

# THE WEEK.

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## The Week.

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE promised reconstruction of the Dominion Cabinet was commenced very promptly on Sir Charles Tupper's departure for England. Of the changes and appointments thus far announced, it can only be said that they must have their justification in the future conduct of the departments. It can scarcely be said in respect to either that it has its full justification in the past record of the new minister. Mr. Foster had, it is true, applied himself with commendable diligence, and with a fair measure of success, to the duties of the Marine and Fisheries department. He is also said to have given to Sir John A. Macdonald and his colleagues satisfactory evidence of superior financial ability. It will be greatly to his advantage in the more responsible position of Minister of Finance that no important questions, save of administration, are likely to come up before another session of Parliament, and he will thus have ample time for the study of the more difficult and complicated principles involved. The remark that first and most obviously suggests itself in regard to the choice of Mr. Foster's successor in the Department of Marine is that a man so young and inexperienced would scarcely have been chosen for such a position had he not been the son of Sir Charles Tupper. By this is meant no disparagement of Mr. Charles H. Tupper's acknowledged, and no doubt inherited, ability. Now that the appointment has been made, it might, too, seem invidious to dwell upon the strong objections that might be urged against the principle underlying such a mode of appointment. It is quite probable that Mr. Tupper may show himself his father's son by his able and energetic discharge of the duties of the office, and thus best demonstrate the wisdom of the Premier's choice. With regard to the rumoured, but as yet unconfirmed nomination of a successor to the late lamented Minister of the Interior, it may not be amiss to hope the rumour may prove unfounded. A Cabinet Minister should be above suspicion of being capable of using the opportunities of office for private ends.

WITH a Russian railway stretching with but a single break from St. Petersburg to Samarcand, and soon to be extended to the very borders of Afghanistan; with China yet sore over the occupation of Upper Burmah, and freshly annoyed by the virtual exclusion of her subjects from Australia; and with a new source of hostility of unknown extent recently tapped on the confines of Thibet, it may well be believed that the eyes of

the British Government are just now turned India-ward with some solicitude. It is no slight mark of confidence in the capacity of our late Governor-General that he should be sent to guide the destinies of the great Eastern Empire at such a time. It may be hoped that the Russian journals are sincere and well-informed in protesting that the new railroad is a harbinger, not of war, but of peaceful commerce, but Russian protestations are usually taken with large grains of distrust. The railway may mean peace, or it may mean war. All will depend on the Russian view of the exigencies of the situation. It is probably rash to say, as a leading English Tory journal has said, that the advent of the railway means that England must either "fight Russia or bribe her," unless, indeed, the word bribe is used in a peculiar sense. But it is none the less impossible to close one's eyes to the fact that Russia is a military power first, a commercial nation afterwards. Her first care will no doubt be to create in the vicinity of the railway terminus a great military stronghold and arsenal, such as would serve, on occasion, as a base of operations for carrying on a war either with British India or with China. Nor is it wholly inconceivable that the march of events might find her some day in alliance with China in a great struggle for the displacement of British rule in India.

THE British and the Indian tax-payer may devoutly pray that the result of having Russia establish herself as a neighbour on the northern boundary of the Indian Empire may not be analogous to that which the contiguity of this belligerent nation produces in Europe, and compel, or be thought to compel, the maintenance of enormous armaments in the Punjab. Possibly some advanced British statesman may think it not yet too late to begin to inquire whether the traditional policy of attempting to restrain the natural ambition of this pent-up Slavic Empire to find a European outlet to the sea and compete freely for the world's traffic has been the wisest and best. May not the idea some day begin to dawn even upon a British Ministry that this policy may have been both narrow-minded and short-sighted? It is not quite easy to assign any just and reasonable cause why Russia has not a natural right to free entrance into the Mediterranean. Nor is it utterly beyond the bounds of possibility that the opening up of such a vent for her tremendous and ever-restless energy might not have the effect of transforming the nation from a standing menace to the neighbouring Powers into a friendly rival in the domain of commerce and the arts. If once the barriers of mutual distrust and jealousy could be broken down, and Russians of all classes brought into closer contact with modern free institutions and ideas, who knows what a career of peaceful development might be opened up before her? Such a dream is surely not wholly utopian. Its realization would do more than almost any other conceivable change to render disarmament and a long era of peaceful progress possible in Europe.

WITHOUT fuller information it is impossible to form an opinion as to what is involved in the recent attack by a Thibetan force upon the British garrison at Gratong. It may mean no more than a temporary misunderstanding or a tactical blunder, or it may mean a great deal more. If the attack was but the single-handed assault of some warlike Thibetan tribe, acting on the responsibility of its own local chief, the occurrence may be without special, or at any rate far-reaching significance. But if it foretakens the organized hostility of the great Buddhist chief or high priest, Dalai-Lama, whose influence is said to be powerful not only throughout Thibet but over other large districts of Asia, the consequences may yet be serious. The consequences may be still more serious if, as there seems some reason to suspect, the hostile Thibetans are moved by Russian instigation, or if, as it is at least equally probable, seeing that nearly the whole of the Bod-land is tributary to China, Chinese diplomacy is at the bottom of the affair. In reference to the latter supposition it is said that influential Anglo-Indians are advocating the "opening up of Thibet," which is, of course, the British euphemism for occupation or annexation. This is the usual, often the apparently unavoidable, outcome of such conflicts with border tribes. It will probably be the ultimate result in this case, though it is a result that seems, at present, hardly possible without having to reckon with China. But where is this process of "opening up" to end?