

The Week.

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MR. GOLDWIN SMITH's letter on Manitoba, in the *Mail*, is suggestive on one point. He says: "Much of the land round the capital [Winnipeg] is still lying untilld. It is held by speculators at prices which have driven settlement far westward, to the injury not only of Manitoba, but of the settler himself, who is thus carried away both from his market and his centre of distribution, besides losing the general advantages of neighbourhood." It would be instructive to know how much the stagnation incident to this state of things has contributed to the present discontent in Manitoba; and how many of these speculative holders of land are now engaged in semi-rebellion, agitating for Manitoba's rights. No doubt, as Mr. Smith says, Winnipeg, having reached a certain size, is sure to go on growing, as is the way of cities. She will "grow and live to laugh at the menace of the C. P. R. which threatens her with ruin if she will not succumb to Disallowance." Nevertheless, Manitoba is now pursuing a course that cannot be permitted by any civilised Government. The building of the Red River Railroad is an act of open defiance of the law; and while, doubtless, the forcible stoppage of the work by the Dominion authorities, if practicable—which it is not—would be an act of arbitrary power that could not commend itself to Canadians, still it will never do in a Confederation such as this to sanction the rampant triumph of sectionalism over the Dominion authority. Let us have conciliation and compromise by all means if that may do; but it would be a bad precedent in possible future difficulties in other provinces to conciliate and compromise as the price of return to duty as Canadian citizens.

WITH reference to Mr. Smith's remark (speaking of the Commercial Union meeting at Detroit) "that the partial surrender of fiscal autonomy, of which a bugbear is made, is necessarily involved in every commercial treaty, and was involved in the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. The sovereign power of each nation would remain intact, and withdrawal after due notice would always be open, though it is hoped that the benefits of the arrangement would make it perpetual,"—we must observe that there is this important difference between the case of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 and the present proposal, that there was nothing in that treaty to prevent Canada from raising any additional revenue she may have needed by duties on articles not included in the treaty; whereas this resource must be cut off absolutely under Commercial Union. In support of which we submit the opinion of the *Philadelphia Record*, surely a competent authority, which says, commenting on a late article in the *Mail*, "It will be seen that the difficulties to be surmounted hardly admit of any other solution than the acceptance by the Canadian Provinces of the system of customs taxation and excise that may prevail in the United States, trusting to a similarity of interest to insure a mutual advantage. To make an arrangement by which the weaker State could put a veto on the desire of the stronger would be impracticable. If Canada should get Commercial Union she would have to take her chance of the operation of Federal tax laws precisely as Texas or Tennessee takes it, but without any other than an advisory power in enacting such laws. Her safety would be in the general interest, and her advantage in unrestricted trade with fifty million people." What then becomes of our "sovereign power?" The main business of the Dominion Parliament, as the Legislature of a commercial people, is with trade and finance. That is an inalienable prerogative of every sovereign power; and if it divest itself of such a right in favour of a foreign power it ceases to be "sovereign" in any sense.

It is not quite clear how, in face of the refusal of Congress last winter to assent to a joint commission for the settlement of the Fisheries Question, the American Government can make any binding agreement to that effect now. But that some step in that direction has been taken is beyond doubt. The British Government has announced to Parliament that the United States have agreed to the appointment of a commission, and the British Commissioners have been appointed. Perhaps the whole business—the appointment of the joint commission, as well as their decision—being subject to the approval of Congress, this attempt to settle a troublesome question may prove futile; yet, even in that case, something will

have been gained: the facts will have been ascertained, the value of the respective claims weighed; and the case, as it will be presented to Congress, will be as true and complete as a committee of business men can make it. If Congress then refuse to confirm the agreement made by the Executive, or reject the decisions or award of the joint commission, all the world will be able, at any rate, to estimate the merits of the case, which cannot be done while the representatives in Congress of the Gloucester fishermen alone hold the floor.

WE hope, however, the voice of Gloucester will be heard before the Commission. It used to tell us that the Canadian fisheries were of no value to Gloucester—that American fishermen could do very well without a treaty with Canada. But the Canadian fisheries having since been vigilantly guarded, and the enterprise of American fishermen curbed somewhat, this, according to the *American Grocer*, is what a prominent and well-known fish house of Gloucester has to say on the present year's business:—"Catch to date (August 18) for all New England is only 27,000 barrels. In ordinary years it would have been 100,000 or 150,000 barrels. There are only 700 barrels here unsold, and they are held at \$15 per barrel just as they stand, uninspected ones, twos, and threes all mixed. At such prices we cannot guess who will eat them, as the quality is common. The working classes will not pay the price, and they are not fine enough for the wealthier people. Every fare of new mackerel we have bought thus far this season, we have sold out at a less price than we have paid for the next fare after it. There has not been any chance to get the quantity or quality we wanted. It has been a poor and unsatisfactory business. Many of the vessels that have been on the fishing-grounds four weeks or more will not average more than fifty barrels to a vessel. The shortage on the mackerel catch, as it now looks, will make nearly a million dollars difference to this place alone this season."

THE choice of Mr. Chamberlain as chief of the British Commissioners is an excellent one in every way—probably the very best that could have been made. Mr. Chamberlain is shrewd and alert, a *strong* man in every sense, of great experience in business and public affairs. He may have no special knowledge of the fisheries matter at present; but his able and masterful conduct of the business of the Local Government Board, while in Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, gives assurance that he will be no less strenuous in upholding what he thinks—what his exceptionally clear brain sees, to be right in this matter. And that is all Canada can expect—all she wants. As a free-trader, a Radical, and an Englishman, Mr. Chamberlain may be expected to receive with caution and to examine critically any proposal to bind Canada to the United States' policy of Protection, and to transfer the chief function of the Dominion Parliament from Ottawa to Washington. He will probably feel, if the proposal of Commercial Union be made as an offset to the grant by Canada of fishery privileges to the States, that it were infinitely better to surrender these privileges gratuitously than so to commit Canada to a vicious fiscal system, condemned by all sound economists, and to pave the way for her absorption into the Union by transferring the control of her finances from the representatives of the Canadian people at Ottawa to the representatives of the American people at Washington. Mr. Chamberlain must be in favour of local self-government, and the pretence that Commercial Union with a nation of sixty million, protected highly against the rest of the world, would be practically free-trade to Canada, while not likely to blind him to the evil of the system, will blind him as little to the greater evil of centralisation of government involved in Commercial Union—an evil which, strangely enough, is pressed upon us as the best of things by those who can see no good in the federal system as it exists in the Confederation.

THE British Commissioners, we trust, will keep steadily in view the necessity of obtaining such an equivalent for the fisheries as will satisfy the Maritime Provinces. The Atlantic fisheries belong to the Maritime Provinces as they do not to the other Provinces of the Dominion; and the price to be obtained for admitting American fishermen to their privileges should go chiefly, in some shape or other, to benefit the trade of the Maritime Provinces, not to open a problematical market to Ontario farmers for "broilers." What shape they wish the equivalent to be in is for the people of the Maritime Provinces to say; and they should at once set to work to formulate their demands. They want the coasting trade, no doubt, and access to the United States' markets, and the rest of Canada would make great sacrifices to give them that; but it is difficult to see how this may be done without yielding to the entirely unjust claims of the States, and it is too much to ask, as the Commercial Unionists do, that we should present the States besides with the control of the government of British North America.