

having done so might, under conceivable circumstances, give rise to troublesome constitutional questions.

SOME discussion has been caused by Premier Abbott's reply to certain representations which were made to him with a view to secure the appointment of one of the young poets of whom Canada is justly proud, to a position in the Parliamentary Library, or some other branch of the public service. Sir John Abbott's reply was, in effect, that to make the appointment on any other ground than that of fitness for the particular duties of the position would be opposed to sound policy and an injustice to meritorious junior clerks entitled to promotion. Sorry as we are that the noble rage of any of our young men of talent should be exposed in the slightest degree to the repressing influence of "chill penury," and glad as we should be to hear of a favourable turn of fortune's wheel in the case of the promising writer referred to, we cannot but admit that the Premier's view is the right one, and that it would not only be doing evil that good might come to put one man, in view of any such consideration, in the place to which another was justly entitled by faithful service, but would also be establishing a precedent that might prove very troublesome in years to come. Sir John Abbott, and any one of the gentlemen who interviewed him, as well, has a right to play the part of a Canadian Macenas to any extent, but let it be done at his own private expense, and not at that of the Canadian tax-payer, who has a right to expect and insist that the public service shall be conducted on sound business principles.

A SINGULAR state of things is that which just now prevails in British politics. The country is on the eve of an election which bids fair to result in the return of a Parliamentary majority pledged to Home Rule for Ireland. Meanwhile the people of a large section in one of the Provinces of Ireland openly proclaim their determination to resist to the utmost the transference of autonomy in local affairs to the island to which they belong, and even go so far as to outline—at least some of them do so—the mode of resistance which they will adopt and to speculate upon their chances of success in a civil war. Stranger still, their proposed armed resistance to the rule of the majority is not only not rebuked, but is openly approved and encouraged by the present Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Perhaps the most remarkable article which has yet appeared in regard to the matter is that in a recent number of the *Spectator*, in which that organ of the Unionists, after defending Lord Salisbury's much-discussed utterance, which it regards as a warning, not as a threat or an incitement to rebellion, proceeds calmly to discuss the question as to whether, under the new arrangement, the Imperial power could be rightfully used to compel the submission of the minority to the rule of the majority in Ireland. Under a system of Home Rule, the *Spectator* does not deny the right of the Irish majority to coerce the Irish minority, if it is able to do so, but doubts the right of the British Parliament to do so. The outcome of its reasonings seems to be that, in case of the long-fought-for local autonomy being conceded to Ireland, it will become the duty of the British Parliament to stand aloof and permit the two native factions to fight the question out to the bitter end. On this reasoning, which does not lack a degree of plausibility, the British Government must have done wrong in sending a British force to aid the Canadian Government in subduing the Riel insurrection, at the time of the transference of the Hudson Bay territories to Canadian jurisdiction.

#### OTTAWA LETTER.

THERE were but two working days in the House of Commons last week, Wednesday and Friday. The former was devoted to a consideration, in Committee, of the Criminal Code Bill, and was occupied altogether by a few of the lawyers of the House. When this Bill is discussed, party spirit is laid aside, and peace and good-will prevail. Very fair progress is being made, and about one-third of the clauses of the Bill, with amendments generally approved, have been passed.

Having put in a day's labour on Wednesday, the House, according to arrangement, adjourned until Friday; not out of respect to Ascension Day, because a majority of the members, if they do not object to, at least care not for, the observance of "new moons and appointed feasts," but out of the profound respect which is paid to the Province of Quebec, and the great Church which controls it—a respect inspired by a wholesome fear. Some of these sessions, when Col. O'Brien and his friends come into power, they will do a good service to the country by

revising and amending the calendar, as far as that estimable chronicler of departed saints impedes the business of Parliament.

On Friday the House disposed of the charges made against Sir Adolphe Caron, by approving of the appointment of Judges Routhier and Tait, as a Royal Commission to take evidence as to the truth or falsity of the allegations. It was expected that a heavy debate would result on this motion, put by Sir John Thompson, and the expectation was fulfilled. The leader of the House, after making the motion explained that it was thought that two Judges would be sufficient as their only duty would be to take evidence, and it was also proposed that if they should differ at any time as to the inadmissibility of any evidence, the evidence should nevertheless be taken, and they should report upon the points on which this had formed a difference of opinion.

When Mr. Laurier rose, everyone was anxious to hear what he had to say, and he did not leave them long in suspense. He would utter no word of approbation or disapprobation of the choice made; he had nothing to say as to the qualifications of the gentlemen who were offered to the House as members of the Commission. He objected to the commission *in toto*. The Opposition would not recognize it, and would have nothing to do with it. The only tribunal they would recognize as competent to try and to judge the Postmaster-General, arraigned before the House for high political offences, was the House itself. This was the key-note to his speech, eloquent and forcible, and until the division was taken, about midnight, his followers danced to the tune he had set.

The amendment which Mr. Laurier moved was that the charges against the Postmaster-General be referred to a special committee of five members, to be struck by the House. In doing so, he confessed, which must be apparent to everyone, that the Privileges and Elections Committee, composed of some forty members, is unwieldy.

The Government did not show a disposition to follow up the discussion, and Sir John Thompson was the first to cry "lost." The Opposition was not to be lured into the mistake, which led to the untimely strangling of Mr. McCarthy's North-West Bill, so Mr. Mills started the game of "follow your leader."

Probably there is no man in the House who is really better worth listening to than Mr. Mills. He is often complimented on his erudition, and the compliments are not undeserved. On constitutional questions he is remarkably well informed, and on precedents he is great. If there is a precedent to be found he will unearth it, and it will be quoted to the House, saving it would weaken his argument, and, although Mr. Mills is an honest man, no one could expect that, as he is also human, he would assist the arguments of his opponents. On this occasion he plunged deep into the recesses of history to show that precedent was all in favour of a case such as that with which they were concerned being tried by a committee of the House, and not by a commission of judges or any other persons.

During the last few years the House has not had the pleasure of listening, as often as it would like, to Mr. Chapleau, who used to be called the silver-tongued orator from Quebec. But upon this present occasion he broke silence and warmly championed the Government's cause. Whatever jealousy may exist between the Minister of Customs and the other members of the Cabinet, it is not to be openly revealed to the Opposition. The "Junior Member," as Dr. Lunderkin, quoting from the letter of Sir John Macdonald to Mr. Thomas McGreevy, recently published, delights to call Mr. Chapleau, is in full accord with his leader. Judging from his speech on the Caron matter, he is not a powerful speaker these days, whatever he may have been before his health became shattered, and nothing particularly new was contributed by him to the debate.

It having become plain that Mr. Edgar, with the full concurrence of his associates, does not intend to appear before the Commission, his conduct was criticized by Government speakers, and defended by the Opposition. Mr. Nicholas Flood Davin, who has taken an active part in all the debates of this session, in the course of his speech said that if the member for West Ontario would not bring his case before a Commission, "he would stand confessed before the people of Canada as a man ready to make cowardly charges, who, when given the opportunity of proving them, slunk away like a dog with his tail between his legs." Sir John Thompson, when his turn came, asserted that "if there was an atom of manhood in his composition, body or soul, he (Mr. Edgar) would meet the man whom he had accused before any tribunal where British law was administered and fair play conducted." But Mr. Edgar did not lack good defenders.

Mr. Davies, who is making rapid strides towards the front as a debater and orator, not only defended his *confreere*, but hurled the charge of cowardice back into the face of the Minister of Justice. "I tell him to the face," he said, "there never was a greater exhibition of political cowardice in this House, or out of it, than by the man who went down to Halifax and called Heaven to witness that if any one would bring a charge against a member of the Government or a member of the House, be he high or low, that charge would be investigated. He says, if there is an atom of fair play in the member for West Ontario, he will meet the accused before these Commissioners. What a valiant challenge? What a noble man he is? He wants the member for West Ontario to go before a

tribunal that the man charged selects for himself and appoints himself."

On Monday, one of those personal matters which frequently arise from the uncontrolled use of that dangerous weapon the tongue, which a very wise man said "no man can tame," and likens to "a fire," "a world of iniquity," "an unruly evil full of deadly poison," was brought up. In the heat of a senseless debate (if it be fair to characterize an all-night wrangle by such a worthy name), which occurred not long ago, Mr. Lister spoke of the Government having sent the Secretary of State to North Perth to "handle the boodle." Mr. Patterson was not in the House when this charge was made, or probably it would not have been made, but yesterday he rose to a question of privilege, quoted the remarks made by Mr. Lister, and emphatically denied that he had done any such thing as he was charged with doing.

Mr. Lister replied that he did not mean to say that the Secretary of State did with his own hands handle the boodle, and then he launched into a general onslaught upon Conservative methods of running elections. He mentioned West Northumberland as a constituency won for the Government by bribery and corruption. This brought the member for that riding, Mr. Guillet, to his feet, who denied the allegations, and carried the war into Africa, by quoting certain misdeeds of the Party of Purity. Here, the matter ended, but it all goes to confirm the saying of the aforementioned wise man that "the tongue no man can tame." A debate arose over Mr. Armstrong's motion to give the North-West Assembly power to deal with matters of education and dual language after next general election, saying that no school section as at present constituted should be interfered with without the consent of the parties composing that section.

The noticeable feature of the debate was a speech from Mr. McCarthy, delivered with his old-time vim and fearlessness. You know our noble partisans do not like Mr. McCarthy. If it were not such a shocking term, we might say they hate him. The pure and holy Grit says he is playing into the hands of the Government, and is a "political fakir," and the out-and-out Tory calls him equally bad names, which, of course, is the very strongest testimonial of good character and of sound statesmanship that Mr. McCarthy could possibly secure. He has spoken twice this session, but to young Canada there is more food for thought in those two speeches, dealing, as they do, with a matter of the gravest interest, than is to be found in the fifty odd speeches delivered by about fifty of the more talkative of our wise men.

On this occasion Mr. McCarthy moved that it is expedient that the limitations and restrictions upon the authority of the North-West Territories in the matter of education, and enactments respecting the use of the French language in the courts, and the compulsory publication of its ordinances in that language, should be repealed. Six o'clock put an end to the debate, which may or may not be continued this session.

On Tuesday the long looked for Redistribution Bill came up for its second reading. The discussion which is likely to ensue commenced with a very vigorous and animated speech from Mr. Laurier, who entered into an arraignment of the Government for delaying important measures till the closing days of the season. On the part of the Liberals he repudiated suggestions which have been thrown out, that the redistribution of seats should be entrusted to a commission of judges, arguing that if Parliament were incapable of dealing with the matter impartially, their appointees were not less likely to be partial. He moved an amendment that the Bill be not read, but a committee appointed from both sides of the House to agree upon an equitable plan of redistribution. The debate was continued by Mr. Ouimet, Mr. Charlton and others.

The Royal Society of Canada met here on Tuesday, Abbe Laffamme, President, in the chair. The following new members were introduced: Dr. Bethune, Abbe Gosselin, Dr. Ellis, Toronto University; Mr. James Fowler, M.A., Queen's College, and Mr. T. C. Keefer, Ottawa. There was a good attendance of members, and the session, which continued a couple of days, was most satisfactory.

T. C. L. K.

#### CENTENNIAL OF UPPER CANADA,

NOW THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO:

THE HUNDRETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM, JULY 16, 1792.

THE Pioneer and Historical Society of the County of York keep their annual festival this year on the 16th of July, in commemoration of the fact that on that day, in the year 1792, was issued the Royal Proclamation dividing the new Province of Upper Canada into counties, and, at the same time, setting forth the number of representatives which the inhabitants of each county were to send to the Provincial Parliament. The 16th July, 1792, was thus, as it were, the birthday of an organized constitutional Government for the Province of Upper Canada, that is to say, for the existing Province of Ontario.

The Governor of the new Province had arrived at Quebec on the 11th of November, 1791, by the ship *Triton*, but various unavoidable delays had occurred, arising partly from insufficient instructions, partly from the non-appearance of a small military force expected from Halifax, and also the non-arrival of certain persons from