

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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### CURRENT TOPICS.

As was to be expected in view of all the circumstances, President Cleveland has permitted the Tariff Bill to become law without his signature. This was, no doubt, the wisest and most consistent course open to him. To have signed the Bill after his vigorous denunciations of some of its clauses, and his determined efforts to prevent its passage with those clauses incorporated in it, would have been an act of inconsistency foreign to any conception of his character which is warranted by his previous record. To have vetoed the Bill, thereby not only separating himself from his party, but making it practically certain that no Tariff Bill would be passed during the session, would have been to incur the serious responsibility of depriving the whole country of the benefits to be derived from the considerable lightening of its burdens provided for in this very imperfect

measure. Happily for him, the Constitution set before him an easy way of avoiding the dilemma. Mr. Cleveland's letter to Representative Catchings gives no comfort to those protectionists who are half persuaded to accept the Bill in the hope that it will be the end of the agitation for tariff-reform, for some years. On the contrary, he intimates that the present measure will be regarded as an advance position captured from the enemy, and used for the starting point for another vigorous campaign. The success or failure of that campaign will depend very largely upon the visible effects of the considerable lowering of the tariff effected by the present Bill.

The somewhat ominous though guarded references in the Queen's prorogation speech to the diplomatic trouble with France, combined with the reports concerning the new treaty between France and the Congo State, which was signed the other day, give good reason for believing that the situation between the two nations has been a good deal strained. Nor is it at all certain that the clouds have yet passed from the diplomatic sky. It is well known that Great Britain, true to her settled peace policy, will do everything in her power, consistent with the national interests and honor, to avoid a rupture with her neighbor across the Channel. If it were equally certain that France is peaceably disposed, there would be no cause for disquietude, as it is not in the least likely that there can be any inherent difficulties in the African question such as to prevent a friendly understanding being reached under such circumstances. But it has been apparent for a long time that the French Government and people are in anything but an amiable mood towards England. And yet it is incredible that they can be so maddened by passion as to really wish to provoke a quarrel with so powerful a neighbour, while Germany stands frowning, like a mighty giant armed to the teeth, upon their border. It seems more probable that they may be counting upon Great Britain's pacific disposition, and have been emboldened by her withdrawal from her own Congo treaty, for the sake of friendly conciliation, to believe that by taking a bold and aggressive attitude they may obtain any desired concessions. It is altogether probable that when it has been seen just how far Lord Rosebery and his Cabinet can be made to yield, and at what point they will draw the line, the difficulty will be at an end.

A Winnipeg telegram the other day spoke of a letter recently written by Mr. Goldwin Smith to one of the local papers in that city, in which that distinguished thinker laid down the principle that it is the duty of parents to educate their own children. The statement is almost a truism and, we dare say, may have been made as such, and not as laying down any new principle, educational or ethical. But it is a truth which is so nearly lost sight of in these days of elaborate public school systems, that its distinct enunciation may be of service. The notion or theory that it is the duty of the state to educate those who are to be its future citizens is so prevalent, and is so generally accepted as if it were an axiom, that we have been sometimes taken severely to task for laying down the simple principle for which we are now glad to be able to quote so good an authority. It has often seemed to us that the overlooking of the natural theory and the acceptance of the other is responsible for very much of the difficulty and confusion in connection with school education, which threaten the peace of the country. If only all parents recognized their duty in the matter, and if all were able and willing to discharge it, the less the state should have to do with the matter of education the better. Under a purely private and voluntary system the religious difficulty would not occur, for only those would act together who were agreed as to the place and the nature of religious training in the schools. The difficulty which renders the interference of the state necessary, arises from the fact that so many children have no parents and that the parents of so many others are unable or unwilling to have their children properly educated. Hence the state, in self-defence, that is, in order to guard itself against the great evils which would result from the ignorance of a large proportion of its subjects, is obliged not only to insist that all children shall be educated up to a certain standard, but also to provide, partly at the public expense, a system of schools for the purpose of such education. From this necessity has arisen, as a matter of economy, the public school system as we have it. But it is becoming more and more evident to many thoughtful minds that this system is as yet far from having solved the problem.

Seldom, we believe, have eulogies of a departed public man been more sincere or more truthful than those which have been called forth by the sudden death of the Hon. C. F. Fraser, late Commissioner