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CURRENT TOPICS.

"The Ontario legislature has awakened to the evil of conferring exclusive privileges on certain occupations and creating close corporations for the benefit of private citizens. The professions which have already secured such advantages are fortunate, as all future legislation tending in that direction will be closely scrutinized."—*The Globe*.

The Province is to be congratulated on this indication that the Legislature, which means, we suppose, the Government and its supporters, without whose consent no such legislation could be enacted, has seen the error of its course in regard to a species of class legislation against which we have repeatedly protested. The Pharmacy Act has already been shorn of most or all of its objectionable clauses, and there is no reason to fear that the Architects' Society will succeed in having it made a penal offence after a certain date for anyone to call himself an architect without leave of their

society. But when the *Globe* says that the professions which have already secured such advantages are fortunate, does it mean to intimate that these have acquired vested rights in special privileges which are now admitted to be unfair and indefensible, and that the members of these professions are henceforth to enjoy in perpetuity such special privileges while members of all other professions are to be denied them? Would that be equality and righteousness?

When we predicted last week that the agitation for universal suffrage in Belgium could not long be resisted we had no idea that the popular demand had already been, or was on the point of being, conceded. But a day or two later came a despatch with the information that the Chamber of Deputies had concluded that discretion was for them the better part of valour, and had passed by a large majority a bill for giving the franchise to every male citizen of the age of not less than twenty-five years, who has resided at least one year in the same commune and has never been convicted of a breach of the law. The new Act provides, it appears, for a system of cumulative voting, under which citizens possessing certain property and educational qualifications may have a second or even a third vote. Voting is, too, to be made compulsory. The latest indications are that the passage of this bill is cooling the excitement and that order is taking the place of confusion and riot. The resort to the strike to effect a political purpose was a novel feature of the situation; but the dissatisfaction seems to have been mainly on the part of the working classes, who naturally resort to the use of the weapon with which they are most familiar and which they know best how to use. The fact that the majority of the Deputies had been elected on a universal suffrage platform, and had, under the spell of other influences, violated their pledges, helps to explain the sudden violence of the agitation.

The two principal topics at the annual dinner of the Sir John Macdonald Club of Montreal, on Saturday, were naturally enough tariff reform and the McCarthy secession. The Minister of Finance defined the present difference between the two great political parties to be that between Mr. Laurier's policy of taxation for revenue only, with free trade as the goal, and the Conservative policy of taxation for protection as well as for revenue. If this be accurate, the country is to be congratulated on

having before it a clearer statement of a more definite issue than at any previous time, at least since the adoption of the National Policy. But we are by no means certain that the Conservative electors, who certainly should have some voice in the matter, will accept Mr. Foster's definition. Unless we misapprehend the situation, not a few of them may be disposed to demur at the protectionist plank in the platform laid down for them. Some of the more logical will at least be unable to shut their eyes to the incongruity between the two aims thus combined. We are sorry that the Minister did not touch upon the very strong objections which are being urged by some influential members of his party against the system of specific duties, of which the Government seems so fond. Even so uncompromising a protectionist as Mr. Stairs of Halifax now condemns this form of protection. But it will be found, we think, that its abandonment would involve much more serious consequences than those who condemn its obvious unfairness may suppose. The loss of the revenue from this source would make the antagonism between protection and revenue as tariff principles more practically felt. Whether Mr. Foster was quite fair in describing Mr. McCarthy's policy as the denationalization of one-third of the people of this country may be left to that gentleman and his friends to say. We have never suspected Mr. McCarthy to be committing himself to a policy of utter absurdity.

Whether the genius of representative government requires that the unit of representation shall be the same in city and country is a question upon which there is room for difference of opinion. There is, certainly, much force in some of the arguments which are available in support of the view that extent of territory, difficulties in co-operation, and other circumstances which readily suggest themselves, make it but just that the ratio of voters to representatives should be considerably larger in the urban than in rural constituencies. But no one, we think, can maintain that the disproportion should in fairness be so great as that which now obtains between the representation of cities like Toronto and Hamilton, and that of the country constituencies of Ontario, in the local House. Hence justice demands that the Legislature shall, with as little delay as possible, make the re-adjustment which was admitted by speakers on both sides of the House, during the recent minority-representation debate, to be necessary. Some re-adjustment will