

## THE WEEK:

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It is not easy to see what Mr. Laurier and the Liberal party could have expected to gain by the discussion which they brought on in the unusual form of a motion to adjourn, unless it was to assure themselves and show the country that the Government majority has been seriously reduced by the entrance into the Liberal camp of three members who have hitherto been in a state of unstable equilibrium with a decided leaning to the Government side. The reduction of the available Government majority to twenty may possibly be taken by other wavering or dissatisfied Conservatives to indicate that the process of disintegration so long prophesied has begun. But the attack itself was singularly lacking in concentration, if not in vigour. The two points of assault may have been the most vulnerable to be found at the moment, but the leaders of the attacking party must have perceived from the first that not along such lines lies the road to victory. It is unquestionably true that the close connection that has so long existed between Mr. Abbott and the Canadian Pacific Railway could not fail to give rise to a certain degree of uneasiness in the public mind, in view of his elevation to the Premiership. But, as we have before said, by his prompt resignation of his directorship and disposal of his stock, the new Premier has done all that was in his power to free himself from both the suspicion of bias and the grosser inducements to it. As for the great tree can be known only by its fruits. When any legislation or executive action is proposed in which the interests of the great railway are involved, Mr. Abbott's course is sure to be very closely scrutinized. But in the present case Sir John Thompson's logic is irresistible. Those who have, without protest, permitted Mr. Abbott to hold office in the Government for three or four years, while still both a stockholder and a director in the company, cannot now protest with any consistency or force against his taking a higher office, after voluntarily divesting himself of both his stock and his directorship. Still less can they plead the example of Sir John A. Macdonald, who called him to the Government and kept him in it without imposing any such conditions, as against the present arrangement.

THE other objective point of the Liberal assault was a still less promising one, by reason, if we must hold to our metaphor, of the very indefiniteness of its location. The speakers were evidently shooting in the dark. They may be very sure, and we do not suppose that anyone seriously doubts, that the formation of the new Cabinet was attended with a good deal of difficulty, that the real cause of Sir John Thompson's declining the Premiership was more or less closely connected with ultra-Protestant feeling or prejudice among certain of the Government's supporters in Ontario, and that a serious struggle of some days' duration preceded Mr. Chapleau's consent to retain, for the present at least, his former position in the Government. But without some measure of exact knowledge and positive proof it was surely a questionable policy to make the alleged want of frankness of the Government leaders the ground of a virtual want of confidence motion. The one tangible fact, and that which gave the Government an immense advantage, was the existence of the Government itself, ranged in solid phalanx on the benches before the House, or rather the two Houses, and constituting a practical demonstration that all difficulties had been overcome and the problem solved, and that henceforth His Excellency's Advisers could be successfully assaulted only on the ground of their policy. That the statement made in the Commons by Sir Hector Langevin in response to Mr. Laurier's demand for information was as brief, ambiguous and unsatisfying as it could well be made, goes without saying. Perhaps we might safely go further and say that it fell short of the requirements of parliamentary courtesy. That it and even the more courteous words of Sir John Thompson, and of the Premier in the Upper House, fell short of a complete statement of the bare facts, is evident from the admission made by the former during the debate in question, that he had been asked by the Governor-General not simply to give advice but to undertake himself the formation of an Administration. Sir John's modesty may excuse him for having failed to mention this fact sooner, but no such motive could have prevented the leaders in both Senate and Commons from stating the fact. Whether they were bound by constitutional precedent to state it is a different question, and one upon which we shall not venture an opinion, though it is the main question in the case. There is certainly a good deal to be said in favour of the view which the Government leaders seem to have taken, that those who succeed in forming a Government, while bound to explain frankly its constitution and policy, are not under obligation to describe all the particular steps by which success was reached or detail the abortive attempts which preceded such success. If they are under such obligation, Premier Abbott and Sir Hector Langevin failed conspicuously in duty and deserve the censure which Parliament failed to pronounce. If they are not, then the speeches of their opponents fall to the level of attempts to damage the Government by bringing to light and possibly stimulating jealousies and dissensions amongst its members. If this was their sole purpose it might have been wiser for them to have waited until the Secretary of State, the prominent figure in the rumoured dissensions, was in his place.

ANOTHER instalment of the correspondence between the Governments of Canada, the United States and Great Britain, in regard to the question of reciprocity, has been given to Parliament and the public. These additional papers add little to the information already possessed, except in two or three particulars. Touching the matter of the Bond draft treaty between the United States and Newfoundland, they seem to indicate that while the British Government objected to discrimination against British imports in any arrangement which Canada might make, they were ready to assent to such discrimination on the part of Newfoundland. That is, so far as we can see, implied in the following despatch from Lord Knutsford to Lord Stanley, dated Nov. 25:—

In the present urgent condition of Newfoundland an unfortunate feeling will be excited by opposition of Canada to the effort of Newfoundland to relieve its distress. Any reciprocity treaty between Canada and the United States would, as previously, be framed so as not to place the imports from this country at a disadvantage, and it is presumed Canada would wish to retain control over her

tariff, with the view to the possible extension of her trade with the colonies and England. A more important matter, and one which the Canadian Government, unless it repudiates responsibility for the doings of that which preceded it, should be promptly called upon to explain, is brought to light in a letter from Mr. Blaine to Sir Julian Pauncefote, bearing date April 1st, 1891. In this letter, which is too lengthy to quote, Mr. Blaine makes, in courteous phrase, two astounding complaints concerning the course pursued by the Canadian Government. The first has already been publicly discussed, but so far as we are aware has never yet been explained by the Canadian Ministers concerned. It is in substance that the statement made by both Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Charles Tupper, before Canadian audiences, to the effect that the negotiations to take place at Washington were arranged for on the invitation of the Secretary of State of the United States, was quite contrary to the fact. This direct charge of misstatement was afterwards admitted in the presence of Mr. Blaine by Sir Charles Tupper, on the latter's own showing, but has thus far neither been denied, admitted, explained, defended, nor apologized for, to the Canadian Parliament or people. The other charge by Mr. Blaine is no less damaging to the reputation of Canadian statesmen. It is that the public announcement in regard to the proposed negotiations was made notwithstanding that both the President and Mr. Blaine consented to the negotiations only on the express condition that it should be strictly private. Now that this correspondence is published to the world, it is surely high time that the Canadian Government took occasion to explain these grave charges, and show, if possible, that Canadian public men do not intentionally either make untruthful statements to the public, or violate solemn personal engagements with the statesmen of other countries. In the absence of some explanation not only must the reputation of Canadians suffer before the world, but the hope of successful negotiations with the U. S. Government be seriously weakened.

THE salient point in the Budget Speech, which comes to hand too late for comment this week, is the placing of raw sugar on the free list. This means, of course, a loss of three and a-half millions of revenue to the Government, but it is equivalent to a direct increase of income to every family in Canada, as there can be no doubt that this tax at any rate came directly out of the pockets of the Canadian consumers. The Finance Minister hopes to make up one and a-half millions of the loss by means of increased taxation on liquors and tobacco. To make good the other two millions, recourse is to be had to the good old plan of cutting down expenses. It is certain that the practice of a rigid economy for a few years, even as a matter of financial necessity, would harm neither the Government nor the country, and might be the means of lasting good to both. Still, in view of the ever enlarging demands from all quarters—demands growing to a considerable extent out of the Government's ante-election programme and pledges—it is not easy to see how this economy is to be effected. We have, we confess, a good deal of sceptical dread of the result.

CONTRARY to expectation the Supreme Court did not on Monday announce its decision on the validity of the Manitoba School Act. Meanwhile additional interest has been given to the question by the returns brought down the other day by Sir John Thompson, giving all the correspondence on the subject of the Manitoba School Act and the Act discontinuing the official use of the French language in that Province. The interest attaches mainly to the arguments urged by Archbishop Taché and other prelates of the Roman Catholic Church. Two points in the Archbishop's elaborate remonstrance are worthy of note. In the first place the idea seems to be conveyed by the Acts in question that the French-speaking people are subjected to special disabilities in respect to the use of their language and the practice of their religion. For instance, His Grace says that at Ottawa he was assured that the rights of the Red River people would be fully guarded under the new regime, and that both the Imperial and Federal authorities would never permit newcomers in