

tion is now dead, having been given its *coup de grace* by the reduction in the duty on agricultural implements, and other minor modifications. It would be a striking, though scarcely a surprising tribute to the indestructible vitality of party loyalty, should the event prove that the agitation could be quelled by so meagre a concession. It would, of course, be unsafe to base any very serious conclusions on the enthusiasm called forth by the visit of Mr. Laurier, the fame of whose eloquence is sufficient to ensure him a large audience and an attentive hearing in any part of the Dominion, under any circumstances, but certainly the avidity with which his Winnipeg audience seem to have drunk in his bold avowal of free-trade principles does not favour the idea that the tariff question is settled in Manitoba.

With all his silvery eloquence, Mr. Laurier does not seem to possess the power of varying the form and language in which he clothes his ideas, to so great an extent as might be desirable in one who has the difficult task of speaking on the same topics night after night, in the presence of the ubiquitous newspaper reporter. A little more fertility of resource and originality in the way of putting things would improve his speeches for the newspaper reader, though they might not materially add to their effectiveness with the audiences addressed. And the latter is, of course, the main thing. Many who have been curiously or anxiously waiting to hear his promised deliverance on the school question, will have been somewhat disappointed to recognize the familiar form, clothed in almost the same language, with which they had become well acquainted on the floor of Parliament and elsewhere. This utterance certainly puts the question in a nutshell. If the Manitoba schools are really what they purport to be, public schools in which there is no religious teaching, the doctrine of Provincial rights proclaimed by Mr. Laurier does the rest, and the Catholics have no just cause of complaint. If, on the other hand, the schools are really Protestant schools, under the guise of public schools, if there is religious teaching in them, then the Catholics are grievously wronged in being compelled to send their children to such schools. This way of putting it curiously ignores what we have always understood to be one of the chief grounds of complaint by the Catholic prelates, viz.: that there is no religious teaching in the schools, and that they are therefore "godless." Mr. Laurier still fails to satisfy our curiosity as to which of the two hypotheses he believes to be the true one. It is pretty safe to say, however, if we may venture to read between the lines, that the Roman Catholic prelates will find little comfort in his words, and that the Manitoba Government and people would have little reason to dread interference in the matter should Mr. Laurier become Premier.

When we are told, as a reason why certain admitted evils in Government administration cannot be cured, that they are inseparable from party government, one is naturally led to inquire whether it is absolutely beyond question that party government is so lovely in itself and so happy in its workings that it must be held to as a system inseparable from all responsible government. There are some reasons for suspecting that the party system is just now undergoing a trial such as it has not hitherto been subjected to in Anglo-Saxon communities. Whether we turn our attention to the Mother Country, to the United States, or to our own Dominion, we find ominous indications of revolt from the absolutism of party, such as have not, we believe, been seen at any previous period, at least within the recollection of men who are still in active life. In Great Britain there can hardly be said to be any longer two great parties. The Liberals, whose leaders happen at the moment to occupy the Government benches, are even now less a party than a combination of parties, somewhat loosely banded together, some of which are even now breathing forth threats of open revolt. On the other side, we find an Opposition made up of two very distinct parts, one of which may be pretty closely compacted as a party by the cohesive power of a common self-interest; the other simply held in a precarious alliance by the very uncertain bond of a common antipathy to a given radical measure. In the United States, we have just seen the publicly avowed pledges of one of the old historic parties broken by the revolt or treachery of certain of its own members, while it is well known that in regard to the one transcendent political question of the day both the old parties are hopelessly divided. In Canada, in both Dominion and Provincial politics, the process of disruption, if not of disintegration, in both the old parties is going on before our eyes, and no one can now foresee the end.

What do all these movements betoken? We dare not prophesy. One thing is, however, clear. They plainly indicate the weakening of the old party cohesion. A peculiar and suggestive sign of the time is that, whereas it used to be no uncommon thing to hear a politician of the old school avow that he was first and above all loyal to his party, there is now a marked tendency to be ashamed of such a sentiment as a principle of action, and many candidates at the polls and members in the House pride themselves on being independent rather than party men. This change, which is coming over the spirit of politics, may be in part due to the fact that broad lines of cleavage in regard to the great principles of government no longer exist. Such a thing as a genuine Tory of the old school, for instance, is now very hard to find. A few probably still exist in the circles from which the House of

Lords in England is recruited, but apart from some special question, such as graduated taxation, or Home Rule, which appeals directly to self-interest, old-fashioned Toryism can hardly be said to be surviving as a political dogma even among the landlord classes in England. The old issues which divided Whig from Tory were generic and consequently capable of almost universal application to legislative measures. In such a principle alone is to be found the life-element of a persistent partyism. When all legislators alike profess to desire to work in the direction of progress and for the greatest good of the greatest number, and differ only as to specific measures, that life-element no longer exists. The up-break into individual fragments or small and ever shifting parties is inevitable.

Of course, change, even from that which is admittedly bad, is not necessarily for the better. The up-break of the party system might conceivably be followed by transition to a new one, in which the two old parties would be replaced by a dozen new factions, each fighting for its own fad, or holding out for its own terms. The French system is ten-fold worse than the British and American. The trouble is that in such a case the old is not dead but simply obscured by having the new grafted on to it. It is a party system still, and likely to be ten-fold more dangerous to political honesty, true patriotism, and sound statesmanship than even the old. To something like this there is some reason to fear that politics may be drifting in each of the Anglo-Saxon communities which we have named. What is really wanted in order to cure the great corrupt and corrupting influences which have crept into, or rather were inherent in, the old party system, is to abolish, not multiply parties in the legislatures. It is probable that this good time, should it ever come, will be heralded by two preliminary changes, the substitution of some broader system for the present sectionalism and localism in the choice of representatives, and the substitution of election by the legislatures, for appointment by a party leader, of a body of men to carry on the government. But these questions are too large to be entered upon here. Perhaps, too, they are too far off to be of present interest as topics of discussion. Meanwhile the old system is changing before our eyes, and it behooves every good citizen to do what he can to insure that the change shall be for the better, not for the worse; evolution, not degeneration.

#### MR. GOLDWIN SMITH AND CANADIAN LITERATURE.

The last number of THE WEEK was graced by a letter from Mr. Goldwin Smith replying to the question, "What is the matter with Canadian Literature?"—a question asked by a correspondent of one of our contemporaries. Mr. Goldwin Smith answered the question at some length and in an eminently characteristic way. When Major Wellington de Boots was asked how he managed to gain such a