

THE WEEK.

Vol. XII.

Toronto, Friday, March 15th, 1895.

No. 16.

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Current Topics.

The Coming Election.

Signs of the near approach of a general election are multiplying and it would not be surprising should an announcement be made before the date of our next, or the following number. Meanwhile it is inevitable, we suppose, that diligent search should be made into the records of candidates, by their political opponents, and every effort put forth to convict this or that one of inconsistency or something worse. So far as this turning on of the search-lights has the effect of revealing blemishes in moral character, its effect may not be wholly bad, whatever we may sometimes be compelled to think of the motives of the investigator. It will be a happy day for Canada when it can be said that it is useless for any man to run for parliament who cannot show an unstained reputation. This should always be the first and greatest requirement. As to questions of consistency, the man who has never changed his mind is often near of kin to the man who has no independent mind to change; and who is consequently no wiser to-day than he was yesterday. But it is, perhaps, well that in this particular instance the battle may and should be fought upon one great and clearly defined issue. We have evidently come to a parting of the ways. Shall our commercial policy in the future be constructed on protectionist or free trade principles? That is the question. Everyone admits, apparently, that "free trade as they have it in England" is for the present out of the question. Yet it will make a vast difference in the immediate, and a radical one in the remoter, future, which of the two principles controls the tariff building of the next Minister of Finance. The question is worthy of the fullest consideration—the amplest discussion. It is for the people, the intelligent electors of Canada, not for the politicians, to decide it. They ought everywhere to be studying it with open and unbiassed minds, resolved, when the time comes, to vote every man according to his honest conviction of right. There is reason to hope that an unusually large proportion of them are doing this.

Mr. Morley's Land Bill.

The very favourable reception which seems to have been given to the Irish Secretary's Land Bill by both parties in the British Commons gives ground for the hope that, little by little, the burning question of justice to the Irish tenant in the matter of land-tenure is being settled on a just and permanent basis. It is true that Mr. Morley seems to look for no absolutely final solution in anything short of compulsory sale throughout, but this must be, he admits, the work of more than one generation. Meanwhile it may be hoped that the increasing reasonableness of owners, as the absentee landlords are compelled more and more to look into the question, instead of being content with receiving the rents wrung in many cases from the poverty of the occupants of the soil, by conscienceless agents, may perhaps render a final heroic remedy of that sort unnecessary. But it is somewhat startling to learn that even now, after all the legislation which has been enacted on the tenant's behalf by both parties, the gist of this latest bill is in the fact that it saves him from being compelled to pay rent for improvements which he himself has made. The fact that Mr. Morley's bill was allowed to pass its first reading, not only without a division, but amidst the general commendations of statesmen of both parties is a rare tribute to the undoubted honesty and ability of that model statesman. Of course there may still be a fiery ordeal for him when details are considered in Committee, or when it comes up for second reading. But the fact that the general principles of the Bill are approved, will remain, and control future legislation.

The Torrens System.

We are glad to see that the Council of the Toronto Board of Trade is again moving to bring about the general adoption of the improved system of land-transfer. A committee to whom the matter was referred by the Council have reported, through their chairman, Mr. J. Herbert Mason, in favour of the Torrens System for the whole Province. The report, which was adopted after discussion, recommends that the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and the Legislative Assembly be petitioned in favour of the change; also that proper steps be taken to obtain the co-operation of other Boards of Trade in the Province in such petition. It can hardly be doubted that the suggestion will be readily acted on by the other boards. The arguments for the completion of the reform are so cogent that there can hardly be any serious difference of opinion among intelligent business men in regard to the matter. If any are in doubt as to the merits of the new system they can hardly do better than to read what has been written from time to time by Mr. Mason and others on the subject. It is not easy to understand how any one who knows anything of the labour, expense and uncertainty often involved in the investigation of titles under the old system, can doubt that the substitution of a simple title, absolutely safe and indefeasible, for the present cumbrous and complicated processes will promote the interests of all concerned, the conveyancers perhaps excepted. Moreover, the fact that the Torrens System is in operation in the City of Toronto, the County of York, and some of the new districts of the Pro-