

# THE WEEK.

Ninth Year.  
Vol. IX., No. 39.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, AUGUST 26th, 1892.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

## THE WEEK:

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.00  
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European Agents—SMITH, AINSLIE & Co., 25 Newcastle Street,  
Strand London.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher

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STRANGE as it may appear from the point of view of practical statesmanship, we were quite too fast in assuming last week that our Government had taken the precaution to ascertain unofficially that the promised withdrawal of the discrimination in canal tolls at the end of the season would be satisfactory to the Washington administration. The result is that the concession—we will not say humiliation, because if a thing is right there can be no real humiliation in doing it—goes for nothing and the retaliatory toll is to be imposed at the Sault canal. We refrain from comment upon the singular fact that the decision reached by the Canadian Executive was neither communicated to Mr. Herbert, Acting British Minister at Washington, who had been striving so energetically to effect a settlement of the difficulty, nor officially made known to the American Executive in any way. It is much more reasonable to assume that there is some explanation of the grave oversight, which will be made known presently, than that Sir John Abbott and his Cabinet could have purposely treated both the British representative and the American Government with rude discourtesy. As for the rest, while no doubt the exigencies of the coming struggle for the Presidency are responsible for the sudden energy which the American authorities have displayed, it is not easy to see that Canada has much to complain of. The President has taken care to make the Sault tolls correspond almost exactly in kind and in amount with those imposed at the Welland. The one discriminates against American, the other against Canadian, ports. If the former are not in violation of the treaty, the latter cannot be. Hence all angry denunciations and threats of "striking back" are unreasonable. Had the President used to the full the powers entrusted to him by Congress, our Government would have been probably compelled to again consider and amend their action. As it is, it will probably be thought best to submit to the comparatively slight discrimination, or meet it by recouping the losers from the public treasury, for the remainder of the season. Meanwhile the moderate and conciliatory spirit shown by the American Executive, who seem to have had no option in the matter, gives good reason

to hope that a friendly conference after the Presidential election may lead to a better understanding in regard to the whole business. None the less, he must be a partial critic who can conclude that our Government has played a statesmanlike part in the affair.

THE *Globe* had the other day a curious article appealing to everybody to leave the Government alone in the matter of choosing a President for the University. "No pressure," it pleads, "should be put upon the Executive on behalf of any candidate, in or out of the present Faculty, which will fetter the Executive in making the best possible appointment." The article is far from complimentary to the members of the Executive. It will scarcely raise them in the public estimation, or in their own, to have their chief supporter among the newspapers intimate thus broadly that there is danger that they may be swayed by improper pressure in so responsible a business as that of appointing a President for the Provincial University. It must be improper pressure which is referred to, for any body of trustees, anxious only to make the best possible selection, would be glad to get the benefit of opinions and suggestions from every quarter. In the article in question the *Globe* makes unintentionally a forcible arraignment of the Government method of retaining the appointing power so absolutely in its own hands. It is difficult to conceive of a body less fitted for the discharge of such a duty than a partisan Government. The fact that it is partisan, and as such represents but a part of the people to whom the institution belongs and for whose benefit it exists, is of itself a sufficient condemnation of the method. Then, again, a political administration naturally and almost necessarily lacks the essential qualifications for the direct management of such a trust. For what does the Senate of a university, supposed to be composed of a number of the best and most representative scholars and friends of education to be found in the country, exist, if it may not fittingly be entrusted with the selection of president and professors? Can there be any question as to which body should be the more competent for such a task? We shall be told, no doubt, that the duty of making such appointments is an outcome of the Ministerial responsibility, but surely the responsibility is better observed when the judgment of the best qualified men is followed in such matters. Another remark is invited. The *Globe* complains of the lack of liberality on the part of graduates and friends of the University in giving of their means for its better equipment and endowment, and contrasts them unfavourably in this respect with the friends of McGill and other institutions. Cannot the *Globe* see in this very fact of political management a sufficient reason for the paucity of such benefactions? Can it point to any instance in which any institution directly managed by a party Government has appealed successfully to the liberality of private individuals? Can it not see some very cogent reasons why such benefactions are withheld or bestowed elsewhere?

MOST of what we have read, in the animated discussion to which Sir Oliver Mowat's action in dismissing Mr. Myers from the office of County Attorney, because of his open and persistent advocacy of political union with the United States, ignores, it seems to us, an essential point in the controversy. Does, or does not, Canada, as a semi-independent colony of Great Britain, occupy in any respect an exceptional position, such as would warrant her citizens in discussing the question of her political future with a freedom which could not be claimed or permitted in the case of a province or a state forming an integral part of a national whole? Is it, or is it not, a natural and necessary consequence of the operation of the law of development that a country, great in natural resources and capable of containing and supporting a powerful nation, setting out from the position of a colony of such a Mother Land as Great Britain and gradually increasing in population, wealth and capacity for self-government, must sooner or later come to a parting of the ways, at which she must choose for herself her own future course? Is not the alternative notion, "once a colony, always a colony," unthinkable and absurd? Suppose, for example, that

Canada had now fifteen millions of people instead of five, is it conceivable that she would still be content with the position and powers of a colony? What means the earnest advocacy of Imperial Federation by some of our most loyal—we might almost say ultra-loyal—fellow-citizens, if it is not based upon the implied postulate that Canadians are at liberty and have a right to choose their own future course? The very idea of federation implies the freedom and political equality of all the contracting parties, otherwise any federation which might be formed would be little better than a farce, so far as the members who entered it on any other basis than that of complete freedom to choose between that and any other course was concerned. Then, again, Sir Oliver Mowat has argued publicly and at length against annexation, or political union with the United States, as its advocates prefer to call it. What is public discussion worth, if the person who argues one side of the question is to take advantage of his position to say to anyone who is of a different way of thinking: "Answer me at your peril!" How could an orator more completely stultify himself than by giving notice at the close of an elaborate argument, that anyone who should have the temerity to attempt to confute that argument would be accounted guilty of treason, in so far at least that if he occupied any official position he would be dismissed? But while we hold that as a self-governing colony on the verge of national adulthood Canada has a right to discuss freely her own political future, and that it borders on the farcical for a Premier to argue publicly against a political change, and then use his official authority to intimidate or punish the man who takes the opposite side of the question, we do not, of course, abate one jot from the position which we have always taken, viz., that annexation, by whatever name, would be political suicide for Canada. It would be but a sorry ending to all our cherished national hopes and aspirations, an ignoble surrender of the vantage ground won for us by the bravery of our fathers both on the battle-field and in the political arena, to suffer our country, in a moment of weakness and despair, to become submerged and lost in the immensity of the great Republic beside us. Surely we can do better than that.

MR. BLAKE'S speech before the Eighty Club naturally attracted a good deal of attention as being the first public address of the distinguished Canadian Home-Ruler in England. Pretty full accounts both of the speech and of the comments of the leading newspapers are now at hand. Of the carefully-written address, the *Star* says that "Step by step, with historical precision and irresistible argument, Mr. Blake demonstrated the advantages which Canada had reaped from self-government, the evils which self-government had allayed, and the far-reaching analogy between the evils and the only successful remedy in the case of Ireland and in the case of Canada." Opponents of Irish Home-Rule will, of course, demur touching the "irresistibility" of the argument. But while the press critics with great unanimity admit the ability and praise the statesman-like moderation of the speech, the Gladstonians, as was to be expected, admire its cogency as an argument, and the Tories and Unionists, as was to be expected, either fail to see the alleged analogy, or deny that the remedy has been so successful in Canada as to warrant a trial of its virtues in the Mother Country. Among the Unionists the *Spectator* makes, perhaps, the most effective point. Quoting Mr. Blake's remarks that "the difficulties which existed in the case of Canada with regard to home-rule did not exist in the case of Ireland," and that "Ireland was at our doors," the *Spectator* says: "Precisely, and that is just the key-stone of the difficulty. Canada we can let alone, because if Canada makes up her mind to leave us, we may reasonably make an act of resignation and shake hands with a sigh. That is just what we cannot do with Ireland." This sounds forcible and would unquestionably be so had the drift of Mr. Blake's argument been directed to show that the same difficulties beset the path of the British in giving home-rule to Canada, which now stand in the way of its granting home-rule to Ireland. But the force of the *Spectator's* remark, not as an argument against Home-Rule for