

# THE WEEK:

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

SOME loss of excise revenue the Minister of Finance expects to result from the extension of the operation of the Scott Act. The consumption of beer will be greatly diminished in Scott Act counties, and the whiskey illegally sold there will often owe its origin to local stills clandestinely set up and worked. This loss Sir Leonard Tilley purposes to make up by increased customs and excise duties on cigars. It cannot be objected that in arranging these duties for revenue purposes he bears in mind the welfare of Canadian cigar manufacturers. To incidental advantages of this kind no one objects; and if he went no farther in the direction of protection when re-adjusting the tariff there would be nothing to be said by way of censure. But the greater part of the alterations proposed avowedly have protection, not revenue, for their object. The Minister of Finance lays it down as a general rule that persons who start new manufactures have a right to ask that their interests should be guarded by the shield of protective duties. The manufacturers of pickles and sauces, cutlery, imitation stones used in flash jewellery, asbestos goods, cotton bed-quilts and fluid extracts, are all to be brought under the patronage of the State, by means of increased duties. In this way the list of protected articles increases from year to year, and unless the present policy be reversed the time will come when it will be difficult to find any manufacture produced under conditions of free competition. The farmer, however, in spite of wheat and flour duties, cannot be protected; he must meet the world's competition in the markets to which his surplus produce goes. Sir Leonard has begun to try prohibition both in exports and imports; and though for the first essays in this direction plausible excuses are offered, the

ground he is treading upon is a dangerous quagmire. The forbidding of the exportation of small game may prove an encouragement to the smuggler. Similar laws, on the other side of the international line, do not curtail the supply of prohibited game here. Against the products of foreign prison labour our artisans have a right to be protected; but on the other side it is not the less true that consumers have a right to buy in the cheapest market. Still Sir Leonard need not fear that in this case he will come under a heavy censure for turning the scale in favour of free industry and against the enslaved labour of foreign prisons. We wish we could say that none of the other changes proposed are open to more serious objections.

THE Report on the manufacturing industries of Canada is confessedly imperfect. In Ontario and Quebec "many towns having large industrial works have not been visited at all" by the persons charged with the enquiry; and the "factories which were in existence some years prior to 1879 but were closed in 1878," the year of comparison with 1884, "are given as new industries." By pursuing this plan, Mr. Blackeby greatly diminishes the value of any comparisons he makes. Respecting the Dundas Cotton Factory, which has apparently made no progress since 1884, we get little information. The cotton factory of St. Stephen swells the list of new industries; but about the disastrous vicissitudes through which it has gone no information is vouchsafed. From the way in which the Londonderry iron works are mentioned, a reader whose knowledge was confined to this Report would conclude that they had been in a flourishing condition since 1878. This is not impartial reporting, and the one-sided statements greatly detract from the value of the Report. The incompleteness of the Report is a less serious objection, enough being given to show the tendency of the tariff to stimulate domestic manufactures; and that it has had that effect no candid person would think of denying. But the fact that a given number of workmen and a given amount of capital have been made to pass from one employment to another affords no proof of the benefit of the transition to the public at large. If it were proved that the wages of labour in the new vocations were higher than in the old, and that the gains of capital in the new industries had been increased, only half the story would have been told. To justify the change it is necessary to show that these advantages have not been gained at the expense of the consumer; but when importation of foreign goods is made difficult by high duties the cost to consumers must increase, or, what is the same thing, the normal diminution of prices is arrested. The products of domestic foundries, the Report tells us, still met "some little foreign competition"; and that while the best kinds of fur goods are made up here, there is, in the cheaper kinds, "some competition from the poorly paid labour countries of Europe." This is a translation of the American complaint about the products of "the pauper labour of Europe." It is evident, if these statements be correct, that in some articles the tariff has carried us to the verge of prohibition. But we are asked to believe, and some one in Winnipeg has been found to certify, that a thirty-five per cent. duty has reduced the price of agricultural implements. A thirty-five per cent. duty is the strangest device that ever mortal man invented for reducing the price of the articles on which it is put; and we must decline to believe that Sir Leonard Tilley has by this stroke of policy succeeded in reviving the age of miracles.

SIR LEONARD TILLEY paid perhaps a necessary, certainly a politic, tribute to popular prejudice when he announced his intention of legislating for the protection of "honest labour" against the labour of convicts. All labour is alike honest, if the work itself is thoroughly done; and the work of the hapless inmates of penitentiaries is probably done more thoroughly than that of a good many builders and plumbers who are unconvicted and loose on the community. But the prejudice seems to be insuperable, and it is fatal to prison reform. There is but one way of reclaiming or permanently improving a prisoner; you must give him regular work and allow him to earn a little pay. It is necessary not only that he should work but that he should work with heart; by setting him to carry cannon balls to and fro or to turning a treadmill of any kind you only teach him