

and every time a new district in the West is opened for homesteading or preemption, there is a rush which is quite extraordinary. Applicants stand in line for 24 or 36 hours to secure land which ten years ago could not be given away, and when they get a quarter-section they rub their hands because they are henceforth rich.

Again, the customs returns show that people are once more buying freely. Wages which were on the decline for about two years have shown a tendency to advance, especially among unskilled workers. Only rents and the rate of interest are low—and most of us will hope that they may long remain in this condition.



THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

DR. WILLIAM WILFRED CAMPBELL is a poet with a purpose. He has, on more than one occasion, made something of a stir by going beyond the dreams and fancies in which the poet is allowed to indulge and entering upon the world of affairs. Dr. Campbell has convictions, and courage enough to announce them anywhere. He is quite capable of preaching militarism in the library of The Grange or recommending Higher Critics to Mr. Samuel Blake. When he came to the Canadian Club reception in Toronto in 1904, he brought no gentle, soothing message, but read a clarion call to those brave spirits who would purify the politics of "Canada, my Own, my Own."

Once more Dr. Campbell has come to Toronto, and has departed with a wake of discussion behind him. This time he has deplored the excessive demand for fiction at the public libraries and has also condemned much of modern fiction as decadent stuff. However, by mentioning the name of Mr. George Meredith, to say nothing of the hitherto harmless Mr. William De Morgan, he has given his opponents or detractors an opportunity for specific criticism. In the meantime, those who differ from Dr. Campbell seem, in several cases, to have forgotten that the poet made no estimate of the merely literary value of the works of these writers. He confined himself to a criticism of their moral tendencies—which is quite a different matter. A book may be a marvellous achievement in literary style and yet be undesirable as a moulder of conduct. In fact, the very grace or piquancy of style will make false or pernicious teaching all the more dangerous. To say that a bad book is brilliant is only to intensify the indictment.

However, to most of those who know anything of modern British fiction, the two authors to whom Dr. Campbell has referred do not seem particularly perilous to the young reader. Anyone who has patience to wade through Mr. De Morgan's third novel must have the passive virtues so well developed that he is unlikely to be contaminated by any ponderous work of fiction such as "Somehow Good," while Mr. Meredith appeals to the philosophic few who enjoy his Nature and are not too deeply affected by his Human Nature.

Dr. Campbell is entirely right in his two contentions. Too much fiction is read and much of it is undesirable in moral tone. However, he might have selected far more hurtful works than any which these two elderly Englishmen have produced or are likely to produce.



THE IRRESPONSIBLES

COMPARATIVELY easy, indeed, is the ridicule which the irresponsibles throw upon the militiaman. When a young man joins the force, in which he serves hard without pay, he is described as being attracted by the uniform, or, if an officer, as seeking a new kind of social prominence. Just as easy is the ridicule aimed at prominent military men, such as Lieut.-Col. Merritt, who try to prove to the public that compulsory military service of a moderate type, as they have it in Switzerland, is economically advisable. This form of ridicule is the cheapest form of talk from men who do not realise what citizenship means.

Much of this superciliousness on the part of journalists and preachers towards the militia is incomprehensible. When there is a strike or a riot somewhere, the people are glad to know that the militia has been called out. When the Fenian Raids occurred and when the Half-Breed rebellion broke out, the militia were exceedingly useful. When we speak of ourselves as a nation, we think of a people capable of taking care of themselves under any usual or unusual circumstances—a people strong in peace and in war. That we have had no war since 1815 is no proof that there will never be another. That the Dominion Government has not found it necessary to call out the militia since 1885, is no proof that it will never require it again.

There is no more modest, earnest body of men in Canada than the volunteer militia. Instead of discouraging these volunteers, they should be encouraged. It is much better that a young man should

spend twenty-four of his 365 evenings drilling in a city regiment than that he should spend these evenings in a pool-room or a bar-room. The physical training and the discipline are valuable to him personally and to the nation as a whole. When he becomes a non-commissioned officer, he will probably find the twenty-four evenings increased to forty-eight, to say nothing of the summer afternoons every good militiaman spends on the rifle-ranges learning something of national self-defence.

Instead of discouraging volunteering, every journalist, every employer of labour, and every father should encourage young men to spend three years in the militia. It is difficult enough now to get recruits, as every captain in the militia will confirm.



THE TRIUMPH OF SIR JAMES

WHEN Sir James Whitney arranged with the publishers of the Ontario school readers for a supply of these books for a year and a half at 39 cents a set, it was believed that this temporary price could not be duplicated. It was believed that this reduction in the wholesale price from 86 cents to 39 cents was due to the desire of people who had had the contract for over twenty years to dispose of their surplus stock and to keep other publishers out of the field. It was believed that Sir James Whitney had purchased a job lot of books at a low price, pending the issue of the new series of readers which were being prepared by the Department of Education. It was also believed that the new set of readers would cost more than the "job lot" price of 39 cents a set.

This belief was so common, that the "Canadian Courier" made the statement that the price of the new set would be much higher, that it might possibly go as high as 89 cents, the wholesale price of the old set. Much depended, of course, on the standard of printing and binding demanded by the new contract. Sir James Whitney believed the new price would be higher; so did Dr. Pyne, and Dr. Colquhoun, and Dr. Seath and Dr. Goggin. So did every person who knew the situation.

We were all wrong. The "Canadian Courier" offers its apologies; the other gentlemen, if they are really honest, will offer theirs. Pending Sir James' admission that he was mistaken, the "Courier" offers him its congratulations on his triumph. He has, partly by accident, but mainly by design, secured a new set of books at the "job lot" price. He has accepted a tender from the T. Eaton Company to print the new readers, in a style far superior to that of the old readers, at 49 cents a set, less twenty per cent. discount to dealers and Boards of Education. None of us counted on that enterprising departmental store, which shows how human we are, including Sir James.

The T. Eaton Company knows a great deal about manufacturing and has a business system which is the admiration of the continent. As the plates for these books are supplied by the Department, the contract is merely of a manufacturing nature and one which Eaton's printing department will have no trouble in handling. That this company will produce as good work as any other publisher would have done will be generally acknowledged. Therefore Sir James Whitney's triumph is complete. He has secured for the parents of the province a set of better readers at less than one-half the prices obtained by his predecessors in office. The total saving to the province will be about \$300,000 in the ten-year period. As against this, there is the cost of the Text-Book Commission, say \$10,000; and the cost of preparing the new set of readers, say \$15,000. This would make a net saving of \$27,500 per annum on the transaction.

We confess to a little sympathy with the old-time publishers, some of whom have been in business for half a century. Most of them fattened on public contracts until they became incapable of that exertion and enterprise which is necessary to continued success. They believed that all politicians and ministers of the Crown were fools, or could be hood-winked. The inevitable happened. A Prime Minister arose who could not be fooled so easily. He ordered an investigation and appointed to it men as capable as the publishers themselves. The secrets of the trade, and the extent of the exorbitant profits, were revealed to the public and henceforth publishing school-books was no mystery. Every provincial Department of Education in the Dominion demanded reductions and got them. Prices tumbled in every direction. And the end is not yet. Among all these once mighty kings of the publishing trade there was only one wise man, for he (because of his poor health) sold out nearly all his interests to the others before the shock came.

Perhaps this triumph of Sir James Whitney will be a warning to all manufacturers who deal with governments, that they should not expect fat profits to rule always. Sooner or later there will arise, even in benighted Canada, a cabinet minister who is not wholly devoted to politics and who is not entirely concerned with serving party purposes and collecting party funds. When he arrives at Ottawa, or at some provincial capital, the day of large profits on government contracts will be over. He will see that every possible contractor has an equal chance, no matter what his politics. The present-day rule that governments shall pay higher prices than private individuals is certain to pass away. Sir James Whitney has struck a blow at the practice, and let us hope that Sir James is not the last of his line.