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CURRENT TOPICS.

The statement that the expenditure of the Federal Government was about \$113,000 less during the last three months than during the corresponding months of the preceding year, is not only gratifying but suggestive. One of the chief obstacles in the way of tariff-reform is the necessity for a large revenue. Unfortunately, so much of the Federal expenditure is fixed that the opportunities for the application of the pruning knife are reduced within a narrow compass. Yet the fact above mentioned, assuming that no service of importance has been suffered during the period covered, would seem to indicate that very successful attempts are being made to cut down the expenditure. One hundred and thirteen thousand saved every three months would mean a reduction approaching half-a-million per year, which would be a handsome reward for a pretty rigid economy. Weak

firms sometimes add to their financial difficulties by increasing their outlay in order to keep up appearances. We do not mean to suggest that there is any resemblance in point of weakness, but we have sometimes had a suspicion, which is, we believe, shared by many, that Canada has fallen into somewhat extravagant ways for a young and not over-rich country; partly, possibly, for the sake of effect. We do not accept, without qualification, the dictum that it is impossible to reduce the tariff without reducing the revenue. We believe that it might be quite within the power of a Canadian Gladstone to increase the revenue by judicious reduction of the tariff. Whatever tends to increase trade by lessening the obstacles in its way, tends at the same time to increase revenues. But there will be a double scope for tariff-reform if it be found possible to largely reduce expenditure at the same time that the burden of taxation is being lessened.

The visit of an eleven of cricketers from Australia to our city is an event of interest to many besides the devotees of that almost ideal sport. The advent of these gentlemen just at this time, when special efforts are being put forth to promote better acquaintance and freer intercourse with our fellow-colonists on the other side of the globe, may be accepted as an omen of success for those efforts. Canadian players of the game and Canadians generally are too manly to let the fact that the Canadian eleven who had the temerity to enter upon an unequal contest with the visitors were predestined to defeat, affect the cordiality of their welcome. The high reputation of the Australian team, confirmed as it has been by five months of play with the best elevens in the Mother Country, made it almost hopeless for any which could be brought together in Canada, where so little attention, comparatively, has as yet been given to the game, to enter the lists. It will be something, however, for those interested in cricket amongst us to have had the opportunity of witnessing a match in which players of the very highest skill and science yet developed in connection with it took part. An attempt has been made to crown lacrosse as the Canadian national game, but no one who contrasts the rough-and-tumble methods of the one with the self-possession, nerve, activity, and science developed in the other, can fail to recognize the decided superiority of cricket. It is to be hoped that the visit of the Australian eleven may

tend to popularize cricket in Canada. We see no reason why a return match might not be played a year or so hence, in which a Canadian eleven would prove themselves equal to the best which either Australia or the Mother Country can produce. Meanwhile we congratulate our visiting cousins on their superior prowess and hope that they may carry away the most pleasant memories of their Canadian tour.

There is something almost childish in the exuberance of the delight of the French at the visit of the Russian fleet. Such a demonstration is possible only amongst an impulsive and mercurial people. Allowance must be made for the peculiar temperament of the race. Even the special pains taken by the Czar to have it understood that the visit was a mere matter of courtesy, utterly destitute of political significance, which would have proved an effectual damper to the enthusiasm of almost any other nation, had little or no effect upon the multitudes who vied with each other in showering shouts and gifts and honours upon their visitors. One cannot but wonder what effect all this had upon the minds of the more phlegmatic Russians themselves. Politicians who are accustomed to maintain a strict reserve while year after year steadily, unfalteringly, relentlessly pursuing some policy that has been marked out for them, or some future aggrandisement which is set before them as an aim, will find it hard to understand those who delight in the atmosphere of excitement and who manifest to the whole world their delight at receiving a not very extraordinary mark of attention. It is doubtful whether such an exhibition of excitability is calculated to promote the alliance which the French so much desire. Indeed, it is not hard to give some credence to the rumour which says that the Russians are more likely, after all, to court the friendship of Germany than that of France. On the French side there is something almost pathetic in this unconcealed eagerness to secure the friendship and alliance of the great Northern nation. It is suggestive of national isolation. Why should France be so nearly friendless among the surrounding nations that no one of them is disposed to seek her alliance or favour? Can it be wholly due to a prudent dread of the power of Germany and the Triple Alliance, or has the course of the French themselves, their tendency to hysterics on the one hand, and