

THE WEEK.

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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE miserable bribery scandal which is occupying the attention of the public and the press, to the exclusion of more wholesome subjects, is not a very extraordinary termination to a session productive of no particular good to anybody, and chiefly spent in undignified wrangling upon subjects often not within the jurisdiction of the Local House. But though the nine weeks' session just concluded has not resulted in any startling legislation, it has demonstrated, beyond possible doubt, the clumsiness and absurdity of a Provincial Parliament constituted as that of Ontario is. To the non-partizan observer it is evident that members come up to Toronto with pre-formed ideas upon the subjects touched in the address, and that every vote goes upon strictly party issues. It is equally apparent the oratory of the House is not directed at its members, but at the constituents of the speaker and the party he is identified with. This view is taken by the leading papers, each of which reports only the speeches made by members of the party it represents, and deliberately ignores replies, even when such responses absolutely demonstrate the untruthfulness or fallacy of the statements which provoke them. A dozen men of average capacity could do the whole business of the Province in a couple of weeks with infinitely more satisfaction to the public, and at a tithe of the cost.

THE revelation before the Parliamentary Committee on Privileges and the Police Magistrate affords no grounds for hope that any satisfactory explanation can be offered which will exonerate one political party from the attempt to corrupt another, members of which have not hesitated to descend to very sorry tricks in an endeavour to turn the tables and secure a party triumph. Whatever the judicial outcome of the muddle concocted by a "brawling brood of bribers," one moral result will be to further discredit the business of politics in this country and expose its weaknesses abroad. The wholesale attempt to bribe out of power a government undoubtedly representing the political opinions of the Province, forms a fitting climax to the Muskoka, the stolen telegrams, and the Weekes scandals. This is the kind of thing such creatures as Wilkinson are usually employed for. With Kirkland—who, as an American, has no possible political interest to serve—it appears to have been a mere matter of business. But it is difficult to understand his employers entrusting so absurd and dan-

gerous a scheme to such a notorious tool as the former. Apart from the immorality and dishonour of the attempt, it was a blunder only possible to men whose lack of principle equals their want of judgment. The bare-faced manner in which it was essayed is only paralleled by the assurance with which it is sought to throw the whole blame upon the "approached" and the Government. On the other hand, no generous leader should ask his followers to descend to the tactics employed to entrap would-be corruptors, even to snatch a party triumph. It would further have shown better generalship if the Government had at once appealed to the House when first it received an intimation of what was going on, whilst the hands of their party were clean, leaving the House and the country to surmise what was contemplated by the Opposition. The whole thing is unsavoury, and is strongly corroborative of the demoralizing influence of blind partizanship and resulting from the perpetual scramble going on for place and power as rewards for political services.

AT Ottawa the news caused a great sensation, and "the Ontario bribery conspiracy" was the subject of heated discussion by little knots around the Houses to the exclusion of almost every other subject. One curious result of the matter is that the copious reports of the Parliamentary and police court enquiries have so crowded the columns of leading dailies that Mr. Blake's speech on the Orange Bill was almost unreported; and thus the world has lost the opportunity of reading one of the most carefully prepared and successful speeches of the premier orator of the Dominion.

THERE can be no question but the scandal has for the moment utterly demoralized the Conservative Party in Ontario, as evidenced in the wild manner in which the "you're-another" cry, couched in most offensive language, has been taken up by their chief organ. Meanwhile the gentlemen whom it was sought to buy are feted by their constituents as political heroes who have assisted to confound the enemy. It is felt, however, that more, if not "worse, remains behind," and that if the whole truth should ever be known, it will be found others were implicated, on both sides the House, whose names have not yet been mentioned except in whispers. The reply of an M.P.P. who posed as an independent member to the question if he had nothing to say in the matter, was pregnant of meaning: "What I know I mean to keep to myself. I have no wish to figure in the Police Court."

IT is not thought that Mr. Hickson will push the proposed reduction of Grand Trunk employes' wages to extremity. The results of a strike and stoppage of business would not be confined to the company and the workmen whose wages it is proposed to reduce, but would bring widespread disaster to commercial men generally just at a time when it is hoped the spring will bring a revival of trade which will in some degree compensate for the disasters and stagnation of the past winter. A great responsibility would rest upon those who should precipitate so calamitous a result as a general strike at the present moment—a result which would be equally ruinous to the company, the strikers, and the public.

"BRADSTREET'S" records thirty-seven failures as having taken place in Canada during the past week, a decrease of one from the preceding week. In the corresponding weeks of 1882 and 1883 there were ten and thirty-two, respectively. There were also one hundred and ninety-two failures in the United States during the past week, as compared with one hundred and eighty-six the preceding week, and with one hundred and ninety-six, one hundred and eighteen, and one hundred and twenty-one, respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882, and 1881. About 84 per cent. of these failures were those of small traders whose capital was less than \$5,000.

THERE does not appear to be any reasonable foundation for the rumours of Mr. Gladstone's intention to dissolve the English Parliament. He has nothing whatever to gain by such a step, and is, furthermore, pledged to carry the Reform Bill now under consideration before appealing to the country. What effect his indisposition may have upon the situation it is impossible to surmise, though his absence from the House of Commons at the present moment might seriously imperil the Franchise Bill and the party.