

and about which there are many Dutch survivals in the names of both families and places. Many of the considerations urged on behalf of giving Dutch a place in the universities of America apply with equal force to Great Britain. Some of the local dialects of England have preserved so much of their original Low German characteristics that English sailors from eastern ports can make themselves understood in the harbours of Holland. To give such attention to the Dutch language and literature would have an excellent effect in paving the way for a better understanding between the British and Dutch in South Africa, where dangerous conflicts are the outcome of want of sympathy if not of mutual contempt.

"Offensive Partisanship."

THIS phrase has during the past few weeks played a very important part in current political discussions in Parliament and in the party journals. It is too vague to lend itself easily to definition, and yet on the meaning read into it by men in a state of political passion will depend the fate of thousands of civil servants all over the Dominion.

The Canadian theory of the civil service has heretofore resembled that of the British service—a man appointed to a public office expects, and is expected, to retain it in spite of changes of Administration, so long as he does his duty efficiently and keeps out of election contests. He may vote for his party candidate, but he may not enter actively into campaign work on his behalf.

Quite a different theory prevailed in the United States during the half century before the election of President Cleveland twelve years ago. It was embodied in the terse dictum that "to the victors belong the spoils," and it was reduced to practice with a thoroughness that caused an almost complete change of personnel in the civil and diplomatic services whenever there was a change of Executive. Mr. Cleveland, though he was the first Democratic President in a quarter of a century, gave the "spoils" system a decided check in practice, and Congressional legislation and Executive action have since co-operated in an effort to make it as little mischievous as possible.

No intelligent Canadian desires to have the "spoils" system introduced into this country, especially at a time when the long and determined effort to extirpate it bids fair to be successful in its native land. If we will don the cast-off political clothes of our neighbours, let us at least confine our selection to those garments that have not become odious in the estimation of the original wearers. Instead of following a bad and discredited example we should do our utmost to raise the civil service above suspicion of either inefficiency or partisanship.

There are two dangers to which our system in Canada is exposed. One of these is the tendency of civil servants to take an active and offensive part in election contests for the purpose of helping candidates of the party to which they belong or with which they sympathize; the other is the truculence and persistence with which the party in opposition denounces every dismissal from office as a resort to the "spoils" system. If these dangers are to be avoided, civil servants must make up their minds to keep out of party conflicts, and politicians out of power must be prepared to admit that public servants ought to be dismissed when there is no need for their services, or when they prove to be unfit for their positions.

Disturbing declarations of an intention to dismiss civil servants who have been guilty of "offensive partisanship"

have this session been freely made by several Ministers of the Crown on the floor of the House of Commons. To this there can be no objection from the point of view of those who believe in maintaining the British system. The only question that can arise is one of the interpretation of a phrase on the vagueness of which we have already commented. To see that due care is exercised in its application is the plain, obvious duty of the Premier himself. The majority of the people are not vindictively cruel, and they will look to Mr. Laurier personally to see that every man who is accused is allowed a chance to defend himself. This would be in accord with his personal reputation for magnanimity, and would be at the same time good party tactics.

It should be noted, however, that if "offensive partisanship" is objectionable in the Dominion civil service it is no less objectionable in the various Provincial services. It is openly alleged, and not denied, that some prominent members of the inside service of Ontario were very active and very offensive partisans of the Liberal leader in the late contest for the Dominion. These men should be able to see for themselves that conduct of this sort is sure to lead to reprisals, and that they are not merely risking their own positions but furnishing the best possible excuse for the introduction of the "spoils" system.

Behind the Speaker's Chair.

THE fact of a Liberal Administration at Ottawa is just beginning to make itself realized. For so long one political party and under the leadership of one great personality held sway at the national capital, that many came to regard the Tory regime as perpetual. Anyone looking in upon the House of Commons to-day will see full evidence that a change has come. On the Treasury benches sits a strong Government—stronger probably than any which has sat there for twenty years past.

Policy is an important thing in any Administration, but when the dividing issues are not acute, personality is a greater factor. A study of the personality of the present Dominion Government is not uninteresting.

First, and easily chief, sits Hon Wilfrid Laurier—actually the Prime Minister of this great Dominion. Ten years ago such a possibility was undreamed of. A slight and pleasant-looking figure sat beside Mr. Blake, the intellectual giant who led the Liberal party most ably and most successfully—except into power. When, after the elections of 1887, Mr. Blake got disgusted with the electorate and tired of the seemingly hopeless struggle against the clever humbug of Sir John A. Macdonald, the Liberal leadership was for a time in commission. In point of ability and force of character, beyond question Sir Richard Cartwright stood preëminent among those who were available. But in this age of the world's history force of character is a dangerous quality to possess. In politics it is the age of Opportunism. Mediocrity constitutes the centre of gravity in political parties, and nothing alarms mediocrity so much as the presence of a commanding mental force. Mr. Blake suggested Mr. Laurier as his successor. Mr. Laurier was modest, gentle, unassuming. Every mediocrity in the Liberal party believed he could exercise some influence over him, and Mr. Laurier was chosen.

He assumed his duties very modestly and told everyone that he not only did not wish the post, but felt himself unequal to it. But under normal conditions the world is charitable towards leaders. The distinction between the leader of the orchestra and the rest of the performers, as viewed from the stalls and the pit, is enormous, and every leader is accorded a fair chance. Mr. Laurier steadily grew. Each year he loomed larger in the public eye until at this moment he is, perhaps, the greatest personality and the most supreme