

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

SENATE reform, the opinion was expressed last week in these columns, is not likely to be brought about by a chance reference to the subject in an occasional speech. The *Globe* reminds us that Mr. Blake's objection to nomination was first made ten years ago. This is true; but it would no more be fair to Mr. Blake to hold him to an opinion of Senate reform expressed ten years ago than it would be to assume, which we hope would not be correct, that he still holds to the view which on the same occasion he casually let drop in favour of Imperial Federation. But though he declared in favour of Senate reform ten years ago, it will scarcely be contended that he has continuously pursued the subject in the spirit of one who is determined to bring about a change. There may have been good reasons why, when he was in office, Mr. Blake did not attempt to carry his opinion into action, and also why, when the Colonial Secretary refused to allow an increase of nominated members, the alternative of election was not insisted on. Mr. Blake is on the side of Senate reform: whenever he refers to the subject he gives no uncertain sound; but he does not marshal his forces with the energy and persistency which, in political contests, are the conditions of victory. Not that he is lukewarm, for it is not in his nature to be so; but he is pre-occupied with objects which, if more urgent in point of time, are often of minor importance. The result is that Senate reform has been but little advanced by the eloquence of the leader of the Opposition. An Opposition leader may, as things go, well believe that he best performs his duty to the public during the sittings of Parliament by criticizing the measures of the Government rather than by the introduction of questions himself; but the reform of the Senate is at present rather a popular than a parliamentary question; and the first step to be taken is to convince the electorate of the necessity of a change. To say that it is not especially the duty of the leader of the Opposition to undertake the preliminary work, would practically be a plea for delay. The press, if it believes Senate reform to be necessary and desirable, has a duty to perform equally with any member of the Legislature, since the question belongs to the domain of opinion. The reform of the Senate, if it is to be reformed, its abolition, if it is to be abolished, concerns the whole people, without respect to party: one party, finding the Senate under its control, is only anxious that things should remain as they are; the other professes a desire for a change, and is, no doubt, sincere in doing so, but it does nothing effectual towards bringing it about. The only hope of Senate reform would seem, under the circumstances, to be a popular demand that shall express the voice of the nation, irrespective of party.

It is proper to say, by way of correction, that the Opposition at Ottawa did once, M. Laurier being mover and Mr. Blake seconder, divide the House on the coal and "breadstuff's" duties, and that so far a distinct issue was made on the 30th March, 1882. Forty-seven members voted for the motion, and we take it for granted that these members belonged to the party led by Mr. Blake. We are glad to be able to put on record the fact that a *pro forma* motion against these obnoxious duties was even once made; but the satisfaction which the friends of free bread and free coal feel at the movement is somewhat diminished by the fact that Mr. Blake contented himself with seconding the motion and did not consider the occasion to be one on which he was called upon to speak. The languid nature of the attack goes far to account for the feeble impression it made on the public mind and its early fading out of recollection. The occasion for making the motion was properly taken when the Minister of Finance moved the House into Committee of Supply; and if the motion had been repeated each Session in the spirit of earnestness which overcomes obstacles, those who made and sustained it would have got the credit due for having done something more than making a formal record. Even now it is not too late to commence a systematic attack on the coal and bread duties. If the Anti-Corn Law League had conducted its campaign in the feeble way in which those duties have been dealt with, the British Corn Laws might have been in existence still. An annual motion, such as that made by M. Laurier in 1882, accompanied by a debate displaying the whole strength of the Opposition, though it might not have much changed the complexion of the division in the present House, would have sown seed that would have gone far towards bringing the fruit of future success. The public would be delighted if it were able to accept what has been done as an earnest of more vigorous effort.

THE breaking up of the Bleus in Quebec has gone very far. What was once a united party now presents the spectacle of two hostile camps, with separate leaders and mutually hostile journals making daily war upon one another. One camp acknowledges Chapleau, the other Langevin, for its chief. The discords are telling on the constituencies; to them the Bleus owe the loss of Jacques Cartier, Levis, and Megantic. The *Minerve* is greatly discouraged at the *insubordination en permanence* of the Castors; and it calls on the chiefs of the party to cast out the authors of discord. Political excommunication would make the breach complete, but it could not heal it. The desperate remedy recommended does not even meet the desperate case. There is only one thing that can reunite the Bleus: in a raid on the Federal exchequer they may always be relied upon to act as one man, but they would re-commence their quarrel over a division of the spoils.

SPECULATION as to the causes of the Premier's visit to England has exhausted itself, and the multiplicity of conjectures has ended in confusion. From the first, however, a grain of certainty lay on the surface; Sir John's health is critical, and it is desirable for him to seek the advice of a London physician, from whom in a previous crisis he received marked relief. But if his errand had no other object than a visit to Dr. Clarke, it would scarcely be possible for him to remain in London for a month, at the present time, without some public question coming up to which his attention would unavoidably be directed. The annexation of Jamaica will soon have to be decided upon. Mr. Solomon, on his return to the island, lost no time in bringing the question before the Council, and Lord Derby has again volunteered the statement that the British Government will interpose no obstacle to annexation. Does this mean that the Colonial Office, perplexed with the difficulty of the Jamaica question, intends to ask Canada to shoulder the burthen? Annexation to Canada is the third remedy which Jamaica has sought for the commercial prostration under which she is suffering; the other two have been put aside as impossible of application, and this apparently receives encouragement from Lord Derby. But annexation cannot be brought about without the consent of Canada, and if the Colonial Office has resolved to use its influence to get Jamaica annexed, Sir John Macdonald is the man above all others whom Lord