

wrong in the purchase by a combination of the interests of a small competitor who may be "willing or even anxious to be crushed out for a consideration," rather than assume all the chances of himself crushing out the larger competitor," he conveniently ignores the question whether, but for the dread of boycotting, or other sinister mode of warfare, the small competitor might not prefer to decline either alternative, and whether he has not a natural right to do so and go on doing his own business in his own way. But the broad issue is that which regards principles and tendencies. No one who carefully reflects on the subject can fail to see that the outcome of the principle of the combine must be an absolutism in business as odious in its character as any absolutism in government. The fundamental question is not whether such and such a combination does or does not just now furnish the commodities it produces or handles as cheaply as they could be had under other conditions, but what guarantee the people can have that it will continue to do this, when its control is fully assured. No people who have fought and bled for the principles of responsible government in politics is likely to submit long to irresponsibility in manufacture and commerce. It may be, it is indeed to be hoped, that something better than the old method of competition may be found, but certainly no self-governing people is likely to place itself at the mercy of a great corporation, by leaving it absolutely free to determine at what price its staple shall be sold, and how fast its members shall grow rich. Somewhere and somehow the principle of responsibility must be fixed and maintained.

THE questions raised in the foregoing paragraphs have a special interest for Canadians just now, in view of the evidence being taken by the Committee on Combines, at Ottawa. The report of that committee will be awaited with interest, though it may be presumed that most thoughtful readers of its published proceedings will have drawn their own conclusions from the evidence in advance. When, for instance, an undertaker is virtually prohibited from setting up in business by a boycott, or when a coal dealer pays his fellow-dealers several hundred dollars for the privilege of taking a public contract, it will be hard to convince the unsophisticated that there is not something radically wrong in the system, and that the public is not, in the end, the real victim. But what remedy will the committee propose? Will it be prepared to recommend as radical legislation as that recently enacted by the Legislature of Iowa, by which all corporations, copartnerships, and individuals are prohibited from entering into any combination or confederation to fix the price of any commodity, or the amount or quantity of it to be produced or sold in the State? That is certainly an attempt to go to the root of the matter.

THE rejection by the Canadian Commons of Mr. Kirkpatrick's Bill providing for the acceptance of the standing offer of the United States Congress to allow full reciprocity in wrecking, is to be regretted on the grounds of mutual interests and of international good will. If it is not also to be regretted on the ground of humanity, it is simply because of the fact that no captain or crew, either Canadian or American, would be likely to permit the law to stand in the way of their rendering prompt aid to save life or prevent suffering. This is, no doubt, true in cases in which the peril or suffering are before the eyes of the rescuers. But it cannot be denied that the law may lead even to loss of life by preventing the nearest wrecker from going to the rescue in uncertain and doubtful cases. Mr. William Lesslie, of Kingston, in a letter to the *Empire*, disposes pretty effectually of the two chief apologies that were offered in debate for keeping so uncivilized a law on the Canadian Statute Book as that which forbids that a vessel in distress or danger should be succoured by the first boat that can reach her. One of these apologies was the Government's plea that permission to call in the aid of American wreckers is never refused in cases of emergency. In answer to this Mr. Lesslie shows that, owing to the inevitable delays involved in getting such permission, the critical moment must often pass and the opportunity for rendering effectual help be lost. To the allegation that reciprocity would be one-sided because a larger number of wrecks occur in Canadian than in American waters the reply is still more effective, if the fact be, as Mr. Lesslie alleges, that out of seventy-seven vessels lost on the chain of lakes during the last season only eleven, and those of the less valuable classes, were lost in Canadian waters. But even if the converse were true in regard to the wreckers, would not the very fact show that the opposite is the fact in regard to the sufferers, whose interests are surely paramount? Is not the balance of absolute gain on the side of the nation whose subjects have most to lose for want of prompt assistance?

SPECULATION will be rife, and excitement in ministerial circles intense, until the long-pending reconstruction of the Dominion Cabinet, rendered

now imperatively necessary by the decease of the Minister of the Interior, shall have taken place. This will, as a matter of course, not be until after the close of the Session. The return of Sir Charles Tupper to England is understood to be certain, and the retirement of one or two other members of the Ministry highly probable. Thus no less than four or five Cabinet offices may be simultaneously vacant—an unusual occurrence, and one which could not fail to be embarrassing to any leader not possessed of Sir John A. Macdonald's ample resources. Those resources will, no doubt, be found, as hitherto, equal to the occasion. Meanwhile symptoms of impatience for adjournment are already beginning to manifest themselves and the annual sacrifice of promised Bills may be looked for. It will be a pity if the Railway Bill and other measures involving important interests are amongst the number.

It is not surprising that some members of the Dominion Parliament are impatient and even indignant at the apparently slow progress of British diplomacy in putting a stop to the seizure and confiscation of Canadian fishing vessels in Behring's Sea. The pretence that the nation which has just insisted upon and secured the right of fishing in Canadian Bays exceeding ten miles in width at the mouth may justly exercise territorial rights over a great open sea, and that too in virtue of the ownership of but one of its coasts, seems too preposterous to become a matter of serious international correspondence. To even the coolest heads the seizure of inoffensive fishing vessels, with their cargoes and crews, at the distance of ninety or one hundred miles from the mainland, has more the appearance of privateering than of legitimate protection of rights by a civilized and Christian nation. But the fact remains, and there is no help for it but in international diplomacy, nor is there any known means by which a colony, destitute of a great navy and standing army, can hasten the process of such diplomacy very materially. There is little doubt that the United States, as a nation, will do what is right in the end, however gross the wrongs she may suffer her officials, dressed, some of them, in an authority which is unhappily neither brief nor little, to perpetrate in her name in the meantime. It is difficult to see much force either in the pretext by which the American plenipotentiaries justified the refusal of their Government to have the question submitted to the Fisheries Commission, viz., that as no claim of the British Government had been formally refused, there was no dispute to be settled; or in the fact urged by some of the Canadian Ministers, that other nations are concerned in the matter, as an excuse for delay in seeking justice for Canada. The former plea, if allowed, could be stretched so as to cover an indefinite period, and defeat all the ends of justice. To the latter the natural rejoinder is that it is England's duty to protect her own subjects whether those of other nations are protected or not. But there is a sound if not very soothing argument for resignation in the suggestion that it can hardly be presumed that the remonstrances of Canada, single-handed, would avail more than those of the greatest naval Power in the world.

THE severity of the attack made upon the British Administration in the Commons, in the debate upon the defeated bill for the extension of the principle of local government of Ireland, justifies the astonishment of some of the Conservative journals at the introduction of the Government's Local Government bill at the present time. Lord Randolph Churchill's animadversions seem to have been particularly damaging. But apart from the charge of bad faith and broken promises, it is evident that the position in which the Government is apparently placed, of refusing to Ireland the measure of self-rule it bestows unasked upon England, is extremely illogical, and cannot long be maintained. The strength of the Conservative position is in its claim to justice and impartiality in its treatment of the Irish. The dilemma is so obvious and so awkward as to confirm the suspicion, it may almost be said, admission, that the Local Government Bill is a Liberal-Unionist, not a Conservative measure.

THE Irish Nationalists have just received apparently a severe check in the Pope's condemnation of the Plan of Campaign and the practice of boycotting. All the resources of the Party-leaders will need to be called into play to induce the Irish peasantry to reject the authority of the Vatican in favour of that of Parnell, Dillon, and Company, should that be the final issue involved. Much of the moral effect of the Papal decree will, however, be lost if it be found to have been besought, or bargained for, by agents of the British Government—especially if any such price as that of a college endowment can be shown to have been promised. The *St. James's Gazette* is no doubt right in intimating that if the Pope has allowed himself to be drawn into anything even faintly resembling such a mistake as backing up Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, nothing can be gained by