

CONGRESSIONAL LEGISLATION.

Mr. Wilson, in his valuable work, "Congressional Legislation," frequently refers to the working of the British constitution in the mother country for precedents; but the fact is that the British constitution to-day is almost as much in a transition state as it was in 1787. When Mr. Bagehot published a second edition of his well-known work, in 1872, he had to add a long chapter, pointing out the changes which had occurred since the first edition was issued, and another chapter might now be added. Under the constitution of Solon, the Athenians were divided into classes, and although all had votes, none but the higher classes were eligible for the offices. In England a similar system has long prevailed (custom supplying the place of law), and the wire-pullers have been content to return to Parliament as their representatives members of the upper classes selected from the aristocracy, the landed gentry and wealthy merchants. It is only in Ireland, so far, that the people have availed themselves of their voting powers to return representatives from their own class, who have to look to politics as a means of subsistence. All this is gradually changing, and the new Local Government Bill will doubtless hasten the change, but much of this aristocratic tradition still lingers in the mother country, and not until it has been finally wiped out can any comparison be instituted between the working of political institutions in the two countries. It is in Canada, where the British constitution has been adapted to the use of a thoroughly democratic community, that the practical working of the system recommended by Mr. Wilson can best be studied, and in Canada it has certainly developed an alarming resemblance to that system of government by patronage, which the Marquis of Bute recommended to George the Third, and which that astute nobleman certainly had in his mind's eye when he made the sinister suggestion that "the forms of a free and the ends of an arbitrary government are things not altogether incompatible." And the materials