

THE WEEK.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

FRANCE professes to have now no design in Tonquin more ambitious than to occupy Bacninh and Sontay, as a salve to her honour which has been so sorely wounded. This done, it is said she will propose an armistice and will seek the good offices of England as a mediator. But it is impossible for France to refute the charge of rapacity in the face of M. Ferry's late confessions. She cannot deny her arrogance and wantonness in regard to the neutral territory in Tonquin; nor can she deny that the negotiations have been carried on by her in an unfriendly if not offensive manner throughout. It appears certain also that Annam has been tributary to the Chinese throne for centuries; and it looks equally certain that the excuse for French falsehood and the cause of French violence, here as in Madagascar, has been simply greed of territorial gain.

THE election of Mr. Lowell as Rector of St. Andrew's University against the Right Hon. Edward Gibson, one of the finest speakers and foremost men in the House of Commons—a man indeed who would lead the Conservative party better than its present leaders—is a signal instance of what is called "free trade in intellect" and of the generous disposition to recognize a commonwealth of letters divided by no national boundaries. But in the particular case of Mr. Lowell, the homage has now been carried far enough. He is the writer of the best satire, probably, which has appeared on this side of the Atlantic, though there is nothing in his "Bigelow Papers" which is likely to live much beyond the hour. In some of his literary essays and reviews there is acknowledged merit. As a serious poet he can hardly be said to display the originality of genius. His fellow-countrymen know this perfectly well, and when he is treated as if he were a writer of the first rank and put over the heads of Englishmen who are really his superiors, they cannot help concluding that there must be something hollow and diplomatic in these overstrained demonstrations. If there is a diplomatic object, definite or indefinite, exaggeration defeats itself.

In honour of its centenary, St. John, N. B., has put forth an unusually attractive programme for the course of lectures at its Mechanics' Institute.

These lectures are remarkably well attended and form a prominent feature in the winter life of the place; nor would any lecturer desire a more intelligent or a kinder audience. But if St. John wishes to secure the services of a high class of lecturers, without restriction on the ground of political party, she will have to persuade a certain portion of her political press to respect the amenities of social life and the interests of an institution which ministers to the instruction and amusement of all parties alike. If a literary man, brought perhaps from a great distance to take part as a friend in the course of lectures, is to receive as his reward public insult from that section of the community from which he happens to differ in political opinions, and this notwithstanding the strictest observance of neutrality on his part, he will be apt to regret his acceptance of the invitation; while by such treatment of an invited guest, the reputation of the city for courteous hospitality will be in danger of contracting a stain. These remarks, which we believe will be not unwelcome to the literary public of St. John, are occasioned by an editorial of the *St. John Sun* in which that journal somewhat departs from its usual good breeding, urbanity and generosity to opponents.

BOTH in Ontario and in New Brunswick the superintendence of Education has passed into new hands. In Ontario Mr. G. W. Ross succeeds to the position of Minister of Education, *vice* the Hon. Adam Crooks, whom ill-health has compelled to resign. Mr. Ross has abundance of work cut out for him; he finds the Department of Education much in need of clear judgment at the head of it. It is to be hoped he will prove himself the equal of his predecessor in general ability, in enthusiasm, in scholarship, and in culture; and his superior in organizing ability, in lucidity, and in grasp of detail. Mr. Crooks devoted himself to the labour of the department with a zeal which, in combination with the worry of striving to satisfy conflicting claims and give heed to contradictory cries of faction, resulted in the breaking down of his health. Endeavouring to continue at his post when overwork had rendered him physically unfit for it, he made several mistakes which his successor may display his skill in rectifying. In New Brunswick the resignation of Dr. Rand has deprived the Province of a Chief Superintendent of Education whose energy, power of organization, and executive ability are indisputably great, but whose somewhat autocratic rule, with the rigidity and over-minuteness of his system, raised against him strenuous opposition. His successor, Mr. William Crocket, is an able educationist. He has always been a supporter and adviser of Dr. Rand, and it may therefore be supposed that he will continue his methods and carry on his traditions, in which case there will be dissatisfaction in a large part of the Province. As the Government which has appointed him, however, is one which, before attaining office, was professedly hostile to Dr. Rand, and had been in no small degree helped into power by its pledged disapproval of his system, it may perhaps turn out that Mr. Crocket has modified his views to some extent. It is but just to say that he has always shown himself opposed to machine-education.

It would seem as if the Reformers were girding up their loins for battle at the coming session. Mr. MacMillan, the representative for South Bruce, has, at the request of his supporters, resigned his seat in favour of Sir Richard Cartwright, who was defeated in Centre Wellington at the last general election. Very naturally even the loyal Reformers of South Bruce desired to know why it was necessary to sacrifice the ambition of Mr. MacMillan, and to their enquiry it was answered by Mr. Blake that financial and fiscal questions would during the next session probably assume more than usual prominence. This is an age when in the struggle only the fittest survives, and all agree that it is better a candle should go out than the moon. Aside from party considerations there is room for congratulation that the unquestioned ability of Sir Richard Cartwright is to be restored to the House of Commons.

In the North-West we have a spectacle painful enough to all Canadians who choose to be patriots before they are partisans. The perils attendant upon government by party are most imminent in a young nation like Canada, which has not yet had time to become solid and homogeneous, and wherein many causes have combined to force on party feeling to its fullest undesirable development; wherein, at the same time, that surest