

the Government and the House before the question is referred, as it must be sooner or later, to the electors.

UNHAPPY Canada! It was bad enough to have it shown to the world, by the investigations of a Parliamentary Committee, that the patronage of the Department of Public Works has been for years manipulated in the interests of a single firm whose members have been enabled, with the connivance of officers of the Department and by means of wholesale bribery of officials, to enrich themselves at the public expense. But the worst that has been proved against a Minister of the Crown, in this case, was either crass stupidity or a wilful blindness to the frauds and peculations that were going on all about him. Worse from one point of view, though of course involving the reputation of a Province only instead of that of the Dominion, are the revelations made last week before the Senate Railway Committee. The case here is that of embezzlement, pure and simple, and that too from the scanty exchequer of an impecunious province. Through the evidence of bank managers, supplemented by the reluctant and forced testimony of Mr. Armstrong, it has been clearly shown that out of a special appropriation by the Quebec Legislature of \$280,000, in aid of the Baie Des Chaleurs Railway, no less than \$100,000 was secured—embezzled is, we suppose, the proper word—by Mr. Ernest Pacaud, a somewhat famous local politician, editor of *L'Electeur*, and, as it appears, confidential agent or intermediary of the Quebec Government. Of this \$100,000, one half was, it appears, used for the behoof of Mr. Pacaud, and the other half in payment of the personal or political debts of Premier Mercier and other members of the Quebec Government. So much seems to have been already established by the evidence before the Committee, notwithstanding the hasty departure of Mr. Pacaud to France, the failure of other witnesses summoned to appear, and the refusal of members of the Quebec Government to recognize the authority of the Committee. Further developments will be awaited with interest. Meanwhile it is doubtful whether such glaring malversation in office was ever before brought home to the members of any Canadian Government. It is evident that a very serious responsibility will be devolved upon the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province, in case the members of the Government do not themselves relieve him of it by promptly handing in their resignations. Could we count more surely upon the soundness of public opinion in matters of politics in the neighbouring Province, we might confidently expect that a sudden storm of indignation would sweep the offending ministers from their seats. As things are, it is impossible to predict results with any certainty. Seeing that the Roman Catholics generally, and the French Catholics in particular, are so largely under the influence and control of the clergy in matters political as well as spiritual, the Established Church of Quebec may be considered as on trial in this case. What action will its Prelates and Pastors take? What advice will they give to subordinates and parishioners? What will His Holiness, the Pope, himself now think of the man upon whom so many marks of his special favour have been bestowed? In a word, will the ecclesiastical authorities to whom the great majority of our fellow-citizens in Quebec give allegiance, urge the people to purge away the foul stain upon the Provincial honour, or will they wink at or condone political and moral wrong-doing of the basest kind?

THOUGH up to the time of this writing several days have passed since the damaging revelations affecting the honour of the Quebec Cabinet were made, Premier Mercier has so far made no sign. It seems incredible that he can intend to let judgment go against him by default, or that he and his Ministers suppose that they can afford to defy even Quebec public opinion, not to say that of Canada, in such a matter. But assuming that they should persist in the course of silent obstruction they have so far followed, the question of procedure at Ottawa will become a very interesting one. The Government organs are hinting at strong measures. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Province is, of course, the appointee of the Dominion Government, and is pretty sure to seek advice from Ottawa, the more especially as it happens that he was Attorney-General of the Administration that was dismissed by Lieut.-Governor Letellier for a somewhat similar offence, and retains, no doubt, a vivid recollection of the retribution that was visited upon Mr. Letellier by the Conservative Government at Ottawa, for his action in that affair. Perhaps the expression "somewhat similar"

above used should be modified. Mr. Letellier dismissed his Ministers for a combination of offences, the most serious of which was that of having yielded to "a corrupt pressure brought to bear upon them by irregular combinations of members to promote for political considerations a lavish expenditure of public money, in subsidizing railways." In the present instance the corrupt pressure seems to have come from within rather than without the Cabinet circle, and the crime is the still graver one of having intercepted and embezzled for political or personal uses, or for both, the public money which had been voted for a legitimate purpose. It is, however, by no means unlikely that the Dominion Government may feel itself unpleasantly hampered in its desire to adopt heroic treatment by its own troublesome precedent. Probably the better and more constitutional course will be for Lieut.-Governor Angers to demand an explanation from his Prime Minister, and failing that to insist on the appointment of a Royal Commission, or other court of enquiry, armed with full power to investigate the whole history of the now famous Baie de Chaleur Railway. If there is not sufficient strength of virtuous public opinion of Quebec to compel such an enquiry, and to make it thorough, the outlook for the future of the Confederation is dark indeed.

THROUGHOUT a rigid cross-examination Sir Hector Langevin adhered tenaciously to the asseverations and denials contained in his original statement before the Committee on Privileges and Elections. In the numerous cases in which they were in direct contradiction to those of Murphy and other witnesses who had preceded him, most persons will probably feel bound to accept his statements as correct, in the letter at least, though in view of all the facts established by documentary and other reliable evidence some of those statements are most extraordinary. Two features of the case, as seen in the light of the Minister's examination, are especially striking. In the first place there can hardly be two opinions in regard to the comparative uselessness of the Government office, as administered by Sir Hector, for the protection of the public interests. At no single point does the responsible Head of the Department seem to have intervened with effect, or even to have acted as a check upon the carelessness or dishonesty of officials, or the machinations of designing and unprincipled contractors. Indeed, if the statement of Mr. Starrs, made before the Committee on Friday, be accepted, it would appear that the Minister was made use of to further the fraudulent ends of officials and contractors. Notwithstanding his high reputation for administrative efficiency and personal attention to details, Sir Hector was, on his own showing, ignorant of the very things which the responsible Head of a Department should surely be expected to know. Waiving all matters requiring engineering and expert knowledge, it is obviously inexcusable that the Minister should have taken no pains to inform himself about the antecedents of a Murphy, or of a "Bancroft," before entering into large contracts on behalf of the Government with them, or the firms they represented. Seeing how much must in all such cases depend upon the personal character and sense of honour of the parties in all such business relations, it should surely be one of the first duties of an officer entrusted with primary responsibility to satisfy himself that the parties with whom he is entering into business relations, involving hundreds of thousands of dollars, really exist and are men of good reputation. In the second place Sir Hector's alleged purposed ignorance of the source of the large funds in the hands of his bosom friend, Mr. McGreevy, for political uses, funds which, by his own admission, were largely subject to his personal control, instead of being, as he seems to suppose, creditable, must really be regarded as most suspicious and reprehensible. One of the first cares of a high-minded and scrupulous Minister would have been to satisfy himself that such moneys were both honestly acquired and legitimately used. It is not too much to say that the man who is voluntarily blind and deaf in such matters invites wrong-doing. Darkness is the symbol of suspicion, and the refuge of conscious guilt. In political as in all other phases of human conduct, he that is conscious of strict integrity courts the light. One would hesitate to say such things of a man, whose downfall is threatened, if he were really either condemned or penitent. But in Sir Hector Langevin's case the plea is not a penitential confession, but a demand for acquittal by Parliament and the public. In our opinion the acceptance of the plea by either would be nothing less than an additional calamity and disgrace to Canada.

WHAT shall be done with the Intercolonial Railway? To this question the House of Commons addressed itself for a little time the other day, without reaching any definite result. It has always to be borne in mind that this railway occupies a position which is in an important respect unique. It was the price, or at least a chief part of the price, which Old Canada had to pay for Confederation. With the Maritime Provinces its construction was a *sine qua non*. And well it might be, for without such a bond of connection and means of intercourse, the union itself would have been absurd. It could have existed only in name. The Atlantic Provinces would still have been to all intents and purposes separate. There can be no doubt whatever that this railway has played not only an important but an indispensable part in making possible and actual whatever success has grown out of the federal compact. We are not sure that even the most sanguine advocates of the construction of the railway prophesied, as a contemporary says, that it would be a great source of pecuniary profit. That would have been a most unreasonable expectation under the circumstances. Our own recollection is that it was foreseen by many that the road could not, for a long time at least, pay running expenses, and certainly not interest on capital. This was urged with great force by the opponents of the roundabout North Shore route, which was finally adopted "for military reasons" (1). Be that as it may, the Dominion was in honour bound to build the road, and is in honour pledged to keep it running, in so far as its place is not fully supplied by other roads built on commercial principles. But while it may be doubtful whether under any management it would be possible for long years to come to make the road pay in a business sense, there can, we suppose, be no doubt whatever that its present management affords room for vast improvement in the direction of economy. It must have been, however, rather humiliating to the Government to have one of its ablest supporters—one, too, in a good position to know whereof he speaks—Dr. Weldon, of Albert, rise in his place in the Commons and propose that, in order to save the country from the average annual loss of \$200,000 to \$300,000 in the working of the railway, it should be taken out of the hands of the Government and given over to an independent commission. This implied condemnation of Government management was anything but flattering to the Government. Why should a board of commissioners be able to conduct the business more economically or efficiently than an honest and competent administration? If the one is exposed to temptations and pressures of various kinds, the other could not escape. It would also be under the disadvantage of being free from direct responsibility to the owners of the road, i.e., the Canadian public. The road was built and, we think, run for a time by a commission, and, if our memory is not sadly at fault, the results were not such as to invite a repetition of the experiment. At a time when many students of public affairs in other countries are advocating the taking over of all railroads by the Government, it is hardly worth while for Canada to experiment rashly in the other direction. What is really wanted is honest and efficient management of the road. Preliminary to the radical reforms which are obviously needed, a thorough examination and report by a competent commission should be provided for. There can be no doubt of the need of sweeping changes, but it does not seem fitting that both Government and Parliament should go about these by voting want of confidence in themselves and handing the road over to others. The revelations now being made of the manner in which party governments have been conducting the public service are certainly discouraging and appalling, but, unless we are to give up our faith in the possibility of popular self-government, what is wanted is thorough reform, not confession of failure and helplessness.

RECENT utterances of Mr. John Morley and other Liberal leaders in England make it pretty clear that Lord Salisbury reckoned without his host when he affirmed that the rejection of Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill by the British electorate was final. Many other Conservatives besides the Premier have been congratulating themselves that, however objectionable some features of the Land and Education Bills may have been, Ireland has, at any rate, been saved by them. But now Mr. Morley, one of the most careful and sagacious of the Opposition leaders, has distinctly declared at a large Liberal demonstration in Stoneleigh Deer Park, that the Liberals of England are irrevocably committed to Home Rule for Ireland, that