

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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THIS time the expected has happened. Acting on the advice of his responsible Ministers, His Excellency, the Governor-General, has been pleased to dissolve the House of Commons one year before the efflux of its full term of life, and issue his writs for a new Parliament. The time allowed for the elections is short, scarcely more than a month. Whether this is a matter for congratulation or for regret is a question in regard to which opinions will differ. Perhaps, as party politics go and as such contests are managed, it is as well that the agony should be short, and the time for wire-pulling and bringing undue influences to bear as limited as possible. Did our mode of conducting elections and transacting our political business approach more nearly to an ideal standard, it would, on the other hand, be highly desirable that the fact of a coming dissolution should be definitely known many weeks beforehand. The interval could then be used by the leading men of both parties in discussing the great issues involved and educating the people to an intelligent and dispassionate consideration of their respective policies and arguments. Good citizens would be proud to see these leaders meeting often face to face on the same platforms, replying to each other's arguments and presenting their own, openly, in the presence of the people; instead of discussing individually to meetings composed of their own partisans. It is not to the credit of our political methods that the politicians have in these days almost abandoned these old-fashioned and manly face to face discussions. With regard to the question of dissolution itself, we have before maintained what seems clearly to be the constitutional right of the Government to determine on its own responsibility when the circumstances are such as to warrant or demand a premature dissolution. They may abuse the right, just as they may abuse any other trust. The people must be their judges. In one respect we have no hesitation in saying that the Government seems to us to merit very severe censure, and the people must be careless of their own rights and hold the palladium of their liberties, the franchise, in small estimation, if they do not find means of bestowing that censure. We refer to the fact that, under the unwieldy and enormously expensive Franchise Act the Government have introduced, and through their own deliberate refusal to make the revision needed under that Act, a hundred thousand of loyal Canadian citizens

will be deprived of the right to vote in the coming election, while the presence on the two-year-old voting lists of thousands of names which should not now be there will afford facilities for fraud and personation which should not exist. If the people of Canada do not take some means both of resenting this great wrong and of preventing its repetition, it can only be because partisan zeal makes them strangely blind to their own rights and interests.

THOUGH the ground on which the sudden appeal to the people is based is, of course, the main issue in the case, it has been so often before us that we do not now deem it necessary to dwell upon it. That ground is ostensibly that the Dominion Government is making, through the British Government, certain proposals to the United States for negotiations looking to an extension of our trade with that country. The fact is significant in support of what THE WEEK has often said touching the futility of attempting to deny that reciprocal trade with our neighbours is most desirable, if it can be obtained on terms consistent with our duty to the Mother Country, and the folly of indulging in a mode of speech and action tending in the direction of either commercial or political hostility to those neighbours. The present course of the Government is a full endorsement of this view, even if it be, by implication, a rebuke of the utterances of some of the Government's most zealous supporters. Beyond this we can but repeat what we have often said, that the politicians of the United States have made it as clear as language can make it that restricted reciprocity, such as that under which Canada once prospered, is now forever out of the question, and that we are utterly unable to see what scheme of reciprocity Sir John A. Macdonald can hope to induce the Washington statesmen even to discuss, which will not be incompatible with his avowed determination to uphold the National Policy in its integrity. Here we can only rest and watch for light.

POLITICAL developments at home have so largely occupied our attention this week that we have left ourselves no space to comment upon other events of interest which are occurring in various quarters, such as the judgment of the full Court in Manitoba upholding Judge Killam's decision affirming the validity of the new School Act of the Province; the downfall of Crispi, the Italian Premier; the apparent successes of the Rebel party in Chili; and the abortive attempt at insurrection and revolution in Oporto. The first we confidently anticipated. Its chief effect will probably be to stimulate the agitation for disallowance in Quebec, an agitation for which, by the way, the coming election affords a tempting foothold. The second seems to have little political significance save as a rebuke to the extravagant expenditures of the Government, especially in Africa; though the news was at first hailed with effusion in France, as presaging the end of the Triple alliance. The third is but an episode in the history of a people who, if we may venture the Hibernicism, are never at rest save when fighting at home or abroad. The fourth is probably but an outcome of the unreasoning resentment aroused by the results of Portugal's dispute with England in Africa, though it may prove to have a deeper significance as a premature outbreak of a republican sentiment much more widespread than this ill-managed and feeble display gives reason to suppose.

BETWEEN Sir John A. Macdonald's speech before the Albany Club, and Mr. Blaine's blunt letter to Congressman Baker, we are now in a position to judge how broad, or rather how narrow, was the foundation for the rumours current last week touching negotiations for reciprocity. Sir John, while indicating his readiness to consider reciprocal trade in natural products, and even to some extent in certain other commodities, affirms the determination of the Government to maintain the principle of the National Policy intact. Mr. Blaine, on the other hand, says very frankly that no scheme for reciprocity with the Dominion, confined to natural products, will be entertained by the Washington Government. This is just what was to be expected. It has long been evident to all who have paid any attention to the drift of opinion and sentiment on the other side of the frontier, that no renewal

of reciprocity on the old lines, that is in natural products only, is now, or is likely to be in the future, possible. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Opposition aided by the chief writer of the *Globe*, are openly using their best endeavours to obtain from the United States Government and Congress an unequivocal offer of unrestricted reciprocity. It is difficult to determine just what probability there is of success in this attempt. A considerable number of Senators and Congressmen are, no doubt, in favour of such a resolution, but it is evident that the majority take but a languid interest in the matter, and in the fierce competition to get other questions of intense party interest before the two houses for discussion and action, it will be no easy task to obtain a pronouncement upon a matter of this kind. No doubt such a declaration as it is sought to obtain from the two Houses of Congress would be of very great use to the Canadian Opposition in its canvass, now that the anticipated dissolution has become an accomplished fact. It would furnish an effective answer to one objection that has been persistently and effectively urged, viz., that we have no assurance that even unrestricted reciprocity is attainable, and that to elect a House of Commons pledged to that as a policy might be only to prepare the way for rebuff and humiliation. But assuming that reliable assurances may be procurable on that point, we wonder if it has not occurred to Mr. Laurier and Sir Richard Cartwright and other leaders, that another assurance is equally desirable in order to commend their policy to the Canadian people, and insure its acceptance. Let them get, in addition to the declaration sought from Washington, a clear intimation from the British Government that it will approve or assent to a policy of this kind, and the verdict of the Canadian people is assured. The only thing which could then save the Government from defeat would be its adherence to the new policy. While we thus write we have no means of knowing to what length the British Government would go in order to secure a settlement of all outstanding difficulties with the United States, and a prospect of perpetual peace and friendship between the Republic and Canada. It is well known that both the Government and the people of England earnestly desire such amity, not only for political reasons, but for others which, though sometimes called “sentimental” by way of disparagement, are really worthier and nobler than any dictated by considerations of mere policy. The chief significance in the communications with Mr. Blaine is that they seem to have been the outcome of an overture of some kind by Sir Julian Pauncefote. He is said, it is true, to have acted on a suggestion from Ottawa, but he could hardly have done so without being sure of the approval of Westminster. We suppose that the British Government would be much more chary than the United States Congress about giving aid and comfort to the Dominion Opposition in its warfare against a strong Government, but it is none the less pretty clear that the assurance of the approval of the Mother Country will be one thing greatly needed to secure the adoption of Sir Richard Cartwright's policy, in addition to its endorsement at Washington. The people of Canada are not likely to sanction wholesale discrimination against the Mother Country without her consent. Mr. Laurier and Sir Richard are welcome to the hint.

THE direct practical outcome of the annual meeting of the Imperial Federation League of Canada is, we suppose, embodied in the resolution that was adopted to the effect that “in the opinion of the League in Canada it would promote the objects of the League if a council to be composed of representatives of the self-governing colonies as well as of the Mother Country be convened by the British Government for the purpose of considering the practicability of improved trade relations between Great Britain and the different colonies and dependencies of the Empire.” This amended resolution is but the expression, in the form of a general statement and in more euphemistic terms, of the first postulate of that which it supplanted, and which recommended the proposition to “provide a closer union between the various parts of the British Empire by means of an Imperial tariff of customs, to be levied independently of the duties payable under customs tariff on goods entering the Empire from abroad, the revenue from such tariff to be devoted to the general