

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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### CURRENT TOPICS.

The Parish Councils Act, soon to go into operation in England, is so often spoken of as the end of the rule of the Squire and the Parson, that one at a distance is likely to get the impression that those two influential classes are necessarily hostile to the change. Very many of them, we dare say, are. But it is pleasing to note that there are at least occasional instances in which the opposite is the fact. In his speech at Rotherham, on June 27th, Mr. John Morley quoted a very pleasing extract from a letter written by a Yorkshire clergyman to a friend, in which a meeting of ratepayers held to consider the subject is described. The meeting, the clergyman says, was the largest ever known of men only. It seemed that every ratepayer must have been present. He was struck with astonishment at the lively interest display

ed, and has no doubt that the Act will arouse the people of all classes and bring "out of apathy and indifference forces which would have remained dormant but for the Act." The closing words of the letter are worth quoting for the excellent spirit manifested, as well as for the hopeful view they present of the probable effects of the Act:

"Hitherto I have taken little interest in ratepayers' meetings, for the simple reason that I have always disliked the *ex officio* which my benefice confers, and which I am delighted to see the new Act sweeps away." "It is because I want to help my neighbors and parishioners to rouse themselves and take the powers and privileges conferred upon them by this Act, and to use them for the common good of all, that I have taken this part in these affairs, and my only wish is to serve my day and generation; and I do sincerely hope that all my brethren will strive to make this new measure of parochial self-government a power for good in their several parishes."

The action of the Government, and of Parliament under its leadership, in the case of Mr. Turcotte, brings before us a fresh sample of a species of partisan dealing which we had vainly hoped would become extinct under the *regime* of Sir John Thompson. That anyone could read the evidence given before the Committee on Privileges and Elections and have any serious doubt that Mr. Turcotte was the real contractor and beneficiary in the transactions in question, is almost beyond conception. It seems scarcely possible that those members of the Commons who voted for a verdict of not proven could have had any real doubts as to the facts of the case. The most charitable conclusion is that they satisfied their consciences with a technicality. In form, the contract was made with Mr. Prevost. He signed it and the cheques were drawn to his order. Hence the Independence Act was not violated in the letter, obvious though it was that it was grossly violated in its spirit and intent. All honour to these high-minded supporters of the Government who refused to vote with it on this occasion! Such men in Parliament are the hope of our politics. In view of the revelations which are being made in the Curran Bridge investigation, there is great need that every man, on either side of the House, who is prepared to put the country before party and honour before success should take some energetic action to elevate the standard of political morality in the Dominion and especially in the Province of Quebec. It is amazing how many there are in all grades of life who deem it no harm to de-

fraud the public treasury. It is even more amazing that these men are so often given the opportunity. There must surely be many contractors and other business men, and many officials who are honest and upright. How is it that those who are of the opposite description so often get the preference?

The total decrease in the revenue of the United States for the fiscal year ending with the month of June, 1894, as compared with that of the previous year, is measured by the enormous sum of \$89,000,000. The actual excess of expenditure over revenue was \$70,000,000, the difference being accounted for by a reduction of expenditures to the amount of between \$17,000,000 and \$18,000,000, and a balance on hand at the beginning of the year of about \$2,000,000. Of the total falling off in receipts, \$71,000,000 was in customs and only about \$14,000,000 in internal revenue. While these figures mean, no doubt, a good deal of cutting down of expenditure in articles of luxury, the want of which did not materially affect the comfort or well-being of the wealthy who were affected by it, they also mean a vast deal of economy that was felt, if not of actual privation, in myriads of families previously accustomed to a fair share of the comforts and conveniences of life. But who can measure the amount of actual destitution and suffering which is revealed in those same figures? It must be borne in mind, however, as the *Nation* points out, that a very large portion of the falling off in importations indicated by this loss of revenue was due, not to business depression, but to anticipated tariff changes. And the most vexatious part of the affair, to those whose business interests have been so seriously affected, not only to their own personal detriment but to the loss of all who were in any way dependent upon that business, must have been that the greater part of this injury was caused directly by the procrastination of Congress. This procrastination is still going on, and though somewhat better progress has been made of late, it is even now impossible to predict, with any degree of assurance, how long the uncertainty will continue, or even whether a Tariff Bill will be passed at all during the present session.

The Budget which has now been passed by the British Commons is a radical, some would say almost a revolutionary measure. As explained by Mr. John Morley, in the speech referred to in another paragraph,