

# THE WEEK.

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## The Week,

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THOSE who noted the peculiar features of the North-West Act passed at the last session of the Dominion Parliament will not have been surprised to see indications of a very general dissatisfaction amongst the Territorial electors, with its provisions. Most of the candidates at the recent local elections protested, it is said, in vigorous terms against the anomalous position in which the people of the Territories are placed, and declared themselves in favour of a responsible local executive. It was too much to expect that, accustomed as a large majority of the people of the North-West were, in the provinces which they have left, to full self government, they would take kindly to the paternal system which they find provided for them. One of the speakers who was elected by acclamation, argued, not without much force, that the new state of affairs is worse than that it replaces. It was certainly better to have the Lieutenant-Governor occupying a place in the Assembly, and thus brought into direct contact and consultation with the people's representatives, than to have him, as now, exercising irresponsible authority from without, simply as the agent of the Ottawa Government. The demand for a responsible local executive will, with a little popular agitation, soon become too strong to be resisted.

SELDOM has a political party in one of the provinces been so utterly discomfited as the Conservatives in the recent Manitoba elections. But for the local divisions of the Government supporters in two or three constituencies there would scarcely have been left even the nucleus of an Opposition, and, as it is, the Government will have hardly half-a-dozen hostile critics to face, at the outset, in the new Legislature. This is a state of things that cannot last, and ought not to last. Under the cumbersome and illogical party system an efficient Opposition is almost as essential a part of the political machinery, and almost as necessary to good administration, as an efficient Government. There is no reason to expect that the Greenway Cabinet will prove so much above the average, either in wisdom or in integrity, as to be able long to shun the errors or withstand the temptations into which party leaders who can have everything their own way are pretty sure to fall, and the blunders and lapses of the party

in power will soon nourish the feeble Opposition into strength and vigour. The great want of the defeated party at the first will be that of a skilful and trusted leader; for it seems highly improbable that one so completely discredited as Mr. Norquay can regain the confidence of the party which, whatever his good qualities and intentions, he has led to ruin. Meanwhile Mr. Greenway and his colleagues have before them an open door, a noble opportunity to raise the local Government and Assembly to a position of honour and influence such as they have not hitherto attained.

THE papers are commenting on the unusual undertone of political independence which ran through the speeches of some of the Orange orators on the Twelfth. This is but one of various indications that the spirit of blind loyalty to party is rapidly losing its hold on many of the more thoughtful minds, in the ranks of both the old Canadian parties. The sign is full of promise of purer politics and better government. So long as the people are divided on some really great question of principle or polity, such as that of Responsible Government, it is natural and fitting that the electors should range themselves in two great bands on opposite sides of the line of political cleavage. But there are few more prolific sources of evil to the political life of a State than the perpetuation of old party prejudices and animosities long after the original lines of division have been obliterated. Other great questions may indeed arise, and it may be found expedient to retain the familiar names to represent new and living issues. In that case a process of re-adjustment must take place. Independent and conscientious members of the old parties will be found exchanging camps in large numbers. Such a process has been for a few years past going on in the United States, where new questions, such as Civil Service and Tariff Reform, are taking the place of the old slavery and state-sovereignty watchwords. Such a change took place, to a considerable extent, a few years ago in Canada, when the issue between Protection and Free Trade was first joined. Such a re-arrangement, on a still more extended scale, will, it may be pretty safely predicted, take place within the next few years, as the people find themselves compelled to choose between such opposing tendencies as those of Commercial Union and Independence on the one hand, and Imperial Federation on the other. The speeches of the Twelfth show that the new leaven is already at work. It is, at any rate, vastly better that political battles should be fought on great questions than that such contests should degenerate into mere struggles for office.

THE Act recently passed by the Quebec Legislature, at the instance of the Government, for the conversion of the public debt of the Province, contains the following remarkable clause: "It shall be lawful to determine the delay within which the holders of the present debentures may exchange them for the new debentures, or claim the redemption thereof in cash, and to order that after such delay interest shall accrue upon all classes of debentures at the rate specified for the new debentures." It is reassuring to know that the Government, before proroguing, distinctly pledged themselves that no attempt would be made to enforce the provisions of this clause in the case of holders of existing bonds except upon such terms as may be found both equitable and acceptable. When it is borne in mind that the new debentures to be issued bear a much lower rate of interest than those at present outstanding, and that many of the latter do not legally mature for a number of years, it will be evident that such distinct pledge was imperatively needed in the interests of public morality and the good name of the Province. Even so, and accepting the pledge as given in good faith and absolutely reliable, it is difficult to see what the Government had to gain by incorporating in its wise Act a clause of such more than doubtful morality, thus taking powers which they have no intention of using, and whose use would be morally indefensible. It seems a pity Mr. Mercier had not frankly consented to the modification or repeal of so obnoxious a provision, as its very existence in the Act savours too much of the nature of intimidation.

THE people of both England and Canada must have been astonished at the revelations made by Senator Hoar, of Massachusetts, in his speech before the United States Senate on the Fisheries Treaty. Neither they