

COMMERCIAL UNION.

The Commercial Unionists are vigorously agitating their side of the question, and it must be admitted that, in theory at least, they present a strong case. To the average citizen who has had to pass the ordeal of the custom houses, both going to, and coming from the States, the proposition that these pests to the traveller should be abolished, has much to commend it. Free and unrestricted intercourse with our Southern neighbors would certainly be beneficial to some portions of the Dominion, the Maritime Provinces in particular, so that without discussing the *modus operandi* by which this result is to be brought about, or the thousand and one difficulties that have to be surmounted before Commercial Union becomes practicable, many impulsive Canadians have taken the theory, and are advocating its adoption on grounds, the soundness of which has yet to be proved. The question is an open one, and still has to be discussed in all its bearings. Admitting, that theoretically, it would be advantageous to the Dominion, let us cursorily examine some of the practical difficulties that will have to be surmounted before it can be put in operation. And first, it would be well to examine the question from the American standpoint. It must be remembered that the American Government has taken the initiative in terminating the different commercial treaties with the Dominion. The Reciprocity Treaty and the Treaty in regard to the fisheries were both terminated by the authorities at Washington, and they have since refused to negotiate a new Reciprocity Treaty, although the Dominion has made every honorable effort to induce them to do so. Their hostile action forced the Dominion to adopt a protective system, and what grounds have its advocates to expect that the States would now consent to enter into Commercial Union with the Dominion? They might be willing to join with Ontario and Manitoba alone, but will New England consent to admit Nova Scotian fish free from duty, and will Pennsylvania agree that Nova Scotian coal and iron shall come in unrestricted competition with her own? We very much doubt it. If the Commercial Unionists place their reliance on the bill introduced into Congress by Mr. Butterworth, we fear that they are doomed to disappointment. The bill is a good one, and its introducer proves that he knows what would benefit both countries; but if it is passed by Congress, it will certainly be defeated by the Republican Senate, if not on principle, to embarrass the President. The only argument, in our opinion, that would induce the United States to favor Commercial Union is, that it would prove the entering wedge for annexation; and this argument, we think we are safe in saying, would kill the movement on this side of the line. From our knowledge of public opinion in the States, we fear that Commercial Union with the Dominion would prove an unpopular measure, and one that could not be carried through Congress and the Senate.

On this side of the line, the obstacles in the way of Commercial Union are numerous, and great skill will be required to surmount them. Without an assimilation of tariffs Commercial Union is almost an impossibility. The United States tariff is very much higher than our own, and it is questionable whether the increase would meet the popular approval. If this increase were made we should be discriminating against English goods; and although the argument against this is called a purely sentimental one, it is possible that even on that account, it would prove unsurmountable. But is it purely sentimental? We think not. The Mother Country has it in her power to aid the Dominion, and she has generally done so. At the present moment Parliament is debating the advisability of granting a large subsidy to the Canada Pacific, for the purpose of establishing a mail route to India and Australia. If this is granted, it cannot but prove of great advantage to us. Shall we then give the Home Government an excuse for refusing the grant, on the ground that nothing can be done for a colony which would find itself bound to discriminate against English goods? These are serious difficulties, and to them must be added the fact that we cannot break faith with our home manufacturers, who have spent millions in establishing factories, on the assurance that they were to be protected from outside competition. They and their employees will oppose Commercial Union with all their strength; and the last election abundantly proved that no party can succeed in the Dominion which they do not trust. These are a few of the difficulties in the way of Commercial Union that occur to us, and at present they seem quite as hard to meet as any that have yet been advanced against the other great question—Federal Union.

TOMMY ATKINS' RATIONS.

It is generally admitted that a very satisfactory amount of practical improvement in the condition of the soldier has been effected of late years, and when we also take into consideration the diminished exigencies of his career, due to short service, we are apt to be surprised at the continued prevalence of desertion. A recent debate on the army estimates, however, throws some light on this point.

The recruit is given to understand that he will have free rations; but the promise is broken to the sense, and turns out to be practically a somewhat bitter mockery. It is naturally interpreted to mean as much wholesome and nourishing food as young men need; but, in point of fact, the British soldier gets about five or six ounces of meat, after deducting bone and waste in cooking, from a nominal ration of three quarters of a pound. This morsel he has for dinner, and for breakfast and supper the state provides a very limited amount of bread and tea.

If the hungry Atkins is unreasonable enough, like Oliver Twist, to want more, he must satisfy his desires out of his scanty pay. Is it any wonder if he deserts? A daily exasperating grievance of this sort is far more chargeable with desertions than any supposed tyranny of martinet officers, which is far less prevalent than it used to be.

Fancy the Canadian soldier serving under such conditions. English

departmentalism cannot divest itself of red-tape. The minute and vexatious fiddle-faddle of stoppages out of a shilling a day would drive a Canadian officer out of his senses. Free kit and free rations should be terms to be understood in their fullest sense, allowing for reasonable wear and good appetites.

Whether or no general officers in command are alive to the evil, or if they are, whether they make urgent representations to head-quarters, or if they do, whether Red-Tape snubs the writers, or merely pigeon-holes the letters, no man may know; but, until it is both understood and remedied, the Imperial Government may continue to lay its account with the waste expenditure of training a soldier to no other end but to make a deserter of him.

THE WAR OUTLOOK IN EUROPE.

The great manipulator of European politics has probably succeeded in averting any outbreak of hostilities this year, but it has evidently required a good deal of management. It has had to be made apparent to Russia that Germany is not disposed to bar her road to Constantinople, and, somehow or other, the constitution of M. Rouvier's ministry has been accomplished without General Boulanger.

It is quite possible that the retention of the popular general might have meant war, and, if the chances of an outbreak have even been postponed, something is gained. Whether this probable respite has been attained through the representations of Prince Bismarck, or through M. Grévy's own foresight and firmness, is not very material. Perhaps it is due to both. That M. Grévy, however, is not wanting in those essential attributes, we have had a good deal of evidence. Prudence has been shown on both sides, but on all sides it has been compulsory. Germany, powerful as she is, is heavily handicapped by the hollowness of her *entente* with Russia, and the almost certainty of the use Russia would make of an opening. Russia herself is not altogether so internally sound, either as to her army, or as to the people at large, as to have no causes for hesitation, even without taking into consideration the power of Austria, which, though she is almost proverbially unfortunate in the field, is yet a powerful factor. Moreover, the prowess of her arms is so nearly on a par with that of the other great powers, that it might only depend on her developing a capable general to make her at any moment the equal of any of them. It is in this respect that she has been so often unfortunate, but we must remember that *she* inflicted crushing defeats on the great Frederic at Hochkirch, and on Fink at Maxen; that Laudohn commanded the hearty admiration of the king, although he consummated the Prussian defeat of Kunersdorf; that the Archduke Charles defeated Napoleon at Aspern; and that it was "touch and go" with the Prussians at Sadowa, despite the self-recognized want of genius of Benedek, who, indeed, perhaps thought too moderately of his own capacity. At all times the Austrian troops and generals have shown superiority to the Italians, yet Italy herself is of some account.

Still no one can feel assured that the spark may not at any moment be struck which shall set alight the explosive materials of European jealousies armed to the teeth, and, under present conditions, it would be marvellous if England should escape being drawn into the struggle.

TROUBLE IN THE NORTH-WEST.

The persistent rumors of a possibility of a recurrence of trouble in the North West, lead us to consider it a duty to pointedly draw attention to some intelligence we have received from those parts. It comes from a person of reliable observation, who has every facility, and a competent knowledge.

It is to the following effect. That the Qu'Appelle murders are said, with much probability of truth, "to be designed to draw attention from the Bloods and Blackfeet in the Macleod District, and are probably the forerunners of trouble, only to be averted by prompt action. That the Metis and Indians throughout the territory are very unsettled, refuse to put in crops, and are wandering from one place to another with no apparent motive."

On the other hand, the class of men recruited into the Mounted Police are unsuitable, the training they receive does not fit them for prairie work, and but few of the force can be trusted near the boundary, as they desert at every opportunity.

The sooner precautions are taken, and, as our correspondent says, "the sooner a change is made, the less chance the people of the east will have to pay another \$5,000,000 to send troops up." The number of deserters is said to be 50 per cent. greater than from the Imperial army. The authorities, it is added, "have all been warned, and we wait to see what they will do."

Now it happens that we have exceptional knowledge of the Mounted Police from its beginning, and we are startled to hear complaints of precisely the faults which characterized its earlier days, chief among which is the bad selection of men. We are also quite aware of the influences which frequently control selection, to the detriment of the service.

We further think it is the duty of the government, and of the C.P.R. offices and emigration bureaus in England, to impress upon intending settlers the expediency of providing themselves, whenever they have the means, with efficient arms.

The treatment of consumption by the injection of carbonic acid gas into the stomach is again put forward with circumstantial evidence. We do not know how the doctors are inclined to regard it; but, if there is really anything in it, it is of immense importance.