

THE WEEK.

Vol. X.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, NOV. 3rd, 1893.

No. 49.

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.

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. 6d.; half-year, 6s. 6d. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the publisher.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

At last the dead-lock in the American Senate is broken. The Silver-repeal Bill has been passed unconditionally by a considerable majority. The constricted commercial and business interests of the country have already drawn a deep breath of relief, and beneficial effects are felt on "Change." This hopeful result is mainly due to the inflexible will of President Cleveland, who, at a time when most of the advocates of unconditional repeal in the Senate had become faint-hearted and were going about seeking a compromise, sent out his fiat, that it must be "unconditional repeal or nothing." True, such a state of things favors too largely of personal government to suit the ideas of Canadians, who cling to the theory and the fact of the responsibility of their rulers. But seeing that the American constitution puts so great powers in the hands of its one-man executive, it certainly is better that the chosen ruler should be a man of discernment and firm-

ness and not a mere automaton, to be moved by political wire-pullers. Whether the beneficial effects anticipated from repeal are immediately realized to the full or not, there can be no doubt that a most mischievous law has been erased from the statute-book, and that only good can result from the change.

Unless we greatly misread the signs of the time, the impending conflict with the Matabeles of South Africa will mark the winding up of the affairs of the last Company to be entrusted by the British Government and people with powers which should belong only to the responsible rulers of the nation. At the time the South African and East African Companies were being chartered we ventured to express wonder that such arrangements should be sanctioned by the British people at this stage of their history. It would be manifestly unfair to prejudge the case against the South African Company, and we have no disposition to do so. To what extent they are to blame for the difficulty can be ascertained only by the rigid investigation which will in all probability be held. But the giving of ruling and war-making powers over regions inhabited by uncivilized tribes, into the hands of any private corporation with selfish ends to serve, seems to us utterly indefensible in principle, and is almost certain to prove pernicious in practice. Just to what extent the Government has already taken the Matabele business into its own hands cannot now be known. The cabled statements are contradictory. But there is scarcely room for doubt that sooner or later it will be the duty of the Government to accept the responsibility for a situation which is the result of its own action. It must do this no less to protect the Matabeles from cruelty and oppression than to secure the safety of British subjects and other white settlers in the regions under the control of the Company and so under the British flag.

The House of Representatives at Washington passed, by an almost unanimous vote, the McCreary Bill, extending for six months the period within which the Chinese may register under the Geary Exclusion Act, and defining more specifically the term "laborer," as used in that Act. This legislation, which is a virtual approval of the course of the Administration in declining to enforce the law as it stood, is a concession to the moral sense of the nation, which revolted against the harshness and injustice

of the Geary Act. We do not know what are the exact provisions of the Bill which has now become law, beyond the two points above indicated. As Mr. McCreary's speech laid special stress on the fact that the Chinese, in refusing to register, acted under the advice of eminent lawyers to the effect that the Exclusion Act was unconstitutional—an opinion in which several members of the Supreme Court are said to concur—it is probable that one object of the extension of time is to give opportunity for testing the question of constitutionality. Indeed, apart from some possibility of a deliverance arising from this quarter, the only effect of the McCreary Bill will be to free the 93,000 Chinese who have refused to register from the penalty of immediate deportation, by giving them another opportunity to comply with the law. Should they still decline to be photographed and to register, they would be liable to deportation at the expiration of the six months. As Mr. Geary himself, while saying that he did not object to the extension of time, strenuously opposed the McCreary Bill on the ground that it did not assure the residents of the Pacific slope that it was intended in good faith to restrict the Chinese population to those already there, it may be assumed that it leaves future action to some extent an open question.

During the debate on the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States House of Representatives, Mr. Bowers, a Republican representative, declared that the passage of the McCreary Bill in the shape in which it then was, and in which it was afterwards passed, would destroy both the old parties within his State. It is noteworthy that the Silver question has quite obliterated party lines so far as that question is concerned, in both Houses of Congress. This is a novel situation, in the discussion of important measures, under the party system of government. What will be the ultimate effect upon party loyalty of these temporary intermixings? It remains to be seen whether the supreme tariff issue will bring back the party adherents to their accustomed loyalty. Viewed in the abstract, the tariff question seems rather to be one of those most likely to provoke wide differences of individual opinion. Should the event show large numbers on both sides refusing to walk in the lines laid down for them by their leaders, and asserting their right of independent judgment, one may pretty safely infer that the old planes of cleavage are being rapidly effaced, though