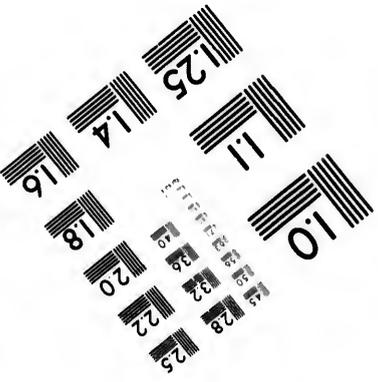
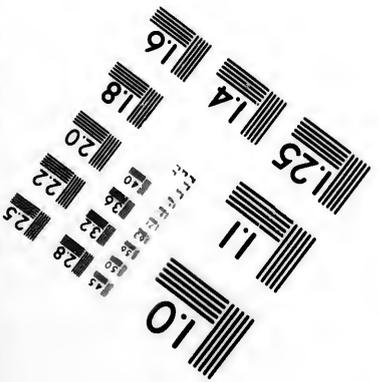
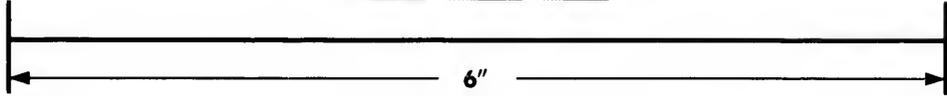
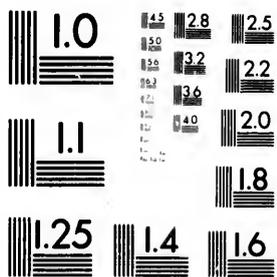


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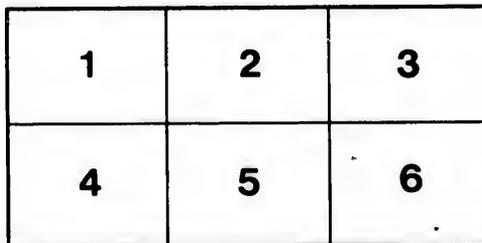
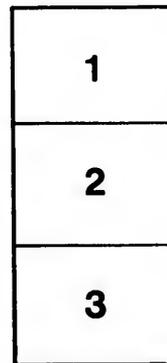
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## THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN SESSION.

THE ceremonies which attend the opening of our Parliament have been so often and so fully described in the leading newspapers of the country, that it is not necessary we should take up the attention of our readers with any lengthy remarks on the subject, in an article in which it is proposed to give to the clientèle of this periodical some idea of the manner in which the Commons of Canada discharge their legislative duties from day to day.

These ceremonies are invariably the same from year to year. A few minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon of the day for which Parliament has been summoned, the Commons assemble in the Chamber, with the Speaker in the chair. Members occupy themselves in renewing acquaintance with their personal and political friends in the House; but the buzz of conversation which fills the chamber stops in an instant when three heavy knocks are heard on the principal door. The Sergeant-at-Arms announces a Message from His Excellency the Governor General amid a deep silence, and the Speaker replies: 'Admit the Messenger.' The Sergeant-at-Arms shoulders the Mace, a richly gilded instrument surmounted by a Crown,—which always lies on the table in front of the Speaker and Clerks, whilst the House is in actual session,—and admits a gentleman, dressed in a handsome official costume, and carrying a small ebony stick, as the insignia of his official standing as Gentleman-Usher of the Black Rod. He bows solemnly to the Speaker (who takes off his cocked hat) and requests, in the name of His Excellency, the presence of the Commons to the Senate Chamber. When he has made this request, once in English and again in French, he bows gracefully and backs out of the Chamber in accordance with official etiquette. Then the members leave their places, the Speaker and the Clerk and two Clerks Assistant put on their cocked hats, the Sergeant-at-Arms again shoulders the

mace, and the whole assembly proceeds to the bar of the Senate Chamber.

Here a fine pageant is presented. On the gilded chair, under a heavy crimson canopy, is seated the Governor General, dressed in his usual uniform and decorated with his orders, while on either side of him stand the Premier and members of the Cabinet, Aids-de-Camp, Militi' officers, and Deputy Heads of Departments, nearly all in costumes *de rigueur*. Immediately in front of the Governor General are seated the Chief Justice and Judges of the Supreme Court, in their robes of crimson and ermine, and the Chaplain and Clerks, in their silk gowns. Below the table are a number of seats devoted to Episcopal dignitaries, clergymen of all denominations, and Judges not of the Supreme Court. The Senators, in evening dress, occupy a row of seats on the floor, on each side of the Chamber. All the other seats are taken up by ladies in evening dress, who illustrate the beauty and fashion of the political capital on such occasions. The galleries are packed far beyond their capacity with men and women, but chiefly the latter. Though the ceremony is invariably the same, the number never diminishes, but session after session people flock to the galleries with unflagging enthusiasm.

The Speaker and Clerks approach the Bar, and the Governor General takes off his hat in recognition of the presence of the Commons of Canada in response to his constitutional request. Then His Excellency reads his Speech in clear, audible tones, and the members of the Commons, not in the confidence of the Ministry, listen intently to the official announcement of the programme for the session. When the Governor General has concluded reading his English copy of the Speech, he repeats the same in French, in pursuance of that constitutional usage, now more than a century old, which preserves the use of the French language in all our legislation af-

fecting the Province of Quebec. When the Speech is finished, the Secretary of the Governor General hands a written copy to the Speaker, who then bows and retires to the Chamber of the Commons.

The etiquette observed on these occasions is confined to a bow from the Speaker on his entrance and exit, but we may mention here, *par parenthèse*, that in times not very distant, a Governor General made a pretentious claim which excited the ire of the popular branch of the old Canadian Parliament. We find it stated in an official volume which records the Speakers' Decisions that, on the occasion of presenting to the Governor General the Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne, at the opening of the first session of 1863, a difference arose between the Speaker of the Legislative Council and His Excellency's Secretary as to the posture the Speaker should assume in presenting the Address. In the Assembly the Speaker communicated certain documents which he had received from the Governor's Secretary, on the subject of the etiquette observed in presenting an Address to Her Majesty the Queen by the Speaker of the Commons, and when these papers had been read, the Speaker was directly asked whether he intended to follow the formula pointed out in these documents. Mr. Turcotte, who then occupied the Speaker's chair, was very emphatic in his answer: 'He could assure the House that he would kneel to no one but his Sovereign.' So strong was the feeling of the House on that occasion, that the obnoxious documents were not even allowed to be entered on the journals of the House. Since those days the Answer to the Speech is not even presented by the Speaker, but 'by such members of the House as are of the Queen's Privy Council;' and the reply of His Excellency thereto is subsequently brought down by the Premier and read by the Speaker in his place, in the presence of the members, who invariably rise and stand uncovered.

But we must accompany the Speaker on his return to the Commons' Chamber. Parliament having been formally opened, the House is at length in a position to go on with the business. The first proceeding is almost invariably the presentation to the House of Certificates and Reports relating to elections which have been held during

the recess, and then new members are introduced and take their seats, the necessary oath having been previously taken in the Clerk's office. Leading members of the Government and Opposition generally introduce their respective friends, who are loudly cheered by one party or the other. All members must subscribe to the necessary oath before they can take their seats and vote in the House. Some cases of members inadvertently taking their seats and voting on a question have occurred in the Canadian House. For instance, in the session of 1875, Mr. Mackenzie made a motion directing the attention of the Committee on Privileges and Elections to the fact that the member for Centre Wellington (Mr. Orton) had voted before he had taken the oath prescribed by the British North America Act of Union. The Committee reported subsequently that Mr. Orton was not liable to any penalty for the omission in question, but at the same time recommended the erasure of his name from the division list. In order to prevent such mistakes in the future, it was decided during the present session to introduce every member recently elected.

When the Election cases have been disposed of, it is the practice for a member of the Government to present a bill, and have it read a first time *pro forma*, 'in order to assert the right of the Commons to deliberate, without reference to the immediate cause of summons.' Then it is usual for the Speaker to rise and state that when the House attended His Excellency in the Senate Chamber, he had been pleased to make a speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which, Mr. Speaker added, he had 'to prevent mistakes obtained a copy.' The reading of the Speech is almost invariably dispensed with, and then, on motion of the Premier, it is ordered to be taken into consideration on a future day. Little business is done, as a rule, on the first day of the session, beyond the presentation of reports of Departments and other public papers of interest. Then the House adjourns, always on motion of the Premier or a member of the Government in his absence. For some years past, since the advent of Lord Dufferin, a Drawing Room is held in the evening in the Senate Chamber, and the members of the two Houses, with their wives and daughters, have an opportunity of pay-

ing their respects to their Excellencies, who stand for hours on the dais of the Throne, and return the bows of a steady stream of gentlemen and ladies, all of whom appear in evening costume. The Senate Chamber, on such occasions, presents a very brilliant spectacle, and proves how much more attractive complexions and millinery look under the gas-light.

But before we proceed to describe the details of an ordinary day's business in the House, it will be useful to take a glance at the Chamber itself. The fine room devoted to the Commons is already filled to its full capacity, by the two hundred and odd members who now represent the different Provinces of Canada, and the speculative mind may well wonder where the additional members are to sit when British Columbia, Manitoba, and Keewatin receive that representation to which they will be entitled when their wilderness lands are filled up by the large population which must sooner or later follow the Pacific Railway. A broad passage runs from the entrance door to the Speaker's Chair, which is raised on a low platform directly under the small gallery where the short-hand writers of the press and other newspaper men take their notes with unflagging industry. Just below the Speaker's Chair, and in the middle of this passage, is the Clerk's table, where the Clerk, Clerk Assistant, and Second Clerk Assistant, sit in silk gowns and black dress. The mace rests on a silk cushion on the lower end of the table, and its official guardian, the Sergeant-at-Arms, has a seat at a desk, close to the bar at the entrance. The members are seated at desks which gradually rise from the floor until they reach immediately below the galleries. Each desk is ticketed with a name, and consequently no confusion or difficulty can arise as to a member's place. In England only a few members of the government and a few others enjoy a place by courtesy, while the great majority can only secure a seat for the debate by being present at prayers. One can then put his card in the brass plate which is appended to the back of the seat, or he may leave his hat or glove in evidence of his occupancy. So strict are the rules of the British Commons on this point that it is ordered, 'No member's name may be affixed to any seat in the House before prayers.' But the members of our House are relieved from all difficulty in this particular. Before they

reach Ottawa, their seats are assigned them, and they are given, besides, convenient desks—a luxury not yet granted to British Commoners. The members of the Government of course occupy the front seats to the right of the Speaker, whilst the leader and prominent members of the Opposition sit on the left. The older and best known members naturally occupy the front rows of seats, and the younger necessarily get crowded to the rear. The seats immediately beneath the galleries are under the disadvantages of being more exposed to draughts and of being badly situated for hearing, especially as there is a constant hum and bustle when routine business is in progress. Pages are constantly rushing to and fro, with letters and papers, and from the opening to the close of the session these little fellows never seem to get tired, though they are kept running until very late hours of the night.

The House meets every day at three o'clock, unless, as it happens often near the close of the session, it is called for an earlier hour with the view of facilitating public business. At that hour the Speaker and Clerks, preceded by the Mace, file into the Chamber, and the first proceeding is the opening of the doors, unless it is necessary to discuss some question of privilege or other matter which it is advisable to consider before the admission of the public. No prayers are read in our House, as it has always been the practice in the British Commons, and the Senate is the only branch of our Parliament that has the privilege of a Chaplain.\* The first proceeding as soon as the doors are opened and the public has been admitted to the galleries, is the presentation of petitions. The valuable privilege of petitioning the Houses, so dear to the heart of every British subject, is a very tame and monotonous proceeding. A member rises in his place, and confines himself to a simple statement of the contents of the petition, which is taken by the page to the Clerk's table, whence it is sent to an office up stairs, where it is carefully read to see that it does not infringe any rule, and then endorsed with the name of the member presenting it, and a brief statement of its subject-matter. The petitions presented on one day are brought up to the table two days subsequently, and are read and received

\* Mr. Macdonald of Toronto has made a motion on this subject during the present session.

if they do not contain any objectionable matter. It is very rarely that petitions are read at length, for the rule is to read only the endorsement on the back of each, which explains its character. Every session large numbers are presented on some subject which is engaging at the time much public attention. [For a year or two memorials asking for a Prohibitory Liquor Law came in by hundreds, and in such a case the Clerk confines himself to a mere statement of the number on that particular subject. Last session the petitions on that subject were exhausted, and petitions asking for protection to certain native manufactures became the order of the day.] Petitions are constantly thrown out on account of informality. For instance, it is irregular to ask for grants of money or any pecuniary compensation, on the wise principle which only allows the Government to initiate money votes. Any petitions containing offensive imputations upon the character or conduct of Parliament or the Courts of Justice, or other constituted authority, will not be received. Some of the names to a petition must always be appended to the same sheet on which it is written. A paper assuming the style of a declaration, an address of thanks, or a remonstrance only, without a proper form of prayer will not be received. In a case of informality, however, the petition is entered on the journals, with the reason for its rejection, and consequently if the petitioners only desire to obtain publicity of their wishes they get what they want; but of course no action can be taken on such a document, for it is no longer before Parliament.

The Answer to the Speech is the first important business that is taken up immediately after the commencement of the session, two members supporting the administration, generally the two youngest—that is to say the most recently elected—are chosen to move the Address, which is first introduced in the shape of a resolution, containing a number of separate paragraphs in answer to the Governor General's Speech. The mover and seconder always appear in England in uniform or full dress for that purpose, but the same custom is not observed here as a rule. As the speakers are generally new to the House, they are always heard with great forbearance and attention, and those prominent members of the Govern-

ment and Opposition who follow in debate seldom fail to pay some graceful compliment to the maiden efforts of the speakers. It is competent for any one at this stage to move an amendment to the Address, but this is only done in rare cases. It is considered more courteous to the representative of the Sovereign to pass the Address as a matter of course, especially as it is framed to avoid opposition. It is also felt to be very inconvenient to discuss important questions at a stage when the House has not before it all the papers which it requires for its information. In a very critical condition of public affairs, however, a strong Opposition which believes it has the sympathy and support of the country, will probably move a motion of direct want of confidence in the Government of the day, but that is an exceptional state of things and only proves the usage which obtains as a rule.

When the Address has been passed, and the Standing Committees of the House struck, the working machinery of the session may be said to be in motion. The Committees are at work in the morning, and the House in the afternoon and evening. Then the Government bring down as rapidly as possible the public reports, and members commence to ask 'Questions,' and give 'Notices of Motion,' on the multifarious topics that suggest themselves. The House has before it every day a sheet containing the 'Votes and Proceedings' of the previous day, and also a paper containing the 'Orders of the Day.' The 'Votes and Proceedings' publish the 'Questions' and 'Notices of Motion' according as they are made, but these cannot be taken up and discussed in the House until they appear, according to the rule, on the Order Paper. It is a rule of the House that two days' notice must be given of a motion for leave to present a Bill, Resolution, or Address, for the appointment of any Committee, or for the putting of a question. Only in case of the unanimous consent of the House can this rule be deviated from. The reason of such a rule, of course, is obvious; it is to prevent the House being surprised by a motion suddenly sprung upon it. Cases, however, of Privilege, can be immediately brought to the notice of the House, and obtain priority over all others. For instance, in the session of 1874, priority was given to a motion

for the expulsion of Louis Riel, then elected to the House, though it was away down among the 'Notices' on the Order Paper. The debate was continued in the evening after recess, though an hour ought to have been devoted to the consideration of private bills.

On the days not devoted to Government business, private members have all the opportunity they require to put the questions or make the motions they have placed on the paper. A member must confine himself to the question of which he has given notice, and cannot be allowed to make a speech on the subject. The consequence is, he generally reads the question off the paper, and the member of the Government whose province it is to reply is equally brief and emphatic, though more latitude is allowed in the case of the latter. When notices of motion are reached, they are taken up in their order and discussed. In previous sessions motions have been allowed to remain week after week on the paper, but henceforth it is proposed to enforce the rule, which orders that they shall be dropped if they are not taken up when they are called. In this way the Order Paper will not be crowded day after day.

The rules with respect to debate are necessarily very strict. No member can speak except to a motion which is in regular form before the House. A reply is only allowed, by courtesy, from the member who has proposed a distinct question, and not from one who has made an amendment. But directly a new question has been proposed, as 'that this House adjourn,' 'the previous question,' or an amendment, members are allowed to speak again, as 'the rule only applies strictly to the prevention of more than one speech to each separate question proposed.' Members, as a rule, sit with their hats on or off as they may please, but the moment they rise to speak, they must uncover and address themselves to the Chair. If any member should inadvertently say 'Gentlemen' instead of 'Mr. Speaker,' he will be called to order, though in the Senate a speaker addresses himself to 'Honorable Gentlemen.' Whilst a member is speaking no one is allowed to interrupt him except with his own consent, or he has infringed a point of order, and no one should pass between him and the Chair, because he is supposed to be address-

ing himself particularly to the Speaker. Any offensive allusions against the House or any member thereof are not permissible. No member must be referred to by name, but every one disappears under the title of an 'honorable member' for somewhere, and this rule, like so many others, has for its objects the repression of personalities and the temperate, calm conduct of debate. No reflection must be cast on the Upper House, though members who have a wish to make a sly hit at that branch generally get out of the difficulty by referring to 'another place.' Many other rules exist, having for their object the keeping of debate within moderate bounds, but it is not necessary to review them in a brief sketch of this character. Members have one safety valve, when they believe themselves to be too suddenly 'choked off,' and that is, on a motion for adjournment. When such a motion is made in the course of a debate, full scope is given to a discussion. It has been attempted time and again, in the British as in the Canadian House of Commons, to enforce a stricter practice, and confine members to the question of adjournment, but the Houses have never appeared willing to limit too closely the privilege of members in this particular, especially as it is made use of only in rare cases. Members, we may add here, are not allowed to read from written manuscripts, though they may speak from notes; but the House is at times indulgent to new and diffident members, and winks at notes which sometimes develop into a written speech. In the Canadian as in the British Commons the style of debate has become essentially practical. We hear none of that impassioned rhetoric and flowery eloquence which once filled our legislative halls. The debates invariably mark the activity and earnest spirit of a representative assembly entrusted with the important business of a young people, engaged in laying the foundation of a future Empire. Speeches without pretensions to oratory illustrate the strong common-sense, the practical knowledge, and the unwearied industry which the public men of the present day must bring to the discussion of public affairs. When great questions are before our leading men they display a force of argument, a correctness of language, an earnestness of purpose, and an appreciation of their

subject, which prove them to be fitting compeers, on a narrower stage of action, of those able statesmen who guide the destinies of the British Empire in the Parliament of England.

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To the uninitiated the mode of obtaining the opinion of the House on a question may be somewhat perplexing, and we shall therefore try to explain it. Let us suppose that the Premier has proposed a motion with reference to the Canada Pacific Railway. When he has made his speech he hands his motion (which must always be seconded) to the Speaker, who reads it to the House in English, and then sends it to the table to be read in French in case he does not understand that language. Then the motion may be considered regularly before the House; it may be debated, or amended as the House may think proper. A member of the Opposition proposes an amendment, which is seconded—for otherwise it cannot be taken up—and also read by the Speaker. It is also competent to move an amendment to the amendment on ordinary questions, but not when an amendment is proposed on the motion for the House to go into Committee of Supply. But let us suppose there are only two motions before the House—the original motion and one in amendment. When discussion has been exhausted and cries of ‘question, question,’ over the House prove the desire for a conclusion to the debate, the Speaker raises in his place and asks the House if it is ‘ready for the question.’ If the debate is really concluded—and any member who may wish to speak will soon find if the patience of the House is exhausted and will very wisely refrain from saying anything at that juncture—the Speaker orders the Sergeant-at-Arms ‘to call in the members’—an order which forbids all further debate. In the course of a few minutes the vacant seats soon fill up, and the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Whips return from the adjacent rooms where bells have been ringing for some moments to indicate a division. Then the Speaker rises once more and finally ‘puts the question,’ as it is called in Parliamentary phrase. He first reads the original motion, and secondly the amendment. Then both motions are read in French at the table, and the Speaker, who is still standing, says: ‘The question is now on the amendment. Those

in favor of the motion will please rise.’ In England the members file into two distinct lobbies and their votes are taken by two tellers for each party, while two clerks are stationed near each of the entrances of the House, holding lists of the members, in alphabetical order, printed upon large sheets of thick pasteboard, so as to avoid the trouble and delay of turning over pages. While the members are passing into the House again, the clerks place a mark against each of their names; and, at the same time, the tellers count the number. When both parties have returned into the House the tellers on either side come up to the table (the tellers for the majority being on the right); and one of the tellers for the majority reports the numbers. The Speaker also declares them, and states the determination of the House. But in the Canadian House the practice is very different from that of the English Commons, as well as from that of the House of Representatives at Washington, where the members are called from printed lists by the Clerk, and reply ‘Aye,’ or ‘Nay’ to a question. In Canada the usage is for the Chief Clerk to check off the names of each member who stands up, and is called by the Assistant Clerk. It follows that the latter must know the face of every one of the two hundred and odd members who make up the Commons. The least mistake in a name is very embarrassing, but it would be still more perplexing to the Speaker and standing members if the Assistant Clerk should lose his memory for a minute or two. However, no such difficulty has so far ever occurred in our Parliamentary practice—some six hundred votes being at times taken in the course of an hour.

When the vote has been taken of the members in favour of the amendment the Speaker calls upon those against it to rise, and the same process is gone through with. If the amendment is rejected the Speaker declares it lost—‘passed in the negative’—and then proceeds to put the question on the main motion, though it is quite regular to move another amendment provided it is not similar in language and purport to the one just rejected. If the main motion is adopted on a division the Speaker declares it carried—‘passed in the affirmative’—and that ends the matter. When the division has been taken the Clerk reads off the mem-

bers on each side, but until that is done and the Speaker declares the motion 'passed in the affirmative or negative,' it is not permissible for any member to cross the House or leave his seat; for if he does so, he is saluted with an uproar of cries of 'order,' which soon glues him to his chair. Neither will the vote of a member be allowed, if attention be called to the fact that he was not in the House when the Speaker put the question, but only took his seat while the division was in progress. In taking the names, the members, it may be mentioned, stand in rows, and sit down as soon as their names are called, and consequently entered. [We have just shown that very little sets the House off into laughter, when a member forgets the rule which keeps him in his place during a division. Not long ago much amusement was invariably caused if two gentlemen named Mr. Killam and Mr. Coffin, who sat together, were called in their due order, but the Assistant Clerk soon saw the joke and generally managed to interpolate another name between the two in order to prevent so deadly a sequence.]

The most important duties of the House are in connection with money-matters. Here the constitution and the rules of Parliament have imposed every guard and check upon hasty expenditure or the imposition of taxes without due consideration. By the Union Act all measures for appropriating any part of the public revenue, or for imposing any tax or impost must originate in the House of Commons. The House itself is restrained by the same Act. It cannot adopt or pass 'any vote, resolution, address, or bill, for the appropriation of any part of the public revenue, or for any tax or impost, to any purpose that has not been first recommended to the House by a message of the Governor-General.' A rule of the House itself declares that if any motion be made in the House for any public aid or charge upon the people, 'the consideration or debate thereof may not be presently entered upon, but shall be adjourned until such further day as the House shall think fit to appoint; and then it shall be referred to a Committee of the whole House, before any resolution or vote of the House do pass thereon.' It follows from what precedes that no private member is permit-

ted to propose a Dominion tax upon the people, or to introduce a bill providing for a public grant; such measures must be initiated by ministers of the Crown in the shape of resolutions which are to be considered in Committee of the whole, and when adopted form the basis for a bill. No petition, as we have already shown, can be received if it asks for any grant or charge upon the public revenue, unless it is first recommended by the Crown. It happens sometimes, however, that a petition asks for enquiry before a special Committee into certain claims which the petitioner may have against the Government, and then if the Government is willing, the Committee is granted; but such cases are under our present practice of rare occurrence, for the Government is very properly jealous of any attempt to deviate from a wise constitutional rule which prevents the inconsiderate expenditure of public money. Individual members of the House cannot have the same feeling of responsibility as a Government, which is constitutionally the guardian of the public purse, and is held strictly to account for every dollar of expenditure. [So rigidly is the principle of Governmental responsibility enforced, that the House has even refused to receive a report from a select Committee recommending the appointment of a Royal Commission to visit the United States and report on the Maine Liquor Law. The report was thereupon withdrawn to allow the chairman an opportunity of so amending the report that it might fall within the rules.] [Abstract resolutions are allowed, 'on the principle that not being offered in a form in which a vote of the House for granting money, or imposing a burthen, can be regularly agreed to, they are barren of results;'] but for that very reason they are 'objectionable, and being an evasion of wholesome rules, they are discouraged as much as possible.]

The Committees of Supply and Ways and Means are the constitutional mode of providing for the public expenditures. These Committees are now appointed at the beginning of every session, so soon as an address has been passed in answer to His Excellency's speech. As soon as the Committee of Supply has been formed, and the

\* May; Parliamentary Practice. Todd; Parliamentary Government.

Government are ready, they bring down a message from His Excellency with the Estimates of the sums required for the public service. For several years past the Finance Minister has brought down his budget and made his annual financial statement on the motion for the House to go into Committee of Supply. But in case of a change of the Tariff, the more constitutional mode is to make his speech when he proposes certain resolutions to be adopted by the Committee of Ways and Means, and this is generally done when the Estimates are before the House and a basis is made for the Committee in question. The rules for proceeding in the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means are precisely similar to those observed in other Committees of the whole House. Members are not confined to one speech, but may address the Committee as often as they please on a particular resolution. The Chairman acts as Speaker and decides all questions of order, unless an appeal is made to the House, and in that case the Speaker immediately resumes the Chair, and decides the point in dispute. After the Budget is formally before the House, and the leading members on both sides have made their speeches on the commercial and financial state of the country, the Committee of Supply meets regularly and disposes of a large amount of money at every session; but every vote is very carefully scrutinized and the fullest explanations are demanded from the Government, who, on such occasions, have to perform the most difficult and wearisome part of their legislative duties. Resolutions agreed to in Committee are reported to the House, but they are not received until a later day. [This is a rule which can only be relaxed in an extraordinary emergency.] When the Committee of Supply has finished its labours, and all the money votes have been adopted by the House, the Committee of Ways and Means passes certain resolutions which provide for the grants shown to be necessary by the first mentioned Committee, and then a bill, called the Supply Bill, is introduced by the Government to carry out the resolutions. This bill has often passed all its stages in one day, but this is not in accordance with the British practice, where the rule requiring delay in case of money bills, is strictly carried out. The bill goes up to

the Senate, where, however, it is never altered, in accordance with constitutional usage. On its return to the Commons, it is carried up by the Speaker to the Senate Chamber. When His Excellency has assented to the bills passed by Parliament during the session, the Speaker of the Commons addresses His Excellency, and asks for his assent to the Bill, and this assent is granted with the usual formula:— 'In Her Majesty's name, His Excellency the Governor General thanks her loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence, and assents to this Bill.'

X From the commencement to the close of the session, the House is kept constantly busy from its hour of meeting, three o'clock, until a late hour of night, and very frequently until an early hour of the next morning. It has not been unusual for the sitting to last from three o'clock in the afternoon, until the same hour next morning, with the regular recess from six to eight o'clock. [The attempt to crowd a vast amount of work into seven or eight weeks is necessarily a severe strain upon members, and it would be well if the sessions were longer, and the hours more reasonable.] It must be remembered that the members of the government have not only departmental work to attend to, but there are very important duties to be performed in Committees, by Ministers and Members. The Committees on Public Accounts, Private Bills, and Printing, for instance, have very laborious work to attend to during the mornings, and then there are always any number of special Committees appointed on motion of members during the session. [Last session there were such Committees sitting in connection with matters relative to agriculture, the Charlevoix election, the criminal law, the financial depression of the country, official reporting, salt interests, sanitary reform, telegraphs, and the winter navigation of the St. Lawrence] all of which consumed a great deal of time and obtained a considerable amount of useful information, which is to be found in the appendices to the Journals of the House. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the work that is done in the Committees. Many members who take but little part in the debates of the House, and consequently obtain comparatively little share of public notoriety through the press, give up a great deal of time and

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attention to labours whose value to the country and the House can only be fully appreciated by those who have been initiated into the mysteries of Committee work.

It necessarily takes a large staff to perform the official work of legislation. The Chief Clerk, who sits at the head of the table, is appointed by the Crown, and is sworn to make 'true entries, remembrances, and journals of the things done and passed in the House of Commons.' He keeps notes of the proceedings, which are made up in the shape of journals, where all the forms are strictly carried out. [Mr. Patrick, the present Chief, has just completed his fiftieth year of official life, and has won his way to his present responsible position through all the gradations of office.] He is aided by two Assistants, who sit on each side of him. Then there is in the Department a large number of officials who are kept constantly occupied during the session with the multifarious duties required of them. [The venerable Law Clerk, Mr. Wickstead, has also been between forty and fifty years in official harness, and though now beyond three score years and ten, is still able to perform his laborious duties with the same assiduity and carefulness he did twenty years ago.] The work of translation occupies the time of several officials, and the impossibility of attending to the numerous Committees and other work consequent on a session, renders the employment of a few extra clerks necessary. The Sergeant-at-Arms has charge of the messengers, servants, post office, and furnishings of the Department. He attends the Speaker with the mace on all public occasions, serves orders on persons who are to appear at the bar, takes into custody all persons who misconduct themselves in the galleries or other parts of the House, and performs other duties of an important character, which are prescribed by usage. [The Librarian of Parliament is another officer whose duties bring him daily into contact with members of the House.] The gentleman who now fills the position, Mr. Alpheus Todd, is the author of an elaborate work on Parliamentary Government in England, and years of

close study of Parliamentary precedents and usages have made him one of the first authorities on all such subjects.

In its obedience to the Chair, in its respect for constitutional authority, in the patience and calmness of its deliberations, the Canadian House of Commons is in no respect inferior to its illustrious prototype in the parent state. The Speaker has always the gratification of knowing that his orders are respectfully heard, and that he has the confidence of the House as long as he continues to observe that strict impartiality which, it is acknowledged on all sides, the first Commoners of Canada have never failed to exhibit whilst presiding over the debates and deliberations of the popular branch. In the Commons of this country the rules and practice of Parliament—*lex et consuetudo Parliamenti*—are observed as closely as in the British House, and whenever our own rules and usages fail as a guide, we fall back on those of the British Parliament, where centuries of legislation have built up volumes of precedents which have been arranged and explained so admirably in the invaluable work of Sir Erskine May, now the Chief Clerk of the Commons of England. [Some persons may find mysteries and even absurdities in the numerous formalities which surround our legislation, but no one who has studied constitutional history will be ignorant of the fact that such formalities are found absolutely necessary by the experience of the greatest deliberative body in the world. We have already shown that Parliamentary rules are particularly valuable in the direction of careful deliberation on all questions affecting the public purse, but they also tend to assist that slow and patient enquiry and discussion which can best mature useful legislation, and help to moderate the spirit of faction and the play of personal animosities.] It is a proud thing to be able to say that in this young country the deliberations of our most important representative assembly are conducted in that spirit of moderation and anxious enquiry, which is the distinguishing feature of the British Legislature.

J. G. BOURINOT.

