

THE WEEK:

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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 person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

SIR RICHARD CARTWRIGHT was no doubt logical in arguing that the Finance Minister and the Government are entitled to no special credit for having remitted three and a-half millions of taxes by removing the duty on raw sugar. To a certain extent our tariff is unquestionably governed by that of our neighbours, and it is worse than idle to deny the fact, or shut our eyes to it. So long as the consumer over the border can purchase twenty pounds of refined sugar for a dollar it would be the height of folly to attempt to compel his Canadian compeer to be content with twelve or thirteen pounds of a similar article for the same sum. The Government could have rendered the Unrestricted Reciprocity propagandists no better help than by attempting to keep before the people such an object-lesson on the effects of high taxation. The only question left to the choice of Mr. Foster was that of the amount of protection, if any, to be continued to the manufacturers. He has chosen, in accordance, we suppose, with pure protectionist principles, to continue a virtually prohibitory tax upon refined sugar. The effect of this cannot be exactly determined as yet, but it will almost certainly be to compel the people of Canada still to pay a considerably higher price for the article than that for which their neighbours across the border can procure it. Perhaps a better concrete illustration of the application of pure protectionist principles to practice could hardly be found. Very little, if any, of the very considerable sum which Canadians will still have to pay for their sugars in excess of that for which they could be procured if importation were free, will go into the Government coffers, for there will be little or no importation. The clear inference is that this money will go into the pockets of the Canadian refiners of sugar. The free-trader will say that it will go to add to the wealth of the already wealthy capitalists who own the refineries. The protectionist will defend the tax, on the other hand, on the ground of the benefit

to the employees engaged in the manufacture. We shall not enter into figures. The argument from statistics is usually much more convincing when the person makes his own calculations. We therefore suggest as an interesting computation, that each householder who may chance to read this paragraph sit down at once, pencil in hand, and ascertain as nearly as he may be able, first, how many pounds of sugar are consumed in Canada in a year; second, how much more this sugar costs per pound than the price for which it could be imported but for the tax, and third, how many persons are employed in the Dominion in the manufacture of sugar. The handling, etc., would have to be done in any case. With these data before him he may easily determine, approximately, how much the consumers of sugar in Canada pay yearly, on the average, for each employee in the refineries. We venture to say that the result will be found both interesting and suggestive. Whether the ordinary employee in the business receives anything like the sum indicated, and, if not, who gets the money, are other questions which it might be well to follow up. We make the suggestion for the benefit of those who are fond of figures—or of sugar.

THE final debate in the Commons on Mr. Jamieson's prohibition motion resolved itself largely in a question of the consistency or the opposite of the Minister of Finance. It was not very difficult for Mr. Foster's critics to show that his views as a responsible member of the Government, and especially as its Finance Minister, differ somewhat widely from those which he was accustomed to urge in the capacity of a private citizen and temperance lecturer. The contrast is mainly useful as affording an instructive lesson on the duty of looking at such a question on all sides before striving to secure special and heroic legislation in regard to it. The Royal Commission that is to be appointed at the instance of Mr. Foster and the Government will certainly have a large investigation on their hands. One year will, we fear, prove a very short time in which to gather a title of the information which they are to be instructed to obtain. Their duty as defined in the resolution is to obtain the fullest and most reliable data possible respecting:—

(1) The effect of the liquor traffic upon all interests affected by it in Canada. (2) The methods which have been adopted in this and other countries with a view to lessen, regulate or prohibit the traffic; with results in each case. (3) The effect that the enactment of a prohibitory law in Canada would have with respect to social condition, agricultural business, industrial and commercial interests and financial requirements of municipalities, Provinces and Dominion, and also as to its capabilities of efficient enforcement, and all other information bearing upon the question of prohibition.

It is evident that the scope of any one of these three subjects of enquiry is wide enough to occupy the energies of the very best Commissioners that can be appointed for a much longer period than one year. It is more than probable, too, that the results of the fullest investigation may be an immense accumulation of facts so varied, diverse and seemingly contradictory that it will be quite as difficult to determine in the end what is wisest and best for the Dominion of Canada, as it now is. At the same time it is undeniably wise to gain the fullest information possible as a basis for action, before venturing upon legislation so very radical as that proposed. Though many of the facts which the Commission is to gather are within the reach of all, we more than suspect that they are far from being within the knowledge of all, even of those who are most anxious to have Parliament commit itself to a policy of "thorough." Probably the best justification of the appointment of

the Commission is that it postpones the necessity for decisive action and secures for all concerned more time to think. At the same time it must be admitted that the main practical question is after all, as was pointed out by Mr. Laurier and other speakers, that of the possibility of enforcing a prohibitory law, if enacted. We do not, of course, mean to imply that there is not a great question behind this, the question, viz., of the soundness of the principle on which such a law rests. No strength of public opinion, no strictness of enforcement, can ever win permanent success for any enactment not based on sound political and philosophical principles. But waiving that enquiry the crucial question is that of the state of public opinion. Would it enforce a prohibitory law? If assured that it could and would, comparatively few of us would doubt that its passage would usher in a period of financial prosperity and social and moral improvement, such as has not been hitherto known. But the multitude of signatures to the petitions does not guarantee enforcement, because no one believes that one in five of these signatures represents a positive force for carrying the law into effect. Nor would a mere majority vote, in a plebiscite, assure enforcement, for nothing is more certain than that even two-thirds of the people could not enforce a law of this peculiar kind, if the remaining one-third were resolutely opposed to it. While, therefore, the appointment of a Commission is a dilatory measure, and will seem to many enthusiasts a lame and impotent conclusion of the debate, we are inclined to think it on the whole the wisest action that could have been taken.

A BILL has been introduced in the Canadian Senate by Senator Macdonald to provide for the establishment of divorce courts in those of the Provinces in which they do not already exist, an exception to be made in the case of Quebec, the great majority of whose people are known to be opposed to divorce in any form. We have as yet no means of knowing whether the Bill has any prospect of success, but surely it is high time that the Canadian Upper House, especially now that it has the Premier of the Dominion to guide its deliberations, should cease to act, even by committee, as a court for the taking of evidence, especially evidence of the unsavoury kind that is common in trials for divorce. If our Senators are really in earnest in their desire to raise their Chamber to a higher level of influence and usefulness, they should be unanimous in determining to rid themselves of functions with which as a legislative body they have no proper concern. We need not repeat the strong objections that have so often been urged against the present system. It is undeniable, we believe, that it necessarily makes divorce a luxury for the rich, whereas it is evident that if a dissolution of the marriage contract is to be granted under any circumstances, or to any persons, the relief should be, as far as possible, equally accessible to all. This end would not, of course, be fully attained by transferring the investigation to a Court of Justice, but it would be approximated. Moreover, special legislative provision might be made by which the poorest as well as the wealthiest citizen might obtain release from a tie which the only offence now recognized as a valid ground of divorce may have rendered intolerable. The main point to be considered is, however, that the enquiry in such cases is a purely judicial one, and the proper machinery for determining questions of fact by means of evidence is a court of law, not a House of Parliament.

SOME startling testimony has of late been given by one of the witnesses before the Committee of Privileges and Elections, in the Tarte-McGreevy