

THE WEEK:

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

WHILE our last number, containing Senator Alexander's opinion on the state of the Senate, was in the press, came the announcement of the nomination of Judge Gowan. Judge Gowan is a personal and political friend of Sir John Macdonald, but he has never taken an active part in politics nor can his appointment be fairly said to be the reward of partisanship. By his long service in the Judiciary, and by his liberal and comprehensive views of law, as well as by his character and position, he is well fitted to represent his profession in the Senate, and to play a useful part in moulding legislation, and especially in the codification of the law. The selection was as creditable as any selection could be in which party lines were not entirely ignored. We hailed it as a new departure, and began to surmise that beneficent influence might have been exercised in a quiet way by the Governor-General, who is ostensibly responsible, and to whom, in an hour so critical for Second Chambers, the condition of the Canadian House of Lords must be far from a pleasant spectacle. But this dream was rudely dispelled by the announcement of the second nomination. It is impossible to doubt that the elevation of Dr. Sullivan is payment for party services and especially for influence in Kingston elections. If the Prime Minister's butler were paid with a seat for life in the National Legislature, the mischief done would be practically less, and the insult to the nation would not be much greater. It is no exaggeration to say that there is not another community of freemen on earth which would tamely endure this system. To all apologies for it the simple answer is: Let it be submitted to the judgment of the people. That the people of Canada should never have been allowed a voice in the settlement of their own constitution shows that the tendency to usurpation is not less strong in politicians than in kings.

IN speaking of the possible intervention of the Governor-General we referred, of course, to informal influence gently exercised behind the scenes. But, formally and constitutionally, is the Governor-General wholly free from responsibility for the appointments made in his name? We should say not. We should say that he is still bound to satisfy himself in all cases that the person named to him by the Minister is morally eligible. The Sovereign whom he represents takes the advice of her Minister on the creation of Peers, the appointment of judges and the selection of bishops; yet if the Minister were to name for a Peerage his election agent, or for a Judgeship a lawyer of the stamp of Dr. Kenealy, or for a bishopric

a wild young Ritualist who had just been running a-muck in the Ecclesiastical Courts, the Queen might properly say that among eligible persons she would choose on his recommendation, but this person was not eligible. It is most unlikely that a British Minister will ever put his Sovereign in this dilemma; but we fear it is not inconceivable that a Canadian Minister, hard pressed in a party conflict and unable to escape from importunity, may propose to a Governor-General a flagrantly improper appointment. Under such circumstances we submit that the Governor-General would be called upon to act as the guardian of public right and his own honour. He might have to face the consequences, which is not fashionable, but must sometimes be done. We should venture to extend the analogy to measures. On a question of policy the Governor-General would be relieved of all responsibility by following the advice of his ministers; on a question of public morality we conceive that he would not. If Lord Lorne had thought that in dismissing Lieut.-Governor Letellier he would be committing an act of injustice, his proper course, we venture to think, would have been to refuse, and if the Minister insisted, to invite other men to his councils. If they declined, or if the result of the appeal to the country which must have followed was against him, he would have retired with character unstained.

DESCRIPTIONS of the opening of Parliament bring before us the figure of the Chieftain resplendent in the uniform of his new order and toying with his cocked hat bedecked with white plumes, together with those of other personages magnificently arrayed. Nobody wishes to gainsay the brilliancy of the spectacle, or detract from the glory of those concerned. But there is a little debt of gratitude which the country, if it wishes to be loyally served, must never forget to pay on these occasions. Amidst that throng stood two men undecorated, who when offered a decoration had on patriotic grounds declined it. Neither of them was wanting in heartiness of feeling towards England or the Imperial Government; but both of them deemed it best to accept honour only at the hands of the community which as public men they served. That they were right in this, and that the sacrifice which they made was of high value to Canada, is the opinion of Canadians neither few nor mean. Patriotism sees on the breasts of Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Blake a cordon of honour at least as bright as the Grand Cross of the Bath.

INTEREST in the proceedings of the two Legislatures which have just met is diminished by the weakness of the Opposition. This is a casualty for which the Partyists have not provided. They must admit that an Opposition strong enough to be a check on the Government is an indispensable part of their machine, which, without it, would produce the irresponsible domination of a faction. But how is it to be secured? In a "tug of war" you can match the members and the weights; but in the tug of parties you are always liable to a complete derangement of the equipoise. Is the minority in such a case to be reinforced by a detachment from the ranks of the majority? Few citizens are so easily transferable as the gentleman who at the Macdonald banquet avowed that the N. P. had turned him at once from a thorough-going Liberal into a thorough-going Tory. The weakness of the Opposition at Ottawa is the result of a great error in strategy, which better strategy, and above all the adoption of a definite commercial policy, may repair. The weakness of the Opposition in Ontario is inherent, and likely to increase rather than diminish so long as its present relations are maintained. Its position is Anti-Provincial, as the Boundary Question showed with fatal clearness. It would be an overstatement to say that the present Government rests on a combination of the other Provinces against Ontario; yet it rests mainly on Quebec, which is the Province most antagonistic to Ontario, and looks to the smaller Provinces to make up the majority. Ontario is rather the victim, while the other Provinces are the beneficiaries of the system. The Tory Party in Ontario is a garrison; or rather it is a detached corps the individual success of which is sacrificed to the main object of operations. So long as it remains in this subordination the local influences must be against it; strength will not come to it; session after session it will formally draw