

The Week.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

WE had reason for feeling assured that the confidence of the Conservatives was sincere, and it appeared likely to be not altogether unfounded, though Mr. Mowat's majority, including the almost certain fruits of his Gerrymander was, as we said before, too large to be pulled down without a great change of public opinion. The event has shown, however, that, whatever the Protestant feeling against Roman Catholic domination might be, the party lines were still too strong for it. Nor was any attempt made on the part of Mr. Meredith to satisfy the people that he had men about him who would be competent to manage their affairs in the event of power being transferred to his hands. The Gerrymander has told, and we have received a warning of the danger in which Constitutional Government may be placed if the party which has the majority is to be at liberty, both to redistribute the constituencies at pleasure, and to dissolve the Legislature when it pleases. But about the most notable feature of the election is the menacing growth in the east of the Province of the French element, the vote of which was of course cast for the allies of the Roman Catholic Church. The adjurations of Liberals to disregard race and religion are not heeded by their French confederates; nor can the time be far distant when the British and Protestant element in this Province will be brought to bay, and compelled to make a stand against the advancing tide of encroachment. But the movement which has now commenced, and which is likely henceforth to furnish the dividing line between parties in this Province, must find a leader of its own. It cannot be led with any prospect of success by one whose hands are tied like those of Mr. Meredith, by connection with a French and Roman Catholic party at Ottawa. The Labour Party in Toronto has done its utmost, but without success. No one can be more heartily desirous than we are of seeing the opinions and interests of the wage-earners thoroughly well represented in the Legislature; yet we cannot bewail the defeat of candidates brought forward with the too exclusive stamp of a class upon them, and in a spirit of antagonism to the community at large, which the community has done nothing to deserve. That the prolonged continuance of the same party in office, with an Opposition too weak to exercise an effective control over the Government, is not a good thing in itself, and that in that respect the event is not matter for rejoicing, would be admitted by all who look only to the interests of Constitutional Government, and may be said without departing from a strictly neutral point of view.

A NOTE of admiration is the only comment on the political literature upon which the civilised public of Ontario has been feasting for the last month. The craving of Canadians of our generation for this description of mental food seems to be ingrained and incurable, like the passion for faction fights, which are always growing more senseless as the issues upon which the factions were originally formed recede further into the past. If they relinquish it for a moment it is only to return to it with increased appetite. But new forces begin to work in the public mind, and the taste of the next generation will not be the same as that of the present. So much, we think, even the result of our own experiment warrants us in saying.

THAT an Election is a nuisance, few citizens of Ontario, after the experience of the last three weeks, will deny. It stirs up all the bad passions, sows the seeds of strife in the community, floods the country with calumny, and pollutes all the public questions which are sucked into its muddy vortex, to say nothing of the waste, or worse than waste, of money, and the disturbance of trade. To avoid multiplying elections, as well as to preserve the integrity of the Constitution, it is most desirable that Parliaments, in the absence of any constitutional necessity for an appeal to the country, should be allowed to sit for their full legal term. An appeal has been made to English precedents in support of the doctrine that Parliaments are liable to dissolution, without reference to constitutional necessity, at any time when a new election suits the convenience of the party in power. The appeal is groundless; English rules, amidst the fierceness of the recent party struggles, and with the reins in a lady's

hand, may have lost something of their salutary strictness, but they have not been relaxed to so monstrous an extent as this. In 1834 Sir Robert Peel having, like Pitt, taken office with a minority, appealed, like Pitt, to the country. In 1837 Parliament was dissolved upon the death of King William IV. In 1841 the Whig Government, having been defeated by one vote on a motion of want of confidence, appealed to the country. In 1847 Lord John Russell appealed to the country upon taking office with a minority. In 1852 Lord Derby did the same thing upon a like occasion. In 1857 Lord Palmerston appealed to the country against the adverse vote of the House of Commons on the Chinese policy of the Government. In 1859 Lord Derby appealed to the country against the condemnation of his Reform Bill. In 1865 Parliament had completed the six years which form its customary, though seven years are its legal, term, and a fresh election accordingly took place. In 1868 Gladstone having, as the leader of the Opposition, carried his resolution in favour of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, Disraeli resigned, but afterwards agreed to an appeal to the country, which, after a delay of some months, took place. In January, 1874, Gladstone sprang a dissolution on the country with the most disastrous results to his party; but he had been defeated not long before on the Irish Universities Bill, so that his dissolution had in some measure the character of an appeal from an adverse vote, and might be deemed necessary in order to ascertain whether the Government had the confidence of the country. In 1880, when Disraeli dissolved, the customary period of six years had nearly run out, and Sir Stafford Northcote explained that it was a question between a dissolution at Easter and a dissolution at Whitsuntide, which public convenience decided in favour of the former. Thus the doctrine of free dissolutions and elections at the Prime Minister's pleasure finds no real confirmation in the record of British practice. It was a great mistake, if it could possibly have been avoided, to leave anything in the Canadian Constitution to unwritten usage and tradition. These may control public men in the Old Country, but our colonial politicians were sure, like the Americans, to use their legal powers to the utmost. The place of unwritten usage and tradition in England must here be supplied by the authority of the Governor-General, who embodies English usage and tradition. It is to be hoped that His Excellency will never grant a dissolution except for cause stated by the Privy Council in writing, and that, in deciding whether the cause stated is sufficient, he will exercise his discretion in the interest, not of the party in power, but in that of the whole community. If the Governor-General's office is to be nothing but a mask for bad practices, and a veil to hide from Democracy its needs and dangers, the salary is worse than wasted.

A PROHIBITIONIST, incensed at what he deems the betrayal of the cause by Mr. Blake, and venting his wrath in the *Mail*, speaks of Canada as "a drink-enslaved country," and as calling for deliverance from "a worse than Egyptian bondage." Now, is this true, or is it a rhetorical figment? Is liquor? That is the fundamental question. Nobody will deny that in extraordinary cases of necessity ordinary rights and liberties must give way. In time of war or pestilence dealings with private property and by the supreme law of public salvation. If the people of Canada have really lost their power of self-control, and are perishing of drunkenness, Frenchman or a Spaniard would spurn. It may be right that the liquor of war or pestilence private property is seized or destroyed for the benefit of the State, the loss, unless philanthropy has completely cast out justice, will be borne by the community, not thrown upon the trade. But the fact, as it appears to us, is that the people of Canada, instead of having lost their self-control, are a temperate and a progressively temperate nation. Nothing can be more positive than the testimony borne by those who have passed long lives in the country to the improvement which has taken place in the habits of its citizens. Even in the cities, where intemperance most prevails, the number of people seen drunk is small compared with the number in the great cities of England, and most of the cases brought before the magistrates are those of unassimilated immigrants, whose nationality it would be invidious to specify. On the Prohibition platform it has been asserted that the number of annual deaths from drink is ten thousand, something like half the total number of adult male deaths in the country; and even this proportion has, we believe, been exceeded in the transports of enthusiastic declamation. The Canadian Mortuary Statistics for October give two cases of death from drink; in those for November there is not