

Dominion Churchman.

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THE WEEK.

WITH all our educational advantages, we Englishmen are, as a nation, very indifferently gifted with self-control and common sense. We pride ourselves upon being somewhat stoical, upon not being so easily excited as our more mercurial neighbours; but give us a political or, still more, a religious bone to wrangle over, and we give way to an outburst of zeal and fanaticism of which, in our more sober moments, we subsequently feel somewhat ashamed. Some of us, at least, may remember such occurrences as the "Durham Letter" and the consequent Ecclesiastical Titles Act, the Russophobic enthusiasm of 1853-4 and the consequent Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the late Anti-Turk agitations, as instances in which very sound heads seem to have become loose upon very staid shoulders. The worst of it is that, in such times of excitement, not only are crude proposals adopted, but the plainest principles of sense and justice are often lost sight of. To attempt, among people whose religious feelings and varieties of thought are peculiarly intense, to repress opinions and to establish a dull level of uniformity of practice by Act of Parliament is a folly of which we should hardly have thought sage English statesmen to be capable. It occurred, however, to Mr. Disraeli (as he then was) that by identifying himself for the nonce with the opposite party in the Church to that with which Mr. Gladstone was connected, he would not only hurt his great opponent but would so to speak, take the wind out of his sails. And so, to the surprise of all, the Government influence was thrown on the side of the Public Worship Bill and that measure became law. Let us not be misunderstood in the matter. We are very far from saying that good Churchmen have not lately, in England, at least, had reason to be disgusted at the behaviour and practices of certain clergymen and congregations of extreme views—practices for which we believe no adequate authority can be logically deduced from the Prayer Book, the canons or the admitted custom of the Church of England. But we feel positively sure that, in a year or two, it will be generally admitted that a law passed for the avowed purpose of "stamping out Ritualism" was not only unjust in itself, but from its own advocates' view, was extremely unwise. Opinions and belief can be suppressed by the civil power. It is a mistake to say they cannot. Spain has done it. But the example is one which Englishmen hardly care to follow. Canon Trevor, who wrote a very sensible letter to the *Times* concerning prosecutions under the Public Worship Act, has followed it up by another recapitulating a few instances in which persecution has in England had the effect of perpetuating that which it desired to suppress. But all history is written in vain for theological theories. Toleration is

the soundest wisdom, as well as the purest charity.

Recent events in England produce the preceding remarks. Mr. Tooth, Vicar of St. James', Hatcham—a suburb of London—has been inhibited by Lord Penzance, the Judge of the new ecclesiastical court, for three months from performing any service in the Diocese of Rochester. Into the causes for which the inhibition was issued we need not enter, though we may remark, in passing, that the contradictory judgments and opinions of the Privy Council have left the law relating to Ritual in such a state that even the best lawyers, let alone the clergy, are at a loss to know what is legal and what illegal. "Meantime," as Canon Trevor says, "the fact remains that one clergyman has been punished for doing. The question is whether doing or not doing is to be punishable for the future—and that is to be tried at the risk and cost of particular clergymen." All this and the natural irritation consequent on such a state of things has to be borne in mind when we consider the extraordinary position taken up by Mr. Tooth, who not only disregards Lord Penzance's inhibition, but also this in face of his Diocesan and refuses to admit to his church the clergyman whom the Bishop of Rochester sent to conduct the services there. Whatever way you look at it the situation is a distressing one. It is distressing to see a clergyman setting the law, whatever he may think of that law, and his Bishop at defiance. It is distressing to see men persisting in extreme practices which, even if consonant with the Church's teaching—and that is at least also doubtful—must necessarily produce wrangling and ill-will; to see a law put in operation to enforce decisions which, being contradictory, cannot all be right; to see matters affecting the religious belief of the Church adjudicated upon by that very miscellaneous conglomerate, the House of Commons, to see the authority of Bishops subordinated in matters spiritual, to lay jurisdiction: to see a law in force which seems calculated to breed a race of spies and informers and to offer a premium for uncharitable accusations and vexatious litigation. But, it is said, the extremists have brought it upon themselves. Possibly so; but, in the case of Turks, Sepoys, and even Ritualists, it is hardly wise—to take the lowest ground—to disregard justice. "The new thing," to quote Canon Trevor again, "is prosecution. Before, we were content to argue and work. Can there be a question which answered best? The first of these Ritual prosecutions was against the Knightsbridge churches; the war has been carried on with varying success to the present hour, and the result is—a vast increase of Ritualism." We, in the Colonies, can fortunately look on, tolerably dispassionately, at the contest waging in England; but in its issue we are all intimately concerned. But in the meantime, let us be thankful that the Church in Canada is dissociated from State control, and let us pray God, that even

in theological controversy, toleration and charity may not be lost sight of.

If the annual circular of a mercantile agency may be taken as evidence, the "hard times" which Canada, in common with other countries, has lately experienced, are not yet passed away. The failures in the United States in 1876 exceeded those of 1875 by 1350, while the liabilities of the larger number total up a sum less by nine millions of dollars than those of the smaller number. In the Middle States there has been one failure in every fifty-seven firms, in the New England States one in every fifty-nine; but in the Dominion one in every thirty-two traders has succumbed to the financial pressure! No doubt there are many explanatory causes to be taken into account which, when considered, will show that, after all, we are not worse off than our neighbours; but for them it is said that these statistics "reveal a condition of things far from encouraging, and, were it not for the reflection that these disasters are the result of circumstances not directly chargeable to the business operations of the year, the prospect would be well nigh disheartening." Explain it as we will, look at it as we may from any point of view, the position is certainly not very encouraging. Probably the "weeding out" process will be continued a little while longer; but with the weeds many sound and useful plants will also be rooted out. "Hard Times" affect the Church very immediately, for one of the first things in which a pinched man retrenches is in his offertory and charitable fund. He does not give up his late dinners, his cigars, or his other extravagancies, and his wife doesn't retrench in ribbons or "three-button gloves," until it has been found that a rigid economy on Sundays is insufficient to meet the crisis; and, as when bakers raise the price of bread, it takes some time to come down again, so, when a man reduces his subscriptions, it is long before he "feels justified"—for all act from the highest motives—in replacing them at the original figure.

An honest effort is being made to meet and tide over the crisis in the United States regarding the Presidential election. The Joint Committee of Congress has agreed upon and reported a Bill providing that the count shall be made on February 14th., by the President of the Senate, but that when more than one return is presented from a State, such return shall be referred to a Commission of five senators and five members of the House, elected by the respective Chambers, and four justices of the United States Supreme Court, who shall themselves elect a fifth judge. The decision of this tribunal shall stand, unless rejected by the concurrent action of both houses. The report was signed by all the members, excepting Senator Morton, and it is said that the Bill will undoubtedly pass both Houses of Congress. It is proposed to take action under it immediately after it has received the President's signature. This seems to be an honest and dignified attempt