

THE BUDGET SPEECH.

SIR CHARLES TUPPER'S budget speech shows clearly all the marks of a strong and consistent protective policy. Not content with further protection to many industries suffering from foreign competition, Sir Charles aims to create a new one by a duty on pig iron, which he thinks will lead to the erection of smelting furnaces all over the country. Perhaps he is too sanguine, but Nova Scotia has certainly every facility for iron production, and even in Ontario the production of charcoal iron ought to be profitable. The tax on anthracite coal has been removed, but the operation of carrying fuel to the ore is too costly to be materially aided by so small a bounty. If the land carriage from Pennsylvania were less expensive, we should have little fear of the success of Sir Charles's new "infant industry," but as it is we must confess to doubts. By the way, it is only great men who can make very great blunders, and the reputation of great acquirements is not enough to make any man absolutely accurate. Sir Charles Tupper states that iron and coal are found in close proximity in Canada—a statement altogether erroneous, so far as Ontario and Quebec are concerned, and surely they should count for something. Mr. Blake made a very funny mistake in the debate on the new National Park. He said that a thousand per cent. on an expenditure of \$40,000 amounted to four millions!

PRESS AND PULPIT.

A VERBAL warfare involving questions of some public interest, and also involving a considerable amount of nervous heat on the part of those engaged in it, is at present being fought out from week to week in the columns of *Secular Thought*. The *dramatis personæ* are Mr. Charles Watts, editor of the above-mentioned paper, and the Rev. Hugh Johnston, the popular pastor of Carlton Street Methodist Church, in this city. The original *casus belli* was a sermon preached by Mr. Johnston to his congregation a few Sundays ago, in the course of which that gentleman made use of some exceedingly denunciatory language with reference to "infidels" in general, and more especially with reference to a number of persons who have made more or less mark in the world of literature and politics. Among those so denounced were Thomas Paine, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, and—strange juxtaposition—George Eliot. It is difficult to get at the exact merits of the controversy, owing to the fact that no verbatim report of the sermon was taken at the time of its delivery, and to the additional fact that Mr. Johnston is at issue with some of his hearers as to the precise phraseology employed. The reverend gentleman's congregation were more than a little impressed by the discourse, which must have been of an eminently *ad captandam* character, being full of pointed personal allusions, and in other respects well calculated to arrest the attention of the average church-goer. The popular appreciation was manifested by frequent rounds of applause, and certain passages are said to have evoked demonstrations more befitting to a dramatic representation than to a discourse delivered in a place appropriated to divine worship.

SCEPTICISM AND IMMORALITY.

So far as we have been able to get at the facts of the case they are something like this. The preacher sought to impress upon his hearers the lesson that irregularity and immorality of conduct is the legitimate result of heterodoxy in religious belief. By way of illustration he cited certain actions on the part of the three persons above mentioned. He charged Paine with being "a drunken, blaspheming wretch." Ingersoll was referred to as having pandered to the dissemination of obscene literature. Now, we are not careful to defend the reputations of either of these men. We are content to leave their defence to those who may conceive it to be their business. We would incidentally remark in passing, however, that when a man sets up for a teacher—more especially when he sets up for an expounder of God's Word—he ought to have some knowledge of the subjects which he proposes to teach. He ought, moreover, to have some regard for truth, in the abstract. It is quite clear that Mr. Johnston either knows very little of what he was talking about in his sermon, or else that he wilfully perverted the truth. We prefer to believe that he was merely ignorant. But a conscientious man should take pains to inform himself on subjects as to which he is ignorant, instead of sowing foul libels broadcast and at random. If the pastor of Carlton Street Church does not know that Thomas Paine was not "a drunken, blaspheming wretch," it is not for want of an abundance of accessible evidence on the subject. If he had confined himself, however, to maligning Paine, Ingersoll, and others of their kidney, he might have gone on to the end of the chapter without interference on our part. But when he assails the memory of George Eliot he touches us more nearly. George Eliot is a name deservedly held in honour by persons of all shades of religious conviction, as well as by persons of no religious conviction at all, and her works are among the glories of English literature.

GEORGE ELIOT.

PRECISELY how far Mr. Johnston ventured to go in his denunciation of the author of *Adam Bede* we do not pretend to say. We were not present on the occasion, and the evidence on the subject is somewhat conflicting. However, one of his listeners was so stung by a sense of the injustice of the preacher's remarks that he forthwith committed to paper such of them as seemed to him the most offensive to good taste and the most contrary to fact. In thus placing the passages in black and white, the reporter does not claim, we understand, to have reproduced the *ipsissima verba* of the pulpit, but he asseverates in the most emphatic terms that George Eliot was distinctly referred to as "a wanton" who had once been a Methodist. The inference sought to be drawn was that in abandoning Methodism, and in throwing overboard the religious beliefs in which she had been reared, she took a clear step in the direction of wantonness, and that her subsequent degradation was nothing more than might have been expected from such proceedings. We would gladly believe that the listener's ears had misled him, but his account is confirmed by others who were present, and we notice that Mr. Johnston carefully abstains from