

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

IN rectifying a technical error regarding Mr. Blake's attitude on the coal and "breadstuffs" duties, THE WEEK did not feel called upon to make a general retraction. It is possible, by going back to forgotten speeches, to show that he at one time condemned both; but it still remains true that an impartial observer of Mr. Blake's course will have failed to get the impression that he has specially brought the thunders of his artillery to bear on these duties. A running fire of criticism on the whole line of the enemy's front is Mr. Blake's ordinary mode of attack; but, as he bestows little more attention on Senate reform and the abolition of the coal and "breadstuffs" duties than on any minor topic on which he touches, there is a singular want of political perspective in the scene he brings before you. The dead level of the oration, which is good throughout, prevents any point on the line of assault becoming conspicuous. Mr. Blake may have mentioned the coal duties in terms of condemnation at "the pit's mouth" in Nova Scotia, though we have failed to find the record; but what impression he would be likely to make on his audience may be judged from the fact that in his manifesto to the electors of Durham, May 22, 1882, he dismissed the two duties with half a dozen words. If anything more emphatic was at any time said on Senate reform, it might be looked for in the Aurora speech. But to go back ten years for proof of the opinions which a public man holds to-day would always be inconvenient and often unjust. A few instances will make this evident. Anyone who should to-day quote Mr. Blake's Aurora speech to show that he is an advocate of Imperial Federation, would have to take the risk of palming off a possibly obsolete for a current opinion. And if he pursued the same course towards the mover of the resolution of 1882 against the coal and "Breadstuffs" duties, he would represent that gentleman, very unfairly, as a full-blown protectionist and the chief speaker in support of the motion as an advocate of the National Policy. What emphatically goes by the name of Free Trade in England is free trade in grain and flour. Mr. Blake gives the words a wider meaning when he says, as he did in his manifesto of 1882, "Free Trade is impossible for us." In that manifesto he encouraged the moderate protectionists to look to the future without misgivings. "It results," he told them encouragingly, "as a necessary incident of our settled policy that there must be a large and, as I believe in the view of the moderate protectionist, an ample advantage to the home manufacturer." A similar opinion he has frequently expressed. When Mr. Gladstone has made up his mind to extend the franchise, nobody is

left in doubt as to his intentions. If Mr. Blake had opened a regular campaign against the coal and bread taxes, nobody could have been in doubt as to the fact. That he has not done so is certain. It would not be just towards Mr. Blake to represent him as playing a part which he has not played, and it is difficult to conceive that a high-minded public man could desire to be described as a special advocate of Senate reform and the abolition of the coal and bread taxes when the facts do not warrant such a description. THE WEEK thinks better of Mr. Blake than to believe without clear evidence that he has any such desire.

DR. TUKE'S formidable impeachment of the management of the Asylum at Long Point, receives its answer in the bold assertion that "the Sisters of Charity are the incarnation of the providence of God." Dr. Tuke thinks the practice of the Government in farming out the lunatics is a mistake, and the defenders of the Sisters profess to have found the reason of his objection: *Les sœurs, c'est bien l'incarnation de la providence de Dieu.* This is a defence which, its validity being admitted, should end all parley; but around the citadel numerous defensive works of a minor character are erected. Against Dr. Tuke all sorts of crimes are charged. He is a Methodist, and as such must be a fanatic; he is a man of science, with the speciality of an alienist, and therefore should not assume to understand the management of lunatics. The denials are so numerous as to cover nearly all Dr. Tuke's charges; and to ascertain the true state of the facts an official enquiry becomes all the more necessary. Whether this Asylum be an earthly paradise or a veritable pandemonium is a question to which a decisive answer will have to be given. If the goodness of the motives of the Sisters be admitted, it does not follow that the efficient administration of an over-grown asylum for the insane falls within their vocation, or that they possess the necessary qualifications for so onerous and difficult a task. It is quite possible that, in their desire to do good to their suffering fellow creatures, they attempt too much, and that the fiscal economy which is the chief boast of their administration leaves many needs unsupplied. For each of the nine hundred and twenty-six patients the Sisters receive from the Government one hundred dollars a year, one-half or one-third of what it would cost to support them in an institution under the control of the Government. This is the defence set up to show that the nuns are not justly liable to the charge of selfishness; but it is open to the suspicion of proving too much. The small proportion of cures and the large proportion of deaths are not causeless, and nothing could be more unwelcome than the discovery that they are in some measure due to this vaunted economy. Does this religious order, in one form or another, make a contribution of one hundred thousand dollars a year towards the maintenance of these lunatics? If it does not, the apparent economy must represent some unsupplied wants; and this alternative is made probable by the report of the observations of Dr. Tuke. It is impossible to believe that Dr. Tuke could have any motive for misrepresenting what he saw, and of his competency as a judge of the deficiencies and the maladministration of the institution there is not a reasonable doubt. That he may have made some minor mistakes is probable; but he has not set up an impossible standard of perfection for the purpose of denouncing a departure from it; he does not go so far as Dr. Buck and other alienists in Ontario, who report that in actual practice they have for some years been able to dispense with physical restraints: all that he insists on is that such restraints should be sparingly used. A single resident physician is a small allowance for nearly a thousand patients, and the value of a medical visitor will depend not only more upon the nature and extent of his duties than upon the way in which these duties are performed. Of the inspectors, two of the three being medical men, the old question must once more be asked: Who inspects the inspectors?

IF Sir Charles Tupper has found means to secure a treaty between Spain and Great Britain to regulate the trade between Canada and the Spanish colonies of Cuba and Porto Rico, the British West Indies will find in the fact a new cause of discontent. In the course of last summer, when a rumour reached British Guiana that the Government of Canada contem-