

we shall (not) find buyers," with considerable allowance. Passing by many interesting observations on various other forms of industry, the following remarks in regard to farmers, whose business lies at the very base of all Canadian prosperity or adversity, touch a matter of special interest to all classes. The facts given us as the result of Mr. Hague's survey are valuable, however opinions may vary as to their true significance:—

I have paid careful attention to the working of farmers' business at our country branches, and the managers of the bank have been instructed to give special attention to it also. The past year has not been supposed to be a year of much saving with farmers, but it is a fact that out of twenty-nine branches where farmers' deposits are received, in twenty-seven of them there has been an increase in such deposits. In only two has there been a decrease, and that only of a small amount. I have no doubt that this experience has been common.

THE resolution passed by the York County Councillors at their recent session, authorizing a committee to draw up a petition to the Ontario Government asking for an amendment to the existing laws in the direction of providing for the payment of all county officials by salary, instead of by fees as under the present arrangement, shows that the tendency of public opinion is in the right direction. There is a manifest inequality and injustice in the working of the fee system which an honest and progressive Government should not be slow to recognize and remove. It is, moreover, desirable in the interests of good government that the number of offices with large salaries attached should be reduced within the smallest practicable limits. The effect would be to remove a species of patronage which must be a source of worry to the Government as well as to the crowds of hungry aspirants who are always on the look-out for the rewards of political services. The power to bestow such rewards is a temptation to both Government and office-seeker. We hold, too, that the fee system is indefensible in principle. At any rate, even the forensic talent of Sir Oliver Mowat failed to find or devise a satisfactory defence when he attempted it last session. His most plausible argument, to the effect that the fee system makes the payment proportionate to the actual work, fails egregiously in those cases in which the work is mainly routine and can be performed very cheaply by proxy. Even in cases in which there is a degree of force in this plea, the counter objections are so many and cogent that it is readily overborne. It is to be hoped that the Premier and Government will give heed to the petition of the Council.

SIR RICHARD CARTWRIGHT'S twenty-one questions did not elicit a vast amount of information with reference to the effect which the *Globe's* publication of documents concerning the "Reptile Fund" have produced upon the minds of the members of the Government, individually or collectively. So far as any visible effect is concerned they served rather to give the House and the country another clever exhibition of Sir John Thompson's skill in fence. Nevertheless the main object of the asker, that of having a synopsis of the documents in question put upon the records of Parliament, was of course gained. The answers were adroitly evasive throughout, but in only one particular, perhaps, did they fail in being formal answers to the question to which they were ostensible replies. That was, it is true, a particular of vital importance to the whole case. When Sir Richard asked whether the Government, in view of the fact that those documents, if authentic, prove that upwards of \$112,000 were expended in twenty-four constituencies with the knowledge and approval of several members of the Cabinet and many members of Parliament, intended to cause a committee of the House to be appointed to investigate said matters, and particularly to ascertain from and by whom the said funds were supplied, Sir John Thompson answered that the Government intended to await the report of the Commission before deciding what steps may properly be taken with regard to any matters which may appear not to have been comprised within the reference to the commissioners. This would seem to imply an admission of the obvious fact that the question of the distribution of the funds is not included in the reference. But when the leader of the Opposition put the direct question whether the special charges apparently substantiated by the published documents were to be considered by the Commission, Sir John replied by repeating the answer to a previous question, which answer certainly contained no reply to the particular enquiry which was put by Sir Richard Cartwright, and emphasized by Mr. Laurier.

NOW most of our readers will, we think, agree with us that the question which Sir John Thompson thus evaded is one of the very first importance to the whole enquiry. As we have before insisted, the excision of that part of Mr. Edgar's charges which had to do with the disposal of these large sums of money, and the limiting of the charges referred to the commissioners to the single question whether these sums of money were corruptly and fraudulently obtained as alleged, were most reprehensible and evasive tactics, unless the intention was to make the matter excised the subject of a distinct investigation. The plea of outlawry which the Government were understood to set up is one to which neither Parliament nor people ought to listen with patience. Suppose the report of the commissioners to have been made and properly acted upon by Parliament. It matters not for the purpose of this argument whether the charges that "the Postmaster-General had diverted railway subsidies from the purpose for which they were granted by receiving for election purposes large sums of money out of such subsidies, and out of moneys raised on the credit of such subsidies, and so forth," were found to have been proven or otherwise. Whether the accused had been found innocent and the charges dismissed, or had been found guilty and punished by the House, if the matter ended there, we make bold to say that by far the most important part of the affair would have been suffered to pass unnoticed. It would still be the fact, if the documents which have been published in the *Globe* are authentic, that evidence of bribery and corruption on a very large scale had been laid before Parliament and the country and had been tacitly declared unworthy of notice or enquiry. Infamous as would be the crime on the part of members of the Government of appropriating large sums from Government subsidies, for political purposes, far, far worse for the country would be the wholesale debauchery of the consciences of electors by Ministers and members of Parliament. The first would be a crime against the Treasury; the second one against the people. The first would inflict upon the country pecuniary loss, which might be made good, or would be felt only for a time. The second would result in irreparable damage to the country by lowering the moral tone of its citizens, and corrupting the political life of the Dominion at the very source. We assume, as we may surely do with all confidence, that the sums of money distributed in the constituencies in question, amounting to several dollars for each and every vote recorded for the Government candidates, could not possibly have been used for other than corrupt purposes. Should Parliament and the people permit such charges, supported by such evidence, to pass without rigid enquiry, will it not be about time for every high-minded Canadian to despair of his country?

IT was, perhaps, a somewhat bold step on the part of the young member for East York to commence his Parliamentary career with a proposal to limit the privileges and profits of such powerful corporations as the Canadian railways have now become. It is not, we fear, very likely that a Parliament, the majority of whose members, in both Houses, have not denied the soft impeachment that they habitually travel on free passes furnished by the railways, will be zealous in securing the rights of the public against the wishes of the obliging managers of these roads. Nevertheless Mr. Maclean's action is, we are persuaded, on the right line, and we hope that he will display the courage, energy, and persistence necessary to compel Parliament sooner or later to take the matter up. Some one exclaimed that legislation by Parliament to limit railway fares for passengers would imply the right to interfere also with freight rates, as if that were a reduction to the absurd. Of course it would imply such a right. Why not? As a matter of fact the principle involved is already recognized by the establishment of the Railway Committee of the Privy Council, though any strict application of it would probably be resented as an innovation and an interference with the rights of private property. But the fact is that in view of the large sums of public money invested in the railways, in the shape of subsidies both Parliamentary and local; in view also of the special rights and privileges granted them in such matters as the securing of right of way and in other respects, in view also of the fact that they partake largely of the characteristics of natural monopolies, it is time that the rights of the public to a voice in their management were affirmed much more effectively than has hitherto been done. We do not undertake to say that the maximum of two cents a mile

which Mr. Maclean proposes is necessarily the correct limit, nor do we suppose it likely that Parliament or Government is in possession of the information needed to enable it to do justice in the matter off-hand. But it is, we believe, demonstrable that public interests and the ends of public justice demand a thorough investigation of the whole question, with a view to the reduction of both passenger and freight rates to the lowest proportions that would be reasonably remunerative after free passes and unfair preferences of every kind had been done away with. Probably the appointment of an independent railway commission will be found a necessary preliminary. As things are at present, there is good reason to believe that the people, whose money has been put so freely into the roads, have never yet derived anything like their fair share of the benefits which should accrue to them. The experience of Hungary, in which, owing to the action of the Minister of Railways, the people now travel at the rate of a little over a cent a mile, the increase of travel immediately counterbalancing the reduction in rates, is an instructive case in point.

WHAT is affirmed in regard to railways in the preceding paragraph is only what is true, in general features, of all our management of those concerns which are either in the nature of the case or in virtue of bad legislation, to a greater or less extent monopolies. Truly we are a race of incapables. We countervail nature's beneficent designs in our behalf. When she puts into our hands an inexhaustible supply of some commodity necessary to our convenience and comfort, we, in our organized wisdom, proceed to turn it over to some few individuals and make it virtually their private possession, well content if they will graciously supply our individual wants on such terms as they may choose to impose, or at any rate on such terms as will enable them to heap up for themselves enormous riches at our expense. We are constantly doing the same thing with the useful inventions of individual members of society. Witness the terms on which the general public not only ride on the great national highways, but are permitted to have the benefit of coal and other mineral productions, of gas and electrical appliances, such as the telegraph, the telephone, the electric light, etc. Not only so, but, untaught and undeterred by these results of national and municipal incapacity, we go even farther and send men to Parliament authorized as our representatives to so legislate for us as to compel us to pay such exorbitant exactions as thirty cents a gallon for the oil which she pours out freely for us from her flowing fountains, and which, as was demonstrated the other day, could be prepared for use in the best manner and sold to us at our doors for about one-third of that price, but for our own sapient law-making. Alas, for our incapacity to utilize the gifts of the good gods without first paying toll to a dozen more or less greedy private interests! Let not our readers be alarmed. We are not going to become rabid socialists, until at least we have some evidence that socialism has discovered some means of transmuting the baser metals of human weakness and selfishness which make the whole community their prey, into the pure gold of a genuine and clear-sighted altruism. But, on the other hand, we do not exactly see why it is necessary that we in Canada should fall so far in the rear of the Mother Country, which has long since forborne to increase the price of the necessaries of life by Act of Parliament; has given the people the benefit of the telegraph at reasonable rates; and is even now preparing to do the same thing in respect to the younger and no less useful appliance, the telephone. All which is but a round-about way of saying that we are on principle in favour of all sound legislation which tends to lessen the burden of taxation on the necessaries and comforts of life, whether the taxes be imposed directly by the State, or indirectly by private individuals and corporations.

WHEN we read the other day the solemn assurance given to the House by Sir John Thompson, to the effect that he desired to do only what is fair and right in the matter of re-distribution, and when we learned that the Government had decided to yield to the representations of the Opposition with reference to one or two of the worst and most indefensible features of the Bill in both Quebec and Ontario, we were disposed to hope that the conscience of the Dominion Commons was at last asserting itself, and that the country might be spared the demoralizing spectacle of the threatened struggle. But the events of Monday have, we frankly confess, destroyed this hope, and forced us back to the conclusion that the