

THE WEEK.

Vol. X.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, AUGUST, 4th, 1893.

No. 36.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics,
Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

The consequences of a blunder cannot always be stopped by its tardy correction. The local Directors of the World's Fair are said to be now struggling with a hard problem in ethics. Having accepted a sum of money from Congress on condition of keeping the Fair closed on Sunday, they after a time concluded that it would pay them better to violate the condition and refund the money. It was a question whether, having once accepted the condition, they rightfully break the condition on promising to return the money—if they should happen to have it at the close of the Fair. That was ethical question number one. Then, having found on trial that Sunday opening would not pay, they after a few Sundays resolved to close on Sundays. Ethical question number two now confronts them, in this shape. Having resolved to break the original condition, having, in fact, broken it for several Sundays, and having now repented of the blunder because it would not pay, and having returned to the original condition, are they now under obligation to refund

the money to Congress? A majority of them are said to have persuaded themselves that they are now under no obligation to return it. To this some influential papers strongly object, saying in effect: "You are not justified in experimenting upon contract-breaking, and then, when the breaking proves unprofitable, keeping the money which was given on the condition which has been broken." The probabilities are against the returning of the money, nevertheless.

If the dispute between France and Siam were one which affected only those two countries, the unconditional submission of the latter would be the end of all controversy. Unfortunately the extraordinary demands of the French Government for the cession of Siamese territory on the upper Mekong, have brought the question into a larger arena, in which China, Great Britain and possibly Germany may have something to say. Britain's interest in the matter is two-fold. She is bound to protect her commerce, which is involved to an extent which is no doubt a surprise to most of us, and she objects to having the latter take the place of Siam as a next door neighbour in the far East. The latter fact is by no means complimentary to France, and is a singular comment upon the effects of European and so-called Christian civilization upon international relations, but it is the fact nevertheless. The guarded statement of Lord Rosebery in the House of Lords, to the effect that the Government had refrained from giving advice to Siam, save when she had asked for it, leaves room for the inference that Siam's acceptance of France's ultimatum was not a surprise to the British diplomatists, and possibly for the further guess that Siam will not eventually be the loser, by having made the concession, which gives France an easy way out of the difficulty, and may possibly prompt her to a display of unwonted magnanimity. But it is idle to conjecture, while it is not unlikely that a clearer light will have been thrown upon the whole transaction before these words meet the eye of the reader. We shall, at any rate, be spared the spectacle of a great nation, using its superior force, to crush the feeble armaments of a weak Oriental kingdom. However French susceptibilities may be wounded by any intervention of Great Britain in the matter, a peaceful way out of the complication will no doubt be found.

For selfish as well as for better reasons Canadians must deeply deplore the almost unexampled financial disaster which has for the time being prostrated and almost paralyzed business in the United States. Notwithstanding the barrier interposed by two tariff walls, our interests are too closely united with those of our great neighbour to make it possible that they should thus suffer and we not to some extent feel the effects, especially should the depression be prolonged. In addition to other considerations we cannot forget the great numbers of our own people who are living across the border, and who must, as a matter of course, be amongst the sufferers. Should the depression continue long enough to cause these to return in large number to their native land, all unprepared as she is at the present moment to find remunerative employment for them, the calamity may yet be brought home to us still more closely. Whatever complication of causes may have brought about the present deplorable state of affairs across the border, it can hardly be doubted that the short-sighted silver policy, and the consequent fear of a depreciated currency, stands first and chief. There is, therefore, some good ground for the hope which is so widely felt, that if Congress shall only be wise enough to promptly repeal the Sherman Silver Act, when it meets in special session a few days hence, the beginning of the end will at once come. No one doubts the immense recuperative power of the country. The fact of this universal faith in its resources will itself be a most potent factor in bringing a return of confidence and prosperity just as soon as the chief cause of apprehension is removed. Meanwhile the object-lesson is one which should not be lost upon Canada. While we have every reason to congratulate ourselves upon the superior soundness of our monetary and banking systems, the example should confirm our legislators and people in an inflexible resolve to let nothing tempt them to turn aside for a moment from the system under which the stability of our banks and the soundness of our currency are assured.

Mr. Gladstone has promised to consider the question of appointing a committee to inquire into the origin of the recent disgraceful scene in the British House of Commons. If there were any hope of the House being able to furnish an impartial committee, or one on which the partisanship could be so balanced as to secure an impartial report, such a report might be useful in preventing