

THE WEEK.

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The Week,

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

DURING the past week the legislative machine has been going on almost without a hitch, and without even serious fear of a break-down or an explosion. The daily papers have reported in a becomingly dry manner the "debate," and the leading party organs have sought to make political capital out of trivialities, in the vituperative style peculiar to them,

"Which read and read, you raise your eyes in doubt,
And gravely wonder what it is about."

Evening sessions have been the rule, rendered necessary by the wearisome prolixity of many speakers, and the occupants of the front Government and Opposition benches begin to wear the jaded appearance of men sick with constant listening to the weary waste of words which becloud, rather than elucidate, the most trivial as well as the more important topics. It is hoped the business of the House may be got through about the 21st current.

In the Fiftieth anniversary of the incorporation of Toronto as a city, which was celebrated after a quiet fashion on Thursday last, the capital of the Province begins, it may be said, to have historic life. Later in the year, the city is to have a more demonstrative celebration of the event. In the meantime, interest was given to the day by the opening of the Public Library and by a reception at the City Hall, which took note of the official fact. Half a century in the life of a city in the New World is crowded with events. What the period has seen of progress and development, of political, social and industrial change, of the passing away of the early settler, the birth and incoming of the present generation, and all the mutations the years have been witness of, we need not recall to the reader. From crude beginnings and a primitive life, Toronto has burgeoned out into an important centre, with a great future before it, and the material, in muscle and mind, in its midst, to give it a prominent position among the cities of the Dominion. Already its influence is great, and this influence, if its citizens are wise, will become increasingly powerful, alike, we trust, for local benefit and for the general good. In this respect, the city, like the individual, has responsibilities as well as duties; and it is befitting that those who direct and govern its affairs shall recognize what Toronto owes to the country at large, in the exercise of a wholesome influence and in the spectacle of a beneficent example. In all that makes a city great—in the sobriety, thrift and industry of her people, in their intelligence and uprightness of character, in the ability, honesty and good repute of her public men, in the purity of her courts and the wisdom of her law-givers—we trust that Toronto will increasingly contribute to her civic fame, and promote peace and prosperity in the nation.

THE proposal to cede over a mile of water frontage to the Grand Trunk and sister railway companies, endorsed by the City Council, is a most dangerous and extraordinary one. That its many objectionable features are well understood by the promoters would appear evident by the satisfactory manner in which the basis of agreement between the city and the railways was smuggled through the Council; and the suspicion naturally arises that Canadian Pacific and Grand Trunk influences had much to do with this. Be that as it may, those most concerned have fortunately grasped its real significance in time, and have made known their objections in no uncertain tone in public meeting. It is difficult to retain a conviction of the City Council's shrewdness, and at the same time believe in its disinterestedness in voting away the control of the whole Esplanade—offering the greater portion of the land lying between the city and the bay—to the railway companies virtually as a present for all time, with permission to fence it round, and thus close many approaches to a lake that is so largely used for business and pleasure. No person can say to-day how necessary it may be in future for the city to have easy access to the lake; but everybody may learn how much Hamilton has lost by being to a great extent cut off from Burlington Bay by the Great Western Railway. The Grand Trunk already intervenes its track between Toronto and the water frontage—in itself a huge mistake—and it is to the interest of that huge corporation to further hamper the shipping trade. All this is beside the serious injury that further isolation would inflict upon owners of property on the approaches to the water, on the water-side, on the island, and the almost ruin that would be brought upon ferry-boat owners. To the allegation that the fencing in of lake-approaches is necessary for the safety of human life, the reply is obvious. If the increasing trade of the railway companies renders necessary the acquisition of more land, let them pay for it, and erect bridges—or, better still, construct an elevated railway—over it for the use of the public. The disgraceful condition of the Union Station is not calculated, however, to impress travellers with an idea that the proprietors are unduly regardful of life and limb, since rather than spend \$500 on a foot-bridge across the track, young and old, women and children, infirm and cripples, are left to dodge around the trains, at the imminent risk of accident, in order to get from one platform to another.

CANADA had, according to Bradstreet's, forty-three failures last week, being an increase of five over the preceeding week, and of nine over the corresponding week of 1883. According to the same authority, there were 211 failures in the United States during the same period, twenty-six less than in the preceding week, three more than in the corresponding week in 1883, and thirty-four more than in the same of 1882. About eighty-three per cent. were those of traders whose capital was under \$5,000.

THE slovenliness of giving uncouth, and often vulgar, names to towns in the New World, as well as the pedantry of designating a place in the cheap imitation of classical lands, have been often the subjects of indignant protest, and sometimes of not unmerited satire. Rarely, however, has there been occasion to animadvert on the error and bad taste of discarding an historic name from motives which are purely commercial. At present, the people of the good old town of Niagara, the first capital of Upper Canada, are greatly exercised over the proposal to discard its ancient and honourable name, and to christen the place Fort George. Some half-dozen reasons are assigned for this threatened civic outrage, the chief of which is that there are, it seems, some seven places that rejoice in the name of Niagara, and that confusion is the result. This, we protest, however, is no reason for re-christening the town, as there is but one Niagara, Ont., and though it has somewhat fallen into the eddies of industrial and social life, and in winter is difficult of access, it has a distinctive appellation, and occupies a notable position among the historic towns of Canada. With the stranger, that it should have to bear the sins of Niagara Falls, and be held in execration as a place of extortion and thievery, is of course not pleasant. But this is the penalty of greatness, and like greatness, when it suffers detraction, it should aim to "live it down." If it has no other stain on its civic escutcheon than that flung at it by those who ignorantly confound it with the Sodom and Gomorrah up-stream, there is little to ruffle the patriot's breast, and naught to disturb the village's slumber.