

THE WEEK.

Vol. I., No. 12.

Toronto, Thursday, February 21st, 1884.

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

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The Week,

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, POLITICS, AND CRITICISM.

Edited by CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.00. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

Mr. CARLYLE once put forward a curious theory of multiplied personality. When A and B, he said, were engaged in conversation, there were really not two people so engaged, but no less than six. There was A as he appeared to B, and there was A as he imagined himself to be, and there was A as he really was; while B of course appeared as one person to A, as quite another person to himself, and yet was present in his true character, which was distinct from either. But even Mr. Carlyle would find it difficult to say how many individuals are wrapped up in the two figures which occupy so much attention in the Provincial House of Legislature as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Mowat and Mr. Meredith might each be said to have not three but thirty separate personalities, when viewed from the numerous standpoints which have been taken up in regard to them since this fifth Parliament of Ontario assembled. To speculate upon what the real party leaders may be like, or what their own opinions of themselves may be, would be a profitless task; but it is curious to note the different structures raised by different people upon what may be called the Mowat or the Meredith basis. To the Conservative members the Prime Minister is a usurper, a time-server, steeped in political crime in order to retain the leadership of a party returned to power by sheer weight of dollars and cents. Mr. Meredith, on the other hand, in the eyes of the ministerial party, is an unscrupulous politician, convicted of disingenuousness and malpractices, and the head of a party of corruption. The respective political organs, finding the language of polite society unequal to the task of describing these gentlemen, fell back upon that of the tap-room, and have exhausted the vocabularies of Billingsgate and the Slang Dictionary. The disinterested Public, meanwhile, estimates the objects of all this criticism, the one as a well-intended, successful, not over strong politician; his antagonist as an amiable gentleman of average capacity, who has been compelled by circumstances to do some things he would rather have left undone.

NOTHING could better illustrate the rapid manner in which Canadian public life is becoming Americanized than the fact that even the proposal to erect new parliament buildings for Ontario has been made a party question. This ridiculous position has been forced despite the protest of sensible men on both sides the House.

WITH incomprehensible unwisdom, and to the infinite discredit of political morality, the details of the Weekes perjury case are still dangled before the public by means of a correspondence in the public prints, the object of which is to shift the responsibility of the unwholesome affair upon the shoulders of some scapegoat, no matter whom. If the discredit which recent election malpractices have brought upon the heads of those who promoted them should have the effect of preventing such abuses in future, the exposure of one and the humiliation of the other will prove of public benefit.

THE unblushing effrontery with which the game of grab is being played in Ottawa is highly entertaining. Seeing the Oriental lavishness with which millions are being distributed, bankrupt Quebec insolently threatens to revolt from the Government if not conciliated with a share of the spoils, and Manitoba querulously asks what is going to be done for her. The proposal to establish a government printing office is a thinly-disguised scheme to place a few more fat appointments at the disposal of the executive. Meanwhile the unhappy taxpayer, with a beautiful faith, contributes his hard-earned money to the pool from which other gentlemen, who do not like work, are continually grabbing.

THE financial condition of the Dominion has been the subject of somewhat unfavourable comment by the *Springfield Republican*. Our contemporary points out that whilst the United States have reduced their debt by one-third, the Canadian debt has been doubled, being now \$158,466,714, and an additional \$30,000,000 is demanded for railway enterprise. The American debt represents about \$30 per capita; that of Canada, nearly \$50, and the tax per head is in the latter case \$8.80, as against \$7.90 in the States. But it is only fair to remember the different conditions of the two Governments. That of the United States has done a great work, and is paying a great debt, while the young Dominion is called upon to undertake the building of a transcontinental railroad over uninhabited mountains and prairies, in a region where ice and snow, bears and blizzards have it pretty much their own way.

BRADSTREET'S weekly returns of commercial failures are discouraging, though they are not considered to be indicative of more than temporary depression, and merchants are sanguine that an improvement of trade will set in with the spring months. In Canada there were sixty-six failures during the past week, as against thirty-five in the corresponding week of 1883, and thirteen in the same week of 1882. From the United States two hundred and forty-three failures are reported as having occurred during the week just expired, whilst in the corresponding weeks of 1883 and 1882 there were two hundred and twenty-one and one hundred and seventy-two, respectively.

It is clear that under the Act which permits grocers to sell excisable liquors, a traffic has sprung up not contemplated by the originators of that statute. It is just as palpable that a large amount of surreptitious drinking daily takes place in groceries. Though there is abundant evidence that one disastrous effect of selling alcoholic preparations in grocers' stores is an increase in female drunkenness, it is absurd to contend that men do not also largely use these places. The police are perfectly cognizant of an organized system, with watch-words and other precautions, by which grocers sell drink by retail in contravention of the law, and that there are numbers of such "shebeens" in every city where men meet daily and hourly for the consumption of beverages on the premises. This is demoralizing in every sense of the word, and ought to be suppressed. The licensed victuallers will seriously compromise themselves if, as is rumoured, they throw their influence into the scale of the grocers in resisting the abolition of, or reduction of, grocers' licenses. They are wrongly advised in regarding this movement as only "the thin end of the wedge" of prohibition. Numbers of good citizens outside the temperance party favour the reform of the abuse referred to, who would hesitate to entertain the idea of prohibition.