

# 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 other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE approaching election in West Lambton has given the newly-formed Third Party an opportunity to try its weapons and its prowess. As a consequence the progress of the triangular contest will be watched with considerable interest. It is to be feared, however, that those who deprecate most strongly the evils resulting from the old and corrupt Party system cannot derive much rational comfort from the entrance of the new brigade into the field. In fact, the multiplication of parties bids fair to be but a multiplication of evils. The public has, so far as we are aware, no guarantee that the operations of the Third Party will be carried on on a higher plane than those occupied by its seniors, while there is reason to fear that its platform will be narrower and its political outlook less clear than those of either. There is, theoretically, something to be said in favour of the existence of political parties claiming to be based on broad, distinctive principles, capable of application in the treatment of the many and varied questions which have to be dealt with by the Government and Legislature of a self-governing State. There is undoubtedly a science of politics. Between the extremes of Radicalism and Toryism a wide field is spread out for choice. The contrasted methods of the Liberal and Conservative schools of political thought awaken interest and challenge investigation. However difficult it may often be to trace the operation of any motives but those of self-seeking opportunism in the policies of the old parties, their titles suggest at least a reminiscence of the higher principles of statecraft. But from a Party whose platform consists practically of but a single, narrow plank; whose leaders seem scarcely to make a pretence of having seriously studied politics as the science of statesmanship; and whose one chief aim would be attained by the passage of an Act which would have for a large and influential body of citizens the odiousness of sumptuary legislation, what could be expected but a brief régime of political empiricism, followed by disastrous failure? The first essential of a political party, in order to give it a claim upon the support of an intelligent people, is that it have at least a modicum of statesmanship in its

leaders. No personal respectability, not even the loftiness of a philanthropic purpose, can supply the lack of this. It is, we trust, with no disposition to be ill-natured, much less offensive, that we ask in all seriousness whether and wherein the Third Party possesses this prime essential of statesmanship.

THE probable unseating of Mr. Colter, M.P., for unhappy Haldimand, for "bribery by agents," calls attention once more to the ineffectiveness of our seemingly stringent laws for the prevention of corrupt practices at elections. Within certain limits, it is true, these laws may be said to have accomplished their purpose. The cases are now very rare in which the candidate himself is found guilty either of having personally offered corrupt inducements, or of having connived at such practices. It sometimes happens, indeed, that after having honestly used his best efforts to secure a pure election, he finds himself obliged to pay the penalty of the misconduct of some dishonest man whom the law regards as constructively his agent. So far as appears this was the case in the present instance, though it cannot be denied that the action of the members of the Reform Association in systematically destroying the records of their meetings lays them open to grave suspicion. Their avoidance of the ordinary modes of organization may bear similar interpretation, though perhaps capable of a more charitable one. It is certainly possible that the aim may have been simply to shield the Reform candidate from the consequences of wrong-doing of which his supporters might be guilty without his consent or knowledge. In either case Mr. Justice Falconbridge's decision, virtually holding the candidate responsible for the conduct of all the individuals who take it upon themselves to canvass for him, will, if sustained, effectually prevent resort to this expedient. Of that decision no one can reasonably complain. Unless the courts feel themselves at liberty to draw the same inferences that any shrewd observer, versed in the dark ways of political partisans, would unhesitatingly draw from such cases as those proved in evidence before Judge Falconbridge, the law for the prevention of corrupt practices might as well be repealed. It is, we think, greatly to be regretted that the party journals, instead of openly denouncing the illegal practices of individual violators of the law and of political morality, whosoever they may be, should so often strive to belittle the crimes of their own friends and exaggerate those of their opponents, thereby doing much to deprive the judgments of the courts of their proper moral effect.

WHAT, then, is to be done? Must it be accepted as true, as one influential newspaper has said, that Parliament has done its best to bring about pure elections, and that this is the result? Are we shut up to the conclusion that there is really no means of putting a stop to these disgraceful and degrading practices? Far from it. Parliament has not done its best. The defects in the present laws are obvious and glaring. Under those laws the really guilty parties are usually allowed to escape, while one who may be entirely innocent has to pay one part of the double penalty, and the honest electors the other part, in the cost and turmoil of a new election. The real criminals are the givers and takers of bribes, and upon their heads the chief punishment should fall. Provision is now made, it is true, for their punishment if any one chooses to proceed against them. But this is evidently insufficient. There can be no reasonable doubt that if the statute made it the duty of the Court to punish with imprisonment, without option of a fine, every elector found guilty of having given or offered a bribe, or of having received or solicited one, and the punishment was rigorously inflicted in the first cases that came to hand, the personal corruption which now so disgraces the country would promptly cease. The educative force of such a law would be by no means the least consideration in its favour. Many citizens of the unreflecting class are accustomed to have their views of right and wrong very much influenced by the state of the law in regard to the practices in question. Hence the rigid infliction of punishment upon all offenders would soon educate the public conscience, and cause many who now see no harm in buying or selling a vote to see such a transaction in its true character as a crime against

both the individual and the State. The stereotyped objection that under such a law it would be impossible to elicit the facts and secure conviction has no greater force, so far as we can see, in respect to this than to any other criminal law. The same expedients, such as pardon to informers, could be employed, if found necessary.

FROM the statements of Attorney-General Martin, of Manitoba, during his recent visit to Ottawa, it appears that the Manitoba Government are fully decided not only to discontinue the official use of the French language, but to abolish the Separate School system. Mr. Martin seems to be of opinion that, in regard to the latter, there will be no occasion for the interference of the Federal authorities unless an appeal is taken by the minority in the Province. He is persuaded, too, that neither the Federal nor the Imperial power will permanently obstruct the carrying out of the policy determined upon by the great majority of the people of the Province. Mr. Martin's statement that some of the most influential Conservatives in the Province heartily approve of the proposed reforms is reassuring. It would be a great pity if the division on such questions, affecting the whole future policy and history of the Province, should be made on party lines, or follow political—we use the word in the popular sense—planes of cleavage. But it would be a grand sight to see the great majority of the people of the Province disregarding past affiliations and rising to demand that their vigorous young province be freed from the unnecessary and therefore unjust conditions which were imposed upon it at its birth by the Dominion Parliament and afterwards confirmed by Imperial Legislation. As we have said before, and as Mr. Martin evidently believes, it is incredible that either the Canadian or British Parliament could prevent the clearly expressed will of a province from becoming effective, or would seriously try to do so.

AN Ottawa despatch credits both Chief Justice Ritchie, of the Supreme Court, and Judge Armour, with expressions of opinion strongly favouring the creation of a divorce court for the Dominion. The views of these men, whose judicial training and professional experience so eminently fit them to speak with authority on the subject, can scarcely fail to carry great weight. In this instance their opinions doubtless coincide with those of most persons who take a common-sense view of the matter, unbiassed by prejudices of custom or creed. The unfitness of the Senate, a body whose proper functions are purely political, to deal with cases often demanding in an eminent degree the best professional acumen in determining the value of evidence and the trained judicial intellect and habit in balancing conflicting testimony, has often been pointed out and seems, indeed, too obvious to need argument. The unseemliness and absurdity of the method formerly pursued when the Senate sat as a body for the investigation of divorce questions, have, it is true, been greatly modified by the arrangement under which such inquiries are relegated to a permanent committee, which acts as a quasi court. Still it is but too clear that the present system fails and must fail to bring the provisions of the law of divorce, even as that law now stands, within the reach of all classes of citizens. Even those who hold most rigidly that no change should be made in the direction of granting divorce for any other causes than those specified under the present law, cannot deny that justice demands that provision should be made whereby all parties entitled to relief under that law may obtain a hearing and decree without unreasonable expense or delay. In a word, the process of adjudicating in such cases is purely and simply a judicial one, and so naturally belongs to a judicial instead of a Senatorial Court. It is to be feared, however, that the dread of opening up afresh the question of scope and extent will deter the present or any future Government from taking action for the establishment of a Divorce Court.

ALL Canada is interested in the wheat crop of Manitoba and the North-West. During the last few weeks most of those who have been desirous of forming an opinion as to the average result of the season's operations must have been in despair. The reports have been so contra-