

# THE WEEK.

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## The Week,

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

ONCE more the unsavoury "bribery charges" have been paraded before a nauseated public—this time in the form of a Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry—and again the investigation has terminated without throwing any new light upon the matter, beyond showing the developed "cussedness" of some of the more prominently concerned parties. The public, unfettered by the journalistic unwritten law that makes it improper to comment upon a question which is *sub judice*, has made up its mind that a great piece of rascality was attempted in the Ontario Legislature; and all but the extreme party men, whilst thankful that the attempt to debauch was unsuccessful, would fain consign the whole affair to the limbo of political corruption as calculated in its discussion to further unnecessarily tarnish the national fair fame. Failing this, it is recognized that the next best thing is to leave the matter to the lawyers and the guilty parties to their reflections. One thing is clear—the enquiry just adjourned to September was a mistake. It was bad in principle, coming between the police court investigation and the pending trial; it has not the justification of success, for nothing new was elucidated, nor has it added to the dignity of the Provincial Parliament, since the committee's decision will be of non-effect when arrived at—in this respect forcibly recalling the march of the gallant Duke of York of pious memory. The policy of continually parading these unproven charges for the grim pleasure of watching those against whom they are made "squirm," savours too much of kicking a man when down to commend itself to the lover of fair-play.

THE spectacle now presented in England is a curious and instructive one. The rival political parties are arranging demonstrations and counter-demonstrations to overawe or support a majority of the House of Lords in their determination to prevent the Franchise Bill becoming law. Four years ago the British nation—or at least that portion of it which is on the parliamentary burgess-roll—sent six hundred and odd men to Parliament for the very purpose, among other things, of passing such a measure. A whole session has been spent by those representatives in elaborating a bill giving to the people in the counties the same political privileges that are enjoyed by the people in the towns. After days and nights of patient toil they succeeded in passing the bill *nem. con.* And now the work of the House of Commons—deliberately elected by the people—is to be all thrown to the four winds of heaven by the Lords—whose sole claim to legislate is that they are their fathers' sons! not one in four of whom are known to the nation or to fame. There is no pretence on the part of the majority of the Lords that they are uncertain whether there is a national demand for an extended franchise. Their policy in contemptuously

rejecting the reform is not a political decision at all. Lord Salisbury and some others, it is true, have demanded that the expansion of the electorate roll shall be accompanied by a redistribution of seats, and if that clique were honest in their objections there would be some show of reason for the position. But there is unfortunately ample evidence that the Marquis has adopted his cry merely as a subterfuge. Lord Carnarvon let the cat out of the bag when he objected that if miners and artisans were allowed to vote for the counties they would swamp the rural labourers. A statesman holding such opinions might be depended upon to support some such gerrymander scheme as would throw the miners and artisans into urban constituencies in order to retain the "solid" Tory vote of the labourers. The Duke of Richmond and Gordon spoke in the same strain, and reminded his hearers that neither he nor Lords Salisbury or Carnarvon supported the Reform Bill of 1867, introduced though it was by the only man who of late years could lead the Tory party to success, Earl Beaconsfield. Before the Bill was completed one of Lord Salisbury's followers told the House of Commons, in the most insulting terms, that it had not a ghost of a chance of passing the Lords. The pretence that fair play demands a re-arranging of the constituencies is of the flimsiest. It is perfectly well known that for many members of the House of Commons—Liberal and Tory—to support such a measure would be to vote their own extinction, and this fact would ensure the present rejection of any measure coupling redistribution with franchise reform. If ever a scheme was clumsy and transparent this one is, and its originators are well suited to its advocacy. If the present Government went to the country the Tories would immediately offer—as Disraeli did with household suffrage—a similar measure to that just passed by the Commons in exchange for a return to power. The Lords' action is plainly dictated by the obstinate pride of a privileged order determined to assert their power. It is a pitiful revenge for past humiliations, indicating the violent hatred felt against the Liberal party in general, and its talented leader in particular. Only those who have listened to the after-dinner talk of the great Tory clubs have any conception how extravagant this hatred is. Such is the spirit in which the hereditary chamber has thought fit to receive the deliberately-adopted measure of the Commons. That body has been insulted, and through it the nation, just to let both know there is a House of Lords—in the same manner that a spoilt child cries if left too long unnoticed by its elders. The Lords are beginning to see the hand-writing upon the wall. They remember that desperate diseases require desperate remedies, and have hit upon the plan of a blind resistance of Mr. Gladstone and all his works as a sign of life. They have come to the unenviable position of having outlived their usefulness—have become a political excrescence requiring the statesman's scalpel—and in their petulance have given their enemies abundant cause to demand their extinction.

THAT the results achieved by the Greely Expedition are at all commensurate with the accompanying loss of life and suffering will be maintained by very few. Surely souls enough have been offered up on the shrine of North Pole discovery? Doubtless if all the precautions dictated by experience had been taken by the authorities at Washington, the latest attempt to penetrate the secrets of the Arctic region might have been attended by less lamentable results; but it is so easy to be wise after the event, and in the frozen north, as elsewhere, it is so often the unforeseen which happens, that one would not willingly learn of the equipment of another expedition plus an infinitude of precautions. All this may be true without invalidating Lieut. Greely's claim to have conducted "a remarkable and heroic achievement," with "skilful management and success"—*vide* M. George Kenna's address. What discovery has been made that even the most enthusiastic scientist would not say was dearly purchased at the price of the lives of seventeen brave men, whose fitness for the work was that they were the flower of the nation? How much richer will the world be for the knowledge obtained in exchange for weeks of agony on the part of the survivors—sufferings which have permanently undermined their health and brought them to the verge of idiocy? Is the sum total of scientific facts to be increased by so small a contribution at the expense of frost-bitten limbs, starvation, and an intensity of suffering which slowly killed near a score of strong men, and brought the survivors within forty-eight hours of death, causing them to weep like children at the approach of succour?