

# THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.  
Vol. II., No. 2.

Toronto, Thursday, December 11th, 1884.

\$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.

UNDER the stimulus of another dinner at the Beaconsfield Club our valetudinarian Premier, who, we are glad to learn, has recently shown signs of improvement, has made another speech. Looking through the dim haze of distance one misses the "auxiliary kingdoms," which for the time have disappeared below the horizon, while attention is languidly called to a few dulcet notes struck from the old string of perpetual connection. Sir John prophetically assures us that the connection between Canada and England will last for "ages," because, he says, the public men of England desire its perpetuation. Sir S. Northcote struck some responsive notes in the same key. Whether the future relation is to be one of an ally or a dependent we are for once left in the dark. Sir John is only anxious that British statesmen should "expand their minds to the imperial idea." The difficulty is that, in all this vague talk about Imperialism, no definite idea is to be found. Even the few British statesmen who proclaim themselves Imperialists assume a waiting attitude: they want to hear from the colonies. Sir John Macdonald, who is very outspoken in declaring himself the embodiment of Canadian opinion and policy, owes it to the people for whom he speaks to be a little more explicit; they are above everything anxious to know what their own opinions are on Imperialism, and Sir John, as the only one having authority to do so, is in duty bound to tell them. When they have been told what their own mind is, Canadians will at least have the happiness of knowing where they stand. At present they have grave doubts about their own Imperialism, and whoever knows their own mind better than they know it themselves should in charity hasten to impart to them the knowledge. Will Sir John give us the Canadian programme of Imperialism? It is just possible that when Canada sees an official exposition of her own mind on Imperial Federation she may fail to recognize the truth of the delineation.

THE Halifax Board of Trade, following the lead of that of St. John, calls on the Federal Government to show its zeal in negotiating commercial treaties with Spain and the United States. It is about time something was heard of the progress Sir Charles Tupper is making with the projected Spanish Treaty. But it may be well to remember that commercial treaties cannot be made to order; and in the case of the United States there were reasons why the initiative could not come from this side, but, as the ice was broken by the renewal of negotiations some months ago, that difficulty has been got over. The inherent difficulty of making a treaty between

two countries, many of the products of which are similar, remains. Still with the fisheries as a make-weight, the elements of an international bargain are not wanting. No one need affect surprise that Spain showed herself more anxious to conclude a treaty with the United States than with Canada. The relative extent of the trade of the two countries affords a sufficient explanation. We shall not secure treaties either with Spain or the United States any sooner by showing an extreme anxiety on the subject. Of the fate of the Spanish-American Treaty in the United States Senate there is no certainty. If the United States were to admit all the sugar she imports free of duty, under treaties with sugar-growing countries, the loss of revenue would be eighty millions a year. So large a reduction of revenue from transferring this single article to the free list would leave little room for reduction in other directions; neither the tariff on manufactured goods nor the excise duties could be much reduced. Against the Mexican Treaty the objection on the point of revenue was less formidable; yet of this treaty the Senate required modifications, and its ratification is still uncertain. Objections to the treaty with Spain are sure to spring up; and, though it is probable that they will in the end be overcome, ratification during the present session of Congress no one can yet guarantee. The omission of the most favoured nation clause can scarcely be made a ground of complaint by other countries. It has been the practice of both the contracting powers to insert this clause in their commercial treaties; and in this way they have incurred obligations which it will be impossible to ignore. But the omission of this clause from the present treaty cannot effect the rights of nations which claim under it, in virtue of pre-existing treaties, though one of the parties to it might be injuriously affected. If Spain has favoured any other nation with which she has treaty relations in any particular not included in this treaty, the United States will not be able to claim anything for which she has not specially stipulated, nor conversely will Spain be able to do so. But the resulting injury, if injury there be, will be confined to the two contracting powers.

SPECULATIVE politicians in Nova Scotia have revived the proposal of a separate union of the Maritime Provinces. These Provinces, the objection runs, have no interest in the Pacific Railway, or the Canadian Canals and a Protective Tariff does not suit them. Against the tariff, so far as it is made to exceed revenue requirements for the sake of protection, they have a right to protest. And to protests which come from parts of the country so widely separated as the Maritime Provinces and the North-West, the Minister of Finance would do well to give his attention. They are not founded upon fanciful grounds, but represent stern realities. It is too soon to say that the Pacific Railway will not benefit the Maritime Provinces; the traffic which it will bring to their shores is what a maritime people would naturally desire. In isolation the Maritime Provinces have nothing to gain; their prosperity demands an enlargement, not a restriction, of their markets, and their industry and enterprise would have more scope in the wider than in the narrower union. Tariff reform they have a right to claim, but even here they would have, in a sacrifice of the coal duties, something to give as well as to get. If ever the Maritime Provinces present a united front on the tariff question, and show themselves ready to give as well as to take, their request will command respect, and may bring some amelioration of their condition.

THE interest which is felt in the commercial situation has again been expressed by the St. John Board of Trade. A resolution was passed declaring that dissatisfaction with Confederation has become general. An attempt to carry a resolution condemning the declared preference for annexation to the United States by two members at a previous meeting failed; as the Board had not expressed any opinion on the subject, it was thought inexpedient to call for a vote on a political question. But surely the declaration of dissatisfaction under Confederation is political. The usual protestations about loyalty were made, and advocates of Independence were not wanting. Mr. Jones believed that "Independence would be best for us, and what we required was free trade with the United States." "It