

# REFLECTIONS

By THE EDITOR

## Sky-scrapers

MONTREAL is the only city in Canada which regulates the height of its office buildings. There the limit is ten stories. Toronto has no legal limit. It has already two tall buildings, one fifteen and the other seventeen stories. Two or three new structures are arranged for, one going twenty stories. So in Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver, the people seem to think that sky-scrapers are a sign of progress, instead of regarding them as dangerous menaces to health and safety.

In Great Britain and Europe, the height of buildings is usually limited to one and a half times the width of the street. The reason for this is given as the necessity for adequate light and air. This is in strong contrast with America, where the only limit is the blue sky and certain conditions as to engineering safety.

It is discouraging to see Canadian cities following the American models rather than the European. It is especially lamentable that a progressive city like Toronto should be utterly regardless of the effect of sky-scrapers on traffic congestion, public safety and public health. No building in the central part of Toronto should be more than ten stories.

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## Civil Service Pensions

ONTARIO Government authorities are said to be considering a pension scheme for its civil servants, and a bill may be introduced this session. Such a scheme must necessarily be preceded by a civil service commission which will make appointments and regulate promotions. For example, if a pension is to be granted to all those reaching the age of sixty-five, as proposed, a man might be appointed at sixty-four and retired in one year on pension, which is manifestly absurd. A civil service commission would probably insist that no man shall be appointed to the regular service who is over thirty-five. This is the case in the inside service at Ottawa now. Thus when a man reaches sixty-five, he has at least thirty years' service to his credit and has some claim to a pension.

No civil service pension scheme can be satisfactory which is not preceded by a civil service commission. Ontario should have such a commission. Two-thirds of the states of the Union already have it, but no Canadian province has yet taken this step to establish the merit system in its civil service.

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## Business Developing

DESPITE the tight money markets, financial business in Canada continues to develop at a rapid rate. January, 1912, was supposed to be a record month. Yet January, 1913, surpassed it enormously. Montreal's bank clearings for the week ending January 23rd were about fourteen million dollars larger than the corresponding week last year, an increase of over 30 per cent. Toronto increased five millions, Winnipeg seven millions, Vancouver two millions, and others in proportion. Only Ottawa showed a decline. New Westminster's new clearing house reported business to the extent of \$574,712.

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## Distributing the Surplus

DOMINION government ministers are busy distributing Canada's surplus. All great financial writers agree that when a government has a surplus, it should reduce taxation. Canada does not follow the advice of economists. Our politicians know more than any economist who ever spent his life investigating the history of government finance. Hence we do not reduce taxation; we simply distribute the surplus.

Hon. Mr. Burrell proposes to give ten millions to the provinces to encourage agriculture. Of this \$700,000 is to be distributed the first year, \$800,000 the second, \$900,000 the third and \$1,000,000 the fourth and \$1,100,000 the fifth. After that it will be stationary until the ten millions is exhausted. Each province gets \$20,000 as a start, and the remainder is to be divided according to population.

All this in addition to grants for good roads and other public needs. The manufacturer is to be protected by customs duties, and the proceeds are to be used to help the farmers who largely pay the duties. Thus everybody is pleased. The industries of the country are guaranteed against the foreigner,

high wages ensured for the mechanic, and bonuses for the farmer. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it? And yet there will be those who would prefer to see the taxes reduced, especially the man on a moderate salary who pays his share of the customs duties and gets no part of the bonus.

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## The Agricultural College

THERE are people who hope that no part of Mr. Burrell's bonus to agriculture will go to provincial agricultural colleges. As Mr. E. W. Nesbitt, M.P., pointed out in the House, the graduates of the Ontario Agricultural College do not go back to the farm. They become agricultural professors and instructors or go into business. The productivity of the average farm is not affected by the O. A. C. Mr. Nesbitt would establish illustration farms in every township, and many will agree

HAS HE A WORRIED LOOK?



This Recent Snapshot of the Minister of Finance, Hon. W. T. White, was Taken Just Outside the Parliament Buildings, Where he Has Been Most Busy Defending His Bank Act and Other Legislation.

with him. Then every farmer, young and old, will be influenced and educated. The Ontario Government has placed county instructors in county towns to whom every farmer may go for advice and information. These instructors are really more valuable than college professors.

Part of Mr. Burrell's grant should also go for the teaching of agriculture in the rural schools. Nova Scotia, Manitoba and British Columbia are doing something along this line now; the other provinces are not. No doubt Mr. Burrell intends this. He contributed some chapters on fruit-growing to the text-book which is used in British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

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## Callous Statesmen

NO greater exhibition of callousness was ever exhibited to the world than is now being shown by the statesmen of Great Britain and Canada in connection with the navy question and the German scare. We were told last July that there was an emergency, that all the Dominions

must flock to the help of the United Kingdom at once, quickly, immediately, speedily, hurriedly, hastily, eagerly, vehemently, without delay, as the German fleet might be sailing within twenty-four hours, and Armageddon was in sight. Some of us wondered if it was advisable to put any more money in the savings banks and most of us made inventories of our assets, so that when we passed away our affairs might be in good condition to hand over to our German successors. Every good centralist throughout the Empire made his will, so as to be prepared for the last emergency.

That was July. Then came August and September, but no Armageddon. Then October and November and the enemy made no move. But in the latter month, Mr. Borden introduced his navy bill to present three Dreadnoughts to the United Kingdom. He and his colleagues, and his newspaper organs, said the emergency still existed. The bill must be rushed through.

Then came December and Parliament adjourned for the Christmas holidays. It reassembled in January and the navy bill was again to be rushed. Now we have a lull again, and the Borden administration is discussing aids to agriculture and banking, just as if the Britannic peoples were fearing no war for half a century to come.

Over in the United Kingdom it is just the same. The Liberals have been pushing Home Rule for Ireland, education reform and suffrage enlargement, just as if the German Emperor were the most peace-loving monarch the world has known with the exception of Edward VII. The Tories, most of whom are centralists, have been discussing a new trade policy, just as if Britain's trade were not menaced by a deadly German fleet.

Can we come to any other conclusion than that Mr. Borden, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mr. Asquith and Bonar Law, with their numerous colleagues, are the most callous set of statesmen the Empire has ever seen? Or is the German menace one large sized JOKE?

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## The Plain Truth

PROBABLY the plain truth of the naval situation in Canada is that neither the Conservative proposition nor the Liberal proposition meets with general approval in the party which is fathering it. If the Borden policy were forced through exactly as it stands, many Conservatives would be dissatisfied. If the Laurier policy were forced through in its present form, some Liberals would be none too well pleased. There are Conservatives who prefer parts of the Laurier policy and Liberals who would tolerate certain features of the Borden policy.

We have argued for a non-partisan settlement of the question on a basis which both parties could agree and enthusiastically support for all time to come. This would be (1) a gift of Dreadnoughts for the enlargement of the North Sea fleet, and (2) a Canadian fleet unit or units for Canadian purposes and for co-operation with the Australian fleet in the Pacific. Such a policy would unite all classes of Canadians, with the possible exception of the Nationalists of Quebec and some extreme Grangers in Ontario and the West. It would have the support of eighty per cent. of the people, and hence could be carried to an immediate and permanent success. The naval service would immediately become popular, and bright young Canadians would be glad to serve as officers, engineers, electricians, marines and seamen. Such a policy would best serve Canada's interests and Australia's interests, and thus be best for the Empire as a whole.

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## The Late Lieut.-Col. Matheson

ONTARIO'S provincial administrations are largely dominated by the country lawyer.

Being less ambitious than his city brother, he has usually a stronger sense of public service. Lieut.-Col. A. J. Matheson, who passed away on Saturday last at Perth, was one of these. In the days when his brother country lawyer, James P. Whitney, of Morrisburg, was waging an almost hopeless battle in opposition to the then Liberal administration in Ontario, under Mowat, Ross and Hardy, Lieut.-Col. Matheson was the financial critic and the quiet, persistent helper. When the long-drawn battle was finally won and Mr. Whitney was made premier, Col. Matheson became provincial treasurer.

No one ever accused the Colonel of being progressive, but he was fair, courteous, dignified and reliable. He never played politics as a game nor used his position to satisfy an empty vanity. He was one of the last of the good old type of country gentlemen who kept the ship of state safely on her course, when more brilliant men were going to the United States or playing selfish games at home.