

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

WHEN we were commenting on the Toronto City Elections last week our attention had not been called to the most unfortunate speech which Mr. Manning made in a most unfortunate place on receiving the news of his election. At the meeting of his friends held in St. Andrew's Hall he carefully eschewed politics, and we gave him credit for his good sense. But now he proclaims that he owes his success to the Conservative Vote and thus recognizes party. He does himself injustice, as we believe, when he thus ascribes his victory over a highly respected and very able opponent to illicit and discreditable influence; he owed it to the confidence felt by his fellow-citizens in his capacity and their special desire to have the benefit of his opinion on the Waterworks and other important questions of a practical kind which are now before us. Let us hope that the new Mayor's words were a slip in a moment of excitement. It is time to say plainly that the man who, after seeking a high office at the hands of his fellow-citizens on municipal grounds, uses it for party purposes is guilty of a fraud, and that he who avows such an intention stamps himself with dishonour. When will our people see that this party game to which we sacrifice everything is as pestilent as it is childish?

MR. MANNING'S advent to the Mayoralty will be followed, we may hope, by a fair inquiry into the case of the police. Too much, perhaps, is expected by the public of detectives, each of whom, people imagine, ought to be a counterpart of one of the human sleuth-hounds of Gaboriau's novels, able to hunt surely on any track, however invisible to common eyes. If good detectives can be had for money, Scotland Yard must have them; yet the people in England are angry because the police cannot at once pounce upon the dynamitards of London Bridge. Crime is not always accommodating enough to leave a trace. The next official report will show what proportion of our burglars is now in safe keeping and what proportion has escaped. The ordinary police of Toronto is, at all events, a very fine set of men, and appears generally to do its duty well; it is rather too small for the work, and in winter, when more frequent reliefs are necessary, would probably be short-handed if the weather did not aid it by preventing rowdiness from going abroad. Its task is not an easy one, for there is among the people a general unwillingness to assist the policemen, if not a tendency to sympathize with the man in custody. However, supposing anything to be amiss, where does the blame lie? That is the question to be

determined. The common impression is that the chief is the master of the force, as a colonel is of a regiment, that he appoints, dismisses, rewards and promotes the men, and is, therefore, personally answerable for their character and efficiency. It ought to be so, and the force, which is quasi-military in its character, ought to be treated on military principles, and to be thoroughly in the hands of its commander. In fact it is otherwise. The power is in the hands of the Commissioners who, if we are rightly informed, determine appointments and dismissals, promotions and punishments. Giving these gentlemen full credit for the best intentions, they have not, like the chief, the pressing sense of personal responsibility, and as politics are in the very air we breathe, it is always possible that they may creep into any conclave. Not long ago a safe was broken open while the policeman was absent from his beat: it was alleged that he had gone to a public-house. This was a serious case, and one of a kind which demoralizes a force. Has the man been retained? If he has, to what influence is his retention due, to that of the chief or to that of the Commissioners? Mr. Manning will probably make it his business to discover.

THE charges of personation in the late mayoralty election in Toronto if true must be capable of being proved. The substitutes for dead or absent men may be difficult to find, but if party vigilance, which was active on both sides, be worth anything it ought to be able to guard against this form of electoral fraud. The proof of personation, even if the guilty party were not identified, would void the vote. Complaints are made of the defective state of the law governing municipal elections; but if the election law does not specifically make personation a crime, it does not follow that it is a pastime in which any one may indulge with impunity. If the law is deficient it should be amended, and perhaps this could be done in no better way than by the adoption of the remedies and penalties of the law which governs legislative elections. To the objection that it is not a crime for a deputy returning-officer to refuse votes which he personally knows to be fraudulent, the answer is that it is not the policy of the law to invest him with discretionary power. Even in Legislative and the Parliamentary elections, the deputy returning officers have been deprived of the power which this objection assumes they ought to have. Experience shows that when they had it many abuses which are now avoided were committed. The policy of the law, Federal and Provincial, now is to make the voter vote at his own peril; if there is a doubt as to his right to vote he can be sworn, but the returning officer cannot say whether he shall vote or not when his name is on the list of voters and he is prepared to take whatever oath may be tendered to him. Repeating for mayor can be checked by requiring the voter to swear that he has not previously voted at the election which is being held. The sufficiency of the penalty of fifty dollars for duplication, when no oath is tendered, may fairly be doubted. The real evil is that, being on the spot, the alderman can generally exercise a paramount control in the selection of deputy returning-officers; and though these officers do not often go wrong they are under an influence from which they ought to be free. Whether the ballots ought or ought not to be numbered, really involves the question whether the absolute secrecy of the vote ought to be maintained or whether provision ought to be made for the removal of the veil. The two systems have been acted upon in different countries; in England, Australia, and the Federal elections of Canada absolute secrecy is secured; and where subordinate office-holders are not disfranchised, it is quite clear that the opposite system is liable to expose them to the vengeance of offended superiors.

LENNOX, which at the last election passed by a small majority from the Tories to the Grits, has now by a small majority passed back again from the Grits to the Tories. Each party charges the other with having obtained the success by roguery and corruption: on one side the charge has been proved, on both sides it is probably true. Such is the political education which the party system gives the people. The presumption of irregular agencies of course vitiates the verdict, which might otherwise be justly claimed by the Government as a proof that there was no Grit reaction.