

# THE WEEK:

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

LORD DUFFERIN is a man of much tact and address; the speeches which he elaborately composes are in grace and felicity worthy of the pains which he bestows upon them; he has inherited a true touch of Sheridan's genius; his social popularity is universal, and in the art of flattery he is unrivalled. But whatever may be his gifts, his achievements have not yet been extraordinary. As Governor-General of a Colony he had only to accept the guidance of his constitutional advisers; in Russia he had nothing to do, and in Egypt, so far as appears, he did nothing; for the system of government which he framed for that country came at once and totally to the ground. At Constantinople he is believed to have shown high diplomatic skill, but we may be sure his chief in England retained throughout, through the telegraph, the supreme control of the negotiations. While, therefore, it would be easy to understand a very favourable reception of his appointment to the Viceroyalty of India, it is not easy to understand this unparalleled outburst of eulogy and jubilation. Perhaps the explanation may partly be found in the fact that no man cultivates more assiduously and skilfully than Lord Dufferin friendly relations with the press. He has managed to turn it into one vast sounding-board of his praise. Unfortunately we have had practical proof enough of the difference between a press-made reputation and one of a more genuine kind. General Wyndham in England, and General Sickles in the United States, were press-made heroes. The first was the only British General who was defeated by the Sepoy Mutineers, and the second by his presumptuous incapacity nearly caused the loss of the battle of Gettysburg. A crisis like the mutiny would show of what metal Lord Dufferin is really made. It is to be hoped, however, that he will not be tempted to create for himself opportunities of distinction by dangerous dealings with the native powers of which suggestions have been thrown out, or in any other way. Those who, like our contributor, Mr. Riach, know India well, are unanimous in thinking that what she needs is rest, while the measures of improvement already inaugurated are receiving a fair trial. Lord Dufferin's taste will be thoroughly gratified by the pageantry of an office which is now, in the magnificence of its trappings, almost unrivalled in the world. With this, and with the safe exercise of his social and rhetorical gifts, if he is wise he will be content. So say all those who are best qualified to judge.

WHETHER the Federal Government win or lose in the license case, now before the Supreme Court, the result is almost certain to prove that it would have been better if Parliament had not passed the Act which is the occasion of dispute. A marked tendency of the time is to exalt localism into patriotism, to place the Province before the country, and to deny that one who prefers the interests of the whole country to those of a part can be a patriot. Devotion to local interests, when kept within rational bounds, is laudable; but when the lesser is magnified so as to make a part look larger than the whole, the folly and delusion of the game are evident. But the excesses of localism are not to be checked by the Federal Legislature trenching upon what, by common consent, would, if no political passion had been aroused, be recognized as its own special domain. The granting of tavern licenses has hitherto been an exercise of local authority; and when the General Legislature steps in and supercedes the authority of the Provincial Legislatures, its action is naturally stigmatized as centralization. Parliament, in passing the License Act, may be found not to have acted without due authority; but in view of the irritation which its intervention was certain to produce, it would be difficult to justify the introduction of the measure on grounds of policy. The causes of the strained relations between the Provinces and the Federal authority do not all come from one side; the spirit of conciliation has been wanting on both sides, and its absence has not been less conspicuous on the side of the Provinces. Should the Federal Parliament be declared to have exceeded its authority, the rebuff will be thrown in its face whenever a question of doubtful jurisdiction comes up; and if it should prove victor in the courts, a demand for an alteration of the constitution, in favour of the Provinces, would almost certainly be made. It would be unworthy of Parliament to cower at the prospect of an agitation of this kind if its right to act in the premises were clear and some certain evil would follow its inaction. But the right was not clear, and the Provinces might safely have been left to regulate the issue of tavern and shop licenses.

THE contested election of Jacques Cartier has taken a new turn. It is now said that M. Mercier will resume proceedings for the disqualification of Judge Mosseau. Should the threat be carried out, the Conservatives will only have themselves to thank. According to their own story, they first bribed M. Mercier, by whom the proceedings against M. Mosseau were being conducted, to drop the demand for disqualification, and then denounced their alleged partner in the guilt of bribery for allowing them to draw him, by a golden bait, from the path of rectitude. They got a royal commission to enable them the better to expatiate on the enormity of M. Mercier's crime; and they succeeded in proving that if there was bribery in the transaction they were themselves the bribers. But if, as his accusers' story goes, M. Mercier was induced to show clemency to a political adversary for a consideration, he does not feel disposed to observe a truce which the other side has broken. M. Mosseau's bill, after being agreed to and paid, is stigmatized as proof that justice had been sold. But if his adversaries have had their revenge, M. Mercier declares that he, in turn, will have his: as it is represented as a fault in him to have bargained not to push the demand for disqualification, he will rectify that error by retracing his steps and asking the court to disqualify M. Mosseau to be elected a member of the Legislature of Quebec. But M. Mosseau is no longer in a position to be elected to the Legislature, and disqualification could not affect him otherwise than by the stigma it would attach as a memorial of his political career. The petitioner refuses to aid M. Mercier to satisfy the exigencies of party revenge; and M. Mercier declares that he will seek out another petitioner. And this threat brings into relief the methods sometimes followed in election protests. M. Mercier, besides being counsel for the petitioner, was also practically the petitioner himself in the first instance. He brought an elector to his office, induced him to become petitioner, and paid him \$20 for expenses, though it was not certain the petitioner had expended that amount. He afterwards brought the proceedings to a sudden close, on receiving from the opposite party an amount considerably larger than his taxable costs. Disqualification being abandoned, the petitioner will not now agree to its resumption. M.