

## The Week.

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To every thoughtful and right-minded citizen, on either side of politics, the result of the Kingston election trial will be a matter of gratification. It is something, in the midst of too much evidence of widespread corruption, to be saved the deep humiliation of having it declared by a court of justice that the seat of the Premier of the Dominion was won by bribery or fraud. This gratification, so far as it is a moral feeling, will, however, be greatly modified by the knowledge that the unwonted purity was in this case the result of a kind of commercial compact between the party wire-pullers, rather than of any genuine abhorrence of corrupt practices on their part, or on that of the electorate. But when party canvassers can be brought to feel that it will pay better, even on the low ground of expediency, to refrain from debauching voters, a considerable advance will have been gained. The stringent election law has begun, negatively, to educate the people in morality, by delivering the weak from temptation. It can scarcely become a schoolmaster, in a direct and positive way, until it punishes the taker as well as the giver of bribes.

In the absence of authoritative information, which is not now available, and will not probably be for some time to come, it is idle to speculate about supposed agreements or "hitches" of the Washington Commissioners. The nature of the difficulties which were almost certain to arise, and which have, probably, arisen may, it is true, be pretty well wrought out from our knowledge of antecedent conditions. Not the least embarrassing circumstance is the triangular form which the conference would naturally assume. That the American Commissioners would refuse to accept the Canadian interpretation of the Treaty of 1818; that the British "Plenipotentiary," if Mr. Chamberlain rightly describes himself by that term, would be unprepared to insist on that interpretation to the point of rupture, and would seek to obviate the danger by some new convention; that Sir Charles would propose and Mr. Bayard decline a new and limited form of reciprocity by way of compensation for fishery privileges, all this might be pretty safely taken as a foregone conclusion. But whether, this point being reached, the result will be an absolute failure of the negotiations, or the concession of commercial and fishery privileges, one or both, to the United States fishermen, in return for free admission of Canadian fish to American markets, the British Government undertaking to reconcile Canada to the arrangement, is as yet matter for conjecture. That the issue lies between the former alternatives and some modification of the latter seems tolerably certain, though the yielding of the commercial privileges without compensation must be regarded as possible. Meanwhile, the Commissioners have adjourned for the holidays.

It is always well to be frank, but not always easy to draw the line where legitimate frankness ends and loss of dignity and manly independence begins. Many will be inclined to think that Attorney-General Longley, in his letter to the *Portland Argus*, has crossed that line in the wrong direction. In the first place, his statement of fact, if fact it be, does not strengthen the Canadian contention. Many who have been accustomed to suppose that the fishery privileges in question were really of very great intrinsic value to the Maritime Provinces, will be surprised to find it intimated on what should be good authority, that such is not the case; and that the insistence on the literal rendering of the Treaty of 1818 is rather due to pique at the ungenerous trade policy of the United States, than to any very high value set upon the exclusive right to the inshore fisheries. Then, again, if Attorney-General Longley thinks that the United States have dealt unjustly with their weaker neighbour, it might be well to frankly tell their statesmen so, but any plaint about their lack of generosity seems too like an appeal *ad misericordiam* to be pleasing to high-spirited Canadians. As a matter of fact, generosity or magnanimity is hardly to be expected from a democracy. Irresponsible kings, and even oligarchical ministers, may make free with the rights and property of the nation, but rulers who are of the people, and who have to go back to the people to give an account of their stewardship and receive fresh instructions, are under pretty heavy bonds to eschew sentimental considerations and act on pure business principles. When that

people is largely made up of foreign, semi-hostile elements, the granting of any favours from mere friendly or neighbourly feeling becomes still more out of the question.

"THE gods help those who help themselves." From recent reports in the *St. John, N.B.*, papers, it would seem that the enterprising business men of that city are awakening to a realization of this fact and bestirring themselves accordingly. The newly formed "St. John Forwarding and Trade Promoting Company" is vigorously pushing trade with the West Indies, having already chartered a vessel for that business, and is now turning its attention to other matters of great local importance, such as the union of St. John and Portland, and the building of the projected Navy Island and Courtenay Bay bridges, for street railways, carriages, and foot passengers. The taking in of the suburban city of Portland would give St. John a population of 50,000, making it the first city in size and commercial importance of the Maritime Provinces; and at the same time it would be pretty sure to impart a new impulse to the energies and enterprise of both.

IMPERIAL Federation, Commercial Union, Independence, Annexation, Constitutional Revision—on what a restless sea is the Canadian Federation just now being tossed! He must be an optimist indeed, who, in the midst of all this anxious discussion of radical-cure specifics, can calmly maintain that we are going on very well as we are, and there is nothing wrong with the health of the body politic. The fact is becoming painfully apparent that the experiment of provincial union, in its present shape, is threatened with failure. Under such circumstances the true patriot is the man who is not afraid to look the facts of the situation fairly in the face, and ask what is to be done. There should certainly be no need for despair. The resources of the country are ample, its people inferior to none in industry, energy, and other elements of national progress. But geography on the one hand, and alien race and religious influences on the other, militate powerfully against any real national unity. And yet such union is almost essential to permanent independent existence. Any centrifugal force, powerful enough to disrupt the existing federation, would almost inevitably project the fragments within the sphere of attraction of the great nation on our borders. Such words may seem ill-omened, but no pleasant prophecy can change the fact that there is as yet, after twenty years of mechanical connection, no real cohesion or vital unity among the provinces of the Dominion. It is pretty clear that Repeal is slumbering, not dead, in Nova Scotia, and that the failure to secure any substantial tariff concessions as the result of the Fishery negotiations would quickly stimulate it into fresh life and activity. What is really needed is a conference, or commission of inquiry, composed of the best and wisest statesmen the country can produce, irrespective of party politics, to decide, if possible, upon some new departure which may command the assent of the whole people. The deliberations of such a body would as a matter of course, have to be carried on on a higher plane than that of the party politics, which, however necessary in some respects, seem utterly incompatible with unprejudiced deliberation or united action.

THAT the end of the party system in its old shape is at hand is tolerably certain. Even the *Montreal Witness*, staunch Liberal though it is, confesses that the Liberal party, as such, is on the verge of disruption or dissolution. Since the defeat of last year and the retirement of Mr. Blake the rank and file of the party seem to have lost heart. The experiment of modifying the platform in regard to the vital issue of free-trade *versus* protection, or rather of revenue-tariff *versus* "national policy," proved a conspicuous failure. Nor can it be doubted that a rigid adherence to the old programme would at that time have proved still more disastrous. Under the baneful influences which date back to the Pacific Scandal, if indeed they were not operative from the date of union, the constituencies were so far debauched that the party having the money could, as a rule, find enough purchaseable votes in a majority of constituencies, to control the elections. Under the new, and if possible worse device, of buying whole constituencies with the borrowed public funds, the case of the Opposition is well nigh hopeless. Hence the languor, premonitory of dissolution, which has seized upon the Liberal party, as evidenced by the result of the recent Haldimand election. But with the upbreak of the old Liberal party, that of the older Toryism is certain. The resignation of Mr. Blake, and the relaxation of Opposition pressure which followed, are destined to prove no less disastrous to the Party in power than to their opponents. Their disorganization and dissolution may come more slowly, but are equally sure. The excitement of battle is the life of partyism. Not that there is much room to hope for any more rational system of government. The ranks of both parties will fall