

POLITICAL OFFICE-HOLDERS.

THAT the principal offices of honor and emolument in the gift of a Government will ever be distributed according to merit, or seniority and merit combined, there is no sign at present. Political influence alone seems to control the disposal of the greater berths, such as collectorships of customs, postmasterships, and other of the more valuable appointments. The necessary result is that it is a piece of exceptional good luck for the public when the successful competitor does not turn out to be utterly incompetent to encounter the responsibility he has succeeded in investing himself with. When neglect and idleness are not also added to incapacity it is only another illustration of the proverb that the exception proves the rule. The appointing power, however, usually has the decency to take care that no superfluous attention is called to selections so indefensible, which are come to be regarded as an evil inseparable at present from the party system. A daring innovator at Ottawa is, however, now attempting to tear away even this very small remaining shred of decency by boldly proclaiming the doctrine that all appointments to the great Civil Service prizes should be bestowed on political grounds solely and exclusively; and this novel disturber, if not reformer, has actually entered on a crusade against a candidate solely because his record is wholly free from all political scum. The office in question is the Postmastership of Ottawa, made vacant by the death of the latest incumbent. The duties have since been filled by the nominal deputy, but who has been for years the *de facto* head, and he appears to be an officer of thorough experience and general competency—the natural and legitimate successor, in fact, under any wholesome system. The professional politicians are, however, up in arms against the idea of such a promotion, declaring that such a horrible precedent would be but the death-knell of the whole exemplary and useful race of wire-pullers. Long service, proved ability, common fairness, are all to stand for nothing. Some political "boss" must and shall have it, or they'll "lay out" the Postmaster-General himself. It is said, however, that the latter has astounded and dismayed some local "rings" by refusing for once to surrender his liberty of action, and to have determined that the principle of promotion for merit shall have at least one fair and impartial trial. We trust Mr. CARLING will not allow himself to be moved from this resolution, and that if he finds the experiment turn out well he will give notice of the fact throughout the whole of his Department as a general warning to others who owe their appointments only to wire-pulling and political corruption generally.

THE U. S. Bureau of Statistics reports a foreign trade balance of \$33,602,874 in favor of the United States, exclusive of gold and silver on both sides the account, for the first five months of 1884.

THE CANADIAN ARMY OF INDUSTRY
—7,000 INVOLUNTARY IDLERS.

THE valuable compilation made by *Bradstreet's* and alluded to in our last respecting the industrial condition in the United States is now supplemented by a kindred paper as affecting Canada. Neither of these assumed to cover returns from the whole of either country, all the necessary figures from a few of the States being absent, while the new *Bradstreet* paper now under consideration confines its enquiries to Ontario and Quebec alone. This latter presentation, if accepted as even approximately correct, will be most gratifying as showing a far less melancholy result than had been feared even by such as are not in the habit of giving way to gloomy apprehensions. In fact so little depressing is the truth as compared with the too general forebodings that partisan papers, the so called "organs," have already begun to question the accuracy of our contemporary's statistics. At the best they are bad enough, showing a total of 6,150 skilled artisans entirely out of employment in the two Provinces named above. Of this inactive army the share belonging to the whole Province of Quebec, inclusive of the city of Montreal, is estimated in round numbers at only 600—a minimum for which local readers will surely be but little prepared. That there have been occasional reductions in the rates of wages paid, both in Ontario and Quebec, is admitted in this new compilation, but such diminution is claimed to have been neutralised by the still greater fall in all prices whether of food consumption, articles of wear, or other items of regular expenditure. It has to be borne in mind that the comparison thus made is as between the present year and that just past. The preceding American compilation embraced the differences as between 1880 and 1884. The comparison, however, under whatever aspect regarded, is immeasurably to the disadvantage of our neighbors, the whole concentrating in the appalling assertion that there are 350,000 skilled artisans absolutely out of employment in the United States to-day. Had *Bradstreet's* enquiries been continued through the remainder of the Canadian Provinces our total should have been brought up to about 7,000. This aggregate, enlarged to meet any reasonable assumed shortcomings, would still make a showing so largely in favor of Canada as to cut the ground wholly from under the feet of any local Annexationists. So large a force as even 7,000 of unemployed is deplorable enough, but it is no doubt much within the number reached in general estimation and based on guesswork instead of hard statistical facts. Some remarks made at Toronto a few days ago by Sir LEONARD TILLEY give, indeed, great room for congratulation rather than of any despondency. On the occasion in question the Finance Minister assumed that the number of skilled artisans in the Dominion to-day reached fully 100,000. In 1878, before the present N.P.

policy came into operation, this class was estimated to reach only something but little over half that number. Thus, conceding the statement to be well based, the fact remains behind that, allowing 7,000 to be idle to-day, there are yet in full employment fully 40,000 more than at the corresponding period of 1878. The whole matter is certain to be exhaustively discussed, not only on account of the inherent interest naturally attaching to it, but because all the extreme party organs are engaged in doing battle over it. Amongst them all the exact truth is pretty sure to be reached. In the meantime we accept the *Bradstreet* showing as approximately correct at all events, and are grateful to find that matters are no worse than they are and than it was so generally supposed they would be found.

THE STOCK MARKET.

In the matter of prices quotations have kept up fairly as compared with last week—on the score of numbers there is still once more a formidable diminution. The extent of this falling off will be immediately understood by realising that the entire transfers during the week were, of—Bank stocks, 872; Local Miscellaneous, 724; General Miscellaneous, *nil*: or a petty aggregate of 1,596 to represent the entire week's business. This exhibit is bad enough, but a list of the dilapidated professional element on "the street" which was in consequence compelled to dispense with the usual New Year's feast would be infinitely more heart-rending. It has to be said, however, that not a little of the inactivity which prevailed on St. Francois-Xavier Street throughout so lengthy a period of the year just closed was attributable to the more than questionable policy of a certain small set of "shady" brokers themselves. These made it a systematic policy to terrorize the market from time to time with mendacious reports of great failures, local and remote, imputing at the same time enormous financial losses to some one or more banks. With this and other equally disreputable "dodges" they kept up a game of see-saw with quotations till at length the general public and the *bona fide* investor were fairly driven away altogether. From which time out matters slackened till at length the present semi-stagnation was reached. We have now to see if the unprofitable results of this discreditable system are to act as a warning in the future and to bring about a reformation in the New Year commenced yesterday.

The Old Year expired with the following quotations in leading stocks:—

Bank of Montreal	187
Merchants'	108½
Commerce	117
Toronto	175
Ontario	145
People's	44
Molson's	109
Montreal Telegraph	112½
Richelieu and Ontario Nav. Co.	58
City Passenger	119
City Gas	180½

THE uneasy feeling in Vienna in financial circles continues. Rumors are in circulation about the stability of various banks and commercial houses.