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## QUEBEC NOTES.

MR. MERCIER'S treasurer found an empty treasury. He says that when he looked into the strong box all he discovered were a few uncurrent coins. This is probably correct, for the Ross-Taillon administration led a pretty lively life of it, and money was a thing about which the late Cabinet troubled itself very little. Debt, of course, was piled up, and this legacy is left to Mr. Mercier's coalition to wipe out. He contemplates raising a loan of at least three millions of dollars, and the Barings, of London, are said to be the fortunate gentlemen who are to be entrusted with the negotiations. After this a raid of some sort is contemplated on the federal preserves, but in both of these plans to fill the depleted coffers the Premier of Quebec is only following the methods of the Chapeleaus, the Mousseaus, the Rosses and the Taillons of fragrant if unhappy memory. His contemplated Congress of Premiers is regarded as a statesmanlike movement by his friends. Certainly the reasons which prompt him to call the convention are urgent enough, so far as Quebec is concerned. More money must be had. The present revenue from every source is wholly inadequate to meet the expenses of government. Direct taxation must come in time, and the date may not be so very far off, but the minister dare not resort to it just at present. No one knows better than Mr. Mercier what the effect a direct appeal to the pockets of the *habitant* would mean. The cry of "No tax" would resound from one end of the province to the other, and the mere attempt to impose it would result in the utter annihilation of him and all his forces—Liberals, Rouges and Rielites alike. Poverty will compel him to do many things, and love of power will stimulate him to resort to all sorts of plans to keep the wolf from the door, but he will hesitate long before he asks the frugal and thrifty backwoodsman to surrender a part of his income to keep alive the Liberal government at Quebec. It would be the same if Mr. Chapleau were at the head of the government. He would no more think of direct taxation than he would of paying a visit to the moon on a witch's broomstick. But some day it must be tried, no matter who is in power, and there are political economists to-day who say that the sooner we resort to that system the better it will be for all concerned. Constant appeals to the federal government only serve to show the weakness of the union, though certainly Mr. Mercier strikes a shrewd note when he says that the basis of 1867 ought not to form the basis of 1887. Twenty years ago when the provinces surrendered their chief method of raising a revenue, the customs duties, the amounts realized per annum were small as compared to what they are to-day. The subsidy from the Dominion Government has not materially increased, while the amount of the duties which are annually collected at the various provincial custom houses has increased enormously. Mr. Mercier insists on the point that

we gave up too much for too little, and he desires the re-opening of the whole question again. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, which have deficiencies of their own to answer for, will probably second Mr. Mercier's efforts to have the Constitution modified. But will Ontario, which has a fine surplus of its own, feel disposed to join hands with the smaller provinces, and insist on a fresh and energetic raid on the Dominion treasury? Conservatives here do not believe that the question can be re-opened at all, and they pretend to pooh pooh the schemes of Mercier and his friends. But the Quebec Premier is resolved to try his plan, and with that object in view he has invited the Provincial Premiers to a grand Council. Certainly the question is one which may be discussed, but it is not well to keep tinkering at our Constitution continually. If we are ever to become a nation we must have higher aims. The provinces, with the exception of Ontario, are in a bad way financially. Quebec particularly has squandered her patrimony. With care the province might have been in as good a position as Ontario to-day. But extensive railroad building, extravagance and corruption melted the receipts faster almost than they came in. Mr. Mercier promises to pursue the strictest economy. So did his predecessors in office. The fact is they all promise that, but while they are saving the pennies the pounds are being shovelled out from the back door.

The disposition is to give the new government a fair chance. Mercier's majority will be about ten. It looks now as if he had come to stay. The opposition has some new blood, but the same old gang is leading. Taillon was a failure as first minister. One of the best-natured men living, and a vocalist of remarkable power, he is at the same time very quick-tempered. He flies into a passion at a moment's notice, and when angry he sulks. A sulky man is not fit to be a leader, and the succession must fall to some other one if the opposition is to be held together. It will never do to fall back on Mr. Lynch, for he is an Englishman and a Protestant, and it is an unwritten law in this province that Premier and leader of the opposition must be Frenchmen and Catholics. Anyway, Mr. Lynch has no capacity for leadership, though he speaks fluently and has the respect of the House. Mr. Blanchet is too heavy to lead. He has neither tact nor magnetism, and his oratory is dull and lacks spontaneity and spirit. Besides he has literally no following. Mr. Robertson is too old, and he is not French. Mr. Flynn is in bad odour with the gentlemen on his side of the House, for he left them in the lurch when Dr. Ross resigned, and it is questionable whether they will ever forgive him for that. Still Flynn is a rising man, and some of these days he will have a place, a recognized place, in this country, but his ground will be at Ottawa. He is politically dead in Quebec, for he has twice thrown his Premier, and deserted him when he needed his services the most. The young Conservatives will not depend on the members of the late ministry for a leader. They will find him among their own ranks if they are wise. Good speakers abound among them, but the abler debaters in the House are on the Liberal side of politics this year. Mercier, Robidoux, David, Gagnon, Lethieux, Shehyn, Murphy, Cameron, Deschenes, Duhamel, Larne and several others are among the most brilliant parliamentarians in this country. On the Conservative side, Casgrain, Desjardines, Fancher, St. Maurice, Lynch, Taillon and Flynn can scarcely be regarded as men of equal rank.

The new government is not at all delicate in its treatment of offensive partisans. The spoils system is being introduced in ample form, and many heads are being chopped off daily, from