

opportunity should be had for a free interchange of views before any more formal negotiations are attempted. If these gentlemen and those with whom they may consult are fairly frank, it may soon be known with tolerable certainty whether it is worth while to proceed any further. The business even of unofficial conference on such a matter is a difficult and delicate one, and it is to be hoped that while it is going on the delegates may have the moral support of the Canadian press and people, irrespective of party politics. Sir Charles Tupper has complained—and not, we fear, without cause—that the tone of a certain portion of the Opposition press, since the election, has been such as tended to prejudice the negotiations in advance, and incite the Washington statesmen to refuse the proposed arrangement. It is not at all likely that Mr. Blaine and his coadjutors are attentive readers of Canadian newspapers, or much influenced by them. They will strive to regard any measures proposed simply and solely from the standpoint of what they conceive to be the interests of their country or their party. Their Canadian visitors will do the same. Yet, there can be no doubt that the feeling in which such commissioners approach each other has more effect than they would be willing to acknowledge in predisposing them to see clearly the advantages offered by a certain proposition, or the objections thereto. As to the prospects of any successful result, speculation would now be useless. Very much depends, no doubt, upon the length to which the representatives of the Canadian Government are prepared to go in the direction of modifying the National Policy and discriminating against the Mother Country. To hope for the conclusion of a treaty not involving some concessions in both these directions would, we suppose, be idle in view of the avowed opinions and policy of the United States. Against the *personnel* of the Canadian delegation nothing can be said. The Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance are unquestionably the best men to represent the Cabinet. We have always felt that there was great force in the objections so strenuously urged by the Opposition against the action of Sir John Macdonald in asking or permitting the High Commissioner, who should unquestionably be a non-partisan public servant, to quit his post and cross the ocean to engage in a party conflict. The course of the latter in joining in the fray can scarcely be regarded by unprejudiced observers as other than improper and unseemly. But there can be no doubt whatever that, as a member of the delegation to Washington in the interests of freer commercial intercourse with the great Republic, the High Commissioner is the right man in the right place.

THAT we believe with our correspondent, Mr. Wallace, that our stringent laws have not succeeded in putting down bribery in elections, we need not reiterate. We have often deplored the disgraceful fact. Whether the remedy Mr. Wallace proposes would meet the difficulty, or be the most effective one available, is worthy of consideration. We are, we confess, disposed to demur at any proposal, unless in case of absolute necessity, to increase the frequency of the occasions on which oath-taking is required. It is a law of human nature that familiarity breeds contempt. The necessity for frequent oath-taking tends to do away in the common mind with the solemnity and awe which are supposed to hedge the act about, and which give it its chief value as a means of compulsion to truth-telling. Nevertheless, so great is the evil of bribery at elections, so degrading its effect upon individual and national character, so destructive is it of whatever is best in national self-government and free institutions, that if the administration of an oath to every voter could be shown to be the only effectual, or the most effectual, means of crushing out corruption and promoting purity at elections, we should say by all means let us require the oath. The best of all methods of cure would no doubt be the outcome of higher moral characters and ideals in our political leaders. If these would honestly use their influence in favour of pure elections, and against every form of improper influence, they might do much in a very short time to impress their principles upon their Parliamentary supporters and through them upon the people. As it is, how many men have we in public life who would sooner suffer defeat than gain election by corrupt methods? We hope there are some. We much fear they are in a minority. But before resorting to so extreme and expensive measures as those advocated by Mr. Wallace, why not try the English plan of fixing a maximum limit for legitimate expenses in every district, and requiring a strict account of expenditures? Extensive bribery means large sums of money. This money

must, as a rule, be supplied either by the candidates or from the party campaign funds. Cut off the sources of supply and the expenditures must cease. Let every club, every candidate, every agent be required to furnish a strict account of expenditures, with satisfactory vouchers. If to this precautionary system were joined the compulsory punishment by imprisonment of every one convicted of having given or accepted a bribe, the evil would at least be greatly curtailed. Mr. Wallace's strictures on other defects in the existing laws and their administration are worthy of careful consideration. We are glad that he has taken the matter up. One of the most discouraging features of the case is the general indifference or apathy with which the abounding corruption seems to be regarded.

THE Government of Ontario prides itself on its professed principles as a Liberal Administration and on its record as an honest and progressive one. Even its enemies being judges, its course on the whole during the many years of its existence under Premier Mowat's leadership compares very favourably with that of the average party Government. It is now once more firmly entrenched in its place, with a strong majority at its back. It has thus every advantage for entering boldly upon the work of reforming such abuses as still exist in the political system. One of these abuses will probably be before it during this session, and the question of its perpetuation or reform will be entirely in the hands of Mr. Mowat and his colleagues. We refer to the objectionable system of paying a large number of public officials who are Government appointees by fees instead of by salaries. Take the case of the seventy or more registrars, to say nothing of the sheriffs, court clerks, etc. Is there any good and sufficient reason why those officials should be paid in accordance with a system which makes the incomes of some of them larger than that of the Premier himself, while in many cases the actual work of the offices is done by clerks with very moderate salaries? Does Mr. Mowat, or any member of his Cabinet, doubt in his heart that the system is a bad one; unjust to the public who are made to pay much more for a service than it is actually worth, and demoralizing to some extent in its influence in politics? If so it will be interesting to hear their strong reasons when the question comes up for debate. If not why should they not establish an additional claim to public confidence and gratitude by adopting the proposed reform and carrying it out in a fair and courageous spirit?

LATE despatches indicate that affairs between Newfoundland and the Mother Country are entering a critical phase. The decision recently given by the Supreme Court of the Island in the case of Baird vs. Walker, sustaining Baird's claim against Sir Baldwin Walker, Commander of H. M. S. *Emerald*, for damages caused by the closing of Baird's lobster factory on the French shore last summer, virtually affirms that under existing statutes the Queen has not power to enforce the agreement entered into with France under the late *modus vivendi*. It appears, in other words, that the obligations of a treaty made by her Majesty with a foreign nation do not carry with them the right to take the action necessary for carrying out those obligations, when such action injuriously affects the property or rights of a British subject. Special legislation by either the British Parliament or the Colonial Legislature is necessary in such cases, and such legislation, it appears, does not now exist in the case in question. The immediate effect of the decision is to open the way for numerous other claims of a similar kind by Newfoundland citizens. That, however, being merely a matter of a little more or less money out of the pocket of the British taxpayer is not the chief consideration. Anticipating, probably, the decision, the Foreign Office in November last requested the Newfoundland Government to procure the legislation necessary to empower England to carry out treaties with France. The Colonial Government refused. The consequence is that, in view probably of the possible requirements of the new *modus vivendi* which is to be agreed on pending arbitration, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Knutsford, has introduced in the House of Lords a Bill reviving the Crown's authority to instruct naval officers to enforce the treaties of Utrecht, Versailles and Paris, securing to France certain fishery rights on the coast of Newfoundland. The Bill, which is in effect a coercion Bill for the enforcement of the *modus vivendi*, was supported by Lord Kimberley and Lord Salisbury, and passed its first reading. Meanwhile the Colonial Legislature has adopted resolutions requesting England to delay coercive

legislation until the Colony shall have been heard in defence. As the British Government recognizes the importance of the question, every reasonable opportunity will no doubt be given to the Islanders to present their case. Judging, however, from their past attitude and present mood, there is little likelihood that the Newfoundland Legislature and people will acquiesce in any measure that the Home authorities will deem satisfactory. In the case of open resistance, which is threatened by the colonists, it is not easy to foresee the result. It will depend largely upon two unknown factors, the length to which the British Parliament may be willing to go in coercing a rebellious colony to which it has granted representative institutions, and the amount of encouragement the American Government would hold out to the Islanders in response to the appeal which would almost surely be made. Perhaps some agreement may be reached to await the award of the arbitrators, though the Islanders apparently do not expect much consolation from that source. The fact probably is, as Lord Salisbury said, that Newfoundland is now paying the penalty of errors made in past treaties. The fear is that she will have to continue to pay the penalty, as there seems little hope that any means of correcting those errors can now be found. It is true that, to the unsophisticated mind, the language of the treaties seems to favour Newfoundland's contention on most points, but it is hard to explain the concessions made in the *modus vivendi* on any other supposition than that the British Government regards the French claim to control of the lobster fisheries as well founded. In any case the concession must tend to prejudice the opposite claim in the minds of the arbitrators.

THE appalling deed of violence committed in New Orleans the other day has shocked the civilized world. A mob of citizens, called together and led by men occupying prominent positions and hitherto deemed respectable, marched to the jail, burst open its doors, and shot down, hanged or otherwise cruelly did to death, eleven prisoners. No provocation whatever could justify such a deed in a community supposed to be enlightened and organized, and under the dominion of law and order? Unquestionably the temptation which led so many of the people of New Orleans to lose faith in their own legal and judicial system and take the administration of what they believed to be justice into their own hands was very great. The victims, or most of them, were members of that dread secret organization of Italians known as the *Mafia*, which is believed to have as its chief end the infliction of private vengeance by assassination. In Italy its record is of the darkest kind. It is said that thousands of murders and other horrible crimes have been brought home to it. For a long time past a branch of it has been operating in New Orleans, chiefly among Italians, and many of that nationality have been assassinated. The municipal authorities had finally determined to crush the organization, as a public duty. One night in October last, Chief of Police Hennessy, who had shown great energy in following up operations against the Society, was basely murdered near his own door. The city became thoroughly aroused, a special police force was organized and the jails were filled with Italians accused of complicity in the crime. For some time past the integrity of the jury has been suspected, and when finally a verdict was brought in acquitting the accused, in the face, it is said, of the plainest proof of guilt, the indignation and wrath of the citizens knew no bounds. The tragedy above recorded took place the next day. Assuming that the account above given from the most reliable source at command is correct, the provocation was, it must be admitted, very great. But on the other hand, it is just such appalling failures, or apparent failures of justice which test the genuineness of our civilization. To lose faith in the principles of law and order, and yield on such an occasion to the instincts of savagery is a fearful mistake, and a retrogression towards barbarism or chaos. It is to announce the failure of civilization in a moment of supreme trial. It is a misnomer to call such a massacre an act of justice. Some or all of the murdered men may have been, probably were, guilty. Some were very possibly innocent. Others, no doubt as guilty as the worst of the slain, were unharmed. The whole transaction was mere guesswork. Whether serious international difficulties result will depend, we suppose, upon the spirit in which the Washington Government meets the demand of the Italian Government for redress. Rumours are current touching a proposed rally of Italians from all parts of the continent to wreak vengeance on New Orleans, but the project, if such really exists, is too wildly insane to be treated seriously.