

opens wide the other to stimulate it with immense subsidies. But perhaps they are preparing to meet the taunt with a genuine tariff-reform bill.

A good deal of discussion has been had in consequence of the unusual, if not unique, position now occupied by the Commissioner of Public Works in the Ontario Government. The situation was succinctly described by Mr. Meredith as follows: "The Commissioner of Public Works is to remain a member of the Government, responsible only for such measures as he may approve of." The Government is forcibly reminded by the Opposition of the very strong ground which has always been taken by the Liberal party in regard to the necessity of unanimity in the Cabinet, and the immorality of coalitions and compromises among members of it holding different views. This, however, differs materially from the present case. The objection to coalitions has usually been based upon the alleged want of principle of the members of the Government in agreeing to set aside their honest convictions on important points for the sake of holding office. In the present instance there is to be no pretence of agreement. Mr. Fraser is to be at liberty to dissent whenever he pleases. The *Globe* quotes Mr. Todd in support of the right of governments to treat certain questions as open questions, and the right of a Premier to retain a Minister in office after he has voted against the Government upon a certain question. But neither of these hypotheses covers the case in hand. To treat a given question as open is to take it out of the category of Government measures. To retain a Minister who may have voted against the Government on a given question, may be simply an admission that the act was pardonable under the circumstances, or a declaration of confidence that the offence will not be repeated. All these instances differ quite radically from the present, in which a Minister is permitted to remain in the Cabinet, not only without sharing responsibility for its measures, but with full liberty to oppose those measures whenever he sees fit. If one Minister may claim the privilege, why not another? The official bond of cohesion is broken. The principle of unitary responsibility is repudiated. Carry out the idea to its logical result and the Ministry can never be defeated as a body, since to declare a want of confidence in some of its members would be to approve the position of others.

We are glad that Mr. Meredith, in his speech on the Address, committed himself so unmistakably in favor of a non-political head of the Education Department. We may assume, no doubt, that in this he speaks for the Opposition. To free the management of the educational system of the Province from all suspicion of partisanship would remove from it a perennial

source of weakness and distrust. Even were it thought best, for the sake of fixing the responsibility, to have the Department of Education still under the general direction of a member of the Government, so far as its more purely business features are concerned, there can be no necessity that the whole system should be run on political lines, as will almost inevitably be the case so long as it is managed directly by a member of a party administration. A Board of experienced educationists, representing both the political parties, or all of them, if we are henceforth to have more than two, or rather, representing none of them, could surely much better arrange courses of instruction, choose text-books and attend to other purely professional details, than a Minister of the Crown. While the former would have but one master to serve and one end to reach, the partisan Minister of Education is of necessity compelled to keep two distinct aims in view in every question connected with his department. He has not only to seek to promote the educational interests of the country, but to consider the effect of every move upon the popularity of the Ministry of which he is a member. No one can pretend that these two aims will always coincide. Hence the proverbial impossibility of serving two masters will apply with full force. While, moreover, it is not absolutely necessary that the head of a business department in the Government should be a thorough scholar, it is in the highest degree desirable that those who have the management of educational affairs should be men of the highest culture. For these and other reasons which will readily suggest themselves, we cannot but think that the position of the Opposition leader in this respect will commend itself to many besides his own political followers.

In his advocacy of biennial sessions of the Legislature we cannot think that the Opposition leader is equally forcible. Granting that the saving of \$100,000 a year could be effected by the change—though the calling of an occasional extra session, which Mr. Meredith admits might be necessary, would cut down this saving very rapidly—there seems much reason to fear that other interests might be affected by the change which would far more than counterbalance any mere pecuniary saving. The principle of responsibility, upon which our whole political system is based, demands that the people shall have frequent opportunities, through their representatives, for calling those officially responsible for the management of their affairs to account. The biennial plan would greatly increase the powers of the Government and enlarge proportionately its opportunities for abuse of power. It would also probably greatly increase the length of the sessions, in order to compensate for their diminished frequency. This would, in fact, be inevitable if a close scrutiny of the two years' doings were to be

made, and a proper consideration of the legislative needs of the country for two years to come, undertaken. In fact, the character of most of the legislation which falls to the lot of a provincial administration is such that opportunities for yearly addition and revision seem even more necessary than in the case of the larger concerns which demand the attention of the federal administration. It is quite possible that there may be room for reduction in the number of Ministers required for the efficient administration of the affairs of the Province. But we should suppose that the full services of a competent Minister of Agriculture would be among the last that should be dispensed with. Surely in a country in which the agricultural interest so greatly overshadows every other, the full time of the best man available can be profitably utilized for the improvement of the farming industry.

As we thought we foresaw at the time of writing last week, Mr. Gladstone's much-talked-of resignation has become a fixed fact. Incomparably the most influential statesman in the British Empire and in some respects the most striking personality in the world's politics, has retired, in all probability finally retired, from public life. In respect to such a personage anything in the nature of the biographical comment which is usual on such an occasion would be superfluous. Everyone who knows anything of British history and politics during the last half-century, knows a good deal of Gladstone's character and career. He was, up to the moment of his retirement, at once the best beloved and the most hated, the most admired and the most execrated man, in Great Britain. The height of the admiration has long been conspicuous to all the world, the depth of the detestation has been less manifest, and could be fully realized only by those who have had *entree* to the inner circles of certain exclusive classes, but credible witnesses of that kind have from time to time related incidents which showed an almost incredible degree of bitterness in the hostility. The admiration will no doubt survive, though the dispassionate criticism of another generation may modify it somewhat by bringing more into relief the inevitable human failings and frailties which are at present, and will be for many years to come, cast into the shade by the towering talents and virtues.

Whatever diversity of opinion—and it is no doubt wide as the poles—may exist in regard to Mr. Gladstone's political principles and aims, as tested by their bearing upon the power and prosperity of the Empire, few candid persons will attempt to cast doubt upon his moral earnestness. This was no less conspicuous than his transcendent intellectual ability, which no one would think of disputing. And this moral earn-