

ment in consequence of two or three years failure of crops and the want of facilities for getting their grain to market—this dissatisfaction being expressed in writing to their friends, and even leading numbers of them to cross the border themselves—than to the influence of the Parliamentary speeches and newspaper articles which few of them ever read. We should be glad to believe that the exodus has been turned from the United States to our own territories so completely as Mr. Cumberland supposes, but we have no doubt that to whatever extent it is happily so turned, the result is much more largely due to the better reports from friends in that land than to any other cause. The view that it is owing to the cessation of pessimistic diatribes is hardly consistent with the fact that these diatribes are still kept up, the Minister of Finance and the Government supporters generally being witnesses. However, while still unable to believe "that any considerable number of persons already in the country and reasonably comfortable or prosperous would be induced to abandon it and try their fortunes elsewhere by the speeches and writings of political partisans anxious to make a point against the Government of the day," we have nothing to gain by arguing the question further, and shall much prefer to call the attention of any of our readers, if there be such, of pessimistic proclivities, to the personal testimony of one in so favourable a position to learn the facts as Mr. Cumberland, in regard to the wounds often inflicted upon the country by shafts aimed at political opponents.

THE question discussed by Senator Boulton in our columns this week is a larger one than might at first thought be supposed. Two important principles are involved in the action which the Minister of Public Works, representing the Government, is asked by the Trades and Labour Council to take. In the first place, it means the fixing of a *minimum* of wages for all employees of Government contractors. In the second place, it means a recognition of the workmen themselves, in their organized capacity, as the proper authority to determine what that *minimum* shall be for each class of labourers. In regard to the first point it may be observed that there is in all enlightened countries just now a marked tendency toward labour legislation of a kind which would have been scouted as socialism or something worse twenty-five years ago. This tendency is inevitable. It is the corollary of the gradual extension of the franchise and the consequent gradual transfer of the balance of political power to the hands of the working classes. The process may, it is true, be hindered for a time, as in the case of the United States, by going too fast and bestowing the ballot in advance of the intelligence which is necessary to secure it against the machinations of party wire-pullers and corruptionists. But that need not now be discussed. It is clear that a movement or tendency may be irresistible, and yet be far from right. But in the case in question there is no need, in our opinion, to talk about making a virtue of necessity. We can at once take higher ground. The thing asked for must commend itself to almost everyone who will take the trouble to look into it, as both just and reasonable. While the public expects from those entrusted with the management of the public funds, strict economy and observance of business principles, it does not wish these to be carried beyond the limits of fair and honourable dealing. As an employer of labour the Government should furnish an example to all private employers. It usually happens indeed that the labour expended upon public works is not employed by the Government directly, but through the agency of contractors. Surely, in point of morals, the Government which permits its contractors to grind the faces of the poor whom they employ to do the work contracted for, can no more be held innocent than can the private merchant or manufacturer who makes use of goods manufactured by the "sweating" process. Our sense of justice tells us that it is a shame and a sin that work for the use and benefit of the whole community should be performed by overworked or half-starved citizens. But the responsibility thus fixed, it easily follows that it is both the right and the duty of the Government in awarding contracts, to make it a condition that those who do the hard toil shall receive fair wages. The sentiment, or rather the sense of justice, of the whole country will bear them out in so doing. In fact, the principle is already recognized in the common condition in railway and other charters which gives the labourers the first lien on the contract money, until their wages are paid. The by-law of the City Council of Toronto which secures a minimum wage for the lowest class of labourers in the employ of

the city, whether by contractors or otherwise, is an admission of the same principle in civic affairs. That principle once admitted, the second question is easily disposed of. The scale of wages agreed upon by the workmen's unions is more likely to be a just one than any that could be fixed in any other way, because it is made by those who understand the subject and know well what is practicable. And, then, the unions have been already recognized in legislation in so many ways that the principle involved, so far as there is one, is already fully conceded. All things considered it seems, therefore, in every way desirable and right that the Minister of Public Works should accede to the request of the Trades and Labour Council.

NOT the least argument in favour of the granting of the request of the Trades and Labour Council may be derived from a consideration of the effect upon other employers of labour. Were the advantage likely to be confined solely to workmen employed upon public works, the proposal would still be defensible. The fact that private employers of labour are too often ready to take advantage of the necessities of workmen by securing their labour at the lowest rates made possible by competition, affords neither reason nor excuse for the Government doing the same thing, or permitting it to be done by contractors in their employ. It would still, as we have said, be the duty of the Government to set a righteous example. But it is clear that the example of the Government in this matter would have a powerful effect upon all other employers. It would constantly be referred to as marking the standard of fair dealing. The more conscientious and generous employers would soon adopt the standard, and little by little others would be forced to follow suit. The influence upon public opinion would be great, and that opinion would in its turn become a powerful lever for uplifting the whole labouring community to the higher level. And surely it is high time that the people, as users or consumers who are indirectly the employers of all labour, should be educated to a keener sense of their responsibility in this matter. Said a lady in Toronto the other day, when about to go "down town" to do some shopping: "I think I must go to A and B's," naming one of the more high-priced and fashionable dry-goods shops. "No doubt I could get the articles I want more cheaply at X and Y's, but I always fear that the cheapness there is at the cost of the sewing-girls who make up the goods." The motive did the lady honour, though we could not feel at all sure that her inference was correct, or that it by any means follows that the dealers who charge the higher prices for their goods do, as a rule, deal more liberally with their employees. The incident suggests the query whether customers of either sex realize their responsibility in this matter as they should. There is, we believe, in New York city a society or club of ladies, of the well-to-do classes, we suppose, who take means to find out as nearly as possible how the different firms treat their employees in the matter of work and wages, and pledge themselves not to patronize those whose names are, after such enquiry, placed on their black list. This means a kind of boycott, it is true, but it is a question whether the boycott, in certain forms and within certain limits, is not a natural and proper means of bringing influence to bear for right ends. There are, no doubt, many women and some men in all our towns and cities who would conscientiously and heartily withhold their patronage from the oppressor, and give it to the just and liberal employer, had they any means of arriving at the facts in respect to each. It is a pity that such knowledge could not, by some fair means, be brought within their reach.

JUST now the promised reconstruction of the Ottawa Cabinet is occupying a large share of public attention. The task is doubtless a difficult and delicate one, and the Premier may well be excused if he takes time in deciding upon the changes to be made. There is one principle, however, the observance of which should be expected and as far as possible insisted on by friends and foes alike. The permanent Heads of Departments should be chosen from among men of high character and spotless reputation. They should be above suspicion. It surely is not too much to expect from Mr. Abbott, after his strong speeches in the Senate, that he will, at all cost, observe this principle. It is, moreover, questionable whether any other course can bring the Government safely through the crisis. These comments are suggested by the well-understood fact that the present Secretary of State is a candidate for the vacant portfolio of Minister of Public Works. It is not

unfair to observe that the very fact that a Minister is so persistently anxious, as Mr. Chapleau is believed to be, to obtain control of a Department with large patronage and expenditure, is in itself a suspicious circumstance. Whatever may be said of the lack of positive proof of his connivance at the disgraceful doings in connection with the management of the Printing Bureau, no one can claim that Mr. Chapleau is above suspicion. It is well-nigh inconceivable that Sir John Thompson, or Mr. Abbott, or their colleagues, can have themselves full confidence in his innocence. Then, is his past record, and his whole course as a politician, such as to qualify him for a position of great trust and responsibility? To put it plainly, there can be no doubt that the appointment of Mr. Chapleau to the coveted position would create a painful impression, not only throughout Canada, but in the Mother Country and elsewhere. If the Premier is well-advised he will hesitate long before doing so. If it be necessary that the portfolio should be given to a French leader, surely there are in the ranks of the Conservative party in Quebec strong men of spotless reputation who can be called to the post. Of such, by general consent, is, we believe, the present Governor Angers. We cannot but think that, in the existing state of public feeling, the appointment of Mr. Chapleau Minister of Public Works would do the Government more injury than even his resentment and opposition could possibly do. If he were a reasonable and unselfish man he would see this himself, and, for the sake of his party and the good name of the country, would decline the position if offered him.

THE Kingston *News* thinks that THE WEEK was hardly judicial in discussing the speech of the Minister of Justice on the demand for a committee to investigate the charges against the Hon. Mr. Haggart. After very fairly quoting our comments in full the *News* complains that we fixed upon one unimportant point in the Minister's speech, and made that a test of the whole speech. Sir John Thompson's negative argument, which THE WEEK criticized, was, it admits, "altogether too narrowly legal" and a "somewhat artificial train of reasoning," but this negative argument was not the pith of the matter. The *News* goes on to say:—

Sir John then went on constructively to point out that a royal commission in 1880 had fully investigated Lister's charges with an abundance of evidence, and had come to the conclusion that there was not a tittle of justification for the accusation against Mr. Haggart, and that in the absence of new evidence of any importance, there were no grounds for re-opening the matter. Mr. Lister's refusal to give the Minister of Justice a hint of what now evidence he purported to have obtained, and the time he chose for demanding the investigation—the very closing hours of Parliament—sufficiently indicate the purpose of the Opposition demand. It was made to be refused, so that Grit spouters might have something they consider effective for the hustings.

We have not the speech now before us, but our impressions formed from reading it at the time and our present recollections by no means agree with the *News*' opinion that the portion of the speech on which we remarked was even comparatively unimportant. We confess that we thought it the pith of the Minister's argument. But be that as it may, our criticism on the paragraphs quoted by the *News* was directed simply against that part of the speech. We were more concerned at the moment with the character of the reasoning to which the Minister of Justice committed himself, as an indication of his mental and moral attitude in relation to the matter, than with the soundness of his conclusion that the charge was not one requiring investigation at that late period of the session. The purpose of the Opposition may have been no loftier than that which the *News* ascribes to it, though even on that assumption one would have supposed it good policy on the part of the Government to give the few days asked for, and let Mr. Lister take the very serious consequences of failing to justify his charges. But aside from the merits of the action of either party, our object was to show that the reasoning of the Minister of Justice, in the part of his speech referred to, was not only unconvincing, but morally disappointing and unsound. To that point we confined ourselves. In regard to it, it is evident that our contemporary more than half agrees with us.

SPECULATION is rife in regard to the effect which the death of Mr. W. H. Smith, late Government Leader in the House of Commons, will have upon the political situation in England. Of the three men whose names are prominent as possible successors to the honours and vex-