

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

IN Manitoba, the Norquay dynasty appears to be tottering to its fall. The sincere attachment of Mr. Norquay to the interest of his Province cannot be questioned any more than his ability; but he is condemned to sustain at once two characters which are incompatible with each other. He is trying to be at once an independent representative of Manitoba and a faithful liegeman of the Tory Party at Ottawa. By the Tory Party at Ottawa Manitoba and the North-West generally are regarded as a dependency in the management of which, though its own welfare may not be disregarded, the interest of the party is to be paramount alike in appointments and other matters. Mr. Norquay sets forth from Winnipeg a Manitoban patriot, sternly resolved to insist on the demands of his Province, with which it is quite evident from his Manitoban speeches that he personally concurs; but as he fares Eastward the other side of his double character gains the ascendancy, and when he reaches the presence of his Chief at Ottawa he is a Tory and nothing else. It is gratifying at all events to see that Manitoba is not easily to be made an appendage of parties with whose struggle for power she is no more concerned than she is with that of parties in the United States. The Machine has been imported, but works imperfectly. What the Province wants is an independent, though not a disaffected, delegation at Ottawa. Of her present delegation one member alone seems to do his duty.

OUR Protectionists must have the courage of their convictions, if they can recommend the hungry multitudes of workmen in Great Britain to alleviate their distress by the re-imposition of the Bread Tax. They must also have a martyr spirit of devotion to principle, since the Corn Laws, if re-enacted, would exclude Canadian wheat from British ports. We should then come back to that happy state of economical relations which was aptly compared to a dinner party in which one man had all the soup and another had all the salt. Manchester would have all the clothes and Canada all the food. Industrial history is too fresh in the memory of the English people. They have not forgotten, nor will they be allowed to forget, that before the repeal of the Corn Laws England was the scene of commercial paralysis and of distress which bordered on famine. They know that as soon as the Corn Laws were repealed she bounded forward on a career of prosperity which, though not unchequered or unmarred by over-speculation and other commercial errors, has on the whole been unexampled and almost fabulous. There is distress now in some of the

English trades, especially the shipping trade, with regard to which however it ought to be borne in mind that reduction of the number of ships built is in some measure the natural consequence of increased speed, as a smaller number of ships becomes sufficient to do the same amount of carrying. There is distress, and not less intense, in some of the trades in the United States. There is distress in Canada, though we are relieved of its pressure to some extent by emigration into the States. Everywhere the causes are vicissitudes of trade the laws of which are not yet certainly known. In England the mass of artisans is so large that prosperity and depression alike appear there in the most striking form. The point of those who recommend the renewal of the Corn Laws seems to be that wheat would then be grown on the poorer land which is now given up to pasture. No doubt it would; and, if the Protective duty were raised high enough, the people would be driven to the cultivation of sand and bog. Their capital and labour would then be wasted, as under a Protective system capital and labour always are. That prosperity can be created by taxation, and that the hungry can be fed by making bread dearer, are propositions of which the bare enunciation would seem sufficient. But there is no absurdity which cannot be worked up in plausible words or which self-interest will not find arguments to defend.

FREE Trade and Protection have been bandying against each other in our Press charges of affinity to Communism. The Tory Squires who voted for the Corn Laws in England were not Communists in principle, neither were those luminaries of economic wisdom, the statesmen of old Spain, who carried Protectionism to the highest point. Yet it is true that while free trade belongs to a general policy of liberty, self-development, and spontaneous progress, Protection belongs to a policy of paternal government and regulation by authority, the organ of which in a Monarchy is a single despot, and in a Communistic society would be that complex and mysterious autocrat styled the State. What is more important than theoretic classification is the question whether it is the practical tendency of Protection to produce suffering among the people and Communism as the result of suffering. Free Traders contend that it is, and they show good reason for their contention. The fiscal legislator is able to stimulate production, as Sir Leonard Tilley has stimulated production in Canada; but he cannot regulate demand. Over-production is certain to be followed by glutted markets and by sudden depression. Great and abrupt changes in the labour market, wages so high as to tempt to improvidence one day and dearth of bread the next, are of all things the most trying to the character of the working-man. Thus are engendered the paroxysms of discontent which lead to communism and communistic outbreaks. In the United States, a new country, with ample room for expansion on every side, employment ought if anywhere to be abundant, wages ought if anywhere to be steady. Yet there have been industrial convulsions more violent than any which England has witnessed during the same period. England has of late had nothing like the Molly Maguire outrages in the mining district of Pennsylvania, much less has she had anything like the wave of industrial war which some years ago rolled over the Middle States. The history of the trade in pig-iron has been cited as a case in point. A fresh start in railway enterprise caused a sudden demand for the article. Protection limited the field of supply, and the consequence was an enormous inflation of the trade. The production increased more than 50 per cent. in a single year. In 1870 there were 230 furnaces, in 1873 there were 657. Then came the collapse; half the iron-workers of the United States were out of work, the rest were receiving reduced wages; many coal miners were in the same plight; communistic agitations and outbreaks followed. In England, though there had been over-production and fluctuation, there had been nothing so extreme as this, and there was but little disturbance. It is also contended by the Free Traders, and with apparent truth, that Protection engenders discontent and communism by its tendency to exaggerate the inequalities of fortune. Monster fortunes are certainly the characteristic phenomena of the United States, while in England of late years the distribution has been more equal. It may perhaps be added that there is an affinity between Protectionism and