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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THOSE members of the British Association who landed on our shores ten days ago do not need to be told that, in the alternation of the seasons, Canada is amply redeemed from the reproach of being uniformly the snow-clad region which the imagination of Voltaire painted it. Whether the beavers which the country contained, and in which, from the hatters' point of view, an English wit professed to see its whole value, were worth the heads which the acquisition cost, will never again be asked. It will be safe for our visitors to trust what they see and feel, though some caution may be necessary about accepting as gospel everything they hear. They will not draw too sweeping conclusions, even about the weather, from the experience of a few days, much as individual comfort or the reverse depends upon the indications of the thermometer, when it registers in the nineties. They will hear much vouched for as the opinion of Canada; though they would find, if they remained long enough and travelled far enough, by comparing what they hear in different places, that authorized interpreters of Canadian opinion are not easily found. To find people who will undertake to tell what Canada thinks, and wills, and intends to do, on any possible line which the future opens to her, is not difficult. But the listener, if he move from one Province to another, will hear very different things vouched for as the unalterable aim and purpose of the country. Without moving from any given spot within the four walls of a single room our distinguished visitors may hear affirmed, with equal confidence, the most contradictory views of what Canada wishes for, aspires after, and will inevitably embrace. There are still to be found persons who believe, or affect to believe, in the perpetuity of the nominal colonial dependence at which we have arrived. They will tell you that the present state of things will have no end; that it is the most natural, the best, the happiest, the safest possible. It is true the men whose faith is of this robust texture are not a great majority, are not numerous in fact; but on special holiday occasions they make up in vehement assertions what they want in numbers. In the same room in which lingers this antique form of opinion, discarded by the majority of Englishmen more than a century ago, every variety of its opposite may be heard. In different parts of the country, what passes on the spot for Canadian opinion takes on a great variety of hues. In Nova Scotia a stranger will often have occasion to doubt whether he is in Canada at all. He will be liable to hear Canada spoken

of as a somewhat distant country, which Nova Scotia has its own reasons for not liking; that the Province most loved that autonomy of which it was bereft by Confederation, and that "better terms" have not healed the sore inflicted by the violence of a forced union. In Manitoba, mutterings of an ultimatum to be sent to the Federal Government may struggle for a hearing amidst the rejoicings over a good harvest. The condemnation of the duties on agricultural implements will be heard in tones loud enough to recall the objections of the Southern States to a protective tariff half a century ago. In Quebec the wind will be found to set not less strongly in favour of Provincial autonomy. The advocacy of a protective tariff, heard in Ontario and Quebec, finds no echo in the Maritime Provinces, Manitoba, or British Columbia. The truth will at last dawn upon the mind of the visitor that much of that which passes for what Canada thinks, believes, feels, wishes for, and is resolved upon, is peculiar to the locality from which it derives its colour, that it is local sentiment which is attempted to be passed off as national. The truth is this young confederation, composed of heterogeneous materials, has no great national smelting pot through which to pass refractory populations and bring them all to a common consistency. Provincial angularities remain; the original rills of local feeling continue to run in the old channels, some of which get broader and deeper; new differences have been developed with the settlement of Manitoba and the North-West; localism is put in the place of patriotism. The situation is aggravated by the representatives of Federation pursuing a course which produces undue friction in the working of the governmental machinery; the Provinces are spurred into an acute sense of the assumed violation of their rights, and the two authorities, local and federal, are very much in the attitude of men who have put one another, with something of mutual defiance, at arm's length. In this state of things, to presume to interpret authoritatively Canadian opinion, as a whole, is an impossible task and a vain pretence. Nevertheless, the members of the British Association who are now in Canada will find a country, the study of whose capabilities and resources is not unworthy of their regard.

WHATEVER through traffic across the continent it may be possible to attract to the Canadian Pacific Railway, the directors of the company will take means to secure. Mr. Van Horne has told the British Columbians that steamers will be put on to connect the Pacific terminus of the road with China and Japan. As the vessels will be the property of the railway company, no second interest will be able to prevent the through rates being put at competitive figures. In the absence of other controlling influences, the bulk of this traffic will go to whichever company will undertake to carry it on the best terms to the shippers. The policy of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, in this particular, is the only one that can bring success. It would be a mistake, however, to suppose that a large part of this traffic will be found to be easily attainable. The American trans-continental lines, with the combinations they can make, may be relied upon to make a desperate fight for the chief prize. American shipping, thanks to the ruinous policy of left-handed protection, is at a low ebb, and no signs of recovery are apparent. Over the Americans we shall have, in this contest, one advantage, and they will have one advantage over us: we have not debarred ourselves from buying steamers in any country and utilizing them; the Americans could not, under existing laws, naturalize a foreign vessel of any description, if the life of their commerce depended upon it. But the American trade with China and Japan is relatively large; and the greater part of this trade is almost certain to be distributed through the agency of the American railways. The English trade with China and Japan is the prize which the Canadian Pacific Railway may hope to share. To be successful, the company must put through freights down to a competitive figure which no rival can underbid. These rates, it is not improbable, will leave but little profit. But whatever may be the result of the venture, an enterprise of such daring and magnitude will deserve success.

THE shipment of grey cottons from Canada to England is an incident which has no significance beyond marking the necessity which exists for relieving a glut in the market. Canadian mills have manufactured more