

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

SINCE our last issue all the Volunteers have returned to their homes amidst extraordinary demonstrations of enthusiasm, which were carried to the greatest height in Toronto. That the heroes were "Our Boys" would be the sufficient answer to any unimpassioned onlooker who might remark that our rejoicings were out of proportion to the magnitude of the victory or the importance of the foe. We have had before us a lively image of the City wars of former days when the civic army, taking down the bows and battle-axes which hung over the hearth, marched under the banner of its town, while the hearts of parents, sisters and sweethearts went with it to the field. The scale of the operations in our case was very small; but the troops did their duty in the way of endurance as well as in the way of action, and the victors of Inkerman or Sedan could do no more. Nor have we broken the Roman rule that after a civil war there should be no triumph. This was in name only a civil war. The Half-breeds were an isolated race; though annexed they had never become Canadians, and they were fighting for a territory which they regarded as their own. It was a conflict natural, though if the officials on the spot had fully done their duty not unavoidable, between the ranger of the hunting-ground and the advancing forces of agricultural civilization. The scanty band in which we are told men over seventy and one man ninety years of age fell, was arrayed in defence of homesteads which by those who formed it were regarded as their country. In the cases of most of these people this constitutes a fair claim to mercy, which indeed there appears to be every disposition on the part of the victors to show. Some of our homes do not receive back those whom they sent forth. The home of Colonel Williams is one of these, and his popularity not only as an officer but as a man was shown by the vast concourse of mourners which attended him to the grave. That the bereavements were not more numerous is due to General Middleton, in praising whose strategy we should only be offering to military science the tribute of ignorance, but for whose management we must once more express our sincere gratitude.

AMONG the rejoicings over the returned volunteers, which were in the main as orderly as they were appropriate, a few freaks of folly were observable. The hanging of Riel in effigy, as the incident at Ottawa shows, has the tendency which the law attributes to this form of libel to produce a breach of the peace. For that reason it is a forbidden pastime, indulgence in which is liable to be visited by somewhat severe penalties. If the truth were known, it is probable that it was indulged in thoughtlessly by individuals who had no real malice in their hearts. At the distance of several hundreds of miles from the scene of the trial the exhibition of the effigy would not be likely to prejudice the accused; but it is unseemly and improper to subject to a mimic execution a man who is on trial for his life. The magnanimity which abstains from jeering exultation in the hour of triumph is the attitude which best befits the conqueror. Riel's fate may safely be left to the tribunals, and to them it is irrevocably committed. Undue sympathy, the child of a religion which he has in large part renounced, and of a race to which he had only a distant relationship, Riel did once awaken. That sympathy sleeps now; but as a French journal points out it is not a sleep from which no waking is possible. It might be awakened by persistently showing contempt for the captive in the mode which has more than once been called into activity. But persistence need not be feared, when a moment's reflection will show the unfairness of this form of exuberance. The French population of Quebec is quite prepared for any sacrifice, though it be the life of Riel, which justice may require. From that quarter a fervid and impatient demand for amnesty is not likely to be repeated. Resignation to the justice of the tribunals is the mood which best befits us all; and its maintenance should not be imperilled by a repetition of the foolish freaks to which no fair-minded person can point without reprobation.

SIR CHARLES TUPPER, speaking before the London Chamber of Commerce, came out as an advocate of differential duties, which may be described as a family arrangement between Great Britain and the colonies by which both will be bound to turn the cold shoulder to foreign nations. He set out by expressing his belief that "Parliamentary Federation" of the British Empire would not be attainable without a hundred years of preparation. Schemes of Imperial Federation which have taken shape he is obliged to pronounce impracticable. But he thinks it possible to add to the sentimental tie ties of commerce, and that the new bonds might advantageously take the shape of differential duties in favour of the various parts of the British Empire and against foreign nations. The self-governing dependencies would not give up the right to make their own tariffs; Sir Charles's experience tells him this, and he does not explain how all the dependencies and the Mother Country can be induced to adopt the same tariff for application to the Empire; how it would be possible to agree about "one tariff within the Empire and another outside it." If it were possible to agree upon one tariff to be used within the Empire, there would still have to be several tariffs outside of it, if the dependencies are to retain their most cherished franchises. It may be quite true that the arrangement proposed would not interfere with "the most favoured nation" clause of commercial treaties; but if it adversely influenced the spirit by which, in the making of commercial treaties, nations are drawn together, it might bring the element of repulsion into international exchanges and produce the calamity of commercial estrangement. England, with her widely extended foreign commerce, would not be likely to venture upon an experiment of this kind, which could scarcely stop short of a duty on foreign wheat in favour of colonial; while, as an equivalent, the dependencies would have to admit British manufactures on more favourable terms than foreign. This would be a turn to the old discarded colonial system under another name. That it will be possible, by this device, to put the clock of time back few will be found to believe. Once more, in proposing these fanciful schemes, does Sir Charles Tupper speak his own individual views or the views of the Government whose High Commissioner he is?

THE Scott Act election in Victoria like most of those which preceded it, went by default. On the side of the Act the county had been organized