

# THE WEEK.

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## The Result of the Election.

THE people of Canada have, by their votes, decided that the Liberal leader shall be the new Premier of Canada, and Sir Charles Tupper receives his *congé*. The Conservatives are amazed at the result in Quebec, and it does seem to be a case of ingratitude as far as the French-Canadian Roman Catholics are concerned. Canadians who are not Conservatives may congratulate themselves that Jean Baptiste's answer to the *mandement* was, "Mind your own concerns. Laurier, our compatriot, knows what we want better than you do." The clerical authors of that famous document must feel considerably disturbed. Does the vote in Quebec mean that the *habitant* is getting tired of paying tithes and of being dictated to, or does it mean only that he chose a French-Canadian prime minister in preference to an English speaking one, although the former was under the ban of the Church and the latter was under its protection? In either aspect it is the striking feature of the election of 1896. In the first aspect, it is a good sign; in the latter, it is a bad one. Time alone can tell which it means.

The question now to be solved will be the policy of the new Liberal ministry on the trade question. How far is the tariff to be altered? Altered it will be that seems certain. Mr. Laurier has declared himself in favour of a policy which would assist the importation of English goods and it is probably in that direction we may see the first change made. English opinion will welcome the result of the Election as a return to Free Trade notions on the part of Canadians. American opinion will construe the vote as an evidence of the leaning of Canadians towards the encouragement of trade relations with the United States. In either aspect, manufacturers in Canada will be on tenter-hooks, and they ought to be put out of their misery without unnecessary delay. If the Liberals can now steal a little of the Conservative thunder—settle the Manitoba School question amicably—help on Imperial Customs Union, of which Mr. Laurier has also declared himself in favour, and apply to the conduct of public affairs that economy and honesty in which their opponents have been on the Liberal showing so lamentably deficient their tenure of office will be a service to Canada. They will have Sir Oliver Mowat to keep them straight. So long as he remains the leader from Ontario Canadians of all shades of opinion will be satisfied that matters cannot go very far wrong.

The battle has been a fair one, and the Conservatives have got the worst of it. It has taken just five years to

smash up the strongest combination Canada ever saw. To discuss the question, who is to blame, will not do the Conservatives any good now. They have to thank Mr. McCarthy as much as anybody, and from this time his hand in politics will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. If he joins the Liberals, they will have their opinion of him, and so will his countrymen. He can never be welcomed back to the Conservative ranks, and his political fate will be that of every man who turns on his former friends. Mr. Laurier has not suffered by his boldness. His Church attempted to read him out and failed. If any man ought to feel proud Mr. Laurier ought to be that man. He has also accepted a great responsibility. The fate of Canada is to a great extent in his hands. He has won his battle in the straightest possible way, and only history can record how he will use his victory. Sir Charles Tupper inherited a difficult situation—one he did not create. His loyalty to the declarations he made with regard to the Remedial Bill in the House of Commons was carried out to the verge of chivalry. He miscalculated the support from Quebec and he is thrown. The whole strength of the Liberals was directed against his reputation for corruption, and the bad character bestowed upon him by his opponents injured him just as the attacks upon Blaine's want of character in the same line helped to defeat the American statesman. By its new masters we may be sure Canada will be loyally served. The people understand the issues involved very well, and they may be trusted to see that their mandates to their representatives are carried out. The Liberals have had bad luck for a long time, Canadians will carefully watch what use they make of their good luck.

The Toronto elections have resulted in the return of three Conservatives to one Liberal. One of the Conservative candidates may be said to have defeated himself. He was pitted against an exceptionally suave opponent, and electors do not like to be dragooned into voting as a candidate wishes. In Montreal the famous Mr. McShane has disappeared. In the cities of Canada, as a whole, where the manufacturing classes might be thought to be strong, the Conservative protective tariff is condemned. This vote is an indication to the new men that they will be safe in altering that protective tariff. Employers will doubtless now trim their sails accordingly. If only the rural constituencies had condemned the Government the vote need not necessarily be accepted as indicating a desire on the part of the whole country to alter the tariff. But when town and country agree in wiping out a Government which appealed to them on that issue there is no other reading possible of the handwriting on the wall. How far bad times had anything to do with the vote it is hard to say. If the workmen voted for a change on the principle that any change would be preferable to being as they are, then the new Ministry are bound to give them that change under penalty of meeting their predecessors' fate when their turn comes to seek re-election. In all these cases it is well to remember that there is a Future. The Conservatives have in the present met the result of their past. That same reckoning awaits the Liberals in their turn. The country has given them their chance and must now patiently await the results. Too much must not be expected at once, but the trade question is one which will not endure much delay—and on that point some declaration to quiet men's minds should be soon forthcoming.