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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

It would be doubly wrong in communistic days to countenance any unwarrantable invasion of private property by the State. But if ever there can be a fair case for expropriation—a widely different thing from confiscation—that of the land adjacent to the Falls of Niagara would seem to be one. This land has no special value in itself, either naturally or by virtue of improvements; nor can it be fairly compared to that of which the value is enhanced by the common influences of commerce or population, as that of all land in a growing and thriving community must be. The revenues derived from it depend wholly on the power accidentally possessed by its owners of excluding the people from the full enjoyment of a natural spectacle which is the public property of two communities, and to which if those communities chose to-morrow to put an end, say by diverting the course of the river, the landowners would lose their revenues without having the slightest ground for complaint. In this instance then, if in any, it would seem not unjust to expropriate, paying such compensation as may be reasonable, regard being had to the fact that the Falls belong to the public; and thus to relieve the people of extortion by which not only hundreds of thousands have been fleeced, but other hundreds of thousands have been turned away from one of the most august and impressive of the schools of nature.

THE sense of humour, like other human faculties, is not equally distributed, and this probably accounts for the fact that the *Mail* and a few other organs fail to perceive anything ludicrous in the conferring of knighthood upon Canadians. Nor can our contemporary understand that a sense of self-respect compelled Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Blake to refuse titular distinctions. It is nevertheless the fact that the sight of an obese gentleman with difficulty rising from his knees after receiving the magic sword-touch which forever after classes him with the flower of chivalry, is sufficiently incongruous to make most people laugh. And apart from the absurdity of gentlemen who do not pretend to know a rapier from a broadsword accepting the title "Sir Knight," politicians like Mr. Blake and Mr. Mackenzie could not afford to imperil their reputations by wearing an honour often used as a "gag," and which is not in the direct giving of the country they delight to serve. Nor is it easy to

understand the motive which impelled a gentleman with such a record as Dr. Dawson to accept an empty title, excepting it were that he desired to patriotically contribute to its dignity. It is too late in the day to assert the value of an obsolete decoration, or to pretend that it is respected by the people. Canada is practically a democracy, the *Mail's* protest to the contrary notwithstanding, and she requires in her evolution into national life that her best men's sympathies be kept within her institutions—a result that is not likely to accrue so long as the rewards for public work are looked for by politicians and *litterateurs* outside the country. Honour and power, to be appreciated by the people, must come from them—must be such as they can themselves bestow upon their leaders—must be in keeping with the spirit of the age and the genius of a young country. These, again, are weighty reasons which may probably have convinced the best public men of this and other countries that it is more consistent with their self-respect, more patriotic, and better for their political position to refuse knighthood.

THE Irish Convention at Boston is simply one long shriek of hatred against England, her government, her people, and everything connected with her. It is wonderful that the Irish themselves do not get tired of the monotony of vituperation; the Americans certainly must. In one respect, however, the convention is noteworthy. If the opinions of the Irish leaders are truly represented, as no doubt they are, the policy of conciliation has totally failed to make any impression on their minds, or to divert them in any way from their aim. Neither the Land Act and the other measures of relief, nor anything that has been said or done by Mr. Gladstone and the Liberal Government, has propitiated them in the slightest degree. Their declarations of enmity envelop Liberals as well as Tories, and their object is still clearly avowed to be, not Home Rule, but Separation. The Irish, by the way, are exhorted by the Convention not to buy any English goods. Perhaps those who tender this advice have forgotten that multitudes of Irish men and Irish women are employed in English factories. The number of Irish in England and Scotland can hardly be less than two millions. That the organ of Mr. Mowat's Government should support an attempt to dismember the United Kingdom might seem strange, as Mr. Mowat has always professed himself extremely loyal; but we all understand the exigencies of an Administration which requires the support of the Catholic vote.

FROM all quarters come indications of the increasing unpopularity of the Salvation Army. Whatever be the causes, the prognostications of those who long ago foretold its failure seem about to be realized, and the process of disintegration to have begun. It was not probable from the first that an emotional—if not hysterical—religion, using that term in its broadest sense, would stand wear and tear, and it was evident that the Salvation Army contained within itself all the elements of early dissolution. It has come to be seen that the good done by the Army is both problematic and entirely overshadowed by the evils which result from its operations. Experience teaches that the "reformation" effected under excitement—mental or alcoholic—is neither healthy nor enduring; and the indisputable fact that questionable benefits are obtained in such manner and at the cost of considerable annoyance to the public, seems to be evidence of failure. When to this is added the contempt that is brought upon true religion by the Army's puerile travesty, and when it is remembered that a lax discipline has admitted as officers men and women who have not hesitated to gratify unlawful passion, who are insolent in their street parades, who are utterly reckless of the feelings of others, it is not a surprising matter to find the Army often in the police courts, and to read of its being rotten-egged in the streets. There can be no question as to the earnestness of some "soldiers"; but any unprejudiced observer who has attended the meetings of the Army—from the "General's" headquarters in Regent Hall to the village "drill-shed"—must admit that they are the small minority, and that Carlyle's savage and sweeping generality applied to the population of Great Britain might with equal truth be uttered of the Salvation Army.