

THE WEEK:

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The Week,

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE capture of Big Bear and his band dispels the gloom which hung over the northern settlements of the North-West. Hunger plays a great part with these savages; it caused them to raid the settlements and it brought Big Bear out of his inaccessible lair to the front. He was willing to surrender himself, which probably means the surrender of his life also, that he might in the meantime get a reprieve from the pinch of hunger. He and his men had spent some days without food. Big Bear is by no means the worst of the lot with which he was connected. When others were engaged in massacre, he was stealthily doing what he could to save some lives. He put Cameron on the track of safety and told him to take a white woman under his protection. Among these savages the chief reigns, but the impetuous young Indians generally govern. That Big Bear instigated the massacres is at least doubtful; what sanction he gave to them is uncertain, and will probably appear from the evidence on his trial. Such of the settlers as left their homes may now return to the Indians have been taught a lesson which they will not readily forget. The losses of innocent settlers are roughly estimated at \$2,000,000. This is an outside figure and is probably a good deal in excess of the fact. Before the Rebellion Losses Commission, which it will be necessary to appoint, the Government will be at a disadvantage in seeking rebutting evidence in support of extravagant claims. All the residents of a neighbourhood who have suffered loss will support one another's claims, and there will be an informal conspiracy against the public treasury. Still no doubt evidence will occasionally crop up by which excessive demands can be met and moderated. But when all is done that is possible, many imaginary items will probably have to be allowed. The trouble which has come, and let us hope gone for good, was one that was very likely to come, in some

form, sooner or later, and if its coming was inevitable, better that it should be early than late. All Half-breed claims which rest on a reasonable foundation are being admitted; the Indians made no specific complaint and put forth no claim. But they must not be allowed to starve. Indiscriminate charity demoralizes them as well as white men; from hunters they cannot in a day be turned into farmers. It is clear that there is an Indian problem to solve. In the friction resulting from the contact of the two races, the Indian, the less self-helping and self-reliant, inevitably gets the worst of it. All the resources of charity and humanity cannot prevent the dwindling away of the aboriginal races. So it has been since the discovery of America; so, in spite of all our wishes and endeavours, it will be to the end. From Labrador, the other extremity of the country, comes a wail of despair; the disappearance of the Moose having caused famine and death among the Indians. Next year, emigration to the North-West is likely to follow the return of the confidence in public security which may be expected to be established before the winter of 1885-6 shall have passed away.

WE are sorry to find that our friends in the *Globe* think our arguments on the Disallowance question very feeble. We did not flatter ourselves that they were a thunderbolt of controversy, but we did flatter ourselves that, though unpretending, they were tenable. The *Globe* says that the Legislature of Prince Edward Island may as well be a sovereign power as the Legislature of Rhode Island. But the Legislature of Rhode Island is not a sovereign power; it is subject, so long as the State remains in the Union, to the Constitution of the United States interpreted by the Supreme Court. Again the *Globe* objects that the Constitution of the United States does not prevent the Supreme Court itself from impairing the obligation of contracts, as for instance in the *Legal Tender* decision, which deprived every creditor of a large part of his money. That the *Legal Tender* decision was a gross misinterpretation of the Constitution, and did practically break and nullify the article forbidding any Legislature to impair contracts, we heartily admit; but to misinterpret is one thing, to override is another, and the Supreme Court did not profess to override the article. That the power of interpretation and disallowance ought not to be lodged in party hands as it is at present is an opinion which we have already expressed and emphatically repeat.

ON the Chinese question, the Government is certainly acting contrary to the spirit of the report of its own Commission and the evidence by which the conclusions of the Commissioners are supported. The evidence went to show that Chinese labour, especially in the United States, had proved of great value; that by means of it feats in railway building otherwise impossible had been achieved, and that this labour is at once cheap and good. The charges of excessive immorality hurled at Chinese immigrants were not proven. This being the true state of the case, no rational being not unduly prejudiced against the Chinese could have been prepared for this measure of practical exclusion which the timidity of the Government, with one eye on British Columbia and the other on the Labour Vote, has hatched. To tell a Chinese labourer that, on his arrival in Canada he must pay a tax of \$100, is to sentence him to poverty at home; and to require that each Chinese passenger shall represent fifty tons of the vessel on which he comes, is to close the last avenue to his escape. The Labour Vote is at the bottom of this piece of race legislation. Rival labourers raise the mad-dog cry of immorality against their Chinese competitors, and the Government clutches at the objection which its own Commission has disproved as a means of conciliating the Labour Vote. Economically this measure is a fatal form of protection; morally it is a subterfuge; politically it is class legislation in favour of one form of labour and against another: a decree restricting the production of capital through the medium of high-priced labour, it is at once a political crime and an economic folly.

IN passing the Costigan Resolutions the two political parties at Ottawa displayed their emulous subserviency to the power of the Roman Catholic