

THE WEEK.

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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

AFTER the triumph of "brute majority" in the Ottawa Parliament the other night, the followers of Party no doubt broke up in the sweet assurance of a night well spent upon earth. When the tension of excitement has passed away, however, may we not hope that Ontario members, who voted the "straight ticket" on the Canada Pacific loan, will put to themselves the question: "Why contravene public sentiment in voting to throw enormous burdens upon Ontario, by acquiescing in legislation to promote the interests of a railway in the construction and maintenance of which the Province has little to gain and much to lose?" In this political tramway across the Continent, which, so far as Ontario is concerned, may be said to run along the confines of the Arctic regions, what interest has the Province, and wherein is her commerce to be benefited by its construction? The road if tributary to anything will be tributary to the sea, and any gain to be got out of it will not be Ontario's but Quebec's. In this view of the matter, had it been our own members, rather than those of the Lower Province, that withstood the Government and demanded "better terms" as the price of their vote, we could have comprehended the situation, and, in a measure, justified the act. As it is, Ontario has not only the delightful outlook of having to pay her already large share of the public burdens of this costly political railway, but the prospect of having to contribute her heavy proportion of an alarming additional amount, plus the "better terms" extorted by Quebec and those yet to be demanded by, and no doubt ceded to, other Provinces equally eager to drain the public chest. Such are the drawbacks imposed upon the Province whose privilege it is to be consumingly rich!

To the above picture we have to add the pleasing setting of the wholesome and elevating influence upon public morals of a section of the country's legislators deliberately selling their vote, though happily for something more than a mess of pottage. Noble patriots! to wrest from the administration at a time of crisis that which may entail the ruin of the country. One would have thought that the Province they represented was getting enough in bringing the line of the road by Ontario's back door direct to the St. Lawrence. Just weigh the matter for a moment in the scales of the two older Provinces. Quebec has no interests the railway will not

help; she has hardly a trade it will not stimulate and develop; she has no farms it is likely to impoverish, nor lusty yeomen to be taken from the soil. Ontario, on the contrary, has interests the railway will dwarf, and a commerce which the position of the line precludes from aiding. She has farms the North-West has harried, and towns and villages which have suffered more than from the most rigid conscription. When, we may ask, shall we have done with this drain of men and treasure, and for what is the country despoiling itself? To give continued power to the mere seekers and retainers of power, and to imperial flatterers the gratification of having a military highway from sea to sea. For the present *divertissement* of party, it will be well if some day the tax-payer has not to wring his hands. Yes, by all means, hurry the road recklessly to a conclusion, but don't let the people of the Province delude themselves with the idea that it is for Ontario's benefit. Ontario has as much interest in this military highway as Texas has in the line of the Northern Pacific.

THE proposal to strengthen boards of police commissioners by adding to each two members, to be elected by the city councils, is fraught with danger. A petition praying for this change was adopted by the St. Catharines city council, endorsed by that of Hamilton, and placed in the hands of Mr. Meredith for presentation to the Provincial Legislature. As at present constituted, a police commission includes the County Judge, the Police Magistrate, and the Mayor of the city employing the force. The first two, by virtue of their offices, are supposed to be preëminently fitted for the position of commissioners, and are compelled by statute to serve, such duties being included in their salaries as judge and magistrate respectively. The third commissioner, the Mayor, is supposed to represent the city, which of course has to provide funds necessary for the preservation of the peace. It is contended by those who advocate the change that the city ought to have control of the disbursement of so large a sum as this requires, and that object can best be attained, they suggest, by increasing the boards to five members, three of whom would be directly answerable to the tax-payers through the council. But there seems no valid reason why a commission as at present constituted should be guilty of extravagance which would result in no personal gain except in case of a conspiracy between all three members—a most improbable result. Two at least out of the three are directly interested in the efficiency of a force that is intimately related with their own duties. If the control of such commissions passes into the hands of men who are elected in the interests of party, the police force would become a hot-bed of jobbery and corruption—a force into which men would be pitch-forked as a reward for political services, and so subject to never-ending mutations. This proposal is not the outcome of a popular cry. The tax-payer has not originated it, and if brought about it would not be his friends who would get the loaves and fishes. But it would be used by the ward-representative for his own purpose.

THE floods in the West reached terrible proportions. The Ohio rose from two to three feet higher than last year. Various towns along the river bank are still under water. In some instances they have been entirely abandoned by the inhabitants. We have not yet heard the worst. Sickness will follow, with sufferings which no generosity of the government and no sympathy from the general public can relieve. Homes have been destroyed which have cost the labour of a lifetime to secure, and with their destruction energy, enthusiasm, hope have gone also. An urgent appeal is made to the country at large for aid. It does not alleviate the distress to know that the country has brought it upon itself by its own folly. Years ago it was foretold that if the forests were destroyed at the headwaters of our rivers, sudden thaws would make sudden floods, and spread ruin and desolation. But men believed it as little as they believed the warnings of Noah in the days that preceded the flood. If our own experience were not enough we might be taught also by that of France, whose government has attempted to stop the destruction of the forests in order to prevent similar floods. Will this disaster make any impression on the New York Legislature, who are now considering what measures, if any, should be taken to preserve the Adirondack forests? Will our Dominion Legislature learn the lesson that may be so plainly read in the American floods and in the minor but significant floods of London, Ontario, and other Canadian towns? Or must we learn in the same bitter school of experience in which Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois are taking their lessons?