

it has really been offered, which in the absence of confirmation we make bold to doubt. It is pretty clear that the facts concerning the new difficulty, if there really is one, are not yet known, and all speculations based upon the press rumours are useless. The most remarkable thing on the British side is that this moment should have been chosen for a debate in the Commons on the British Columbia docks. But it is incredible that the British Government should have the bad taste and worse policy to resort to a veiled threat under any circumstances that can possibly exist at present. It is to be most earnestly hoped that nothing may occur to prevent the speedy settlement of the question by the truly rational and just method of friendly arbitration, whereby these two great nations will again have set an example worthy of imitation for all Christendom.

THE *Christian Union* of New York, referring to two reports which were submitted to the House of Representatives, a few days since, by the protectionists and free-traders, respectively, of the Committee of Ways and Means, on the subject of the free-wool Bill, points out very clearly the fallacies—"intellectual dishonesty," it calls the thing—which characterize both reports. These fallacies are so similar in kind to a class of arguments with which we in Canada are very familiar that the gist of the *Christian Union's* criticism is worth reproducing. We shall leave the reader to make his own application to the cases nearer home. The free-traders said: "Wool has steadily declined from 1867 (when the wool tariff was passed) to the present time. The McKinley tariff increased the duty on wool an average of one cent a pound. The result has been a fall of two or three cents a pound instead of a rise of one cent. After twenty-five years of experiment, the result has been a reduction of one-half in the number of sheep in the States east of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and a reduction of one-half in the price of wool. To this the protectionist reply was that all over the world the supply of wool has increased and its price decreased"; but a careful comparison of prices shows that the wool tariff has kept the price of domestic wool above the price of foreign wool by nearly the full amount of the duty. This is admitted, and is a successful reply to the free-trade contention that the tariff has caused the fall in the price of wool, by showing that it has instead increased that price above what it would otherwise have now been. But then, the protectionists go on to allege that "the great mass of the people, the consumers, have shared in the benefit." To this end they say: "The people of the United States find themselves able to secure all the wool they require at a smaller cost than ever before in their experience." But that, as our contemporary points out, is not the question. The real question is whether they are able to procure wool more cheaply, or even as cheaply, as they would have been able to do but for the tariff—whether the tariff has not kept the price of domestic woollens above the price of foreign woollens "by nearly the full amount of the duty." "All over the world the supply of woollens as well as of wool has been increasing and the price diminishing. Every advance in civilization, every extension of the area of cultivation or the productiveness of the soil, every cheapening of the means of intercommunication, every labour-saving invention, makes both wool and woollens more abundant and less costly. Unless the tariff restricts this movement, and artificially lessens the supply and raises the price, the manufacturers would not gain by free wool, nor lose by freer woollens." This seems sufficiently clear. One point made in the majority report, that of the free-traders, can hardly be evaded, and is of great importance, viz., that free wool and cheap woollens would enormously increase the demand for clothing, carpets and blankets, just as free sugar had already increased the consumption of the article twenty-four per cent.

AS we are about going to press, the whole Dominion is ringing with the news of the triumph of the De Boucherville Government and the defeat of the Mercier party by an overwhelming majority in the Province of Quebec. Until very recently the indications, as we were able to read them, did not lead us to look for so decisive a result. But within the last two or three weeks the symptoms of a general revulsion against Mercierism have been marked. As the proofs of his dishonesty have been more glaringly displayed, the tendency has been to lose sight of the constitutional question, and when on Sunday last the pulpits sent forth their denunciations, the issue was no longer in doubt. Mercier's own familiar friends, the

prelate and the curé, had evidently risen up against him, and the result was virtually pre-determined. All friends of honest government must be glad that "boodling" is so sternly rebuked, and that one whose personal integrity is above suspicion is at the head of affairs in Quebec, though many will not cease to regret and to deprecate the means by which the change has been brought about.

#### OTTAWA LETTER.

THE House has not yet settled down to hard work although over a week has passed since it assembled. The debate on the Address, the introduction of new members, and solemn resolutions respecting the untimely death of the Duke of Clarence, have been somewhat varied by a calm, technical, and exceedingly intricate argument between Mr. Mills and the Minister of Justice over the meaning of the law dealing with the election of members to the House of Commons. The member for Bothwell, sometimes called "philosopher," endeavoured to put the question merely in the abstract, and Mr. Laurier, who naturally enough had something to say on the subject, went so far as to affirm that it would make no difference to the Liberals whether the disputed votes were cast for Mr. Carling or Mr. Hyman. The London election is certainly an unfortunate affair, and may yet become as famous as the election which took place several years ago in Bothwell, when the candidate whom the returning officer declared entitled to the seat remained in possession for a year and a-half and was finally compelled to retire by a decision of the Supreme Court. Or, it may yet be invested with such an unpleasant savour as that which to-day arises whenever reference is made to the election in Queen's County, N. B., which occurred about the same time.

There was a great deal of argument and an appalling amount of that delicate business of splitting hairs, and it is very doubtful if any member of the House, outside the principals in the debate, was as wise at its conclusion as before its commencement.

The difference between the original motion by Mr. Mills and the amendment by Sir John Thompson is with regard to the relation of the House to returning officers. Sir John was forcible in his declaration that failure of duty on the part of an officer is severely punishable, as the law now is; while Mr. Laurier displayed an inclination to act kindly and even affectionately towards those important gentlemen, and would have them well advised, that they might not be severely punished. His was a sort of "prevention is better than cure" argument. The debate had its constitutional aspect. Mr. Mulock waxed somewhat warm in his discussion of the matter, and, to use a forcible if vulgar expression, he put his foot in it, when he mentioned a rumour that the County Judge who would be called upon to decide upon the votes in question had already shown a bias towards the Government candidate. Sir John Thompson protested against the reference, and the Speaker told Mr. Mulock that such language should not be used unless he was prepared to impeach the Judge. Sir Richard Cartwright, who, it is said, is not favourably disposed towards Speakers appointed by the Conservative Government, bristled up and protested against the ruling. The Speaker, however, fully vindicated the stand he had taken when he read a quotation from Bourinot, showing that the Speaker of the British House of Commons always interferes to prevent attacks upon Courts of Justice, or Judges, unless the member is prepared to make a motion of impeachment.

During the past week the annual meeting of the Canadian branch of the Imperial Federation League was held here. The members got out of the usual rut and discussed matters of practical importance with more than their usual zeal.

The more active participation in the discussion than in former years of the younger element, who are not yet fully versed in political "ways that are dark and tricks that are vain," and are not yet burdened with responsibility to the electorate, may well account for the almost daring opinions expressed and embodied in resolutions. Mr. Hamilton Merritt's motion, to the effect that Canada will be found ready and willing to bear her just share of Imperial responsibilities in the event of inter-Imperial preferential trade relations being adopted, was vigorously opposed by Mr. Cockburn, M.P., Col. O'Brien, M.P., and Professor Weldon, M.P. It was carried, however, though not unanimously. The opposition from the older, and consequently more experienced, wing of the meeting to Mr. Wickham's proposed rider providing that a revenue for Imperial defence be raised from a small, uniform *ad valorem* duty imposed on foreign goods was still more determined. Dr. Weldon pointed out the difficulty its advocates would find in convincing the electors that it was well for them to increase their burden of taxation, and the motion was finally voted down. The election of officers, probably the most important business of the meeting, was disposed of hurriedly and as if it were a matter of small consequence. The officers all bear honoured names, but practical men would like to have seen in the list the names of leading merchants and tax-payers substituted for past politicians and professional gentlemen.

Lord Stanley showed himself wise in his generation when he displayed more than usual courtesy to the newspaper men who met in annual conference the latter part of the week. He tendered a most gracious reception to

them at Rideau Hall, and not only was present at the dinner in the Russell House, but took advantage of the occasion to make the best after-dinner speech which he has delivered since he came to this country. *En passant*, it may be said that there is a certain amount of jealousy between the Canadian Press Association and the Press Gallery. The former in its constitution embraces as members only editors and proprietors. There is scarcely a member of the Gallery who comes under either of these heads, and they not unreasonably contend that an association supposed to represent the journalism of Canada is an anomaly when it excludes from its active membership those men whom the leading newspapers in the land have selected to perform the most important duties which fall to the lot of the practical journalist. There is some talk of an entirely new association of practical newspaper men originating from the Gallery this year. It is to be hoped that instead of two rival organizations, the constitution of the present Association may be so amended as to render it perfectly acceptable to those of the profession who consider themselves quite entitled to rank as *bona fide* members.

At the time of writing the elections are being held in Quebec. Yesterday there was practically nothing done in the House, nor will there be to-day. All eyes are turned on Jean Baptiste. For a week past the French members in this House of Commons of Canada have neglected the duties which pertain to them, and have been scouring the Province of Quebec, opposing or upholding Mr. Mercier, according to their party proclivities. Nor are certain of the English members less blameworthy. Some of them are in Ontario constituencies where elections are about to be held, and others are airing their eloquence in such ridings of Quebec Province where they are, or think they are, appreciated. It is certainly becoming a serious matter when the business of the Federal Parliament is allowed to come to a standstill in order that the members may assist their political friends in local contests, and it does not augur well for what we are continually preaching about, viz.: the separation of Dominion and Provincial politics. It must be remembered that when the House of Commons assembles at Ottawa, it owes the duty to the people of Canada of transacting with despatch the business for which it is called.

The social world is quiet. The death of the Duke of Clarence is the cause of this; not any antiquated reverence for the Lenten season. We are too pious to think of transacting public business on Ash Wednesday, and would be horrified if such a thing were thought of on Good Friday; but it would be too much to expect that, for forty days, during which the House is in session, social entertainments, such as balls and dinner-parties, would be dispensed with; and High Church dances have, some way or other, by a system of logic peculiar to themselves, managed to reconcile the apparent inconsistency of strictly observing the Lenten Fast, while indulging at the same time in all the festivities of a gay Ottawa season.

The proceedings in the House to-day (Tuesday) were brief and of very little interest. Mr. Bowell introduced a Bill to provide for reciprocity in wrecking between Canada and the United States, which he said was approved by the American Government. Mr. Tupper explained at some length certain amendments which he proposes to the Fisheries Act, providing particularly for the license of the lobster fisheries. This appears to be a step in the right direction since the experience of other countries shows that the lobster fishery needs protection if it would be preserved from extermination. The House sat for about half an hour. Everything is in suspense now, pending the result of the Quebec elections. T. C. L. K.

#### FICTION IN THE COURT-ROOM.

THE literary libel suit, recently tried in London, which resulted in the publishers of Major Ellis's book being mulcted in the sum of £200, vividly recalls a similar case which took place in Boston ten or eleven years ago. Major Ellis, following the example of Disraeli, Dickens and Thackeray, merely sketched a living person, and presented him to his readers in a somewhat exaggerated form, in his collection of short tales entitled "African Stories." The West African merchant, under the impression that he was being unjustly caricatured—which belief the good-natured friend, always near at hand on such occasions, doubtless did his best to emphasize—immediately brought suit, and asked for substantial damages. Mr. George Meredith appeared as a witness, and his presence in the court-room lent great interest to the proceedings. He is one of the readers for the publishing firm in question, and gave his testimony as an expert. He had read the objectionable story in manuscript, and had reported on it. In his opinion it was pure fiction, but not in good taste, and he added that the description of one of the characters was the attempt of a serious man trying to be funny. The case went against the publishers, and the aggrieved merchant secured his revenge.

The American law-suit, however, was a much more serious affair. A young lady of two and twenty, Sarah Pratt McLean by name, and a teacher by profession, spent a year or so in Cape Cod, where she taught school. While there she wrote a novel, entitled "Cape Cod Folks," but instead of creating fictitious personages, every character in the story was a real entity, no attempt being made to hide his or her personality or characteristics. The very names of the people who imparted life and movement to Miss McLean's exceedingly bright narrative, were