. Essential expenditures should be recognized in calculating this margin, such as insurances up to a reasonable amount, and capital should be treated on a separate basis than revenue. An effort should be made to encourage honesty, to put a premium on frankness and fair dealing, and if it be right for salary lists to be turned over to assessors it should be equally right to have dividend lists, coupon returns, and bank deposit interest returns turned over to the same authoritiy. The rich man should be too proud to ask favors not extended to the poor man. Considering the international character of capital investment there are many problems in taxation the League of Nations may have to solve.

FALSE PRIDE; FALSE SELF-RESPECT.

Learning that there were many thousands of idle workingmen in Detroit, Mayor Couzens offered a thousand jobs at street cleaning and other municipal labor at what used to be a fat wage. Here is Couzens' report:

"Of 265 jobs at street cleaning, paying $6 per day, and garbage collecting, paying $6.50, which the city offered, only eight were accepted. The unemployed apparently don't want jobs; they want positions, while the Detroit editors conclude that, after high wages in automobile factories, Detroit's 75,000 unemployed are "too proud" to do ordinary public labor.

Whereat a great editor, with the city slant on things wrote:

"It is well for mankind that men, who formed a mighty army in a great factory, associating with better fellows than ever before, standing higher socially and in their own self-respect than ever before should rebel in pure pride against rolling a garbage can or chasing street refuse in a gutter for $6 a day, or any other wage."

And yet the farmer does exactly those same things every day in his barn and his feed lot and in his fields, and he does them with pride and self-respect. Would it be well for mankind if the farmer refused to clean out the cattle stall every day or twice a day? Would it be well for mankind if the farmer, through pride, refused to trudge in mud and dirt behind the plow and cultivator, following the example of the city workmen who declined to work on the streets?

It would not be well for mankind: mankind would starve from the face of the earth.

The trouble is that there is too much false pride and too much false self-respect among all the other false things in our cities. Hauling garbage to the incinerator and cleaning the streets is a good deal more important work, so far as humanity is concerned, than working in an automobile factory, and the men who do those jobs should have pride in the knowledge that they are accomplishing the necessary in this world of people.

BREAKFASTING FOR EFFICIENCY

Men and women in business know well that if breakfast is well prepared, well served and eaten under normal conditions, they may rise from the table knowing they are prepared for whatever the day may bring forth. And they know, equally well, that if breakfast is badly prepared, poorly served and partaken of under unhappy conditions, they go forth to a day of vexation, worry and turmoil. In many ways breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It helps us to begin the day well, it gives us the right start, it enables us to meet with philosophy things that would worry us if we did not have the good start.

One pound of sugar distilled in the human body produces .42 (nearly half a pound) of alcohol in the system.

THE MAELSTROM

By FRANK FROEST.

Late Superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard.

CHAPTER I.

Out of the Fog.

Hallett blundered into an unlit lamj-post, swore with fervor, and stood for a second peering for some identifiable landmark in the black blanket of fog that swathed the street. Where he stood, a sluggish dense drift had collected, for following the treacherous habit of London fogs, it lay in patches.

About him he could hear ghostly noises of traffic muffled and as from afar, but whether the sounds came from before or behind, from right or left, was more than his bewildered senses could fathom.

For the last ten minutes he had been walking in a spectral city among specters. A by-street had trapped him within his limited area of sight. He lifted his hat and rubbed his head perplexedly as he came to the conclusion that he was lost. It was as though London had set out to teach the young man from New York a lesson. The fog had him beat.

"Guess I shall fetch up somewhere, sometime," he muttered, and strode doggedly on.

He had gone perhaps a dozen yards when from ahead a quick burst of angry voices broke out. Then there came a running of feet on the sodden pavement. Hallett came to a stop, listening. The fog seemed to thin a trifle.

Out of the thickness the outlines of a woman's figure loomed vaguely. She was running swiftly and easily with lithe grace. As she noted the motionless figure of a man, she swerved toward him, and he caught the hurried pant of her breath—caused rather, he judged, by emotion than by exertion.

She halted impetuously as she came opposite to him and he caught a glimpse of her face—the mobile face of a girl, with parted lips and arresting blue eyes. She was hatless, and though Hallett could not have described her attire, he got an impression of some soft black stuff, clinging to a slim figure. She surveyed him in a quick, appraising glance, and before he could speak had thust something into his hand.

"Take it—run!" she gasped, and tore forward into the fog.

It had all happened in a fraction of time. She had checked, rather than halted in her fight. An exclamation burst from Hallett's lips and he was almost startled into obedience of the hurried command. Then heavier footsteps thudding near brought him to himself. He moved to interrupt the pursuer. As a man came into view, Hallett's hand fell on his shoulder.

"One moment, my friend—"

An oath was spat at him as the man wrenched himself free and was blotted out in gloom. Hallett shrugged his shoulders philosophically, and made no attempt at pursuit.

'Alarums and excursions," he murmured. "Wonder what it's all about?"

In nine and twenty years of life, Jimmy Hallett had acquired something of a philosophy that made him content to accept things as they were, save only when they affected his personal well-being. Then he would sit up and kick with both feet. His lack of curiosity was almost cold-blooded. There was, indeed, a certain inoffensive arrogance in his attitude toward the ordinary affairs of life. He was the sort of man who would not cross the road to see a dog-fight.

Yet he always had a zest for excitement, providing it had novelty. A man who has scrambled for a dozen years in a hotch-potch of vocations retains little enthusiasm for commonplaces.

When Hallett senior had gone out from the combined effects of a Wall Street cyclone and an attack of heart failure, his son and heir had found himself with a hundred thousand dollars less than nothing. Young Hallett went to his only surviving relative—an elderly uncle with a liver—and, with the confidence of youth, rejected the offer of a cheap stool in that millionaire's office. He believed he could get living as an actor—but a five weeks' tour in a fortieth-rate company which finally stranded in the wilds of Michigan convinced him of the futility of that idea.

Thereafter he drifted over a wide area of the United States. Farm-hand, railway-man, cow-puncher, prospector, and one very vivid voyage as a deckhand on a cattle boat. It was inevitable, of course, that he should eventually drift into that last refuge of the unskilled intellectual classes—journalism.

Equally, of course, it was inevitable that fate, which delights to take a hand at unexpected moments, should interfere where he showed signs of making a mark in his profession. His uncle died intestate, and Jimmy leaped at a bound to affluence beyond his wildest dreams.

He stayed long enough in New York after that to realize how extensive and variegated were the acquaintances who had stood by him in adversity. They took pains that he should not forget it. And forthwith he had taken counsel of Sleath, the youthful-looking city editor of the Wire, who breathed words of wisdom in his ear.

"Go to Europe, Jimmy. Travel and improve your mind. Let the sharks forget you."

So Jimmy Hallett stood lost in a fog, somewhere within hail of Piccadilly Circus, with an unopened package in his hand and the memory of a girl's voice in his mind. A less observant man that Hallett could not have failed to perceive that the girl was of a class unlikely to be involved in any street broil. The man flattered himself that he was not impressionable. But he retained an impression of both breeding and looks.

He dangled the package—it was small and light—on his finger, and moved forward till an electric standard gave him an opportunity of examining it more closely. It was closely sealed at both ends with red sealing-wax, but the wrapping itself had apparently been torn from an ordinary newspaper.

He hesitated for a moment and then tore it open. He could scarcely have told what he expected to find. Certainly not the thirty or forty checks that lay in his hand.

One by one he turned them slowly over as though the inspection would afford some indication of why they had been so unexpectedly thrust upon him. A bare possibility that he had been made an unwitting accomplice in a theft was dismissed as he noticed that the checks were dead—they all bore the cancelling mark of the bank. Why on earth should the girl have been running away with the useless checks? And why should she have so impulsively confided them falling into the hands of her head-long pursuer?

Not that Hallett would have worried overmuch about these problems had the central figure been plan or commonplace. She had interested him, and his interest, once aroused in any person or thing, was always vivid.

Keen-eyed, he scrutinized the checks in an endeavor to decipher the signature. They were all open checks made out by the same person, and payable to "self." The name he read as J. E. Greye-Stratton. Whoever J. E. Greye-Stratton was, he had drawn within three months, in sums ranging from fifty pounds to three hundred pounds, an amount totaling—Hallett reckoned in United States terms—more than fifteen thousand dollars.

He stuffed the checks into his pocket as an idea materialized in his mind. An opportune taxi pushed its nose stealthily through the wall of fog and halted at his hail.

"Think you can fetch a post-office, sonny?" he demanded.

"Get you anywhere, sir," assented the driver cheerfully.

"Find your way by the stars, I suppose," commented Hallett, the tingle of fog still in his eyes.

Nevertheless, the driver justified him boast, and his fare was shartly engrossed with the letter "G" in the London directory. There was only one entry of the name he sought, and he swiftly transcribed the address to a telegraph-blank.

"Greye-Stratton, James Edward, Thirty-four, Linstone Terrace Gardens, Kensington, W."

Shortly the cab was again crawling through the fog, sounding its siren like a liner in mid-channel. All that the passenger could make out was a hazy world, dotted with faint yellow specks, which now and again transformed themselves into the lights as they drew near. Later the yellow specks grew less as they swerved off the main road, and in a little the car drew to a halt.

The driver indicated the house opposite which they were standing, with a jerk of his thumb, as Hallett descended.

"That's the place sir."

It was little that Hallett could see of the house, save that it was a big, old-fashioned building, with heavy bow windows, and a basement protected by wrought-iron rails. There was no light in any part of the house, not even the hall.

Twice the young man wielded the big brass knocker, arousing nothing, apparently, but an echo. As he raised it a third time the door was thrown open with discernting suddeness, and he was aware of some one standing within the blackness of the hall. Hallett could distinguish nothing of his features.

"I wish to see Mr. Greye-Stratton," said Hallett, and tendered a card.

The other made no attempt to take it. "He won't see you," he declared with harsh abruptness, and only a sudden movement of Hallett's foot prevented the door being slammed in his face.

His teeth gritted together, and he thrust the door back and himself over the sill. He was an easy-tempered man, but the deliberate discourtesy had roused him to a cold anger.

"That will do, my man," he said, clipping off each word sharply. "I want ordinary civility, and I'm going to see that I get it. My name is Hallett—James Hallett of New York. Now you go and tell your master that I want to see him about certain property of his that has come into my hands. Quick's the word."

There was a pause. When the man in the hall, spoke again his tone had changed. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Hallett. It is dark—I mistook you for some one else. I am sure Mr. Greye-Stratton would have been happy to see you, but unfortunately he is ill. If you will leave whatever you have, I will see that it reaches him. Buy the way, I am not a servant; I am a doctor. Gore is my name."

Hallett thrust his hand in the pocket that contained the checks. He had no intention of handing them over without some information about the girl in black. And he fancied he detected a note of anxiety in the doctor's voice as though, while forced in a way to civility, he was anxious for the visitor to go.

"I quite understand, Dr. Gore," he said coldly. "I will call at some other time. I should like to return the property to its owner in person—for a special reason. Good night."

"Then you will not entrust whatever you have to me?"

"I would rather see Mr. Greye-Stratton at some future time." He half turned to go.

"One moment." The doctor laid a detaining hand upon his sleeve. "I did not wish to disturb my patient unnecessarily, but if you insist I will arrange you shall see him. Will you come with me? I am afraid it is rather dark. The electric light has gone wrong—frightfully awkward.

Hallett groped his way after his guide, his brain busy. It was queer that the light should have given out—queerer still that no apparent attempt had been made at illumination either with oil or candles.

The place was deadly quiet, but that was only natural with a sick man in the house. He wondered why some servant had not answered the door. A man of less hardened temperament would have felt nervous.

The doctor's footsteps falling with ghostly softness on the carpet in front of him ceased.

"Here we are, Mr. Hallett. Keep to your left. This is the room. If you will wait here a second, I will see if I can get a light. Where are you? Give me your hand."

Slim, delicate fingers gripped Hallett's hand as he followed the direction. He passed through a doorway and for a moment his back was turned toward the doctor. He heard something whirl in the air and a blow descended with crushing force on his right shoulder. He wheeled with a cry, but there was no question of resistance. A second blow fell, this time better directed, and a million stars danced before his eyes. He dropped like a felled ox.

(To be continued).

POEMS You Should Know

Joseph Blanco White was born of Irish parents in Spain, July 11, 1775, and died in London in May, 1841. He quit his father's counting house to become a priest in 1796. Because of political disturbance in his native land he went to London and devoted himself to literature.

NIGHT.

Mysterious Night, when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard ty name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent hue,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,

And, lo- creation widened in man's view.
Who would have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst flower and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind?
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife—
If light can thus deceive us, wherefore not life?

—Joseph Blanco White.

A model coffin was the most useful piece of furniture exhibited at a fair at Shreveport, La. A negro boy of sixteen, who works in a undertaker's establishment attends a high school were he made a number of model coffins in the manual training department. He exhibited one at the fair and won three dollars for the most useful article of furniture shown.

Mason wasps are magnificent engineers, being especially expert in building tunnels.