

proprietors, the most respectable citizens, under ordinary circumstances, when there is no great question on foot and no great call for patriotic exertion, are too much occupied in their own commercial and domestic concerns to be candidates for an office which would oblige them to reside at the capital. Their places are taken by a class of professional politicians, needy men for the most part, who too often go to Washington to make the fortunes which others are making through industry, by the trade of political intrigue. The character and habits of these men, the machinery of caucuses and wire-pulling by which their system is carried on, and the general tone of the newspaper press which ministers to their competition for place, still further repel the best men from the political sphere. It is not astonishing that those who come in contact only with the politicians of America, or with what emanates from the politicians, should form, as they are apt to do, a ludicrously unjust estimate of the American people.

The framers of the scheme before us style their work a copy of the British constitution; but, as a plan of a central government for a federation, it may be called rather a copy of the constitution of the United States. Ottawa, as a factitious capital, is the exact counterpart of Washington; and at Ottawa, as at Washington, we shall too probably see the least worthy citizens of the Federation collected together, during several months in each year, without even the tempering and restraining influences which the mixed society of a real capital affords, an unadulterated element of professional politicians, devoting their whole time to the undivided work of corruption and intrigue.

If the Federation is to have a central government and a capital, the question should at all events be considered whether it is not desirable to place the capital in a city, such as Montreal, where there will be some social interests and influences, to temper the pursuits of which Willard's Hotel and the boarding-houses at Washington are the

classic scene. Even the amenities of Washington debate might be a little controlled by the presence of a more enlarged and cultivated circle in the gallery.

A writer, himself a colonist, and one who has had considerable experience in colonial politics, lays it down as one of a series of axioms for the guidance of colonial legislators, "that it is a fallacy to assume that there will be found in the colonies, as in England, a class of statesmen sufficiently above the influence of sordid motives to take the management of public affairs from public spirit and patriotic motives alone; or that men who, by securing the votes of the majority of a colonial legislature, can obtain the handling of the colonial revenue, and the dispensing of the patronage of office, in addition to the distinction which it confers, will scruple at any sacrifice of the public interests which may be necessary to secure those objects." If there is any truth in this somewhat plain-spoken summary of a colonist's political experience, it betokens no vice or malady in colonial society, but, on the contrary, a general prevalence of industry, and an equal diffusion of wealth. It does, however, make it desirable, before instituting a great central government with a vast amount of patronage, and an unlimited command of money, to pause and inquire, whether under the existing conditions of colonial society competent and disinterested candidates for the places in that government are likely to be found. If they are not, it might be a sounder, though a less imposing policy, to be content with a simple federation for the purpose of mutual protection, confining the Federal Assembly to purely federal functions, giving its members as little patronage as possible, and assigning to them only the power of calling for the necessary contingents from the different States in place of the power of raising taxes by their own authority, and expending them with their own hands.

These reflections press upon us with peculiar force when we observe the

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