

THE WEEK:

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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

At the moment of our going to Press the Presidential Election is still undecided. It is evident that the contest is close and that the policy of the United States for the next four years, so far as it depends on the personal inclinations of the President, will be decided by a small weight in either scale. It may even be decided by something quite foreign to the main issue, such as a local revolt of repudiators against their party in Virginia. The importance of the President, however, is apt to be over-rated. He has a qualified veto on legislation, but otherwise he is an executive officer, pretty closely confined in his action by system, tradition, and the influence of his Cabinet. In the question of the hour, which is the Tariff, he has no initiative power. In the department of foreign affairs his tendencies are important; and on this account the friends of peace must prefer Cleveland to Blaine, though Blaine's own utterances have been pacific. Still more clearly must Cleveland be preferred to Blaine on the score of character. The election of a man condemned as Blaine now is by the best representatives of public morality in the country, would be a grave moral disaster. Tammany has adhered to the Democratic Party, and the best result of all, the victory of Cleveland without Tammany, is impossible. At Buffalo and in other places a great many Irish votes seem to have been attracted to Blaine by his reputed tendency to a foreign policy of violence. The grand orgy of political passion and corruption is now over, and for two or three years to come society and commerce will enjoy an interval of peace. It would be well if the respite could be employed by the leading minds of the nation in debating the expediency of retaining a mode of election which has utterly departed from the intention of the founders, and seems to onlookers about the most noxious in the world.

THE report of the state of Sir John Macdonald's health, which comes by cable, is that he is not suffering from any organic disease which could put his life in danger. This is given as the result of the examination of the physician whom he went to consult. Substantially the report may be correct; but it is nevertheless only too certain that even last Session Sir John's health showed indications of general decline. There is no available successor who is his equal in the management of men; and the choice of anyone for the post of chieftain would be full of difficulty. Neither Langevin nor Tupper is wanting in ability, but to both there are serious objections. Langevin, the idol and the slave of the Church, has a formidable, though undeclared, rival in Chapleau; and Chapleau's friends

are enterprising and relentless, but not implacable. But to placate them you must find North Shore Railways for them to purchase whenever they are short of an odd million or so. The process is one which involves not only a serious sacrifice of public treasure, but what the operators would have more to fear, a loss of public confidence. Tupper is able, but not trusted. The list of names of which these two stand at the head is soon exhausted; and the boldest might well hesitate at a choice. At present, however, Sir John's shoes are not vacant, and people are just now more particularly anxious to know, not what he went to England for, but what he is likely to do now that he has got there. The latest version of the guess-book is, that he will urge the British Government to make an arrangement by which the mails for India and China will be carried on the new overland route across Canada. He cannot hope for success unless he can show that, in point of time, this route is the shortest; and this, rumour adds, he is prepared to attempt. This is the last of the hundred-and-one causes for Sir John's visit to England, which truth-seeking chroniclers have taken so much pains to find out. The fact remains that, in the condition of the Premier's health, there was sufficient reason why the trip across the Atlantic should be undertaken.

WHETHER the municipality of Winnipeg is tottering on the verge of bankruptcy under an intolerable burden of taxes, the local press undertakes to discuss, but cannot decide. But that the taxes bear heavily upon the citizens is only too clear. The amount of this year's taxes is \$456,299.04, more than three times the ratio of the taxes to population in Toronto, Hamilton or London. One-third of last year's taxes remains uncollected, and the issue of distress warrants for the collection of arrears is producing great hardships. The percentage of taxes to the population does not give an adequate idea of the pressure of taxation. In a new city like Winnipeg, the superficial area of which is very large, the greater part of the taxes are levied on vacant lands which produce no revenue out of which taxes can be paid; and when the owners of the land have no other sources from which this want of revenue can be made good, the taxes must remain unpaid till forced sales can be made. It is this feature of the case that makes the weight of the taxes peculiarly burthensome. In a normal state of things, the taxes on the unproductive lands would be payable out of the unearned increment, otherwise they must eat into the land. An increment in a given series of years there will be; but at shorter intervals decrements inevitably occur, and the length of the period of depression is proportioned to the intensity of the inflation which preceded the periodic collapse. In Winnipeg the fever of speculation ran high, and the resulting depression brought down prices to a mere fraction of what they had been. Any assessment of unproductive land for which there is no market must be to a great extent based on conjectural values, and present taxes must come out of future profits which are a long way in the distance, or the land must be sacrificed. But if Winnipeg taxes are exceptionally high, there is much besides taxes that is exceptional there. The marvellous growth of the city has no precedent in Canada, and but few even in the United States. This is the day of Winnipeg's municipal agony. She is paying the penalty of fanciful values in the past, and of abuses in the administration of her municipal affairs. The total amount of revenue is large, but in a city of yesterday everything has to be done, and the equipment of a city is a costly business. Bad as things look, there is no need for despair; but there is need, and urgent need, for honesty and economy in civic rule; by the aid of these Winnipeg will be able to emerge from the slough of despond in which she now finds herself. At some period of their history, most American cities have gone through a similar, if less intensified experience.

IN a suit commenced in the Superior Court of Quebec, the question of the legal existence of the Jesuits as a corporation during the French Dominion will have to be decided. The heirs of the late grand chief of the Hurons of Lorette are quarrelling over the division of his real estate, and the new chief has taken advantage of the opportunity to seek to enforce the claim of his tribe to the Seigniori of Sillery. It is alleged that