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CURRENT TOPICS.

When will our political chiefs, especially the members of Governments, have reached a height of conscious virtue from which it will be no longer deemed a sufficient or even a relevant answer, to a charge of misgovernment or corruption, to retort "*Tu quoque.*" Not, we fear, so long as the party system is in vogue. No great discernment is needed to perceive that it is no satisfactory answer to a charge of wrong-doing to reply, "Your party does the same when in office." And yet when the Mowat Government is accused, say, of the meanness and dishonesty of gerrymandering, even the veteran Premier does not hesitate to reply, "See how much worse the leaders of your party at Ottawa have done." Is a resolution of censure moved against the Dominion Government on the ground that it has squandered the public

domain by bestowing it too liberally upon the railways, colonization companies, etc.? A Cabinet Minister seems not to think it a valid argument to say, "The Mackenzie Administration gave much larger portions of the public domain to the railways, and to individuals, or corporations, than we." What should we think of the private citizen who should, when accused of some misappropriation of funds, or other violation of trust, point to some other man, supposed to be in the confidence of the accuser, and say, "He did the same thing on a still larger scale."

Mr. Coatsworth's proposal in the Commons, the other day, that a clause should be inserted in all public contracts providing that the workmen engaged shall be paid at least the current rate of wages in the locality, opens up a much larger question than may at first be apparent. The fact that the Minister of Public Works moved the adjournment of the debate in order to give the Government an opportunity of looking into the matter, adds to the significance of the discussion. The questions involved, perhaps amongst others, seem to be whether the Government, as such, owes any duty to the laborers who may be, by virtue of its contracts, employed to do the work of the State, and, if such obligation be admitted, whether the Government shall adhere to the old law that all questions of wages shall be left to the operation of the conscienceless, relentless, law of supply and demand. We were surprised and sorry to read that Mr. Laurier expressed the opinion that Mr. Coatsworth's motion should not be entertained, and that the Government's hesitation was a sign of weakness. It would be strange should the result show that in this matter the Conservative Government is more liberal than the Liberal leader. Practical difficulties there doubtless are in carrying the principle of Mr. Coatsworth's proposal into practice, but it is the business of statesmen and legislators to overcome practical difficulties. That the principle is one which a Liberal should be first to accept and advocate seems to us to be capable of though hardly to need demonstration.

Poor France! Unhappy, indeed, must be her condition when not only has her last attempt to secure an ally resulted in bitter disappointment, but, when those nations with whom she ought to be on the best of terms refuse to take seriously the

speeches even of her chosen leaders, and listen to their fulminations with the coolest indifference consistent with international courtesy. This is, of course, the natural result of a bad rhetorical habit into which French legislators as well as French newspapers have fallen. It is the Nemesis of unrestrained and unconsidered speech. One of the worst results of a choleric habit is that those who fall into it and indulge freely in wild denunciations and threats on every slight provocation deprive their words of their legitimate force, should occasion arise to warrant strong expostulations. It may be, for example, it is at least conceivable, that France has some good reason for objecting to the ratification of the new Anglo-Belgian treaty. If so, the fact, calmly stated and clearly shown, could hardly fail to secure the attention of fair-minded Englishmen and the sympathy of other nations. As the matter now stands, no one can see any reason, save possibly wounded vanity, or disappointed ambition, to justify the hysterical resentment of France's orators and editors, while, more exasperating still, England does not deign seriously to notice the fiery words of even her Foreign Minister, or notices them only to propose a general conference on the situation such as is probably far from the wish or purpose of the irate Minister. It may be, some Englishmen even think there are good reasons for France's protests against England's continued occupancy of Egypt. But the way to make those protests effective is to press the arguments which support them with diplomatic force and dignity, and to show in like manner the fallacy of the reasonings, satisfactory not only to the British Government and Parliament, but to other great Powers interested, which are given to show that continued occupancy is a duty owed to Egypt herself. It is certain that loud threats and general disagreeableness will never accomplish the result.

When a portion of the Council of the Imperial Federation League in London agreed lately to dissolve, all who disliked the Empire and thought National Unity a dream, rejoiced. They thought that it meant the death of the cause, and some had the exceeding bad taste to flout Mr. Parkin, and ask what had become of him. These gentlemen are finding out that it is a very lively corpse and that Mr. Parkin in particular is all right. He never did better service for Canada and the Empire than by his magnificent series of letters to the *Times*,