

is high time that some of the glaring inequalities of our assessment system were corrected, and the whole matter put upon a fair business basis. Touching exemptions, for instance, it would not, we fancy, be difficult to show that the Catholic Church in the course of a short term of years derives more public aid in Ontario through the exemption of its property and the incomes of its clergy from taxation than it will derive in Quebec from the bestowment upon it, once for all, of the four hundred thousand dollars awarded by the Jesuit Estates Act. So many and so varied are the interests involved that the subject is hedged about with the gravest difficulties, yet it is evident that many are thinking about it, and that some, even of those who get the lion's share of the profit arising out of the present system, are becoming uneasy and dubious as to its righteousness. There are already, we believe, several clergymen in the city of Toronto who conscientiously refuse to accept the exemptions to which they are legally entitled. A free conference could scarcely do harm, and might do good.

IT is not easy to estimate the political significance of the return of Mr. Pope, the Conservative candidate for Compton, by so large a majority. It is not even clear that it has any special political significance. The custom of giving preference to the sons or brothers or other near relatives of deceased public men, in filling vacancies created by their death, seems likely to become the fixed habit of the constituencies. We are not sure that it is a desirable habit. The ideal electors under the ideal political system will, we suppose, refuse to take anything into the account but the merits of the individual candidate. That the fact of his being his father's son considerably increased Mr. Pope's majority may readily be admitted, but it is clear enough that no one but the Government supporter would have had any chance in that constituency in any case. Under ordinary conditions this would have been taken for granted, seeing that Compton is a Conservative stronghold. But under present circumstances, when the whole country is supposed to be agitated and the foundations of its political deeps broken up by two great controversies, the event is worthy of a moment's notice. Whatever else may or may not be taught by the Compton election, it has made it pretty clear that there is at least one constituency in the country in which the people are not greatly moved either by the Jesuit Estates Act agitation, or by the Commercial Union propagandism. The voters of Compton simply record their confidence in Sir John A. Macdonald, or their respect for the memory of the late Minister of Railways, or their adherence to Conservative principles generally, very much as they would have done a few years ago before either of the two great issues referred to was raised. Perhaps Compton is not a typical constituency. Possibly it lies like a lakelet embowered in woods and protected by mountains, so that the gusts and gales of the outside world do not even ruffle its surface. Whatever the explanation, the Compton election has clearly no encouragement for the would-be reformers, commercial or clerical, and no note of warning for the fortune-favoured Old Man at Ottawa.

TWO or three incidents have lately taken place in the courts which set in a clear light the necessity for a modification of the law in respect to evidence. In one case a witness who said he did not believe in future rewards and punishments, but held that all such retributions come in the present life, was declared incompetent to testify. In another the avowal of disbelief in a future life led to a similar result. There is no doubt, we suppose, that these decisions were correct, and that, under existing laws, the judges have no alternative. But surely the interests of justice demand a change. It is quite possible that in each case the judgment of the court was seriously affected by the lack of the testimony thus ruled out. A case may, at any moment, arise in which the inadmissibility of such testimony may lead to the very gravest miscarriage of justice. It will not be held by any person of ordinary intelligence and judgment that a man who believes, or thinks he does, that death ends all, or that we can know nothing of a future state, is necessarily incapable of telling the truth. Many men who profess such views are known to be upright and truthful. It is not necessary to hold that their affirmation is entitled to equal weight with the sworn testimony of a Christian believer. That is a question for judge and jury to decide, and there are usually many indications to help them to decide with tolerable correctness. Such witnesses may be made amenable to all the consequences of perjury, under another title, if con-

victed of giving false testimony, and it is questionable whether the dread of the punishment of perjury is not more powerful with many witnesses than the religious solemnity of the oath. It is high time the laws were so changed that no available testimony should be excluded, on the ground of speculative views of the witness.

WHAT is the proper relation of a member of Parliament to his constituents? Does he represent them as a simple agent bound to be guided by the opinions and wishes of the majority so far as he knows those opinions and wishes, quite irrespective of his own personal convictions? Or is his position analogous to that of the professional adviser whose clearly understood duty it is to do his best for his clients according to his own professional judgment and skill, without reference, and if need be, even in opposition to the views of those whose interests are, for the time being, in his keeping? This old and vexed question is continually recurring, in one shape or another, under representative institutions. The agitation of which the Jesuits' Estates Bill is the occasion rather than the cause seems likely to bring it forward in many Ontario constituencies. There can be no doubt, we suppose, that in many cases the act of those who voted against the disallowance of that Bill would be unhesitatingly condemned by a large majority of their political supporters. Assuming that this fact was, or could have been known to the members in question at the time of voting, were they recreant to their trust in doing as they did? A recent event in England gives us an opportunity to know the stand taken by one of the clearest thinkers in the British Commons. Mr. John Morley was recently pressed by many of his Newcastle constituents to vote for a Parliamentary Eight Hours' Bill, on pain of forfeiting their support at the next election in case of refusal. His answer was unequivocal and manly. He had considered the proposal carefully, he told them, and discussed it with men in the ranks of labour and men not in the ranks of labour, and his opposition was unchanged and not likely to change. "I will rather," he said, "give up the honour that I prize more than any honour that has ever befallen me, I will rather give up the honour of representing Newcastle, than I will give way on this point. If I hear sound arguments, I may change my views; but I do not expect to hear them, and although I will give way to arguments, no form of menace, however delicately veiled, will affect me." Would not any other answer have been derogatory to the high position of a member of Parliament, whose professional duty it is to make a study of politics and legislation? If such a representative is a mere mouthpiece of the electors, if no credit is to be given or latitude allowed for his professional knowledge, the veriest school-boy, or even an automaton could fill the position. Of course the sovereign people have the right of rejecting the man who will not pledge himself in all cases to do their behests, but in pushing that right to the extreme they would most surely render it impossible to secure the services of any competent representative who is honest and self-respecting.

THE foregoing question is involved in the very nature of the representative system. Another, perhaps even more difficult, which has just now been brought to the surface, is the outcome of the party system in politics. It relates to the duty of a member to the Party which has elected him, and to the Government supported by that Party. When the member so elected is called upon to choose between voting against a motion, which his judgment and conscience affirm to be right, and voting against the Government which he is, to some extent, pledged to support, what is his duty? This is, in effect, the question which has of late been discussed, or rather fenced with, by some of the party newspapers. Strictly speaking it is not a question which Political Economy or Political Ethics is bound to answer, unless it be first granted that the party system is a necessary adjunct of representative institutions and responsible Government, and this is far from being axiomatic. Where the party system is accepted, as it seems to be by the great majority, as either absolutely the best, or the best practicable, the question becomes one of those on which a good deal is to be said on both sides. The ingenuity, sometimes almost petty, of an Opposition is often exhausted in the effort to put the honest supporters of the Government in such a dilemma as that indicated. In many cases no possible good can be expected beyond the manufacture of a little political capital. To argue that, in such cases, the Government supporter is bound to consider only the abstract merits of the motion, regard-

less of its party aspects and effects verges on the absurd. It sanctions a principle which, carried to the extreme, would render organization for even the highest political ends fruitless or impossible. But, on the other hand, to admit that the party supporter is bound to vote with the Government in every case, irrespective of his own personal convictions, is not only to reduce him again to the position of an automaton, but to deprive the people of one of the best safeguards against corrupt administration. Probably the only rule that can be laid down is, that each case must be judged on its own merits. The member is bound to decide, to the best of his judgment, which is the less of the two evils, the defeat of the particular good resolution or measure in question, or the overthrow of the Government which he regards as the best for the country.

NOW that Great Britain and the United States have resumed their normal diplomatic relations, each having again its ambassador at the Capital of the other, Canadians may be excused if they begin to grow impatient to hear of some progress being made towards the settlement of the Behring's Sea difficulty. The present state of things is simply intolerable for any great length of time. The people of British Columbia, as those who are immediately interested, are said to be chafing more and more at the delay to vindicate their rights. Considering the high-handed manner in which their fishermen are being swept from the open seas this is not surprising. We have before said that in so serious an international affair wise statesmen, with their tremendous responsibilities, are justified in moving slowly. But this is not to say that either the Canadian or the British Government should suffer individual citizens to bear the brunt of the delay and to be literally ruined by the indefensible action of a foreign power. If those Governments are unable to secure prompt redress from the aggressor, they should surely indemnify the individual sufferers and put the costs in the bill of damages to be afterwards presented. A New York religious journal now explains that the American Government makes no pretension to exclusive rights in the Behring Sea in any other respect, but claims that under the circumstances it is justified in preventing the wasteful destruction of the seals in those waters. Many complaints have from time to time been made by the Nova Scotia fishermen of the destructive methods of the New England fishermen on the Atlantic Coast. By parity of reasoning Great Britain would be justified in sending a fleet to prohibit the use of those destructive appliances in the deep sea fishing grounds off the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. How long would the great American nation submit to that?

AN anonymous correspondent assails us, with the usual courtesy and courage of his *genus*, on a postal card, and with abusive insinuations. The head and front of our offending was, it seems, that some time and somewhere we used the qualifying word "American," when probably we meant to indicate a citizen of the United States. The document itself is, of course, unworthy of notice. A word as to the difficulty referred to. It is one about which much has been said, but for which there is, so far as we can see, no help. There is not, we dare say, a journalist in Canada, perhaps none in the United States, who does not often wish that the neighbouring republic had some distinctive name from which an adjective could be formed. For our own part we never use the term "American" in the sense indicated without a mental protest. But when the choice is between this and the use of some ponderous circumlocution, such as "citizen of the United States of America," we give up the struggle, and we feel sure our readers will thank us for so doing. It does not pay to keep it up. The game is not worth the candle. There is not the least probability that the Government or people of the United States will take any steps to remove the difficulty, and until they do so, they will, as the great nation of the continent, continue to be known abroad as the Americans, in spite of anything we can do to prevent their monopoly of a title which is as much ours as theirs. And, after all, have we not the good word "Canadian," more euphonious, more distinctive, and in many respects, save that it is not derived from the name of the continent, more desirable? When those who have been born and brought up on Canadian soil, as were their fathers before them, have their loyalty to the land of their birth and their hope impugned, because they conform to almost universal custom in the use of a word, or because they try to treat their neighbours with fairness, instead of with vulgar abuse, we have no doubt the readers of THE WEEK will know how to appreciate the charges.