

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

WHETHER His Excellency, the Governor-General, is greatly disturbed or not by the severe criticisms which are being made upon his reply to the Deputation and the petition presented by them, we have no means of knowing. This very fact—that His Excellency is precluded by his official position from replying to such criticisms—will seem to most thoughtful persons, not under the influence of strong feeling, the sufficient reason why these criticisms should not be made. It is quite possible that Lord Stanley committed an error in judgment in allowing himself to be persuaded into making a statement of his personal opinions, even with consent of his advisers. If so, it lies least of all with those at whose special request he consented to make such a statement to reproach him. His Excellency must have been particularly astonished to find some of those who had been foremost in urging the direct appeal to the Representative of Her Majesty, whose royal dignity and prerogative it was conceived had suffered injury through the obnoxious Act, leading the chorus of censure with which his statement in response to that appeal has been met. Most discourteous of all, it seems to us, is the assumption that the views presented in his reply were not, as they purported to be, his own, and that the words spoken were put into his mouth by the Government, or its Minister of Justice. Neither the wording of the petition nor the pleas urged in the course of the agitation which led up to it could easily have been much more explicit in affirming that the appeal was to the Queen's Representative in person, and not to the Governor-General in Council. Nor could Lord Stanley himself have easily been much more explicit in intimating that the reply was a statement of his own views, not those of his advisers. We have not concealed and do not wish to conceal our strong sympathy with some of the chief aims of the Equal Rights Association. We have been quite unable, it is true, to see either the abstract justice or the political expediency of its effort to bring about what seemed to us an arbitrary and fruitless interference with the autonomy of a Province of the Con-

federation, or its attempt to hold the Canadian Jesuits of to-day responsible for all the iniquities of their predecessors in other and darker times. But, as we have often intimated, we quite agree with the promoters of the Association in regarding the special privileges accorded to Quebec and to the Catholics of Ontario as wrong in principle and opposed to the spirit of modern liberty and progress, and we can see no reason why a constitutional movement should not be commenced for the reform of the British North America Act in these respects. Touching, however, the matter immediately referred to, we feel bound to remember the peculiarly delicate position occupied by the Governor-General, and to regret that he should be subjected to unfavourable comment for having, in response to a special request, and with the consent of his Ministers, which should not, perhaps, have been given, expressed, in terms possibly more frank than diplomatic, his personal opinions upon a burning political question.

THE elaborate speech delivered by Hon. David Mills at Highgate, a few days since, in defence of his vote and that of the majority in the House of Commons on the motion for the veto of the Jesuit Estates Act, seems at first thought too late to be of special service. It is, we think, to be regretted that more of the leaders on both sides of the House, who voted against the motion for disallowance, did not come forward at an earlier stage of the discussion to explain and defend their action. Yet even now Mr. Mills' clear and able exposition of the historical and political grounds on which the constitutional principle of Provincial autonomy is based, should have a salutary effect. Few of those, we make bold to say, who have been so earnestly invoking the interference of the Dominion Government or of the Governor-General, can have had clearly in mind the history of the long struggle of our fathers and grandfathers for responsible government in Canada. Otherwise they could hardly have failed to perceive that arbitrary interference from Ottawa with the affairs of a Province would be no less obnoxious than was arbitrary interference from Downing Street. The right to manage their own affairs, wisely or unwisely as they may choose, is a right for which the people of the Provinces struggled long and manfully, and in the end successfully. It is not in the least likely that the majority in any Province will now either willingly relinquish that right for themselves, or seek to wrest it from others. So long as no Province of the confederation does anything which is contrary to the convictions or prejudices of the people of the other Provinces, no test of loyalty to the principle of local self-rule is afforded. It is only when some member of the confederation exercises its powers of self-rule in a manner which conflicts with the views and sentiments of the majority in other Provinces that the efficacy of our federative system and our loyalty to it are really put on trial.

IT will appear, on reflection, that this doctrine of Provincial autonomy is by no means inconsistent with the inauguration of a movement for constitutional reform, such as that of which we have more than once expressed a qualified approval. What is wrong in the British North America Act is not that it too carefully safeguards the rights of the Provinces to full control of their own local affairs, but that it imposes restrictions upon Provincial freedom of action in certain matters which should have been treated as of purely local concern. It may be, for instance, questionable whether it would be right to embody in the constitution of the Confederation any clause forbidding the Legislature of a Province to maintain a system of Separate Schools, or to establish a particular Church by means of endowments or tithes. Such prohibition might perhaps be justified on high grounds of public policy, but the question would be fairly open to debate. But, on the other hand, it could hardly be difficult to show that any provision in the general constitution compelling the people of a Province to perpetuate a Separate School system, or a system of compulsory tithing in the interests of a particular denomination, is a violation of sound constitutional principles and an arbitrary interference with the rights of the Province. And here it may be not amiss to observe that while there can be no doubt as to the opinions of the

majority in Ontario in the matter of Separate Schools, it is by no means certain that the majority in Quebec in favour of the tithe and other special privileges of the Catholic Church is so overwhelming as is commonly supposed. If such be the fact, no great harm could result to the Church from the proposed revision of the constitution. But as the history of the Quebec Act shows that the securing of these special advantages in the first instance was the act of the clergy and nobility—a small minority—without reference to the mass of the people, so it is quite possible that, freed from ecclesiastical constraint, the majority of the *habitants* would to-day prefer to be free to pay the tithe or withhold it as they might see fit. This is a point too little considered in most discussions of the question.

IT was not easy to take seriously Mr. Hugh Graham's petition to the Dominion Government asking it to refer the question of the constitutionality of the Act incorporating the Society of Jesuits in the Province of Quebec, and the Act for the settlement of the Jesuits' Estates, to the Supreme Court of Canada, and in the memorandum accompanying the refusal of the Government to take such action Sir John Thompson scarcely so treats it. There is certainly something bordering on the preposterous in the supposition that the Government, long after the Incorporation Act had gone into effect without protest, and some months after formal notice had been given that the Jesuits' Estates Act would be left to its operation, would be moved, at the instance of a private individual who did not even allege that any personal rights or property of his own were affected, to use its prerogative of referring the constitutionality of said Acts to the Supreme Court. The Minister of Justice points out the serious objections that arise to the establishment of such a precedent. He also shows the petitioner that if he is in downright earnest in the matter there are ample means provided in the Code of Civil Procedure of the Province of Quebec by which he may bring the question of the validity of the Act of Incorporation before the Court, and that if that Act can be shewn to be unconstitutional, the Jesuits' Estates Act, which authorizes the payment of a sum of money to the Society which would thus be determined to have no corporate existence, will almost surely fall to the ground as a necessary consequence. Save in the very improbable event of Mr. Graham or some other individual taking it upon himself to bring the question to a practical test in this way before the Quebec Courts, and afterwards, if desired, before the "highest judicial tribunal in the Dominion," this reply to Mr. Graham's petition will probably be the last act in the agitation for disallowance. Whether the Equal Rights Association will set itself in earnest to the formidable task of securing constitutional revision remains to be seen.

I AM persuaded that any one capable of consecutive thought, who will candidly and honestly consider the question, must come to the conclusion that the control by private individuals of land values is the prime cause of the unequal distribution of wealth; that the private ownership of land is the chief cause why men are not secured a just return for their labours." This sentence suggests in a few words the trend of the well-sustained argument of a lecture on "The Unequal Distribution of Wealth," which was delivered by Mr. Thomas Ritchie, President of the Belleville Board of Trade, before a meeting of the Knights of Labour, and is now published in pamphlet form. Whatever conclusion may be reached in regard to the efficacy of the proposed reform, which is, in a word, the Henry-George scheme of public ownership of the land and the single tax upon land values, to work out the deliverance and universal blessing prophesied for it, the careful reader of this lecture cannot fail to be impressed by its deep and serious thoughtfulness, and by the evident sincerity of the writer. Without in any way committing ourselves to the theory so well advocated, we are persuaded that nothing but good can result from a discussion carried on in the manner and spirit of this pamphlet. We regret, indeed, that, owing partly no doubt to the evident haste in preparation for which the author apologizes, and partly to unpardonable carelessness in proof-reading, the defects in the literary form in which