

# THE WEEK.

Vol. XII.

Toronto, Friday, April 19th, 1895.

No. 21.

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## Current Topics.

The Bye-Elections.

The net result of the four bye-elections on Wednesday last is the loss of one seat by the Government. With its present large majority the change is practically of little importance. As to what is called the "moral" effect of these elections, which the whole country has been watching with great interest, nothing can with confidence be affirmed. The return of the Secretary of State by a large majority was a foregone conclusion, but probably his victory is the result more of personal popularity aided by thorough organization, and powerfully reinforced by the pride which most constituencies have in being represented by a member of the Government, than of firm conviction on the part of a majority of the constituents on any particular question of public policy. In Quebec West, where the contest was between two Conservatives, it is doubtful whether the choice was determined by the unwillingness of many of the electors to be represented by a politician of Mr. McGreevy's unsavoury record, by the personal influence of the successful candidate, or by a widespread preference for the more liberal trade policy which he advocates. In Vercheres the *status quo* is maintained. The loss of the constituency represented by the late Premier, in Nova Scotia, is certainly a blow to the Government, but whether it is the outcome of any special view in regard to either the Manitoba School question, or that of the tariff, or simply of the tendency of a constituency to return to its old-time allegiance as soon as the special influence which may cause it to lapse for the moment is removed, it is impossible at this distance to say. In a word, with regard to either of the two main questions which are now agitating the minds of the people of Canada, these bye-elections leave us not a whit the wiser.

The Assessment Law.

An extraordinary action is reported to have been taken by the City Council in the matter of the Assessment Act. It is stated that at the meeting on Tuesday Alderman Hallam moved, seconded by Alderman Burns,—

"That inasmuch as a bill has been passed in the Local Legislature authorizing vacant grounds, whether used as a farm, garden, or nursery, or otherwise, if two acres or more in extent, and if no sales can reasonably be expected during the current year, to be assessed as farming or gardening lands, the assessment department be and it is hereby instructed to keep a careful record of all lands which will be entitled to a reduction by reason of this change in the law, and showing thereon what would have been the assessment before this new Act takes effect, and that a complete return be made out by the assessment department showing the result of carrying out this legislation, so that information can be accurately obtained for an application to Parliament next session to change the law."

This resolution is reported to have been passed. To us it seems a very a very extraordinary, in fact, inexplicable action of the Council. The terms of the Consolidated Assessment Act, before amendment, were as follows:

28—(1) In assessing vacant ground, or ground used as a farm, garden, or nursery, and not in immediate demand for building purposes, in cities, towns, or villages, whether incorporated or not, the value of such vacant or other ground shall be that at which sales of it can be freely made and where no sales can be reasonably expected during the current year, (in case the Council so directs,) the Assessors shall, in cities, and, where the extent of such ground exceeds ten acres, in towns and incorporated villages, value such land as though it was held for farming or gardening purposes, with such percentage added thereto as the situation of the land reasonably calls for; and such vacant land, though surveyed into building lots, if unsold as such, may be entered on the assessment roll as so many acres of the original block or lot, describing the same by the description of the block, or by the number of the lot and concession of the township in which the same is situated, as the case may be.

The recent amendment only related to expunging the words "in case the Council so directs," and inserting, in the case of cities, "two acres" instead of "ten acres." The effect of the clause as thus amended seems to us to be very different from providing for assessment as farm lands, and it looks as if the City Council had been very ill advised in directing their assessment commissioner to put a strained construction on the Act.

The Ontario Teachers' Association.

The joint meeting of the Dominion and Ontario Teachers' Associations which is now being held in this city has, owing probably to the ferment over the Manitoba School Question, scarcely received the attention it merits. These two organizations occupy quite distinct spheres, and are adapted to serve different purposes. The Provincial Association has been in existence for thirty-four years, and has naturally come to be an influential body, though its influence is not yet so great as it ought to be, in shaping the educational system of the Province. In addition to its general meetings as an association, at which papers are read and discussions upon topics connected with the great educational questions of the day in general, and those of the Province of Ontario in particular, the Association, as now organized, comprises