

# THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.  
Vol. II., No. 3.

Toronto, Thursday, January 22nd, 1885.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 7 cents.

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.  
Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

A GOVERNOR-GENERAL necessarily brings with him to Canada a factitious influence on account of his rank. He carries away with him an influence which if not wholly is largely factitious on account of his supposed experience. His term is short, and though at his receptions and in the course of his official tours he sees many and talks to many, he really converses only with a few, and those either of the Viceregal way of thinking or under courtly restraint. Yet he deems himself and is naturally considered a special authority on Canadian subjects. When Lord Lorne does us the honour to speak about Canada, his utterances are always quoted and cabled as though they carried more weight and deserved more attention than those of ordinary men ten times better acquainted with the subject. He has probably been enabled, with the best intentions, to do some mischief by stimulating unsuitable emigration. He now proposes, and he may be taken to represent Canadian feeling in the proposal, that our affairs should be managed by a board of colonists resident in England and advising the Colonial Secretary. The answer to suggestions of this kind has been given fifty times over. Colonists settled in England, domesticated in London society, and having its prizes before their eyes, would cease to be colonists or fair representatives of colonial interests and sentiments. A board made up of the representatives of different colonies, with widely varying circumstances both commercial and political, would, moreover, have no unity in itself, nor could the representative of any one of the colonies on such a board allow its wishes to be over-ruled by the votes of the rest. The devotees of Expansion seem to have dreamed and talked themselves into the belief that the Empire is a homogeneous mass instead of being a heterogeneous collection as it is. What is the object of all this gimcrackery? What is it intended to produce? Why is not an Anglo-Saxon community, half as numerous again as England in the time of Elizabeth, and ten times better educated, competent, with the help of the telegraph, to manage its own affairs?

Few men enjoy the felicity which has fallen to Sir John Macdonald, and celebrate the fortieth year of their entrance into public life, or their seventieth birthday. The coincidence invites to a double retrospect, and may be used as if it furnished a momentary dispensation from the necessity of looking to the future. At seventy the future is not likely to be long to the individual; but it is plain that Sir John was merely feeling his audience and anticipated the emphatic "no" which he elicited when he said

"perhaps he should make way for younger and stronger men." That he should remain while strength lasts is, as he said, the unanimous voice of his party. There is no one intriguing to supplant him, and there is a general feeling that no possible competitor has the elements of success which have kept him in the position of chief command. The forty years of public life are divisible into two distinct periods through which the dividing line is drawn at the year 1856. Till then Sir Allan McNab was the Tory leader; and in those days Toryism meant in Upper Canada a State Church, and in Lower Canada a dual establishment, in company with the feudal system—a survival the more anomalous from the fact of its appearing on the soil of the New World. Under different circumstances the men who abolished the feudal tenure and secularized the Clergy Reserves would have won the laurels due to the foremost of Reformers; but Sir John had belonged to the party which resisted these changes as long as possible; he then in conjunction with others took up the programme which old opponents had framed and carried it out in good faith to the last line. In deference to M. Morin, who insisted on this reform, the Legislative Council was made elective. This step, when the Confederation was set up, Sir John in deference to the Maritime Provinces consented to retrace, and in doing so he made the only reactionary move of any importance in his whole career. From 1856 to the death of Sir George Cartier Sir John was not the sole leader of the Conservative Party; he was the leader in his own Province, where he did not always, even while in power, command a majority, and he was often under obligations to Sir George Cartier for the majority which maintained the twin leaders in office. With the death of Cartier the double-headed Ministry became impossible; at best it was an anomaly, and with Confederation it was incompatible. After the removal by death of his great ally Sir John became, in the sphere of his action, supreme.

WHEN the friends of such a man resolve to pay him a public compliment on his double birthday they are not likely to do it by halves. The ovation was complete, and everything that adulation could do was done. The after-dinner speech of the guest, witty and brilliant, though sometimes sophistical and inconsequent, was equally applauded for its good and bad points. The company was determined to make the guest happy, and as the readiest means of doing so it resolved to welcome every part of his speech with the same marks of boisterous appreciation. Sir John's defence of the granting of Imperial decorations and of the receipt of them by colonists is well fitted to recall the aphorism *qui s'excuse s'accuse*. For what purpose was the fact recalled that Mr. Blake and Mr. Mackenzie recommended some of their friends for knighthoods, if not to show that there are not, in this community, two opinions about the desirability of our public men accepting rewards at the hands of others than the public whom they serve? When Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Blake refused the offer of knighthood they did their duty just as well as Sir John conceived he did his in accepting. It is late in the day for Sir John to feel severely shocked at a knight expressing opinions in favour of Canadian independence, since he did not object to having as a colleague another public man who had accepted knighthood on the express condition that it should not interfere with his right to advocate independence. What was permissible in Sir Alexander Galt is sought to be made treason in Sir Richard Cartwright. Sir John does not himself object to independence, as he understands it. "What country in the world," he asks, "is more independent than we are?" And he reminds us that, on the Tariff Question he took for his motto "Canada for the Canadians." When he adds "we are free from all the complications of European history," he forgets that Canada has been twice conquered as the result of European complications, and that so purely a dynastic quarrel as the war of the Spanish succession once caused the stronghold of Quebec to change masters. What is there to prevent Canada being again made the battle-ground in a quarrel in which she had neither part nor interest?

THE guest at the Montreal banquet took credit to himself for having allayed the jealousy and ill-feeling which formerly kept the French and English populations apart. In Lord Durham's time (1838) social intercourse