

THE WEEK.

Vol. XI.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, JULY 13th, 1894.

No. 33.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics, Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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Address—CARTER TROOP, Manager, 6 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

Among the last revelations made before the famous Lexow Committee, which is investigating, with such astounding results, the workings of the Police Department of New York City, was the fact that not only the vicious and criminal classes have been made to contribute to the insatiable avarice of the police, but that merchants and builders have been systematically black-mailed. There seems to have been but one builder in the city who had backbone enough to keep up the fight against the system. Payments for police "protection" in violating city ordinances are so common as to be in some quarters the rule rather than the exception. One significant discovery was that the books of the Liquor-Dealers' Central Association have entirely vanished since this investigation began. In brief, the investigation has already demonstrated that the criminality

has not been confined to a member or an officer of the force here and another there, but that from commissioners to patrolmen, the taint of corruption is over the whole department, and that nothing but a radical overturning and renovation of the system can effect a cure. Can such a renovation be effected, and how, will soon be the practical question? Meanwhile the Committee has adjourned until September.

So far as can be judged from the general statements which have appeared touching the evidence adduced before the Parliamentary Committee in support of the charge against Mr. Turcotte, his case is in marked contrast with that of Mr. Corby, whose return to the House after his unopposed re-election was received with hearty cheers from both sides of the Speaker's chair. In fact, the evidence against Mr. Turcotte seems so conclusive that it is hard to believe that a majority of the members can conscientiously vote for the motion of "not proven" which is to be submitted by Mr. Amyot. The very precautions—may we not without harsh pre-judgment say subterfuges?—to which the accused seems to have resorted, will constitute, if satisfactorily proved, the strongest evidence of his conscious violation of the Independence of Parliament Act. The case appears on the surface to be one of those against which the Act in question may be supposed to have been particularly directed. It will be greatly to be regretted should such a matter be argued and decided on party lines. The law that members of Parliament may not have business transactions of any kind, such as may possibly tend to impair their independence, with the Government, is one which commends itself to all. It is very much to be desired that justice may be done in this and every similar case so impartially as to afford the people the protection they need against those who might seek to barter their parliamentary influence for personal gain.

The Tariff Bill that has now been sent back to the United States House of Representatives by the Senate is a nondescript affair. Mr. Wilson, the framer of the original bill, evidently finds it hard to recognize it as in any sense his bill. Whether the House will, in order to meet the Senate half way and put an end to the business agony already so long drawn out, consent to a compromise which involves changes, not merely in details, but in the funda-

mental principles of the Bill, is now the question. There seems to be considerable difference of opinion among the Democratic representatives themselves on this point. Some think it better to accept the fraction of the original loaf which is offered them in the few remaining free-trade or revenue-tariff features of the bill as changed by the Senate, rather than run the risk of getting nothing at all. Others maintain that it would be preferable to let the session pass without any tariff legislation at all, rather than throw to the winds all but the veriest fragments of the principles upon which the party won the election. Mr. Wilson, himself, seems to favour the latter alternative, if we may judge from his remarks on moving to refer the Bill to a conference of members of the two Houses. In this speech he pointed out that the Democrats are in honour committed to the three fundamental ideas of *ad valorem* duties, free raw material, and free necessaries of life, all of which are lost sight of or trampled under foot in the Bill, as returned to them by the Senate. Evidently the crisis of the struggle is not yet reached.

It is impossible to determine as yet how much foundation there may be for the rumour that Sir William Harcourt proposes to retire from the leadership of the Commons, and temporarily from Parliament, at the end of the current session. It must be admitted that the rumour has a verisimilitude which tends to secure it credence. Whatever may be the state of Sir William's health, it has been pretty obvious from the first to close observers that there is a want of congruity in the Liberal Government, with Lord Rosebery as Premier and Sir William as leader in the Lower House. However such a combination may suit the Conservatives, it is doubtful whether the Liberals can long be held together under a Premier sitting among the Lords. Of course the present strained relations between the two Houses augments the difficulty, while the contrast, so sharply accentuated in many points, between the present Premier and his great predecessor on the one hand, and between him and Sir William on the other, bids fair to be fatal to the unity and harmony which are indispensable to continued success. Lord Rosebery's cool-blooded opportunism, which he seems to be at no pains to conceal, can never avail to keep up the enthusiasm which is one of the elements of strength in a party which prides itself on being a party of convictions. If it be true, as there seems good reason to