

THE WEEK.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

UNDER any other system than government by party for party, the doom of Sir John A. Macdonald's Administration would be sealed. The astute Tory leader went to the country in the last elections with a shibboleth that he foresaw would dazzle a people before whom there was no great political issue, and whose first wish was commercial prosperity. It is unnecessary now to enquire whether the Premier really believed that the "National Policy" would be productive of the results prophesied by its advocates. It is sufficient to remember that the present Dominion Government was elected to office in order that they might carry out pledges to formulate and sustain that policy. Of its utter and conspicuous failure no person can be better aware than Sir John A. Macdonald himself—for even his bitterest enemies have ever credited that gentleman with practical common-sense. For months the murmurs of disappointed farmers, disheartened mechanics, and disgusted factory-workers, who were promised a commercial millennium if they voted for the N. P., have testified to their disillusion; and the unkindest cut of all was the cold-blooded manner in which a leading exponent of the policy virtually acknowledged its failure by cutting down the wages of employes, on the plea that business is not good enough to justify its owners continuing the scale which had been paid for some time past. The deplorable condition of the cotton trade in Montreal and elsewhere is causing serious uneasiness; in the same place, as in the other leading cities of the Dominion, business men of all kinds are passing through a very anxious time; and now the much-vaunted panacea for all commercial ills receives its *coup de grace* at the hands of the *Globe*, whose commissioner—a conservative, it is understood—on his return from a tour of the principal manufacturing concerns in Canada, is compelled to acknowledge the utter failure of high taxation. Many factories, he reports, are closed or are running short time; employment has become scarce, and a general reduction of wages has taken place since the high tariff came in. But if Sir John A. Macdonald had one strong point which raised him head and shoulders above the public men of the day, it was his capacity as a constitutional lawyer. So we have been fondly told by his admirers fifty times. Even those who shook their heads with a grave dubiety at his N. P. policy were content to stake their reputations on the Premier's legal acumen. The decisions of the Privy Council in the Insurance, the Mercer, the Streams, the License cases, and the Boundary Award, must have proved a rude awakening to these and the Tory party generally. Not that it is to be supposed Canadian Tories will for one moment acknowledge the defeat and discomfiture of their chief, or that they will confess his policy discredited. He is the only man who can hold them together, and so long as he can do that and keep them in

office it matters nothing how complete a failure he proves. So that, after all, as Sir John's supporters are Tories first and Canadians afterwards, it is not at all probable that the collapse of the N. P. or his disastrous defeat on the boundary and other questions will jeopardize his control of the political loaves and fishes.

It is a sign of the times, we hope—an indication that English-speaking Canadians are not longer inclined to submit to a French monopoly of place and power in Quebec—that Mr. Alonzo Wright, M.P. for Ottawa County, is to be offered the Lieutenant-Governorship of Quebec, a post which has been filled since Confederation by French-Canadians. The Hon. M. Robitaille is not desirous of re-appointment, and though it is understood that Mr. Wright is by no means ambitious to occupy the distinguished position, being rather inclined to retire from public life, the Dominion Government will press it upon his acceptance upon the ground that he is the only possible English nominee who would be acceptable to the French population. With quarter of a century's experience of politics, equally popular, from his affable manner, with both sides of the Commons, English and French, hospitable to a fault, he is by anticipation of his friends an assured success and an ideal Lieutenant-Governor.

THE latest reliable news from England does not indicate any important change in the political situation. The supporters of each party have "demonstrated," but there is no evidence that the Lords have become less obdurate, or the Government more conciliatory, as a consequence. If the Tories still retain faith in the judgment of their late chief, they might well feel rather less confident since the mass meetings. It was Lord Beaconsfield who said, "What Lancashire thinks to-day England says to-morrow"—and the *vox populi* in that county has spoken in no uncertain tones on the presumption of the Lords in throwing out the Franchise Bill. It is not generally a right thing to talk about the opinions held in the highest quarters about the situation, but the usually well-informed London correspondent of the *Liverpool Mercury* says "it is no secret that Majesty itself is in favour of the Bill, though ministers have been entreated not on their part to make the situation worse by supporting or sanctioning a general attack on the House of Lords." The rejection of the bill a second time by the Upper House in the autumn session is quite expected, and up to the date of writing there is no doubt but Lord Salisbury's plans include resistance to the bitter end. It is possible a sustained expression of adverse public opinion might induce him to re-consider his decision, but it will occasion no surprise if he remains sufficiently headstrong to be willing to run all risks. So far, it is taken for granted that he will act in November as he did in July, and some Liberal members advise the propriety of re-introducing the bill a third time next year rather than dissolve at the dictation of the House of Lords. In any case the present session will be brought to an early close, and it is expected that prorogation will take place about the 7th or 8th of August.

A CONFEDERATION of the various Australian Colonies seems likely to issue from the recent *pourparlers* betwixt their executives and the Imperial Government on the proposal to annex New Guinea and the Australian protest against the deportation of French convicts. Lord Derby pointed out that any scheme of co-operation between the Home Government and the Governments of Australasia requires that the Colonial Governments should form an administrative unit—should in fact represent a Dominion. The suggestion has been eagerly accepted. Both the Victoria Houses of Legislature have cast their votes for Confederation; Queensland and Tasmania followed suit; and well-informed authorities declare there will be no difficulty about the other colonies. This has brought within view a realization of a pet idea of many colonial statesmen—the idea of forming a Dominion of the Australasian colonies.

THERE were six failures in Canada reported to Bradstreets during the past week, as compared with twenty-one in the preceding week, and with thirty-three, eight, and eleven, respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883. In the United States, Bradstreets report 225 failures during the same period, as against 211 the preceding week, and 168, 122, and 78 in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882, and 1881. About 76 per cent. were those of small traders, whose capital was under \$5,000.