

had been as masterly and as successful as its panegyrists suppose, what is to be said about the morality? What is to be said about the morality of not only voting, for a political purpose, that the execution was unjust, but supporting the vote with a speech in which the principles of jurisprudence in relation to responsibility for crime were twisted into conformity with the strategical exigencies of the hour. We are not saying what Mr. Blake did, but what some of his friends appear to think that he did and applaud him for having done. Suppose such a thing had been done by Sir John Macdonald, should we not have been all holding up our hands and turning up our eyes at his unscrupulousness. Whatever Sir John may be, Mr. Blake is nothing if not respectable, and a sinister service is done him by crediting him with even a skilful intrigue. It may be very reactionary and illiberal on our part, but we cannot help saying that the chances of the Opposition at the coming election seems to us to have somewhat declined. This we sincerely lament, from an independent point of view, because if we are to have a party system it is absolutely essential that parties should be tolerably balanced and that there should be an effective Opposition. We know it is said, and perhaps with a good deal of truth, that the great Reform journal is still the Bible of Reformers, and of Scotch Reformers above all. But it will surely be a delicate operation to slip into the hands of Reformers, and of Scotch Reformers above all, in place of their Bible, a Missal, a Socialist Tract, and a Fenian Manifesto bound together.

MR. McLELAN's first Budget will not be looked back to as the starting point of a new and brilliant fiscal policy that shall set the wheels of commerce rolling and heap up surplus after surplus in the treasury. On the contrary, it is a particularly dull affair, and one must conclude from it either that the new Finance Minister has no wonderful genius for finance, or, as we prefer to think, that the wings of genius have been clipped to prevent it from soaring into dangerous altitudes on the eve of a General Election. The whole Budget is, in fact, a continuous attempt to soften down the hard lines drawn by a stern fate on the financial canvas, and to put off—till after the elections—the evil day when the situation shall be faced, and acknowledged to the country through the unpopular medium of additional taxation. The Budget, and the Micawber-like attitude of its expounder, are, we think, a clear indication that Sir John expects to have received a fresh lease of power by the time the next statement has to be made: after the encouraging result of the vote on the Landry Motion a dissolution was to be expected; and the colourless, temporizing character of the Budget now seems to show that this has been determined on.

STILL, as far as it goes, the Budget statement is a satisfactory one. The total cost of the Rebellion ought certainly to have been brought to account in some way, and provision made for the deficit it has already caused and will continue to cause; but, on the other hand, it is legitimate matter for congratulation, and an evidence of good care, that, apart from this extraordinary expense, the expenditure is so nearly balanced by the receipts. Unless, however, a pause is made in the construction of public works, this cannot continue, especially if Mr. McLelan's expectation of a decline in imports into Manitoba and British Columbia be realized. As to the few changes made in the tariff, the adoption of the polariscope test for sugar appears to be a very desirable one: sugar is now, like tea, very much cheaper than it used to be, and can well bear a full duty; and this test, like the substitution of specific for *ad valorem* duties, is the most scientific mode of collecting import duties. Where *ad valorem* duties are in use, the burden of taxation may, perhaps, be distributed more equally; but, on the other hand, specific duties, besides affording protection to honest merchants by ensuring the collection of just dues from every one, tend also to encourage the consumption of a better quality of goods, and are therefore desirable on this account alone.

It is to be regretted that the Minister of Finance did not impose a duty on tea and coffee, and increase that on tobacco and liquor. Whatever result his bookkeeping may show, there can be no doubt that the deficit in the current revenue is growing; and a tax or increased taxes on the articles we have mentioned, while falling lightly on consumers, would have been one of the readiest means of supplying the deficiency. It is true Government has just received a large sum as duty and excise paid on liquor and tobacco in expectation of an increase in the tariff rate, thus forestalling any immediate advantage to the revenue that might have been expected from increased taxation; but this, though it has made a good showing in the receipts, is only a partial payment in advance, and in the long run in no way increases the amount of revenue. It is true too that

a great quantity of tea has been lately imported to escape the expected duty; but this again is only a partial loss, and would not have prevented a handsome increment of revenue from this source during the coming year. Tea we believe to be an article peculiarly able to bear a heavy import duty, apart from the ten per cent. charged on importations from the States. It has of late fallen in price to a greater extent than any other article of general use, and sells now at little more than one-half the price of a few years ago; and a small duty of five cents a pound, which would bring in three-quarters of a million of revenue, would not have been appreciably felt by consumers. Tea taken in excess—as it is generally taken—is by no means wholesome; and the Finance Minister would have shown more regard for the poor man's true good if he had subjected it to even a much higher tax than that suggested, and relieved from taxation instead such articles as raisins and currants. These latter especially are a most wholesome article of diet to such meat-eaters as Canadians are; they are peculiarly in use among English-speaking people, who everywhere take to them as a natural corrective to a meat diet; and if they, with other dried fruits, had been substituted in the free list for tea and coffee, no injury would be done to any industry likely to be established here, a very large addition to the revenue would be obtained, and the consumption of a far wholesomer article of diet than tea would be promoted.

THE partial lifting of the veil in the Railway Committee at Ottawa last week, through a quarrel between two members over the North-West Central Railway Bill, has revealed our Parliamentary system in an extremely unfavourable light: it is evident that many Members of Parliament, including the Member for West Toronto—the most deeply implicated—have been engaged in a transaction whose character would have ensured its being rigidly shunned by men with a proper sense of the nature of their trust as representatives of the people. With the organization of the North-West Central Railway Company the public has no concern; and if the Company were composed of private persons seeking to get privileges from Government, the public would have no concern either with the quarrel between the promoters over their expected profits. But the case is quite different where these promoters are Members of Parliament, who have seemingly used their official position to obtain extraordinary concessions for themselves from the Government. The interest of the public is then affected, and attention is strongly drawn towards promoters and Government alike. For here a quarrel between two of the promoters, accidentally divulged, has revealed unmistakably that gross corruption and jobbery exists where purity ought to prevail—a knowledge that may well cause great uneasiness and alarm, when it is remembered that, under the circumstances, searching inquiry is almost impracticable. The suspicion forces itself upon us, indeed, that if the Parliamentary scene could be lit up more generally, many other scandals of the same character might be exposed. However, to consider for the moment what has already appeared, one would like to know what knowledge (if any) Mr. McLelan, the Finance Minister, had of the bargaining between Messrs. Beatty and Woodworth, apart from the five letters Mr. Woodworth says he holds and which show the nature of the bargain; also what knowledge Mr. Norquay, the Manitoba Premier, and a member of the Board, had of it; and further, it would be interesting to be informed of the exact reasons for the election of Mr. Tupper, another M.P., to the Board, without his knowledge—whether, in fact, this had any reference to possible aid that his father, the High Commissioner, might render the financial schemes of the Company in England. The country is fortunate in having a statesman of Mr. Blake's character to watch over its interests, and make such inquiries; and it may be expected he will not neglect to do so; but that he will get any full and satisfactory reply we hardly expect. Yet, as he most justly said, it behooves us to know who profited by this transaction, and what he was to do in return; and, if he is a Member of the House, to ask how such dealings comport with the independence of Parliament. It is unfortunately true that Parliament has proceeded upon a wholly vicious principle in reference to these enterprises, in recognizing it as proper that Members of Parliament should have to do with them in any capacity in which the acts of Government are likely to affect their personal interests; for in this way has the public sense of the wrongfulness of such transactions become blunted. The obtaining of pecuniary favours from Government is really an offence which, instead of being "recognized," ought to be followed by expulsion from Parliament; to receive such advantages from Government is nothing else than taking a personal bribe to vote in a certain way; and of the two methods of bribery we cannot see that Sir Robert Walpole's direct method was one whit more flagrant than this indirect one. At any rate, being plainer to see, it would be easier to cure.