

THE LIBERAL PLATFORM.

buy, it is clear that the man is no better off than he was before, though his income is larger by twenty per cent. In other words, he has to work twenty per cent. harder in order to get the equivalent of his former income. Of course his account book will show an increase of business to that amount.

But it is in connection with the increase in the value of imports under the protective system that the most obstinate anomalies seem to us to present themselves. We do not suppose that any considerable proportion of Canadian imports consists of raw material for the use of manufacturers, or rather that the increase in this class of imports is such as to explain the increase in the total value of imports. If this could be shown to be the case, the mystery would be in part explained, and we should cheerfully give due credit to the N. P. for the result, though even then, in view of the fact that the increase in exports falls so far short of keeping pace with that in imports, we should still be left to wonder what became of the enlarged volume of manufactured goods, in the absence of an increase of population to account for their home consumption. But waiving such niceties, the one question to which we do not remember to have seen a satisfactory answer is, why should supporters of a protective policy exult over an increase of imports? Was it the design of the N. P. to effect such an increase otherwise than as a result of an increase of population which has not been had? The figures will no doubt show that a large part of the imports which are thus increasing in so much greater ratio than the exports, consists of manufactured goods of kinds produced by our own manufacturers. Is it not one of the avowed objects of protection to keep out such foreign manufactures, or at least to reduce the quantity and value of such importations? Was it not—but there is no end to the questions which keep coming up to perplex us as we attempt to get a clearer understanding of the situation and of the relations of cause and effect which produce it, in any way reconcilable with the claim that protection is entitled to the credit. We shall therefore stop with a general hypothetical question which persistently forces itself upon the mind in connection with the subject: If this increased buying and selling in foreign markets, especially the buying, is a good thing, and if it has taken place to so large an extent in spite of a tax of nearly twenty millions of dollars upon imports during the eleven months, what an increase of trade and prosperity would ensue were the tax removed or materially diminished?

Enjoy what thou hast inherited from thy sires, if thou wouldst possess it; what we employ not is an oppressive burden; what the moment brings forth, that only can it profit by.—Goethe.

The great Liberal Convention has been held, and has succeeded, almost we fancy beyond the hope of any but the most sanguine of its promoters, in framing and adopting with complete unanimity, so far at least as outward manifestation goes, a statement of the principles and policy upon which it will contest the next general election. In point of numbers and enthusiasm the meeting seems to have been all that could be desired or expected by its promoters. All the Provinces except British Columbia were represented, and of those thus represented all, except Manitoba, seem to have been fully represented. In accordance with the broad hint given in Mr. Laurier's first speech, the rocks and shallows which threatened delay or shipwreck were skilfully avoided, and the discussions kept well within the lines upon which all classes and sections are pretty well agreed. Perhaps one of the greatest advantages to be derived by the party from the meeting is the hearty endorsement which the present leader has received from representatives of all classes and creeds, from all parts of the Dominion. The absence of any note of discord upon this point will not only greatly strengthen the hands of Mr. Laurier, but will go far in effecting the practical consolidation, which is one of the needs of the party. Nor, so far as a reader of the reports can perceive, was this the result reached as a mere matter of policy, or of necessary compromise. It seems rather to have been the outcome of a thorough liking for and confidence in the man, who certainly possesses in large measure many of the intellectual and moral qualities and personal traits which are the only reliable guarantees of loyalty to a political chieftain.

The first and largest plank in the platform, if we may continue to use that convenient and expressive Americanism, is of course that which has relation to the tariff. This plank is, in effect, a more elaborate statement of the policy which has been advocated by Mr. Laurier and others on the floor of Parliament and elsewhere for some time past—a tariff for revenue only with free trade for its goal, whatever that may mean. "The Customs tariff of the Dominion should be raised," it is declared, "not as it now is, upon the protective principle, but upon the requirements of the public service." The principle of protection is denounced as "radically unsound and unjust to the masses of the people," and the tariff should be so adjusted, it is affirmed, "as to make free, or to bear as lightly as possible upon, the necessities of life; and should be so arranged as to promote free trade with the whole world, more particularly with Great Britain and the United States." It might perhaps be captious to criticise forms of expression too closely, otherwise one might wonder how any tariff with revenue for its object can be made to promote free trade. The clause is, we suppose, to be in-

terpreted in the light of the words of various speakers who declared that absolute free trade was the end to be kept constantly in view. With this understanding, based upon the admitted impossibility of immediate abolition of the tariff and adoption of direct methods of raising the large revenue now necessary, all except the extremists will probably be for the present content. The reformed tariff is to be regarded as an educative as well as a political measure. Both parties are now pledged to tariff reform—the one on protective, the other on free-trade lines. This is declared to be the broad line of demarcation between the two parties.

The denunciations of Administrative corruption, of the Franchise Act, the Gerrymander, etc., were all to be expected as a matter of course. We do not mean to intimate that so far as they can be shown to have any basis in fact they should be passed by on account of their familiarity.

The mild declaration in favour of a Dominion plebiscite on the question of prohibition will probably be a surprise to many. It commits the Liberal party to a policy which can scarcely fail to lead to important results at no distant day. Though the article is very cautiously worded, the declaration is evidently not only meaningless, but positively deceptive, unless it is regarded as an implied pledge, binding the party, should it attain power, to legislate in accordance with the will of the people as ascertained by the proposed plebiscite. The policy is no doubt sound so far as it recognizes the fact that nothing short of a very unmistakable demand on the part of a large majority of the people could warrant such legislation, or render its enforcement possible. But so many serious questions and difficulties are involved in the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors throughout the Dominion that it is a bold and risky movement for any party to take even the first decisive step in that direction.

With regard to the Manitoba school question the action, or rather inaction, of the Convention is perhaps shrewd from a tactical point of view. The fact that the question of the constitutional right of the government to interfere in the matter irrespective of the decision of the Judicial Committee of the British Privy Council is now before the Supreme Court, and that, should the decision of the Court be that the Government has no such right or power, there will, as Mr. Laurier said, no longer be a Manitoba question, gave the Liberal leaders an excellent opportunity to shelve a question in regard to which it is pretty evident that division would otherwise have been inevitable. But it may be questioned if such an attitude exhibits the courage of conviction to which both Mr. Laurier and Mr. Tarte lay claim, and to credit for which they are in many respects justly entitled. Mr. Tarte's opinions upon the merits of the