

## THE WEEK :

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS LITERATURE SCIENCE AND ARTS.

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.00. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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No advertisements charged less than five lines. Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE rather sharp debate in the Commons in regard to the appointment of the Minister of the Interior was noteworthy in two or three particulars. Chief among these was Sir John A. Macdonald's emphatic enunciation of the singular constitutional doctrine that Mr. Dewdney, in his capacity of Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West, had nothing to do with the state of things which led to the Half-breed rebellion. It was, no doubt, just, as well as generous, of the Premier to relieve Mr. Dewdney of all blame in connection with the affair, at the expense of the Government of the day, but it is surely a new and strange view of the duties of a Lieutenant-Governor, that because he had no executive powers in regard to the causes of discontent he was therefore at liberty, had he so chosen, to view with official unconcern the rise and spread of a state of discontent such as could and did culminate in actual rebellion. True, the Premier afterwards bore ample testimony to the fact that Mr. Dewdney did not take such a view of his duties, but, on the contrary, kept up an active and continuous confidential correspondence with Ottawa. But this fact does not affect Sir John's strange doctrine. Though, in the absence of any intimation as to the character and tone of these communications, no opinion can be formed as to the penetration and foresight displayed, it seems but fair to give the ex-Governor the benefit of the doubt, and to assume that had his intimations or remonstrances been heeded the deplorable outbreak would not have occurred. As to other allegations reflecting injuriously upon Mr. Dewdney's administration, opinions and testimony are so conflicting that the fair-minded will prefer to dismiss them from memory and leave the new administration of the Interior to be judged entirely on its merits.

A VIGOROUS agitation is probably about to be entered upon with a view to forcing the Dominion Government to veto the Jesuits' Estates Bill of the Quebec Legislature. It is needless to say that we are quite at one with the agitators in their view of the character of that bill. It is hard to conceive of legislation more opposed to the spirit of the age, or better adapted to destroy all hope of

progress in the French Province, and to bind the fetters of re-action still more tightly upon its priest-ridden habitants. Nor can the flimsy pretext of just restitution or atonement for an act of spoliation bear a moment's scrutiny, seeing that the Order whose estates are said to have been “confiscated” could have no legal existence on British soil at the time of the alleged confiscation, that it was shortly afterwards totally suppressed the world over by a Papal Bull, and that it is only by a transparent fiction that the body to whom the extraordinary grant has now been made can be regarded as the legitimate heir of the suppressed Order. Upon these points all Protestants and, we venture to hope very many Catholics, will be of one mind. The situation is undoubtedly a serious one. The passing of the Act in question by the Quebec Legislature, at the instance of the Quebec Government—nay, more, the passing of such an Act by a professedly Liberal Legislature at the instance of a professedly Liberal Government—can hardly fail to arouse thoughtful men all over the Dominion to ask anxiously, “Where are we, and whither are we drifting?” The inquiry becomes the more pertinent and pressing in view of the fact that the passing of this obnoxious Bill is but the culmination of a series of events which have long since made it clear to all whose eyes are open that the policy of the sister Province is really in the hands of the Catholic hierarchy, which is again, in its turn, dominated from the Vatican, and that Province virtually controls the legislation of the Dominion.

IT may be that in view of all this the time has arrived when Protestant and progressive Canada should take a new departure. It may even be said without hesitation that upon the taking of some new departure, and the breaking up in some way of the solid phalanx of French-Canadian ecclesiasticism rests all hope of a united and prosperous Confederation. But even so, the question of the kind and direction of the liberation movement is of prime and vital importance. The only definite action that has been so far suggested, even by those who are making the most urgent appeals to the public, is in the direction of forcing the disallowance of the Bill in question by the Dominion Government. Surely it is worth while before proceeding any further in this direction to stop and ask first whether an Ottawa veto would really cure the evil against which it was directed, and secondly, whether it would not result in greater damage and danger to the Confederation than can possibly result from the evil it is designed to cure. No great prescience is required to foresee that the disallowance of the Jesuits' Estates Bill by the Dominion Government at the demand of the Protestant Provinces, would involve a change in the constitutional doctrine of Canada equivalent to a revolution. It would virtually transform the federal into a legislative union. Grant that the Federal Government has already claimed and in various cases exercised the right to disallow, in what it considered the general interests of the whole Dominion, Acts which were clearly within the legislative powers of the enacting Provinces, is it not equally true that the Provinces affected have strenuously, and in several cases successfully, resisted such exercise of the prerogative; that it has been denounced by some of the ablest Canadian statesmen as in violation of the federal compact, and that the objection has been seemingly sustained by more than one decision of the highest court in the realm?

WE are not arguing that the proposed agitation is in itself wrong or unnecessary. We are only urging that care should be taken lest it be wrongly directed. It is not wise to take a leap in the dark. It is pretty clear that there is not a Province in the Confederation that would be in it voluntarily on any other condition than that its autonomy in all matters of local concern should be strictly observed. What can be more strictly a matter of local concern than the disposal of local funds? What right of a Province can be maintained if not its right to appropriate its own money for a purpose ostensibly local and educational? When it was at one time threatened to put the disallowance boot upon the other foot in an educational matter we know how the Province of New Brunswick was ready to resist to the death what it deemed an invasion of its chartered prerogative. We can judge

from the past how the great Province of Ontario and the small Province of Manitoba would act in such a case. Bassanio's principle, “to do a great right, do a little wrong,” would not be a safe one to act upon, even could the wrenching of the Constitution be regarded as in any wise a “little wrong.” Before committing themselves the Dominion Government would be bound to consider the probable consequence of the action. Does any one suppose the Government and people of Quebec would submit quietly to the Federal veto? All experience tells us that the Bill would be again enacted and re-enacted until the whole country would be in a ferment of excitement. Not the least probable outcome of the struggle would be an alternative between a giving way on the part of the Federal authorities and the upbreak of the Confederation. Unquestionably the Protestant Provinces of Canada have a right to declare that they will no longer wear the unequal yoke of a connection which acts as a dead weight to retard progress, and which forces upon a Nineteenth Century Confederation such anomalies as a dual language, an antiquated ecclesiastical tithe system, and the subjection of the individual will and conscience of multitudes to the direction of a priesthood ruled by a foreign supreme Pontiff. But if the time has come let the issue be distinctly made on tenable ground.

A STRONG faith, not only in the resources of Canada, but in the soundness of the policy in accordance with which the lines determining the mode of their development are now being laid down, is necessary to enable one to view without some apprehension the present financial prospect. With an actual deficit in the revenue of the year, with official estimates which make it pretty certain that the ordinary expenditures for the coming year will be even greater, and with governmental proposals of extraordinary outlays in the shape of heavy subsidies for railways and steamboat services, the outlook is certainly not free from sources of anxiety. The time is undoubtedly a critical one in the history of the Dominion. It is a time at which a timorous policy would probably be a mistaken one. The most sanguine advocate of the protective system must admit that the population of the country is not growing, nor its commerce being extended, nor its various sources of wealth developed, as rapidly as could be wished. If it can be demonstrated with a reasonable approach to certainty that the bold policy proposed bids fair to be successful, that the subsidized Atlantic and Pacific, West Indies and South American Steamboat Lines will give a healthy and powerful stimulus to foreign commerce, and so to productive industry at home, then extreme prudence would be folly, and false economy wastefulness. But it must be confessed that some of the data at present furnished—those, for instance, touching the prospects of Central American trade—do not seem so encouraging as could be wished in respect to that mutual interchange of commodities which alone can make trade with a distant country profitable. No doubt each of the various projects will receive in Parliament that searching scrutiny which the circumstances demand. Probably there never was a period in the history of Canada when so many and various difficulties, influences, and tendencies combined to make the largest demands upon the wisdom of her statesmen and the patriotism of her politicians.

THE Ontario Government is being strongly urged, on behalf of the workingmen, to exempt dwellings from taxation to the extent of \$600. Mr. Mowat has, we observe, suggested the very important query whether such legislation would not benefit the poorer classes much less than the rich and the landlords? A strong argument could, we believe, be built upon statistics to show that the exemption in question would have this effect. But apart from the operation of a special measure, it is worth while for the representatives and friends of the workingmen to consider whether the tendency of all such exceptional legislation is not against their interests on the whole. Would it not be more beneficial as well as more logical for them, instead of asking exemption for themselves, to take their stand on the broad platform which demands the abolition of all exemptions? They could well afford to declare themselves ready to ask no favours, on condition