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THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF CANADA.*

BY J. G. BOURINOT,

The Clerk Assistant of the House of Commons.

I.—POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE liberal system of government which Canada now enjoys was not the sudden inspiration of some eminent statesman or the issue of the fertile brain of some philosopher, following the example of the illustrious Locke, who devised in his closet an elaborate system of government for South Carolina, in which caciques and landgraves were to represent a colonial nobility. The Constitution of Canada is the practical outcome of the experience of astute statesmen. It has not been won in a decade or two; but is the result of three-quarters of a century of political struggle, during which English statesmen have learned many a valuable lesson in colonial administration. Previous to the American War of Independence, the English Government devoted very little atten-

tion to Colonial affairs, and appeared to have no fixed principle of policy with respect to the colonies, except that their trade should be kept as closely as possible in English hands. But when the Thirteen Colonies threw off their allegiance, and took their place among independent nations, the public men who controlled the Government of the Empire, awoke from their lethargy and went to the other extreme of constant interference in colonial affairs. Aroused at last to the importance of colonial administration, the Home Government made every effort to educate the inhabitants of Canada in the way of self-government. The political system which was to make the Canadians a self-governing people was unfortunately from the outset based on erroneous principles, and illustrated an extraordinary ignorance of the wants and necessities of the people whose interests British statesmen professed to have at heart. But it must be admitted that it was very difficult for a British minister, in those days of slow communication, to obtain

* This paper is to be read before the Royal Colonial Institute, London, in the course of the present winter. The writer, however, has left out some of the original matter, necessary to make the subject more intelligible to an English audience, little conversant with Canadian history.