

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

WE beg leave to invite the attention of our readers to the excellent suggestion made by Mr. Goldwin Smith in his brief letter in another column. The desirability of having some place in which the literary, scientific and artistic workers of the city could meet and make each other's acquaintance, and at the same time find facilities for the indulgence and further cultivation of their respective tastes and aptitudes, is too obvious to require argument. A club arrangement of the simple and inexpensive and yet most attractive kind proposed could not fail to have an excellent effect, not only in the way of mutual help and stimulus in the various researches and pursuits indicated, but in counteracting the tendency towards a kind of intellectual selfishness and reclusion, which is too often fostered by the solitary habits of brain-workers. We hope to see Mr. Goldwin Smith's suggestion bearing fruit at an early day, either in the proposed modification of the plan of the Canadian Institute, or in the furnishing of a small suite of rooms elsewhere for the purpose. Not the least of the advantages to be derived from such an institution would be, if we may be permitted to say so, the incidental benefits that would accrue to younger members from occasional contact with men who have attained eminence in literature, science or art, and whose matured powers and cultivated tastes would make their very presence a source of inspiration and aid to younger workers in the same fields, without the conscious effort of either party.

IT would be but a truism to say that the success of Democratic institutions is impossible apart from a good degree of purity and independence in the electorate. Let a considerable percentage of either the electors or the constituencies become venal and corrupt and there is no longer any safeguard for either the honesty and loyalty of Government and Parliament, or for the liberties of the people. In view of this obvious truth the spectacle which is now set before us in Canada in the large number of actions which have been entered in the courts, protesting against newly-elected members on the grounds of bribery and corruption, is, unless we can believe that most of these protests are based on trivial grounds, an alarming one. That they, or the occurrences which make them possible,

are largely the outcome of the fierceness of party faction is no doubt true and to some extent reassuring. Even if the courts are forced to sustain many of these protests and unseat the candidates, there may yet be room for consolation in the knowledge that in many instances the offences proved will have been comparatively slight and confined to a few individuals. Still the very fact that so many serious accusations of corrupt practices have been made and so many cases tried in the courts must be seriously damaging to our national reputation. Some may be almost ready to enquire whether seeing that this discreditable result is so largely due to the strictness of our legislation, it might not be better to relax in some measure the stringency of the laws which sometimes make it impossible for a candidate with the best intentions to prevent acts by too zealous followers such as will void the election. Any relaxation would, however, be a dangerous experiment, at least until we can be a good deal better assured than we now are that the moral influence of the great majority of leaders and influential men of both parties will be heartily thrown on the side of purity. In the meantime it is not wonderful that there is still a strong disposition to regard the disgraceful results as due largely to defects in the laws, and that the first week of the new session has brought forward a large number of proposed amendments to the Elections Act. It is, indeed, somewhat suggestive and at the same time unfortunate that most of these proposals have thus far emanated from the Opposition side of the House, though the majority of the protests have been entered against members sitting on that side. This is not, we fear, a favourable augury for the passage of these amendments. There can be no doubt, however, that some of the changes proposed are much needed, and it is to be hoped that such may be accepted and adopted by the Government. And yet, so far as we have observed, some reforms which would, it seems to us, be far more effective than any we have seen proposed, have not been suggested. We may have overlooked them, or the newspaper reports may have been imperfect, but we have observed no proposal to limit the amounts that may be contributed or expended for election purposes, or to require that such sums be handled by a responsible committee, whose accounts and vouchers must be submitted to the courts, or to make the giving or accepting of a bribe a criminal offence, to be punished by imprisonment without the option of a fine. Is it not obvious that such measures as these would intercept the stream of corruption much nearer its source than many of those proposed, and be proportionally more effective? They have the advantage too of having been tried and found useful in the Mother Country.

MOST of the amendments to which we have referred, and indeed the provisions of our legislation for the prevention of electoral corruption generally, regard simply the danger of bribery or undue influence in the case of the individual voter. But no observer of the events of the late contest, or in fact of the last two or three general elections, can doubt that another influence much more subtle and potent is being brought to bear with great effect. This is the kind of influence against which those clauses of Mr. Charlton's Bill are directed, which provide that "any candidate promising public works of any kind to electors of any particular district will be deemed to have used undue influence, and his doing so will be considered a corrupt practice under the Act"; that "any Minister of the Crown or agent of the Government who shall during the progress of an election contest make a promise of Government appropriations or aid to any constituency, that promise being calculated to influence the result of an election in that constituency, it shall be deemed a corrupt practice"; and that "where the Government during the progress of an electoral contest, or at any time within two months of the dissolution of the House, send engineers for the purpose of surveying public works for which no appropriation has been made for the purpose of such works, this shall, where such survey influences the result of an election in any riding, be deemed a corrupt practice." These clauses, as expressed, are mainly directed against the Government whose existence is at stake. But, as Mr. Charlton was reminded on introducing his Bill,

there is equal need that the provisions of such a Bill should include other parties, *e.g.*, the Opposition leaders and the Provincial Governments. As Sir John A. Macdonald suggested, a clause is equally necessary to provide that candidates for Parliamentary honours who promise grants or subsidies to assist in the building of railways if their party get into power should be held equally guilty of corrupt practice. It is obvious that the constituency may be bribed as effectively by the promise of the leader of the Opposition as by that of the leader of the Government, assuming that the former's chances of party success are thought to be equally good. The danger is undoubtedly a serious one in Canada at the present time. Let constituencies once be brought down to the low level at which considerations of public or national interest become secondary to those of local gain, and the demoralization of the country in which such a state of things exists is complete. It matters not by whom the inducement is held out, whether by a member of the Cabinet, an Opposition leader, or the Premier or other officer of a Local Administration, it is evident that it is a bribe, and a bribe more injurious than that of a single elector, in proportion as a constituency is a larger and more influential factor in the national life than an individual. There are, no doubt, great difficulties in the way of legislating effectively to meet such cases, but if members on both sides are alive to the danger, and are willing to divest the Bill of all partisan aspects, they surely can find some means of preventing a form of popular corruption so insidious and yet so gross. Every honest member, actual or prospective, of the Government, should wish for such legislation, if for no other reason, to deliver him from the temptation to even think of the party complexion of the constituency in connection with the distribution of the public funds of which he is trustee for the whole people. To believe a Ministry capable of favouring one constituency above another on party grounds is to believe it capable of a base betrayal of the public faith.

ON Monday last, Mr. Tarte, M. P., brought his much-talked-of indictment against Hon. Thomas McGreevy and others, in the House of Commons. Comment, save by way of pointing out the very serious nature of the charges, would be premature and unfair. Our readers are all no doubt familiar with the main points of Mr. Tarte's accusations. The substance of the long list of allegations with which he prefaced his motion for reference of the matter to a special committee is that Mr. McGreevy has been for years using his great political influence to gain premature and illicit knowledge of the contents of tenders sent in to the Department of Public Works; that by means of this knowledge he was able to secure from the Department contracts at exorbitant prices for the firm of Larkin, Connolly and Company; that he received from that firm, or some of its members, large sums of money in payment for the knowledge thus surreptitiously imparted; that the public treasury has thus been defrauded to the extent of hundreds of thousands of dollars; and that large sums of money were paid by the firm above mentioned to the Minister of Public Works out of the proceeds of the contracts thus dishonestly obtained. Mr. Henry F. Perley, Chief Engineer of the Government Public Works, and other officials of the Department are seriously implicated. It will thus be seen that the acts charged are so grossly fraudulent that, if made good by satisfactory proof, they must not only drive Mr. McGreevy and Sir Hector Langevin from public life but render them liable to prosecution in the criminal courts. Sir Hector Langevin and Hon. Mr. McGreevy arose in their places and explicitly denied the truth of the allegations, and declared themselves ready to have them fully investigated by a Parliamentary Committee. Mr. McGreevy went further and not only pronounced the whole statement made by Mr. Tarte false from beginning to end, but denounced it as the outcome of a foul conspiracy by the members of a clique who wished to injure him because he would not become their instrument and help them to obtain what they wanted. He further declared that these persons had even forged his name to documents to gain their ends and that he was able to prove it. The charges were referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections, which will no doubt