

THE WEEK:

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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THREE royal commissions, two in Quebec and one in Ontario, which have recently met, and two of which have not yet finished their enquiries, all bore a similar complexion and had a common object. Their business was to ferret out criminating matter against political opponents. The attempts to criminate M. Mosseau and M. Mercier had a well-marked interdependence, and were in accordance with the rule of reciprocity. When a political contest is reduced to this form, its aim is destructive. The Mercier Commission, which is enquiring into the \$5,000 scandal, has thrown some side lights on the crooked methods of Quebec politicians. There is no longer any reasonable ground for doubt that M. Senécal and M. Dansereau, who advanced the money, believed that they were purchasing for their party chief immunity from the disqualification with which he had been threatened; M. Mercier admits that this was their motive, and M. Trudel, who took part in the negotiation, as the friend of M. Mercier, says the transaction was a regular purchase (*un marché complet*). But why did M. Trudel take part in a transaction which he now represents as dishonourable? He says his suspicions were aroused as to the nature of the transaction when M. Mercier offered to pay back whatever the taxing master might refuse to allow; but M. Trudel, as chief of the River police, is an officer of the Quebec Government, and though a liberal, may have been brought under some influence of which he is perhaps not fully conscious. It is quite clear that, acting as a go-between in the negotiation, he was not perfectly frank in telling his friend what the other side thought of him. According to his story, which bears strong marks of probability, neither side was willing to trust the other, M. Mercier insisting on having the \$5,000 in hand before he ceased his efforts for disqualification, and M. Senécal declaring that, when he bought a pig he always insisted on seeing it weighed and having it delivered. If this contemptuous comparison had come to M. Mercier's ears, the negotiation must have collapsed. M. Senécal evidently believed that he was doing a fine stroke of business in the political market; and the appearance of his sinister figure upon the scene is suggestive of much that is crooked in Quebec politics. As the purse-bearer of corruption, he may be said to be the lineal descendant of François Baby, with more than Baby's stratagem and audacity. The facts which the commission has brought out could have been got at just as readily in a

court of justice. If party combat by commission is to become a regular instrument in political warfare, it will need some better justification for its employment than the disclosures in the \$5,000 scandal supply.

THE work of the Bribery Commission evidently draws towards a close. The additional evidence has thrown no new light on the charges. But the evidence of Sir David Macpherson completely exonerated himself and the Government of which he is a member from any suspicion of complicity in what goes by the name of the bribery plot. And Mr. Meredith and Mr. Morris had no difficulty in clearing their skirts: from Mr. Meredith's evidence, it is plain that his visit to Ottawa, at the time the plot was going on, had no connection with any conspiracy. Whatever was done was the work of subalterns. Mr. S. Blake, as counsel for the Ontario Government, was not anxious to bring under enquiry the conduct of more than the five persons against whom the charge had previously been made. It was not his intention to examine several witnesses who had been summoned; but Sir David Macpherson and Mr. C. H. McIntosh, M.P., insisted on their right to be heard, and they were permitted to tell what they had to say. Mr. John Shields, who had been represented as the purse-carrier, was present, but was not called. Other witnesses only appeared to be told that their evidence was not required, Mr. Blake announcing, on behalf of the Ontario Government, that he had no other witnesses to call. After Mr. Meredith had concluded his statement, Mr. Blake expressed his entire confidence in its truthfulness. The new tactical move sprung on the Commission during the sitting was the show made by Mr. Meredith of carrying the war into Africa. A charge against four members of the Ontario Government was put into the form of a resolution, that they, knowing that attempts were being made to corrupt members of the House, induced these members "to approach persons who were said to be engaged in this work for the purpose of inducing them to corrupt them," and to entrap others who were not so engaged. The commissioners promised that the charge should be enquired into; but the enquiry was adjourned till the next sittings of the commission, in the beginning of October. This counter charge is based upon the evidence of members of the House, whom the Conservative defendants declare unworthy of belief; the object of those making the charge being, presumably, to find means of corroborating evidence which they themselves have been at some pains to discredit. It is a relief to have good ground of assurance that neither the Ottawa Government nor the Ontario Opposition had any hand in this miserable intrigue. Neither Wilkinson nor Stinson had shown any desire to face the commission. All attempts to reach either of them by subpoena had failed; and it looks as if they might allow judgment to go by default.

THE Independence of Canada is often touched upon by persons whose object in bringing it before the public is to show that, from their point of view, it ought to be resisted. To this category belongs the reference to Canadian Independence, by Sir Hector Langevin, in a speech recently delivered at Winnipeg. We are, he said, practically independent; we have "the right to tax other nations, even the English, on the merchandize they send us." This implies great confusion in the mind of the speaker as to the incidence of taxation. We may levy taxes on English goods, but we cannot tax the English people; we can only tax the consumers of the goods on which we lay consumers' duties. No degree of liberty can confer on one nation the power to tax another. The question has nothing to do with Independence. Sir Hector contends that a colonial condition with practical independence is the best; and his reasons are, that we are free from the expenses of a separate establishment; that we have no wars of our own, and are not taxed for Imperial wars; that we get protection without paying for it. But we are, he admits, liable to be struck by the shot fired in an English war. His policy is that we should continue to grow in our own present position; how long and how strong he does not say. The indefiniteness of the advice, *grandissons dans notre condition présente*, implies a time when, in the speaker's opinion, we shall have grown strong enough to take care of ourselves. If this looks to preparation for a change which sooner or later comes to colonies, in all parts of the world, it recognizes