

The Week.

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MR. HOWLAND'S qualification having been made good by the recent Act of the Local Legislature, passed for that purpose, he has very properly been re-elected Mayor of Toronto by acclamation. But we cannot help thinking that his friends have pitched their case too high, and that far too violent things have been said against those who took legal measures to test the sufficiency of his qualification. They have been denounced and vilified as though they were literally the vile adherents of "Barabbas," and engaged in a malignant persecution of "Christ." Nobody, we presume, questions the wisdom of the law by which a qualification is required. But the requirement can be enforced only by objecting to those who are not duly qualified, and the objection is sure to come from opponents, and not from friends; at least, we never happened to hear of an objection of any kind being taken by friends. We see no more malignity in raising a question as to a candidate's qualification than in voting against him at the polls. When there is a doubt, the interest of the community requires that it should be set at rest, since the acts of an officer not duly elected may be invalid. If a candidate wants to avoid the annoyance of litigation, let him be sure that he has a qualification before he runs: he owes this precaution to the community as well as to himself. The "Christ or Barabbas" view of the question is altogether too high-flown to be sound. The thousands of decent citizens who voted in the minority might be voting wrong, but they believed that they were voting right; and a good many of them, when they read a certain document which appeared about a month ago, were strongly confirmed in that impression.

THERE is one subject at least with regard to which Mr. Howland as Mayor is well qualified to do good service. He is thoroughly acquainted with all that concerns the relief of destitution in Toronto, as well as honourably distinguished for his own benevolent exertions among the poor. The question is fully ripe for his consideration. In the past year no less than 268 men have been committed to the City Gaol as vagrants. A third of these were proper subjects not for a gaol but for an infirmary. The House of Industry has made an effort to apply the labour test, but its resources, as we understand, have proved unequal to the need. We are still liable to inundation by destitute emigrants, for, although Mr. Carling is right in saying that he does not ship all the emigrants to Toronto, all or most of them fall back upon Toronto when, from the closing of the working season or any other cause, they find themselves in distress. It is time that the question of the Relief of the Poor should be taken up in earnest and settled upon some definite plan. The reluctance to admit the necessity of a public provision for indigence is respectable; and we should be very sorry to think that the Workhouse system would ever be imported from England into this country. May the name Pauper never be heard on this side of the Atlantic! But it is vain to say that no public provision can be necessary because this is a young country. A young country in years it is, but it is old in progress, and we are already brought face to face with the problems, as well as endowed with the fruits, of an advanced civilization. Nor is the prejudice against public relief in the case of vagrants, or such people as would be received in a Labour Yard or a House of Industry, well founded. Public relief administered by rule and with discrimination demoralizes and degrades less than private charity administered, as it is apt to be, without rule or discrimination, and with more regard to importunity than to need. For private charity, accompanied by words of comfort, misfortune, sickness, and bereavement will still afford an ample field.

MR. CHARLTON again brings in his Seduction Bill, and the reason for demurring to it is the same as before. It is founded on a false assumption, and it proclaims a pernicious doctrine. The false assumption on which it is founded is that in the irregular intercourse of the sexes the fault is always and wholly on one side: the pernicious doctrine which it proclaims is that a woman is not the guardian of her own honour. It is hardly possible to take up a social paper without seeing some account of the intrigues of an adventuress which proves that in cases of seduction the seducer is not invariably the man. Nor can there be much doubt that the

tendency of such legislation as Mr. Charlton proposes will be, by giving a designing woman a tremendous hold upon the victim of her allurements, to multiply cases of that kind. Against violence, of course, the State undertakes effectually to guard; it ought also effectually to guard, if it has not already done so, against trepanning into bad houses, and conspiracy of every sort. But if a girl chooses freely to go wrong under the influence of her passions, or of a love of finery, she has herself to blame; and the consciousness of this and of the reprobation which will await her are the indispensable securities for her virtue. A false promise of marriage makes no difference; every young woman in a country like this knows perfectly well that she ought to wait till the promise is performed. That the purity of the affections is the most essential condition of our happiness as well as of our virtue is most true, and he who fences it with new safeguards would be a social benefactor indeed. But it will hardly be fenced with new safeguards, it will rather be stripped of the best defence which it has, by legislation which, in effect, tells all women that however voluntarily they may yield to the sway of passion, their fall shall be accounted involuntary, and themselves held innocent and blameless before the law. To force marriage, by making it the alternative to the Penitentiary, seems also a most questionable policy. It desecrates and degrades the marriage tie, nor can it well fail to be productive of scandal as well as of unhappiness. In punishing illicit intercourse it lays the train for adultery. We speak of law, not of sentiment; and philanthropy, if it does not wish to throw society into confusion, must learn to recognize the boundaries between the two. Nothing that we have said, therefore, prevents us from affirming as heartily as Mr. Charlton himself could affirm that a man who destroys a woman's character, if he does it in the madness of passion, falls miserably; if deliberately, is vile; and that the only thing which can bring him again within the pale of honour, or, if he has a heart, restore him to peace of mind, is voluntary marriage.

WE are reminded of the necessity of being loyal to right sentiment on these subjects by a fresh outburst in more than one quarter of the fancy for whitewashing the character of Burns. Social democracy regards Burns as its poet, though he was himself rather an equivocal democrat, for no man ever troubled himself more about the manner in which he was treated by the great. It is as much owing to this social sentiment in his favour as to admiration for the prince of British song-writers that a defence of him against a censorious and hypocritical world, even if it goes the length of half-glorifying his freedom from moral conventionalities, never fails to bring down the house. If people would plainly say that a man of genius, like Burns or Byron, who delights and amuses the world, is a privileged being, and is not to be held responsible for any breaches of the moral law in which he may choose to indulge, they would do comparatively little harm; because a young man must be inordinately conceited if he can take to himself the privilege of genius. But they do great harm by tampering with the laws of morality in the interests of their favourite. Burns's intemperance, though miserable and fatal, was the fashion of his time. His incurable love of low company, notwithstanding his training in a remarkably pure and affectionate home, his disregard of social law in keeping and showing about a satirical diary, his gross literary attack on a lady who had been most kind to him and whom he had insulted, may be allowed to pass, except when society is arraigned for its treatment of him. But his conduct to women was utterly vile. To defend, much more to show sympathy for it, is high treason to affection. Nor, we submit, can any man write, circulate, and print obscenities without being, for the time at least, a blackguard. We extend the remark to Byron, Pope, Dryden, and any one else whom it may concern, as well as to Burns, and we apply it, with due qualification, to the reader as well as the writer. Some Burns-worshippers seem almost to have persuaded themselves that lust and intemperance are essential to a genius for song-writing: yet it may be questioned whether Burns ever wrote anything so good as "Auld Robin Gray."

SOME very optimistic Reform journals seem to be flattering themselves that after all Mr. Blake has done the trick. He has himself, they think, captured Quebec by voting that the execution of Riel was unjust, while his followers have kept all safe in Ontario by voting that it was just. This view, we suspect, will prove to be rather Machiavelian than profound. The leader of a party cannot cast off his tail and go out vote-hunting on his own account in this way. His conduct commits the party, notwithstanding any disclaimers, and even though the whole of the party may not follow him. There is not the slightest doubt that the line taken by Mr. Blake has produced its natural effect everywhere: it may have done him and his party good in Quebec, but it has done the party as well as him not a little harm in Ontario and in the North-West. But supposing the strategy