

# THE WEEK.

Sixth Year.  
Vol. VI. No. 16.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, MARCH 22nd, 1889.

\$3.00 per Annum  
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

## THE WEEK :

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS LITERATURE SCIENCE AND ARTS.

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.00  
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No advertisements charged less than five lines. Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE debate in the Ontario Legislature on the License question was curiously, and by no means pleasantly, suggestive of some of the defects of the system of government by party. Into the merits of the question we need not enter at length. Theoretically the views advocated by the Opposition are distinctly Liberal or Radical, and would seem to have come more appropriately from followers of Mr. Mowat. Logically the champion of provincial rights and full local autonomy should be the advocate of local control of licenses. There is a point, evidently, at which the extreme local option theory breaks down in practice. There can be little doubt, we believe, that a great majority of the people were in favour of the assumption by the Government of the power of appointing License Commissioners, and would consider a return to the old system as nothing less than a moral calamity. Probably there is as little abuse of the power by Mr. Mowat's administration as could reasonably be hoped for under any party Government that could be appointed. We see no reason to suppose that Mr. Meredith, whose honesty of purpose will probably be admitted by most, even of his political opponents, would be able to show a better record under the same system. It seems, in fact, idle to hope for the correction of the gross evils and abuses complained of, until the people have become politically wise enough to put such matters of administration into the hands of independent boards, appointed by a non-partisan Government or until—the millennium.

THERE are, unhappily, several other things which no dispassionate reader of the debate on the licensing question can well doubt. He cannot doubt, for instance, that the power of granting, withholding, or revoking liquor licenses is, in the hands of Government Commissioners, a most powerful influence on the side of the Government in election times. Even should it be that the license inspectors in some localities were rigidly impartial and utterly incapable of allowing their action to be influenced by partisan considerations, it would be impossible to

make the holders of licenses, and those wishing to obtain them, believe it. The influence of the appointing power would still be strong on the side of the Government. There can, we fear, be no doubt that in some, perhaps in many cases, the Inspectors brought to bear consciously, though perhaps indirectly, a potent official influence on behalf of the Government candidate. There is too much reason to believe even that in several instances the reward of "a right," or the punishment of a wrong vote, was received by the party concerned in the shape of a prosecution dropped or a prosecution pressed, a license granted or a license refused, and so on. Such things are very petty and very closely related to the betrayal by some one of a very serious trust. But the whole business is the same in kind with transactions that are constantly going on on a much larger scale all over the Dominion. The clamour for the fulfilment of alleged ante-election promises must go far towards making the life of the leader of the Ottawa Government wretched. It is a sad but common state of affairs when individuals and localities all over Canada are led to believe or know that rewards and punishments, offices and promotions, and even the distribution of national funds for railway subsidies, public buildings, etc., are largely affected by the political leanings and doings of the individual or locality in question.

ANOTHER interesting educational debate took place in the Ontario Assembly last week. The High Schools were the subject, and a motion in favour of the compulsory charging of fees for pupils of such schools the occasion. From the popular point of view there is a good deal to be said in support of the position taken by Mr. Gibson (Huron) and some other members, that the Public School, accessible to all the children in the land, is the only one which should be aided by Government funds. Few in Canada are, however, prepared to push their democratic theories to that extent. There is, as Mr. Craig and other representatives pointed out, no agitation against the High Schools, but on the contrary a very general satisfaction with the present system. Much more might be said in favour of a proposal which was hinted at by some speakers, though not, we believe, distinctly formulated, viz., to make the "fifth form" compulsory in the Public Schools, omit the subjects covered by it from the High School programme, and raise the standard of entrance into the latter accordingly. A strong argument in favour of such a change would be the fact that for the great majority of pupils the end of the Public School course is the limit of educational opportunity or ambition. The extension of this course could hardly fail to add a year of school work to the education of a large number of boys and girls, and so to raise very materially the level of intelligence amongst the poorer classes of the coming generation. Another great recommendation is the excellent opportunity that would be afforded for extending the course of the High Schools and so helping the Universities to raise the standard of matriculation and of graduation, both of which, it is admitted on all hands, are now almost absurdly low.

MUCH opposition is being made to the changes in the postal laws proposed by the Postmaster General. Some of the changes are certainly open to serious and obvious objections, especially the proposal to charge for transmission of semi-monthly and monthly publications through the mails, while those issued once a week or oftener continue to go free. If the present practice is based upon the principle that a tax on newspapers would be a tax on knowledge, it is manifestly impossible to draw the line, with any consistency, at the weeklies. Many of the fortnightlies and monthlies are more directly educational in character and influence than those which are published more frequently. This must be clear to anyone on a moment's reflection. The Minister will surely withdraw this clause of his Bill, and devise some less objectionable means of cutting off from free carriage the advertising sheets against which it is understood to be directed. The raising of the fee for letter registration from two to five cents, seems, to say the least, too long a leap, and would almost surely defeat its own end, if that end is to increase revenue rather than to discourage registration. A three cent rate might, perhaps, be unob-

jectionable and successful. As to the proposed two cent rate for dropped letters, we cannot see that it is unreasonable. The difference in cost and trouble to the Post Office between handling and delivering a letter within a town or city, and at a place fifty or a hundred miles away, is slight, and two cents does not, certainly, seem an extortionate charge for the delivery of a letter anywhere within the limits of a city. It is doubtful, however, if the gain in revenue would be very great, as other modes of delivery would be resorted to in many cases, while in many others the postal card would be made to do duty instead of the sealed note. The argument that a large deficit in the Post Office Department is defensible on the same grounds with subsidies to steamboats and railways, may, it is true, be pushed too far, and prove too much, but, there can be little doubt that, on the other hand, the true remedy for such deficit lies in the direction of stimulating the business rather than increasing the cost of doing it.

THE new arrangement for the trial of divorce suits by a Committee of the Senate seems to be greatly expediting the work of hearing and deciding such cases. Decrees of divorce have already been granted in a number of instances. There is, however, no indication of any tendency in the direction of greater laxity, as in every instance in which a decision has been so expeditiously given, the evidence of unpardonable guilt has been clear and conclusive. Pending the establishment of a regular Court for the trial of divorce suits, the Senate Committee is probably as efficient a substitute as could be devised. While Canadian opinion would not tolerate any additions to the one cause for which divorce is obtainable, it is but just and fitting that prompt relief should be granted in cases of notorious infidelity to the marriage vows. Senator Gowan is to be congratulated on the successful working of the scheme he originated.

THE provision made for the care of the insane in the Province of Quebec has long been a reproach to the Government and people of that Province. These unfortunates are virtually farmed out to contractors, seeing that the institutions in which they are placed are not under public control, and that their proprietors have a direct pecuniary interest in keeping the expenses at the lowest figure, and in retaining the patients as long as possible. The question is once more before the Legislature. The Government has introduced a Bill to amend the Act in some respects, but does not seem to have gone to the root of the matter, by doing away with the contract system, and providing directly for the care and medical treatment to which sufferers of this unhappy class are entitled in a Christian community. Some of the facts stated by Mr. Gagnon, the promoter of the Bill, are very significant of the evils connected with the present state of affairs. He said, for example, that the medical service was not complete at Beauport, where there are only three doctors for twelve hundred patients, nor at Longue Pointe, where there are only two doctors for nine hundred patients, and these two have to make up their own prescriptions. Mr. Gagnon further said that Beauport gave great trouble to the authorities, that the managers showed great insubordination, that he found it quite difficult to get patients liberated; and that orders of the Government were disobeyed. These facts speak volumes, and should stimulate a professedly Liberal administration to do away with the causes of the trouble and take the matter into its own hands. It would probably be hard to find another civilized country in which the old system of farming out insane patients at so much a head per week is perpetuated.

THE British Government is likely to have a hard struggle in Parliament over its Bill for the increase of the Navy. It does not appear that the malcontents are absolutely opposed to even a very large expenditure, providing the necessity for it can be made clear, but they certainly have some cause to demand a good reason for a proposed outlay of over \$100,000,000 by a Government which only a year ago actually reduced the naval estimates of the previous year. The Liberal programme seems to be, "A hundred millions if necessary, but not a million without a clear cause rendered, and a reform of the