

THE WEEK.

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CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

	PAGE.
TOPICS OF THE WEEK.....	289
CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES—	
Current Events and Opinions.....	<i>A Bystander</i> . 290
Here and There.....	293
Weiss' Life of Christ.....	<i>C.</i> 296
Politics and Society in Ottawa.....	<i>Henry Milward</i> . 297
How to Cure a Cold.....	<i>Fidelis</i> . 298
Ottawa Notes.....	<i>Ed Ruthven</i> . 299
CORRESPONDENCE.....	299
LITERATURE—	
A Sonnet on a Bonnet.....	300
The Adventures of a Widow.....	<i>Edgar Fawcett</i> . 300
"VERAX" ON CHURCH AND STATE.....	301
THE PERIODICALS.....	302
LITERARY GOSSIP.....	302
CHESS COLUMN.....	302

The Week.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE political atmosphere is still full of scandals and rumours of scandals. It would seem as if nothing less than a terrific thunder-storm of public indignation were capable of purifying the air of the body politic. Unfortunately, the malaria has become common, and does not appear to be offensive. The long-suffering tax-payer seems content to "let everything go"—to allow those in charge of public business to work their own sweet wills and to ungrudgingly "foot the bill." In this state of affairs it is not very surprising that charges of corruption and bribery in the departments are made daily and taken as a matter of course. The latest—that a gentleman occupying a prominent and responsible position in the Government has accepted a "testimonial" from parties upon whose suits he afterwards adjudicated—is so monstrous as almost to defy credence, however, and even the voracious maw of the scandal-loving partizan would surely be satisfied to see the charge disproved—to see his Moloch deprived of a morsel that would still further drag the political honour of the Dominion through the mire.

The conclusion of the police-court evidence in the bribery scandal, the able addresses of counsel on either side, and the committal of all the prisoners for trial, has been followed by a lull in the nauseating business, and whatever the result of a Royal commission, there is small expectation that any definite issue will be arrived at in the higher court. Apart from there being legal difficulties in the way of a verdict, so many reputations are involved besides those now on their trial, that no stone will be left unturned to squelch the enquiry.

THE decision of the Privy Council *re* Caldwell *v.* McLaren, involving as it does the freedom of all "floatable streams" and the validity of the Rivers and Streams Bill, is an indirect triumph for Mr. Mowat, whose position as the vindicator of public right to use such streams was practically challenged by Sir John Macdonald's veto. The outcome so far as the litigants are concerned is that Mr. McLaren will have to pay some \$30,000 for denying Mr. Caldwell the use of that portion of the Mississippi running through his property—a lesson which riparian owners may take to heart.

THE reluctance with which Mr. Gladstone went into the Egyptian imbroglio—a hesitancy born of his clear forecast of the inevitable results of such a step—is probably the cause of his foreign policy being at the

present moment under a cloud, and is responsible more than anything else for whatever tension there may be in the British Cabinet. It is nonsense, however, to suppose that he will dissolve Parliament until he has carried the Reform Bill, or until the House of Lords shall have positively rejected that measure. Provided always that the health of the veteran statesman does not break down. He has nothing to gain by an immediate appeal to the constituencies, since an alliance of Tories and Parnellites after a general election might swamp the Liberal vote, whereas at present Mr. Gladstone has a large and solid majority who have implicit faith in his home policy. His brilliant speech on Thursday night is reported not only to have delighted the Ministry but to have utterly demoralized the Opposition. Nevertheless the situation in Egypt is so critical that it is scarcely possible the event can bring anything but embarrassment to the Government.

THERE is not by any means perfect unanimity in the Cabinet on the provisions of the Reform Bill as drafted. Mr. Gladstone, for instance, objects to electoral districts, would preserve the distinctions between town and country, would "respect within moderate limits the individuality of constituencies," and would not be precise or mathematical in allotting seats. He declines to give "large and highly concentrated populations" a proportional share of the representation; he would not reduce the number of Irish members, but would compel the smaller boroughs, chiefly in the South of England, to give up seats in order to augment the representation of London, the great towns, the counties, Scotland, and generally the north. But why should the South of England be deprived of representatives because it is not populous, while Ireland, which has lost three millions of inhabitants since 1841, retains her full quota of members? The Irish people in 1801 were about a fifth of the population; now they are less than one seventh. Their proportionate contribution to the revenue has diminished in a much larger ratio. Mr. Gladstone would increase the total number of members in the House, but the Marquis of Hartington recognizes that would make the House still more unwieldy, and the proposal is received with implacable hostility out of doors. More might be said for reduction than augmentation. In view of the prospect that the electors of the United Kingdom will probably before long amount to five millions—half-a-million of them living in mud huts in Ireland—the more moderate Liberals are asking whether the educated and propertied sections of the present constituencies, who will then be the minority, are to be swamped entirely, or, by some scheme of proportional representation to retain a fair share of the constituencies?

WHEN rogues fall out a certain person is said to get his own. So it is with the "Nationalist" leaders in Ireland. The Parnell-Davitt quarrel, as to the best form of election procedure, is like to considerably cripple the power of the rebels for mischief. Each leader is engaged in the congenial task of discrediting the other, and though Mr. Parnell has the larger following, his quondam friend and associate has a by no means insignificant band of admirers. The "uncrowned king" will either have to submit to the loss of some of his prerogatives, or Davitt may wreck the party.

THE able London correspondent of the *Manchester Examiner* says:— "Whatever opinion the Duke of Richmond and his colleagues may have formed of the Manchester Ship Canal scheme, they must be convinced that the trade of the district is in a very bad way. Witness after witness has testified to the severity of the struggle in which Lancashire is engaged against the other manufacturing centres of the world, and their evidence has indeed been such that, did one not know the energy and pluck of the Lancastrians, one might almost be tempted to despair of the future. The one fact that the consumption of raw cotton in Great Britain has only increased during the last ten years by between two and three per cent., while in the United States the increase has been over eighty per cent., and in India over sixty-four per cent., is sufficiently startling to alarm even those who have the smallest knowledge of the trade. That the ship canal would be the means of entirely restoring the supremacy of Lancashire in the cotton markets of the world is not, of course, to be supposed, but if the careful calculations laid before the committee are to be trusted, there is no doubt that to a large number of manufacturers the cheaper transit rates which the company would offer would make all the difference between profit and loss."