

The Legal News.

VOL. VI. MARCH 31, 1883. No. 13.

THE VETO QUESTION.

The discussion of a question that savours of politics usually occupies more attention nowadays, or at any rate occupies more of the space of the daily journals, than a great war carried on after sterner methods. Amidst much upon the veto question that is partisan, we find a little note upon the subject in the *Bystander*, from the pen of Mr. Goldwin Smith, who may be assumed to express an independent view:—

"As to the Streams bill, there is no denying that the Dominion Government has the veto power, nor is there ground for saying that the power was not intended to be used. We are dealing not with antiquated practices or vague traditions, but with a constitution recently framed, which must be supposed to be operative in all its parts. Of course the veto is not to be exercised without good reason, but two good reasons at least for its exercise may be assigned. One is, an excess of powers on the part of the Provincial Legislature: the other is a breach of the fundamental principles of public morality and justice by which all legislation ought to be restrained. Nothing can be more likely than that such bodies as our Local Legislatures should occasionally betray an ignorance of the great rules of jurisprudence and require to be called to order by superior authority; such a check is made more essential by the increasing tendency of the machines to ostracise the best intellect of the province. The bill breaking Mr. Goodhue's will was a case in point, and formed a proper subject for the veto. Whether the Streams bill is actually a breach of the principle which forbids legislative aggression upon vested interests is a question which turns partly upon disputed matters of fact, and on which there is sincere difference of opinion among persons free from the party bias. On its face the Act certainly seems to be one confiscating improvements and assigning only an arbitrary compensation; it also looks very like a law directed against an individual under colour of a general enactment. In any case, however, the contention of Ontario ought to be

that the bill is unobjectionable in principle, not that the veto is a nullity."

The Act referred to is an Act "for protecting the public interest in Rivers, Streams and Creeks," which has been thrice passed by the Legislature of Ontario, and thrice disallowed by the Governor General on the advice of the Privy Council.

THE SEDUCTION BILL.

"Violent legislation is the nostrum to which minds of a certain type are ready to fly whenever they see anything amiss, without considering what the general effect will be." So writes Mr. Goldwin Smith, in the same journal, and we think some of our local as well as federal legislators should give heed to the words. They occur in some observations upon the Charlton seduction bill, and the entire paragraph is worth reading:—

"Mr. Charlton moves, practically, to make the illicit intercourse of the sexes a crime, and punish the male offender alone. To protest against the injustice would be idle; philanthropy likes injustice. But does not Mr. Charlton see that he is taking away the principal safeguard of female purity by declaring, as in effect he proposes to do, that breach of chastity is no offence in the woman, and that even when she allures a lover, as it is preposterous to doubt that licentious women often do, she is to be regarded as a passive and guiltless victim? Law will, as usual, mould opinion, and less shame will attend what the law proclaims to be merely a wrong involuntarily undergone. In civilized countries a woman is protected from violence by the Government; against the enemy in her own breast she must protect herself; she is the keeper of her honour, and she knows that a promise is not marriage. It is singular that those who wish to call her to the exercise of political power should at the same time treat her as a creature devoid of sense and will. Violent legislation is the nostrum to which minds of a certain type are ready to fly whenever they see anything amiss, without considering what the general effect will be. A new weapon will be put into the hand of a female black-mailer, to whose machinations the characters of clergymen and medical men especially are exposed, as has just been proved by a signal example in this country, and by a