

—have become so accustomed to what resolves itself simply into government by the parliamentary majority, that it is only lately we have been able to conceive of any other system as other than cumbrous and unwieldy. Of late we have indeed begun to perceive that there may be points of advantage about an executive comparatively free from parliamentary control—as in the United States—and the present state of American politics, with a Senate hostile both to the President and lower House, gives material for an interesting study, which, however, we cannot now enter upon. But whatever may be the disadvantage of our system, we may, on the whole, be thankful that we are spared the regularly four-yearly turmoil of the Presidential election. We doubt if £10,000 a year, the Governor-General's salary, is too heavy a price to pay for this amount of peace and quietness; and we can indeed scarcely imagine a worse "normal condition" for a country than that of perpetual elections.

Much worse political conditions, however, would, as we may take our contributor to imply, fail to impede the progress of a country of an area so practically unlimited, and a population so energetic and ingenious.

That our constitutional Head of the Government is usually taken from the English aristocracy, is not at all, we think, a bad feature of the arrangement. It unquestionably secures to us high-minded men, whose highest and legitimate ambition is the duty of impartiality. It may indeed be said with much safety that the sense of duty is the paramount motive among such men as are sent to us in that position.

We scarcely agree with our contributor's idea that "It may for effect be said that the Governor-General is the mouthpiece of a constitution in every essential respect democratic." We are addicted to going to the substance of things, disregarding the conventionalities in which they may be clothed, and so far as we know ourselves, we never write for "effect." If the practical working of our Canadian institutions is not essentially democratic, we should like to know what constitutes democratic institutions. We have literally no privileged class, and a privileged class is the essence of an aristocratic polity. A few Canadian gentlemen have received Imperial honors, not hereditary, for special services (notably in connection with Federation) of a nature less and less likely to recur. The highest offices of the state are, as in America, open to the humblest pupil of the Common Schools, and we have literally nothing to do with "the struggle for ascendancy that has been going on between these three classes" (Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy) "ever since the days of Magna Charta." The full and matured fruits of Magna Charta, of the struggle of the great De Montfort, of the Revolution of 1688, of the American War of Independence, of the overthrow of the old Family Compact of Canada, have, without struggle or effort on our part, been long assured to Canada, which is as favored to-day politically, as it is by nature in regard to moderation of climatic influences.

We fail to see any practical correspondence between the clash of classes in European countries, where the influences of feudal traditions still survive, and the assumed similar antagonisms in Canada, where they have never in reality existed, except in the old Seigniories of Quebec, which were long ago abolished; and we have really nothing to do with the Home Rule question, except—what is the duty of every fair journalist—to endeavor to show the balance of conflicting prejudices, keeping ever in view the fundamental principles of right and wrong.

We cannot for an instant dispute our esteemed contributor's *personal experience* as to the comparative cheapness of living in Canada and in the States. All we can say is, that his experience clashes with much personal testimony we have heard tending to a very different conclusion. Moreover, our contributor makes a very significant exception—"taking the price of wages into consideration."

It is true this parenthetical statement tells in favor of our contributor's general assertion that "quite a number of young men (and women, too, sometimes) go off to \* \* \* the United States, where they get fair wages; and in the course of two or three years, send back to their parents money enough to pay off the mortgage on the old homestead—a debt that has hung over the farm perhaps ever since the day of Confederation."

Our contributor will pardon us, if, in all courtesy, we say that this is very special pleading. What were the occupations of these young men and women? Have any of them been found in board, and so enabled to put by the whole of their earnings—still, after clothing themselves?

What would be the amount of a mortgage which could be paid off "in two or three years" of saving, involving the most absolute self-denial? Are these mortgages necessarily coincident with the "day of Confederation?"

All accounts, it seems to us, agree that mortgages are far more numerous and more serious in the States than with us, and we should like to know the precise extent of our contributor's personal observation of the "deserted homesteads" in Nova Scotia, which, he states, are "becoming painfully numerous."

### THE MILITIA.

Among other Blue Books, we have had before us for some days the Militia Report for 1887. We shall presently endeavor to enable our readers to see what the country is really getting in return for its expenditure on this branch of its service. At present we must confine ourselves to one or two points of a general nature, and we pause a moment to record our appreciation of the laudable endeavor made by the Government to bring down the Departmental Reports in the earliest days of the session.

The remarks of the Lt-General Commanding are, as usual, marked by the strong, plain, common-sense which is perhaps Sir Frederic Middleton's distinguishing characteristic, and it is always evident that all that "ways and means" allow to the Service will be administered to the best advantage so far as he is concerned.

That some of his reiterated recommendations still remain uncarried out

may be attributed to two influences or conditions pulling opposite ways—the spirit of parliamentary parsimony as to this particular service on the one hand; and, on the other, the nervous tremor about votes which sits upon the politician like a chronic fever-and-ague, and to which the august Head of a Dominion Department is as susceptible as the crudest tyro of a Provincial Assembly.

It will be remembered that General Middleton has, from year to year, represented the damage to the Service of biennial drill, and the consequent expediency, if Parliament will vote no more than Ministers dare ask it to do at present, of reducing the Force to a numerical status which will allow of its entire strength being drilled every year. It goes without saying that the period of drill is far too short, but we will not enter on that point now. The strength of the Active Militia stood last year at 38,000 (less one.) Of this force, 20,500 (about 1255 over half) were authorized to drill. Enough has been said, and is known, of the pernicious effect on any corps of missing a year's drill; and it is also well enough known that throughout the Dominion there are slack corps whose extinction would be, not a loss, but a relief to the Service. These inert and useless bodies are time and again reported by the District Commanders. But what is the result? A dilettante captain and officers, and the body of unformed loafers they play at commanding are inert and careless enough as long as they are allowed to play at soldiers after their own notions of that function. But threaten them with disbandment, and, presto, every useless man-jack of them gets on his hind legs, and brays lustily that he is insulted by the natural and proper result of his own wilful inefficiency. The Captain "goes for" his Colonel; the Colonel (if he be not himself the Member) "goes for" the Member; the Member "goes for" the Minister, and the Minister heaves a sigh of resignation. What can the poor gentleman do? Disbandment of the, in some cases, inefficient ninth company—no Battalion should be allowed nine companies—means loss of votes, and the useless Corps sticks its collective tongue in its collective cheek, and remains a permanent discredit to the Force and an embarrassment to the whole Militia scheme of efficiency. Minister and General continue to perform the duties of puppets to the enlightened military elector, and things go on as they did of yore.

The General's recommendations as to accoutrements and equipments fall under the restriction imposed by the false economy of Parliament. For two or three years Sir Frederic has strenuously insisted on the expediency of substituting brown leather belts for those which necessitate the abomination of pipe-clay. It is to be assumed that the Department does not see its way to this expenditure. Still, we think that at least a partial renovation might by this time have been accomplished. It is a change which has to come, because it is universally felt that the vital parts of a soldier should no longer be pointed out by a band of conspicuous color.

For the same reason we would change the steel scabbard and silver belt ornaments of Rifle Regiments to bronze.

But besides the matter of brown belts, the reports of all the responsible staff officers agree in representing the knapsacks, valises, pouches, ball bags, canteens, water-bottles, etc., now in possession of the Force, as generally rotten, unserviceable, and obsolete.

These fittings are most important to any Force called upon to take the field, and there is a great opportunity before the Head Quarters Staff of beginning refitment in the least expensive manner possible by the adoption of Dr. Oliver's admirable valise equipment.

This gentleman, who, having served in the 1870 Red River Expedition, is, more than most army officers, "one of us," has been shamefully treated by the Imperial war office. Everyone knows how much ingenuity and thought has for many years been devoted to the problem of disposing the burden carried by the soldier in the field so as to entail upon him the least fatigue, the least strain on certain parts of the body, the least impediment to healthy circulation, and consequently, the least detriment to his general health and strength.

These desiderata have been attained by Dr. Oliver to a degree we consider perfect—at least we fail to see how the same capacity of loadage could possibly be better distributed. But this is not all. The highest merit of an invention is simplicity. This Dr. Oliver's equipment possesses to a remarkable degree. The soldier can sling it on unaided, turn the valise to the front by unhooking a single hook, and the pack sits as lightly and fairly with the waist belt unhooked, as with it fastened. The weight rests on the strongest parts of the body, *i. e.*, the great coat high up between the shoulders, and the valise on the buttocks, leaving the small of the back free. It has the further advantage of being very light, though made of exceedingly strong materials—simply leather, stout water-proof canvas, and brass hooks and buckles. The water-bottle is the "Italian," with a decided improvement, and the canteen is extremely simple and well devised.

The Imperial war office has been mean enough, while (no doubt in the interests of contractors or previous inventors) declining to adopt Dr. Oliver's invention, to steal some of its salient points, and fit them to the clumsy equipments they see fit to adhere to, thereby making a complete botch of both.

But it is in the power of the Dominion Government to recompense Dr. Oliver, by giving the Dominion Forces the best valise equipment that has ever been invented, and there is nothing in the simplicity of its construction which should prevent it from being manufactured at a Canadian factory, which, if required, should be established for the purpose; or, if that were not feasible, the whole arrangement could be supplied by any good firm of saddlers or harness-makers, the material used being strictly inspected by Government officers.

No one is more capable of arranging a matter of this sort expeditiously and effectively, than the capable and experienced Adjutant-General, Colonel Powell, and no duty of the Department to the Service it controls is to our thinking plainer.