

the supplies with this bare majority, and then refuse to meet the House again for two years, though they might be guilty of all sorts of iniquity in the meantime. (Applause.) The system of government in Ontario was parliamentary, and entirely different from that prevailing in the States of the Union. The Government here had the confidence of the House and was responsible for the legislation of the session. It was part of the Ontario system that the Opposition should watch legislation also, and, according to the same system, the Government was responsible for the administration of the affairs of the country outside the session as well as during the session. Under the American system, of which his hon. friend had become so enamored, the Legislature might demonstrate that everything was wrong with the Executive, but it would have no effect at all. The House might be unanimous against the members of the Executive, but it would not matter. There might be reasons why the Legislatures of various States should not meet more than once in two years which did not apply here. During the present session, for instance, the House, since it met, had mainly devoted itself not to legislation, but to the conduct of the Government, the condition of the country, etc. Much of the time of the session would be spent in that way. That was quite as important a part of the duty of the members of the House as legislation. In fact, it might be said to be more important. It was true that in 1881 the members of the Government had thought that it would be sufficient to have legislation, except in certain special cases, only once in two years, and to have the Legislature assembled yearly only for the purpose of financial criticism, and so forth, except when special occasions demanded. It was not proposed by the Government in 1881 that legislation should be necessarily once in two years. Hon. gentlemen opposite had opposed this. He remembered at the time drawing an inference from the remarks of Mr. Meredith that he favored only biennial sessions. Mr. Meredith had denied the imputation very emphatically. His present idea on the subject, like that of the abolition of Government House, had come upon him since then, because, he supposed, he thought he could make some popularity out of it. Of course, as he had said before, the Government could not object to biennial sessions. It would be much for the interest of the Government, but not, he thought, for the benefit of the public. The Government would not object to it, any more than to a proposition doubling their salaries, if the people showed themselves very determined on the subject. (Laughter.) Mr. Meredith sneered at any argument drawn from the practice of Great Britain and all her colonies. Personally, he was not convinced on a subject because there were precedents for a certain course, but he believed some attention ought to be paid to the result of the experience and thought of all those countries. If they were found to be unanimous on a certain course, it was reasonable to suppose there was a good deal to be said on behalf of that course being continued in, though, he admitted, such evidence was not conclusive. Mr. Meredith exaggerated a good deal the saving that would be effected by biennial sessions. He said it would be at least \$60,000 a year. The indemnity was practically all that would be saved by such an innovation. That would amount to about 2 per cent. on the annual expenditure of the Province. He did not think this expenditure, obtained by the discussion in the Legislature on the annual audit of over three millions, was a bad investment, or one of which the people of Ontario would complain. He thought it was distinctly in the public interest that this amount should be paid for the annual discussion and criticism on all matters connected with the Government that took place during the session. Money could be saved, and in various ways. Banks could save money by having a biennial inspection instead of an annual inspection, but he did not think the plan would be approved by businessmen. Mr. Meredith had suggested that this investigation and criticism of public affairs should be placed in the hands of a committee. But the great advantage of the present system was that the discussion and investigation were public. The advantage of this was really incalculable. (Applause.) The only precedent found by Mr. Meredith for his idea of biennial sessions was in the practice of the States. Why was the system introduced there? Because of a state of things that did not, he was happy to say, exist in this country. He would prove that by quoting the remarks of two gentlemen who might be considered excellent authorities on such a subject. First, he would refer them to an article in The Contemporary Review by Col. Shaw, formerly United States Consul in this city, and subsequently United States Consul in Manchester, England, an active politician, a man who loved his country, and a very thoughtful man. In the first place, Col. Shaw said as follows:—

some quarters that the saving would lighten the taxation of the people. It would not do so, certainly not for many years to come. It was different with municipalities. When expenses were lessened there, the taxation was lightened, because the revenue was raised by taxation. Mr. Meredith professed to look forward to direct taxation. If the affairs of the Province were as well looked after for the next 22 years as they had been for the last 22 years, at least that period would elapse before there was any fear of direct taxation. (Ministerial applause.) He complained of the timber policy of the Government, but the

hope for trained and experienced legislative bodies. The two years' term and the biennial session are, for the present, firmly established."

The importance of men acquiring training and experience in legislation, said Sir Oliver, was very great. The biennial system would very largely deprive members of this advantage.

Mr. Meredith—Why not meet every three months?

The Attorney-General—You must draw the line somewhere. A yearly session has been found sufficient for our purposes. Only the State of Rhode Island, said Sir Oliver, had considered it advisable to have a session every six months so far as he knew. At all events the Government was not inclined to suggest anything but yearly sessions.

#### PROF. BRYCE QUOTED.

Sir Oliver then read a long extract from Prof. Bryce's American Commonwealth, which he considered apt to the occasion. The author, he said, was a man who criticized Americans and their institutions very freely and candidly, but whose ability and fairness and extreme friendliness to the country concerning which he wrote were so fully appreciated that his book was remarkably popular in the United States and had gone through several editions. If the author were an American his words would, perhaps, have less weight, but coming from a very eminent Englishman, much travelled and possessing high attainments, and accepted as an authority on American matters by Americans themselves, the remarks in his celebrated book which bore on the subject under discussion were well worthy of close thought and study. The Attorney-General then read the following extracts from Mr. Bryce's book, occasionally interjecting a remark contrasting the American political system with that of Ontario, and pointing out why the biennial system, which from Prof. Bryce's remarks appeared so desirable in the States, was undesirable and unnecessary in this Province:—

"These officials, even the highest of them, who correspond to the Cabinet Ministers in the National Government, are either mere clerks, performing work, such as that of receiving and paying out State moneys, strictly defined by statute, and usually checked by other officials, or else are in the nature of commissioners of inquiry, who may inspect and report, but can take no independent action of importance. Policy does not lie within their province; even in executive details their discretion is confined within narrow limits. . . . As the frame of a State Government generally resembles the national Government, so a State Legislature resembles Congress. But in most States it exaggerates the characteristic defects of Congress. It has fewer able and high-minded men among its members. It has less of recognized leadership. It is surrounded by temptations relatively greater. It is guarded by a less watchful and less interested public opinion. . . . There has followed in Pennsylvania and New York such a witches' Sabbath of jobbing, bribing, thieving and prostitution of legislative powers to private interests as the world has seldom seen. Of course, even in these States the majority of the members are not bad men, for the majority come from the rural districts or smaller towns, where honesty and order reign. . . . Many of them are farmers or small lawyers, who go up meaning to do right, but fall into the hands of schemers, who abuse their inexperience and practise on their ignorance. . . . Of course the committees are the focus of intrigue, and the chairmanship of a committee the position which affords the greatest facilities for an unscrupulous man. Round the committees there buzzes that swarm of professional agents which Americans call 'the lobby,' soliciting the members, threatening them with trouble in their constituencies, plying them with all sorts of inducements, treating them to dinners, drinks and cigars. . . . I escape from this Stygian pool to make some observations which seem applicable to State Legislatures generally, and not merely to the most degraded. . . . There is in State legislators, particularly in the west, a restlessness which, coupled with a limited range of knowledge and undue appreciation of material interests, makes them rather dangerous. Meeting for only a few