

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The winter in England and on the Continent has been unusually severe. The larger rivers have been frozen over and much damage occasioned to shipping. Many deaths have occurred from freezing. The reports do not show what we should call a low record of temperature, three or four degrees below zero being the lowest; but most of us remember how very unpleasant an easterly gale, with the thermometer at freezing point used to be in England.

MAYOR BIRKETT'S inaugural address is a model of its kind. It treats the whole subject of civic administration from the point of view of the long-suffering taxpayer. MR. BIRKETT sees no reason why the revenue of the City of Ottawa should not amply suffice for all its needs. With this view the ANGLO-SAXON entirely coincides. The custom in the past has been for each alderman to grab as much as he could for his ward, in the interests of his own re-election. To this end all other things have been subordinated. It is to this point that the civic reformer must direct his attention.

We have been favored with a copy of the Public Accounts for the fiscal year ended 30th June, 1890. In them the Government organs profess to see a most satisfactory presentation of affairs. The presentation is indeed very cleverly done, but the state of affairs can scarcely be described as satisfactory. A surplus is shown of \$3,885,893.96, and the increase of Debt is stated to be only \$3,170.12. Why there should be any increase of debt at all is not apparent.

On the other hand Government deposits, to the extent of nearly four millions, have been withdrawn, and in addition a temporary loan was effected of two millions. Moreover the pernicious practice of including under the head of Capital Account every item which would tend to pull down the apparent surplus, has been continued. The improvement of the St. Lawrence, for example, is in a sense a temporary matter, and should be provided for out of current expenditure. It is absurd to put such items as dredging or even blasting under the head of Capital Account.

We also notice that the sum of \$248,400, advanced to the Quebec Harbour Commissioners, is considered as an investment! *Sic jubeo*. There have been a good many such investments, but we can hardly count on them as assets. The fact of the matter is, there is a difficulty in treating the Public Accounts of Canada from a truly critical point of view. As light literature they may pass, as possessing imagination and other interesting features, but unfortunately there is neither a hero, a love story, nor scarcely an indication of a plot. It is simply a tale of improvidence.

Dominion of Canada at Confederation, assumed a debt of \$93,046,461.73. Some of this was real—some of it imaginary. That is to say, the debts of those provinces which possessed such a luxury, were assumed by the Dominion at Confederation, and those provinces that had no debts were reckoned as possessing debts in order to place them on a level with the other more favoured sections. Out of this arrangement the system of subsidies to provinces grew.

Since 1867 our debt has been growing with great regularity, 1871 being the only year in which it was not added to. The total debt June, 1890, amounted to \$236,112,205.10, and the assets to \$48,579,083.33; so that the relative proportions of the two have been fairly maintained. But the interest annually payable has grown from four millions to close upon nine millions. This constitutes an enormous drain upon our resources.

In point of fact Canadians have been living with their heads too much in the air. The phrase so often heard—"This young and growing country"—has imposed upon their imaginations. The population, we submit, has not been augmented to any extent proportionate to the increase in the public debt, and we think the time has come for a pause. We have a perfect hierarchy of institutions to support; town, county, provincial and Dominion governments, and the pruning hook is sadly needed.

The curious part of the whole business is that the Canadians are, in their personal habits, as thrifty a people as ever existed. But so soon as any one of them becomes a representative of

his community he forthwith begins to talk about millions as if he had no conception of the magnitude of such a sum. We almost think it would be well were we to resort to direct taxation for a while, if only for the educational value of that process. Indirect taxation seems to have a most Micawberish effect upon our people.

The Behring Sea embargo is up its end. The owners of the "Sayward," one of the vessels seized by the "Rush" and confiscated, having appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States through the agency of the Dominion Government, the question as to the legality of the seizure is likely to be decided. For years British owners of sailing vessels unwarrantably seized in the open sea and condemned before American courts have never been compensated, notwithstanding the manifest illegality of such acts from the point of view of International Law. It is time such a state of things came to an end, whether with, or without, war.

We do not know of any nation pretending to be civilized, with so low a standard of ethics in public matters as the United States. By forged maps and downright lying they robbed Canada of Maine, of Michigan, and of an immense territory in the extreme west. By lying and forgery in the Alabama case they obtained an award of fifteen millions of dollars, when they were, perhaps, entitled to five millions. To make matters worse, they will admit these things to you with the most brutal frankness. "We expect our Government to succeed," they will say, "and we do not much care what methods are employed." PRESIDENT CLEVELAND's last year of office abundantly evidenced the depths to which the practical politician thought it necessary to descend in order to win the support of the American proletariat. It is sometimes said that "corruption wins not more than honesty." In American politics, however, it is always a close thing between the two parties as to which shall appear most corrupt. And, appearances are not always deceitful.

The return of an Equal Righter for the East Riding of Durham in the person of MR. CAMPBELL is an encouraging sign, taken in connection with the fact that MR. STINSON will doubtless be re-elected in Hamilton. There will thus be at least two supporters of the people's cause in the Provincial Legislature.

Englishmen in Canada, at all events, will be pleased with the appointment of MAJOR-GENERAL HERBERT to succeed General "Sir Fred" in the command of the Canadian Militia. A determined effort was made to secure the position for a local man. We are not disposed to blame those who took part in this proceeding. It is natural for Canadian officers, to aspire to the command-in-chief of their own militia, but in this, as in other matters, there are two sides to the question.

GENERAL HERBERT has had opportunities out of the reach of any Canadian officer of militia. He was military aide-de-camp to the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, and is said to have made himself familiar with the Continental methods of mobilization. Now this is the especial kind of knowledge which we would stand most in need of in the event of Canada being attacked. There is little fear of that, it is true. All the same, we should like to see an attempt made to mobilize the whole of Canada on a given day. The adventure would be little more difficult to arrange than a census and we should be for all time to come in a position to form a tolerably accurate notion of what we could do should the necessity for a general uprising of Canadians to resist aggression suddenly come upon us. Queen's Birthday would be a suitable day to take for the purpose, as it is a general holiday, and no dislocation of business would interfere with the success of the experiment. Instructions would of course have to be prepared some time beforehand, so that every one would understand what was to be done. Every man capable of bearing arms should be required to take part.

We hope that something of this nature may be attempted during GENERAL HERBERT's term of office. The experiment, if successfully carried out, would have the effect of strengthening the sentiment of loyalty, of adding immensely to the popularity of the Canadian Militia and its officers, and would certainly do much to promote the homogeneity of our people. On the other hand it might serve to inspire any country desirous of attacking us with doubts as to the easiness of the undertaking. For such objects it is

surely worth while to make the experiment and we should like to see the idea brought before Parliament.

The distribution of ecclesiastical patronage by the British PREMIER is one of the most responsible duties of his office. It lies in his power, humanly speaking, to mould to a great extent the future of the Church of England. A large share of this patronage has fallen into the hands of Lord SALISBURY since his accession to power. It was the same with Mr. GLADSTONE. We believe that many of the appointments made by both Premiers have had a most disastrous effect upon the Church as fostering the re-introduction of anti-Reformation principles and practices. The Episcopal bench has been crowded with men who avowedly favour those breaches of the law of the Church expressly condemned by the QUEEN in Council. Now by the sad demise of ARCHBISHOP THOMPSON, Lord SALISBURY has had to fill a position of first-rate importance—to make an appointment which may affect the best interests of the Church for good or for evil, for many long years to come. Is it too much to hope that Dr. MCGEE, who has been selected, may prove worthy to follow his great predecessor as a Father and Friend to the Church of England?

The difficulty which has been occasioned by MR. GLADSTONE's repudiation of PARNELL—at the instance of the "Nonconformist conscience"—has by no means been overcome. PARNELL refuses to retire until GLADSTONE gives a formal undertaking to bring in a Bill that will satisfy the Irish Party. This GLADSTONE cannot do, for the reason that nothing short of separation is aimed at by the Parnellites, and the Gladstonian Liberals know perfectly well that England will not consent to that. In the meantime everything is in a state of utter confusion not only in Ireland, where the two Home Rule sections are fighting each other, but in the Gladstonian Party, which has suddenly discovered that their illustrious leader does not himself know what he means by the term "Home Rule."

At the recent meeting of the Imperial Federationists in London, England, SIR GORDON SPRIGG gave expression to some very sensible views on the question of the Colonial sentiment towards the Mother Country. Among other things he said: "You are getting now a large and increasing population in your colonies who know nothing of England except as a matter of tradition or history. They are people whose patriotism consists of love of the country in which they were born. You must recognize that this is very natural. You and I who were born in England cling to this country as the country of our birth. Take our families who were born in these distant colonies, they have no such feeling as we have. They have a strong feeling for the land of their birth, but that country is not England, but the country in which they were born, have lived, and will probably remain all their lives. Well, now, you have to consider the position of these people, who will soon be a majority in all your colonies. Sentiment alone, I think, will not be sufficient to bind those people together. What are you going to put in the place of this sentiment? Mr. Fuller has gone on the right track in saying that what you want is a commercial union. You want to show your different colonies that they get an advantage by being portions of your Empire—a practical advantage in trade and other matters which they can appreciate; something altogether out of sentiment." SIR GORDON SPRIGG recommends that the Imperial Government should invite the Colonies to send representatives to consider the advisability of arranging some sort of a commercial union.

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