

have been shaken in the least. After many days, the sum total of changes or modifications of opinion resulting from these insensible impressions would no doubt be found to be considerable, if it could be accurately ascertained and estimated.

The Main Point.

But the most important effect of such a debate as that concluded last week is, we make bold to affirm, its effect upon theoretical opinions. It has become customary in political circles to decry what is often contemptuously spoken of as "mere theorizing," and to claim that practical experiment is the only test which is really reliable in matters of fiscal policy. But little reflection is necessary to enable any one to see that the practical test, in such a question as that of Protection vs. Free-trade, is really a most uncertain and precarious one, seeing that, however prosperous a given country may be under the one or the other, it will always be well nigh impossible to prove that the same country would not have been, other things being equal—as they never are when the results to be compared are taken from different periods—still more prosperous under the opposite system, and *vice versa*. But unless Political Economy must give up all claim to a place among sciences, and is merely another term for governmental expediency, it is evident that either Free-trade or Protection must represent the natural law which governs economical progress. When one of the speakers on the Government side exclaimed, in the recent debate, "Your genuine Free-trader won't permit a cent of taxation except for revenue," or words to that effect, he enunciated the fundamental principle underlying that theory of political economy. We are not at present saying whether it is, in our opinion, the true theory. If it is, its vindication is but a question of time. But it is clear that the words quoted touch the very core of the whole debate. Everyone who accepts constitutional government must admit the right of government to impose taxes in some form or other, in order to obtain the funds necessary for meeting the legitimate expenses of government. But the moment we pass that point, the moment we admit the right of governments to impose taxation for any other purpose than to obtain necessary revenue; say, *e.g.*, for the purpose of encouraging a certain manufacture, that moment it departs from a fixed principle and makes the whole question of taxation one of expediency, and of confidence in the judgment and integrity of the Government and Parliament of the day. It does not necessarily follow, as some Opposition members constantly affirm, that such encouragement cannot be given without increasing the price of the articles to be encouraged. If it gives them a wider market, by excluding foreign competition, it may produce the same effect. All such questions are side issues. The main difference is in a nutshell. If all taxation were direct, how many citizens, when opening their purses to pay it, would cheerfully assent were the collector to say, So much is for the needs of the Government, the rest is for the encouragement of such and such industries which cannot stand alone? The chief and lasting value of the debate is proportioned to the extent to which it has helped to throw light upon this prime question of economic principle: For what may free citizens be legitimately taxed?

The By-Laws Defeated.

The overwhelming defeat of the various proposed City by-laws, by the rate-payers on Saturday, speaks emphatically on one point. It declares the unalterable determination of the citizens, or that part of them who went to the polls—only about one-third of the whole—to have no increase of the City debt, at present, for any purpose whatever. The negative vote may have somewhat lacked discrimination, but it

was, probably, on the whole, a wise thing to refuse to have the civic lighting or any other costly experiment tried just at this juncture. It is by no means certain that the experiment is not well worth trying, but not just now. A renewal of the contract with the company which now holds it, but for five years only, and at a largely reduced cost per light, is probably the wisest course which could have been agreed on. The wisdom of dismissing some of the other recommendations is not so obvious. The substitution of a piece of new steel intake pipe for the decaying wooden affair that now does service for the City, but does it so imperfectly is a repair so much needed that to delay it in the supposed interests of economy seems very like a penny-wise and pound-foolish policy. Yet, if the refusal should lead the Council to practice stricter economy for the sake of making the necessary improvement, it may be a good thing after all.

Honouring the Brave.

Canadians may well be proud of the grand record of heroic deeds which received well-merited acknowledgment from the Royal Canadian Humane Association, on Saturday afternoon, in the amphitheatre of the Normal School building. It is, we believe, no national conceit which begets the conviction that, as the offspring of the British race, the Canadian people have in their veins strains of blood which entitle them to rank among the very foremost peoples of Christendom, in point of true courage. The fear is often expressed lest long years of peace and devotion to the arts and industries and commerce which follow in the train of peace, may have a tendency to weaken those nobler traits of the national character which are supposed by many to be cultivated and developed only on the field of battle. We are glad to know that each passing year adds to the accumulating evidence that this is not the fact. In no case that we can recall in recent years has one of those great crises of life which try men's and women's souls, found either individuals or accidental groups of British or Canadians behaving as dastards, even in times of sudden panic. In few cases have such testing occasions failed to bring to the front individual heroes, worthy to take their places beside those of any other age or nation. Ample incidental proofs are being afforded, from time to time, that true courage is an element of character, not a thing of cultivation. And the altruistic is always the highest form of bravery. He who counts not his life dear to him, but promptly risks it in his desire to save others, stand in the very front rank of heroes. The Humane Society has done well to honour the goodly band of men and women who have nobly imperilled their own lives in different ways in the effort to save others. The record should be preserved in the archives and embedded in the school-books of the country. But even here it is impossible to be absolutely just in distributing the honours. There are, in Canadian and other hospitals and in humble city streets, to be found hundreds who are daily risking life itself, without hope of applause, in seeking to alleviate the sufferings and save the lives of fellow beings to whom they are under no obligations save those of Christian charity and human brotherhood. Let not these heroes be forgotten.

Disappointing Fiction.

If some of our present-day novelists were convinced that the habit of reading fiction is injurious and ought to be discouraged, they could hardly set about the work of creating a distaste for it in a more effective way than that followed by some of them. Who cares to read a story with a tragic ending? Why should anyone wish to do so? Have we not all of us enough of tragedy mixed with the prosy routine of every-