

THE WEEK.

Vol. XI.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, JUNE 22nd, 1894.

No. 30.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics,
Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. Subscriptions payable in advance.

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. 6d.; half-year, 6s. 6d. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the publisher.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

The latest news from Newfoundland makes it probable that the strain of the situation may soon be relieved, and constitutional rule restored. In some respects the course of events there is, perhaps, unique in British colonial history. The spectacle of a Government which had not a constitutional majority, holding office by virtue of the Lieutenant-Governor's appointment, and by dint of refusing to give the people's representatives an opportunity to pronounce against it, and waiting for deliverance to come to it through the action of the courts in pronouncing one Government seat after another vacant in consequence of corruption, is a singular one indeed. And, to add to the embarrassment, the *de facto* Government has no money at its disposal, and is carrying on the business of the country by means of public funds, which it has no right to touch without sanction of Parliament, trusting to a favourable House one

day to pass a bill of indemnity. The whole course is rather high-handed on the part of both Governor and Government, but probably defensible on sound principles. But recent cables report that one after another of the fraudulently-elected representatives is falling before the courts, so that the men in power may soon be able to meet the purified House, with a comfortable majority.

When some erratic silver-advocate in the Republican ranks, in the United States, proposed to bring England to terms on the silver question by scourging her with a hostile tariff, most members of the party declined to take so absurd a proposal seriously. But now no less a person than ex-Speaker Reed, the Republican leader in Congress, and one of the ablest, and, to use a favourite word with our American exchanges, most level-headed men in Congress, has declared in favour of the same policy. Some Republican journals refuse to believe that their famous leader could have uttered such nonsense, and say there must be some mistake in the record. Others disregard party trammels so far as to denounce the proposal, regardless of its source. On the other hand, the *Nation* deems it not improbable that this scheme, or "some similar piece of demagoguery, may find a good deal of support among the politicians who run Republican conventions and make the party platforms." The United States Congress will cut a strange figure indeed when it comes before the civilized world in belligerent attitude to declare that it will not permit its people to buy British goods, which they want, until Britain has consented to what Congress tells her to do in regard to the silver question. The protectionist's faith in what can be done by means of the tariff is sublime.

We have never been able to sympathize with the kind of patriotism which binds its possessor to uphold his country, "right or wrong," and deems it a crime to speak an unpleasant truth lest it be turned to account by a foreign critic. But we know no law of truth or honour which makes it the duty of a Canadian patriot and member of Parliament to seek to promote Canadian interests "by placing in the hands of the legislators of another country a knowledge of the means by which Canada can be coerced for her own good," to borrow the *Montreal Witness'* accurate description of the policy which Mr. Charlton claims to have been pursuing in his correspondence with certain influential Americans in the matter of the proposed export duty on logs. We do not believe

that the best interests of the Canadian lumber trade, as a whole, would be promoted by the imposition of such a duty, but very much the reverse. But should the dominant party in the House of Commons be so blind as to be about to repeat the log-taxing experiment, of which there seems to be no immediate danger, we cannot think that even that fact could justify the extraordinary course of Mr. Charlton in advising the Washington law-makers how they could most effectively retaliate. Mr. Charlton's weak defence, in which he studiously avoided reference to the main point, that which constituted the head and front of his offending, will not avail to save him from the loss of reputation and confidence which is the reward of his unpatriotic, and as most persons will believe, intensely selfish conduct. It is not surprising that no one of his party friends seemed willing to undertake to apologize for him, much less to defend his conduct.

Toronto is to be congratulated on the fact that the disgraceful attempt to prevent certain speakers from obtaining a hearing at the Liberal political meeting in the Massey Music Hall, on Monday evening, was unsuccessful. The disturbance itself was a disgrace to the city, so far as the act of a boorish and intolerant few can disgrace the great majority who love order and free speech. As the meeting was in the interests of the Government, the Conservative Opposition will have to bear the brunt of the affair; though no fair-minded person can doubt that all representative Conservatives deprecate such rowdiness just as strongly as their opponents can possibly do. Some of the speakers and papers do not hesitate to ascribe the organized effort to break up the meeting to a body representing the P. P. A., and the indications certainly seem to point in that direction. As that society is the only political organization which shuns the light of open discussion and works under cover of the darkness of secrecy, the imputation is the more readily believed. It is unfortunate that such a thing should have occurred on the first occasion on which the new hall has been open to the public. But it would be very unwise and illogical for the trustees of that building to act on the suggestion which has been made by closing the hall to political meetings. They might rather reason that the fact of so rare an occurrence having taken place in this building, the doctrine of chances is altogether against a repetition of the occurrence.