



THE "lifting of the lid" at Quebec did not show us a man gone wrong, but the local agency of an entire Government Department acting as if the public treasury were a public fountain from which every man carried off his pailful. It was by no means only the officials of the department who had this notion. Those who sold these officials supplies for the department tell us that they charged retail prices on wholesale transactions as a matter of course. One man says that "they wanted to get all they could," and another man remarks that he charged what he chose. They were not on the "patronage list" for nothing. No wonder they were willing to discount their claims with the Chief Agent whether they needed quick money or not; and that they gave "presents" to every employee of the generous department with whom they came in contact. We are even told of a case in which a merchant's book-keeper was distributing cash "presents" to nearly every man he knew in the Government employ, and remarked that it was hard to be giving out all the time and getting nothing in return. At this, the Government employee took the hint and gave him back some of the money he had just given him.

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A COMIC opera has nothing on that situation. Now where do you think the money all came from? Who ultimately paid the bills? Have you any notion that these merchants who thought themselves lucky to be on the "patronage list," and who gave presents and paid discounts to get orders, really lost the amounts of these "presents" and discounts when they came to compare their Government business with transactions with private parties? Of course not. With the loose system prevailing—no tendering, no curiosity about prices, no effort to bring in competition—they probably charged the long-suffering country a profit on the money put out in these very "presents". It was a part of their investment in these Government "deals"; and why shouldn't they get a profit on it? All this bubbling fountain of wealth at which everybody drank and was refreshed, was fed by the taxes which you and I have been paying out of our earnings through all these years. You and I are the "suckers". We are the fools who have been bled.

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FIVE years of direct taxation would do this over-prosperous country of ours more good than any other one thing that could happen it. If we had to go down in our pockets and fish up every dollar that the Government spends at Ottawa, we would take a more intelligent interest in such disclosures as these. When Mr. Merchant hands the third engineer of a Government tug a present of \$200 for looking sweet as he burns Mr. Merchant's coal, we would realise that that money came right out of our pockets; and presently the tax-collectors would come around to the house and collect some more for the same purpose. That would serve to awaken us. We would want that money back, and would feel as we saw it dropped into the Treasury that that was just so much money we would not have to "dig" for during the next year. As it is, we all look upon the public revenues as "found money". We don't know who pays them, and we don't care. We are theoretically shocked at these revelations at Quebec. We exclaim—"Oh! pshaw!" But are we mad? Do we feel the way we do when a slick salesman "short changes" us out of a "quarter"?

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THERE is a too general tendency to regard it as legitimate to "do" the Government. Men who would not dream of stealing a five-cent piece or of cheating another man in a business deal, will complacently treat a transaction with the Government as an opportunity to get some money which they know is not theirs. I remember talking one day at Ottawa to a young fellow who was hanging about the Capital and getting an odd job now and then from the then Government. He told me how he had hurried up to Ottawa as soon as a relative of his had been elected "member", and that he had been making a haphazard living in this way ever since. Soon he hoped to get something permanent. Moreover, a cousin of his had come, too,

on the same errand. "You see," he explained confidentially, "we must make what we can of it while it lasts." That is the idea; and you would be astonished how many people have it. The Government is an institution to "make something out of".

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WILL we ever get over it? We can at least improve. They are much better in this line in Britain than we are. For one thing, people there look upon "grafting" as a disgraceful occupation. Here—let us be frank—too many of us regard it as an evidence of "smartness". We do not socially ostracise the man who is caught making an illegitimate profit out of the country. In fact, we do not ostracise the successful thief on a large scale at all in this country or on this continent. We welcome him to society. We like to ride in his automobile and to attend his dinner parties. We have come to worship money so thoroughly and sincerely in the New World that we do not ask of what material the god is made. When we see it, we bow down. So when men steal from the Government, we chiefly marvel at their cleverness. So long as this goes on, we will get "no better" very fast. We sneer at the European who worships rank and ancient lineage. At least, he has something to elevate socially except money. He has something, indeed, which outclasses money and forbids the successful thief to sit in the highest places. He can only put his grandson there. When we honour virtue and honesty as highly as success, when we pay our taxes directly out of our own pockets, when we send every civil servant who takes a bribe to penitentiary, then we may begin to escape from this sort of thing. But we have got quite a road to travel yet. The Cassels enquiry is only one of the first mile-stones.

Nidmporte

THE COST OF THE FLEET.

THE *Montreal Gazette* does not see much that is good in the present Ottawa Government, but one can usually depend upon the facts which it publishes. Moreover, when the *Gazette* criticises anything in connection with the St. Lawrence route, one can be tolerably certain that the criticism is just. Therefore its criticism, in a leading editorial on the 12th, of the expenditures on the Dominion Government Navy may be taken as reliable. It does not say that these expenditures have not been necessary, but merely intimates that it would be the part of wisdom that they should be officially investigated. The *Champlain* was a new boat delivered to the Government in 1904. Its cost was \$92,000. Since then the cost of this little 550-ton vessel has been \$170 a day. The *Druid* was built in the same Scotch shipyard, a couple of years earlier, and cost \$116,000. She costs \$117 a day. The *Montcalm* cost \$300,000, and is a comparatively new boat. She costs \$285 a day. In other words, eliminating interest and depreciation, these three vessels cost the country \$572 a day, or \$208,780 a year. The repairs on the vessels, in addition to those done by the crews themselves, have cost a sufficient sum, the *Gazette* figures out, to maintain constantly 61 mechanics working 305 days in each year.

The editorial concludes: "The necessity for such enormous repairs upon these steamers just out of the builders' hands is surely worth the attention of the commission enquiring into the Marine Department. May it or may it not be attributed to the reason given by the Civil Service Commission: 'Some of the Government's officers are serving two masters, and apparently succeeding with both—scripture notwithstanding.'"



One of the big engines of the C.P.R. in a Wreck at Peterborough, November 14th.