

kind that fits boys for such clerkships. The ability to read and write, to add up rows of figures, and to apply the rudiments of book-keeping, supply the equipment for a clerk, and these every boy and girl of ordinary intelligence can now get, largely at the public expense. Of course, the idea that these advantages should be withheld from the masses because their possession increases the competition, already almost fatally fierce, for clerkships, if any such idea was in the minds of the speakers, could not be entertained for a moment. But here again it is evident that, if the education could be made of such a kind as would tend to bias the children as much towards mechanical and agricultural pursuits as towards clerkships, it might have no inconsiderable influence in bringing about a better distribution of labour. Does any thoughtful person doubt that it could, at the same time, be made more complete, symmetrical and successful, simply as education?

RUSSIA aside, there is not, perhaps, to-day a sadder picture in national life than that presented in the present condition of Italy. Descendants of one of the noblest races of antiquity, and still possessing in large measure many of the characteristics of their renowned ancestors, the proud Italians just now afford the melancholy spectacle of a nation on the verge of bankruptcy, and no longer, there is some reason to fear, possessed of sufficient energy and moral courage to retrace its false steps and enter on the path of retrenchment which alone can bring relief from the intolerable burden of poverty, largely the result of over taxation. The cause of all this wretchedness may be given in one word—militarism. In the long and painful effort to keep her armaments up to the point of size and efficiency required by the conditions of the Triple Alliance, the resources of the nation have been overstrained until she is seemingly in imminent danger of utter collapse. Whether and to what extent this has been forced upon the country by circumstances which she was unable to change or control, it is hard to determine. Whether mistaken or not, the motive which has influenced the Governments in imposing and the people in submitting to a rate of taxation which is appalling and ruinous, has been brave and patriotic. Everything has been sacrificed and endured to maintain the precious freedom from Papal domination which was so hardly won, and which, in the opinion of many, is still retained by a very precarious hold. A writer who is living in Italy, and who is apparently very well-informed, says in effect, in an article in the *New York Independent*, that the key to the whole situation is the ever-present dread of the Italians of being again subjected by France to the yoke of the Papal authorities. This dread constrains them to submit to a rate of taxation such as is endured, probably, by no other civilized and free people, in order to maintain the alliance which, rightly or wrongly, they deem their only safeguard. What the future may bring forth for them it is impossible to predict. The only hope of the country is, seemingly, the formation of a Government wise and courageous enough to cut down expenses and reduce armaments, even at the risk of breaking up the Triple Alliance. Whatever may have been the case in other days, there cannot now be much danger that Republican France would risk the peace of Europe and provoke another contest with Germany in order to bring a free people again into intolerable bondage. Even were the French so far under the influence of the Vatican as to attempt it, it is in the least degree likely that the other European powers, to say nothing of Great Britain, would permit such an outrage, alliance or no alliance.

OTTAWA LETTER.

AS I begin this letter everyone is looking for the close of the session, and nobody seems to have the least idea when this devoutly-to-be-wished for consummation will arrive. You may go to Government supporters and ask them how long will these things be, and they will answer, "we do not know." Next, you enquire of leading Opposition lights, and they, you find, are in even a more hopeless state of perplexity. It all depends on the Redistribution Bill, and probably we will know about that before this epistle is posted. It may be remarked just here that this Bill is becoming more obnoxious to the Liberals every day, and they are strengthened in their determination to oppose it with all their might by the general support they are receiving from the independent press.

The Intercolonial Railway was thoroughly discussed last week, and Mr. Haggart's brave proposal to reduce the expenditure and try and make both ends meet was received with general approbation, the Opposition quite cordially joining in with his scheme. "For the purpose," said the

Minister, "of establishing an equilibrium as nearly as possible between the expenditure and the earnings, I have decided to make a reduction in several directions," and then he proceeded to state how this would be done. He proposed to dismiss 210 out of the 4,181 employees on that road. He also means to reduce the train service, erasing from the time table one of the fast express trains between Halifax and St. John. Twenty men are to be taken off the Prince Edward Island Railway service, saving thereby \$9,200, while a reduction in the train service will recoup the country \$9,300, making a total saving on the Island of \$18,500. Then, in answer to many questions, oft repeated, Mr. Haggart hurled column after column of figures at the devoted heads of the Opposition. Even the astute member for North Wellington, to whom has been intrusted the duty of criticizing the public accounts of Canada, looked bewildered as, in his monotonous voice, the Minister rolled out big figures and small figures, figures of great account and figures of no account. Honour to whom honour is due! Since the commencement of the session Mr. Haggart has won the good opinion of the House by his management of the difficult Department of Railways and Canals. That he is a practical, cool-headed man of business, who has made a point of becoming thoroughly acquainted with his business, is apparent. He answers all questions put to him with the greatest equanimity, and generally volunteers more information than is asked of him. Even Sir Richard Cartwright unbent so far the other day as to credit the Minister of Railways and Canals with a right intention, though he feared he would find political pressure so strong that he would not be able to carry it out.

It is not very often that sectional jealousy is shown in the House, but a little sign of it was manifested during the debate on the Intercolonial Railway. The Ontario members thundered away at the great expenditure involved in the work, and the immense burden it was to the people of Canada. The Maritime members on both sides defended the railway, and pointed to the large sums of money yearly expended on canals which, while they were for the accommodation of the members for the Upper Provinces, in no way contributed to the commercial well-being of the Provinces by the sea.

Mr. Perry, from Prince Edward Island, is a funny little man, who has a continual grievance against the Government about a public work, known as the "Miminegash Breakwater." Whenever he has an opportunity he asks a question, which he supplements by a lengthy speech about Miminegash, and he invariably tells the House that Prince Edward Island receives no sort of fair treatment from the Government, because it will not send Tory representatives to Ottawa. In Mr. Haggart's explanation he unearthed a new grievance, and it was that the reduction in the train service of the island was to be made at the end where the Liberals predominate, while no interference would take place with the line in the Tory constituencies on the island.

A bit of a sensation was caused in the House when Mr. Michael Adams, who defeated Mr. Peter Mitchell in Northumberland, N.B., last general election, opposed in most vigorous language the proposed grant of \$120,000 for railway accommodation for the city of St. John; \$80,000 was voted for this purpose last session, which makes the total sum \$200,000. Mr. Adams, who is a strong Conservative, and was a short time ago a member of the New Brunswick Cabinet, said the property was not worth anything like the money paid for it; that the accommodation was not needed, and asked on what ground if, in the interests of economy, labourers were to be deprived of their bread, the House was justified in paying out \$200,000 on the city of St. John for a property that was not worth \$80,000. He characterized St. John as "a city of beggars by the sea," and added, "they want \$120,000 more from the taxpayer of this country in order to satisfy the ambition of a city too indolent to do anything for themselves." Now, this is strong language, but will any sane man say that if St. John returned Liberals to Parliament, the Government would find it necessary to spend nearly a quarter of a million dollars for the purpose of better accommodation. Well! there are bribes and bribes! The labouring man who is dismissed has little chance for retaliation on a powerful Government, but, says St. John, if you don't give us our \$200,000 we will turn Grit. So the "increased accommodation," for a city with a decreasing population, must be made.

Mr. McCarthy is a lonely man, in a political sense. He is not in special favour with the Government, and he is not exactly beloved by the Opposition, while just on the moment that his newly-created following is nicely developing, he makes a mistake which calls for the condemnation of those who, a week ago, could not be loud enough in his praises. "Somebody blundered" when the second reading of a Bill to further amend the North-West Territories Act was called. No one rose to his feet, and a vote was taken, which showed a very respectable minority in favour of the principle involved. It was all a mistake, of course, but a very peculiar mistake for a gentleman of the legal ability and Parliamentary experience of Mr. McCarthy to make, and blame has fallen on his devoted head.

To make matters more complicated, Mr. Armstrong, the much esteemed member for Middlesex, steals so much of Mr. McCarthy's thunder as he thinks will serve his purpose, and straightway proposes a resolution to provide "That power be given to the Legislative Assembly of the

North-West Territories, after the next general election thereto, to deal with all matters pertaining to education and the use of dual languages in the courts and in the proceedings of the said Assembly, providing, however, that no school section, as at present constituted, shall be interfered with without the consent of the parties composing such section." It was expected that this motion would have been reached on Monday; but by the time the House had thoroughly debated a resolution by Mr. Charlton on the question of prohibition, and one by Mr. McMullen, on the North-West Mounted Police, time for adjournment had come. It may be mentioned that both these motions just referred to were withdrawn after a lot of meaningless talk, and some of these days Parliament will have to set a limit to the speaking privileges of its members or else settle down to six-month sessions.

It remains for Mr. Devlin, the member for Ottawa County, to propose the most absurd motion of the session. He wishes the House to declare "That in its opinion the time has arrived when a substantial measure of home rule should be granted to Ireland, and the House expresses the hope that at the approaching general election in the United Kingdom a majority will be returned to Parliament pledged to enact a measure which, while safeguarding the unity and interests of the British Empire, will satisfy the legitimate and national aspirations of the Irish people by granting to them a Parliament with jurisdiction over all matters of a local character." The well-deserved snub administered to the Canadian Parliament by Mr. Gladstone, when a motion somewhat on these lines was passed not many years ago, on motion of Mr. Costigan, should be fresh enough in the minds of the present members to prevent them from again making unmitigated asses of themselves. The impression appears to be that the motion will secure scant courtesy from the Government, if it is even reached on the order paper. T. C. L. K.

FREE TRADE AND HOW TO RAISE THE REVENUE.

IN discussing the applicability of free trade to the commercial life of Canada, the question that is more frequently asked than any other question, is, "How are we going to raise a revenue under a free trade policy?" In an open letter to the Hon. Mr. Laurier the writer ventured the assertion that the revenue could be raised without resorting to direct taxation, and he now ventures to state the grounds upon which he based that assertion.

The great principle to keep in view in raising a revenue for the Government of a country is to lighten the charge on the industry of the people to enable them to produce cheaper, and thus compete in the markets of the world for the sale of the surplus product of their labour, and the cheaper the production the greater the profit to the producer. Place the burden of taxation on those luxuries that are not essential to the cheapness of production, and the industry of the country will feel the relief, and a greater profit will accrue to the people as a whole. Under our protective policy we place the taxation, so that it will give to the people of Canada the exclusive privilege of selling to one another, and we draw from every one who uses imported goods the revenue necessary to carry on the Government. This gives a monopoly to certain branches of our industrial life, while the values of our main sources of industry—fishing, lumbering and agriculture—are governed by the competition of the outside world, and are therefore bearing the burden of the revenue, without deriving the benefit of its protective features; the evidence of this lies in the fact that though our forests are of great commercial value, very little accumulated wealth results to the people engaged in them. Our farms show depreciation in value and a falling off in our agricultural population, although the soil is the greatest source of wealth the country possesses. Our fishermen have to be assisted by bounties, although we possess the finest fishing grounds in the world. These are facts that will bear close inspection after fourteen years' trial of a protective policy.

There is no doubt that direct taxation is a stumbling-block to many in calculating the advantages of a change in our commercial system; it is therefore incumbent on those who advocate free trade on British lines to explain the process by which a revenue may be raised in Canada without direct taxation. It will be granted that our machinery of Government is sufficient for a much larger population without materially increasing the cost. Taking the statistics then from the year book of 1890, the latest available source of information, we find that the expenditure was in round number \$36,000,000. Our customs produced \$24,000,000; our excise, \$7,618,118; our public works, etc., \$8,292,853, leaving a surplus over expenditure of \$3,885,894 for the year 1890.

In 1890, our excise yielded \$7,735,100, our duties on spirits, tobacco, etc., yielded \$2,664,145, making a total of \$10,399,245. The value of silks imported in 1890 was \$3,000,000; a 50 per cent. duty will yield \$1,500,000. Fruits were imported to the value of \$2,551,467; a 50 per cent. duty will yield \$1,275,733. The other two items of taxation are tea and coffee; tea is a nerve stimulant, and is probably answerable very largely for an increasing use of other stimulants and narcotics, to soothe the nervous system, which are so injurious in their character. A tax upon tea might check its excessive use, and it is a basis upon which we can equalize the distribution as fairly as any tax we can impose. It varies in price from fifteen