

# THE WEEK.

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

A DISCUSSION which may not be unprofitable is just now going on in some of the city dailies, touching the condition and prospects of real estate in the city of Toronto. It is always the wise policy to look facts fairly in the face. The facts in this case, without being in any way alarming, are serious enough to demand attention. There can be no doubt that the real estate business has been, to use the current phrase, to a considerable extent overdone. House-building, too, was pushed for a few years considerably faster than was warranted, even by the steady and rapid increase of population. The result is that the demand for property in lots and houses has, for the present, become slack for want of purchasers, though, so far as we are aware, rents have not fallen to any appreciable extent. Nor do we know any reason for doubting that the growth of the city is still going on at pretty nearly the old rates. What seems chiefly to be needed is, as some of the business men interviewed have said, a rest, until the accommodations already provided shall have been well taken up, when, there seems every reason to hope, the briskness of the building trade and of the various industries dependent on it will gradually return. Meanwhile the great need of reform in civic administration is very generally felt and admitted. If it be true, as appears from figures recently published by Alderman Hallam, that while the value of taxable property in the city increased nearly three times in ten years, and the amount spent on local improvements about eight and a-half times, the rate of taxation rose one and a-quarter mills in the same period, there is evidently a startling want of proportion, which should be closely enquired into and rigidly corrected. The fact that more than one-sixth in value of all the real estate in the city is exempt from taxation is very significant in the same connection. Why should so large a portion of the city property be relieved from its share of the burden, at the expense of all the rest? Our space does not permit of our going minutely into such questions, nor would it be exactly in our line to do so. We refer to the matter just now simply to emphasize the need of wisdom and care in the selection of our civic rulers, and above all of mayor, a few weeks hence. It is unfortunate that the Citizens' Committee, which was appointed some

time ago, has disappeared from the arena. It is above all desirable that the great body of citizens who, without personal aims to reach or personal ambitions to gratify, are alike interested in securing more economical and efficient civic administration should for once bestir themselves, and eschew the policy of drift for one of action and intelligent co-operation. Is there, for instance, no way in which the citizens can agree beforehand upon one or more candidates for mayor instead of waiting until their choice is limited to those individuals who either push themselves forward, or secure nomination by some clique of interested friends? Is there no possibility of convening a meeting of citizens, so numerous and at the same time so representative, that their choice of a candidate would make his election sure? Even if it were found impossible to secure general agreement in regard to one man, it would matter less if there were several candidates, provided all of them were men well qualified intellectually and morally for the position. The city evidently needs the very best mayor and Council that it is possible to secure, to manage its affairs during the next few years. Why should not forethought be exercised in order to elect such? The meeting at the Board of Trade rooms recently was a good omen, so far as it went, but no decisive action was taken. Had it been otherwise, it is questionable whether that meeting was sufficiently representative of all classes of citizens to ensure the success of its candidate. Possibly the committee which was we believe appointed, may be able to feel the pulse of the majority with such effect as to enable them to agree upon an acceptable nominee.

It is but natural that the series of articles by Mr. Davin, M.P., on the reorganization of the Dominion Cabinet, of which the fourth appears in our columns this week, should attract the attention of thoughtful and patriotic men all over the Dominion. The subject is one which at the present juncture is first in the minds of all who are following with intelligent interest the course of political events in Canada. The writer is admirably qualified by intellectual and literary ability, as well as by the exceptional opportunities he has had for years past, not only as a member of Parliament but as an intimate friend of the late Premier and of other men high in office and influential in public life, to know whereof he affirms. Nor does Mr. Davin in the least over estimate the importance of the present crisis, pregnant as it is with results which must very seriously affect the well-being of Canada for many years to come and which may involve its destiny. As Mr. Davin has clearly pointed out, the necessity for Cabinet reorganization brings with it by far the most serious test to which the statesmanship of Premier Abbott has been as yet subjected. Hitherto his task has required little more than the prudence which is the outcome of long experience and the business power and sagacity which a man of good native abilities could scarcely fail to develop in the course of long years of combined legal and parliamentary experience. Now, however, a new departure must be taken, if the exigencies of the political situation are to be met. A timid conservatism, it is true, might be strongly tempted to try a tinkering process of repair, instead of a bold policy of reorganization, but success even in the lowest sense along such a line could be at best but temporary, while success in the highest sense would be an impossibility. If we might follow a little further the somewhat fanciful analogy suggested by the word, the value and durability of the Cabinet is determined, not by the two or three pieces of good wood which may be wrought into its framework, but by the quality of the material of which it is composed throughout. It is at this point that Mr. Davin rather surprises us by the frankness of his opinions in reference to the methods of Sir John A. Macdonald, as seen especially in his choice of colleagues. If we admit the fact that the late Premier preferred tractableness to strength, either intellectual or moral, in those whom he chose as his associates in office, he but followed a policy which has been characteristic of many men of marked individuality and force—we do not say men with the very highest ideals, or of the very largest calibre. But be all that as it may, in the one central principle towards which all Mr. Davin's arguments are pointed, his sentiments can find, we are sure, only the

heartiest response in the breast of every high-minded citizen from Halifax to Vancouver. What is imperatively demanded at the present moment is a Government composed throughout of the broadest, loftiest and most statesmanlike minds to be found in the Dominion. Upon his steadfastness in adhering to this aim, and his success in reaching it, depend all Mr. Abbott's prospects of any real and lasting success in the accomplishment of the great and hard task which is set before him. Surrounded by a band of men whose characters and abilities command and compel the confidence of all honourable citizens, his position might, by a year or two of good legislation and wise administration, be made impregnable. Should he yield to selfish or factional pressure, and adopt a low policy of expediency, any structure he may erect will be pretty sure to go down before the first of the blasts, many of which are no doubt still in leash in the cave of the political winds.

THE Quebec Commission is evidently approaching the close of its labours so far as the taking of evidence is concerned. The course of the investigation has been marked by the impartiality which was to be expected from the high judicial standing of the commissioners. Their verdict, assuming that they regard it as a part of their duty to pronounce one, will be looked for with much interest. So much depends upon the manner in which the witnesses give their evidence, and the impressions made by them upon minds trained to study character and estimate the weight of testimony, that it is not easy for those who have merely read summaries of the evidence as reported in the newspapers, even to guess at the conclusions that have been, or may be, reached by the judges. We shall not attempt such guessing. It may not be amiss, however, to observe that the evidence of wrongdoing on the part of Mr. Mercier and his Ministers is by no means so conclusive as might have been expected from the evidence adduced before the Senate Committee. There is, indeed, a marked similarity, in some respects, between the case of Mr. Mercier and that of Sir Hector Langevin. Pacaud, like Murphy, stands, self-confessed, a boodler of no ordinary type. Like Thomas McGreevy, too, though scarcely to so great a degree, he seems to have been the confidant of the Minister. In each case the dishonourable gains were applied to party purposes. In each the Minister shared largely in the benefits of this distribution. In each it is well-nigh incredible that the Minister could have been ignorant of the source of the gains by which he and his political friends so signally profited. And yet in each there is no direct evidence—if Murphy's is excluded as wholly worthless—against the Minister, and in each the Minister, on oath, makes a clear and emphatic protestation of innocence. It remains to be seen whether the judicial court will reach conclusions widely at variance with those of the Parliamentary majority. In the interests of truth in both cases it is probably unfortunate that the terms of reference and the laws of evidence were so interpreted as to prevent the investigation from taking a wider range. In the case of Pacaud, dishonest and dishonourable as his conduct unquestionably was, we do not know whether his offence is one punishable by the courts or not. In the case of the Ministers implicated the alternatives seem to be that a verdict of virtually "not proven" will leave the matter just where it found it, save for the loss of reputation and prestige the investigations must cause, while a finding of "guilty" will be open to whatever of suspicion or uncertainty attaches to a verdict based on circumstantial evidence.

THE decision of the Supreme Court of the Dominion in the matter of the Manitoba School Act is one of far-reaching effect. Reversing the decision of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, the highest judicial authority in Canada now pronounces the said Act *ultra vires* of the Manitoba Legislature, and consequently unconstitutional and void. If the verdict of the Supreme Court be not, in its turn, reversed by the Queen's Privy Council, to which appeal will no doubt be made, the obvious consequence will be to saddle the people of Manitoba for all time to come with a double system of schools, one of them strictly denominational in character, yet entitled equally