

# THE WEEK.

Ninth Year.  
Vol. IX., No. 6.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, JANUARY 8th, 1892.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

## THE WEEK:

AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ART

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

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. 6d.; half-year, 6s. 6d. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the Publisher.

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No advertisements charged less than five lines. Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

HOWEVER we may differ from the views of many of our readers, we cannot but feel that the City of Toronto is to be congratulated on the decision of the citizens in regard to the Sunday-car question. From our point of view the only thing to be regretted is that the majority was not larger, the decision more emphatic. We recur to the question, not by any means for the purpose of simply expressing our gratification, but because we are persuaded that the issue before the people of Toronto in this case was but a fractional part of a question of world-wide importance, over which a great struggle is even now beginning to be waged in various quarters of the globe, and which is likely to assume much larger proportions in the near future. This peaceful contest is destined to be, we venture to predict, on the one side a struggle of the working classes for the universal recognition of their sacred right to a seventh-day rest, without loss of wage or disability of any kind; and on the other side a struggle in the interests of humanity generally, and under the teachings of science, for the re-establishment and recognition of a beneficent ordinance which, generally observed, would do more than almost anything else could do to counteract the evil effects of the mad haste which is so characteristic of the time, whether the object of pursuit be business or pleasure. The faithful observance of a regular day of rest, whether from toil of hand or of brain, can, we are fully persuaded, be demonstrated to be a physiological necessity, and one of the best possible safeguards—might we not say the only possible safeguard—of the race against the deterioration with which it is threatened by the conditions of modern city life. From this point of view, and not, as we have before tried to make clear, from any Puritanical belief in the right or duty of the civil authorities to enforce the observance of the Sabbath as a religious ordinance, the struggles which are going on in the United States, especially in regard to the coming centennial, will be followed with the deepest interest by many who, like ourselves, believe the issue to be fraught with consequences to the universal well-being far more serious and far-reaching than might at first thought be imagined.

THE result of the election in North Lanark was a foregone conclusion, but the marked increase of the Government majority was not so generally anticipated. Premier Abbott is too shrewd a tactician to permit the first of a series of bye-elections to take place in a doubtful constituency, or to open such a constituency voluntarily unless sure of the result. So far, therefore, as any augury can be drawn from the outcome of this first skirmish of the campaign, it must be drawn, not from the fact of the Government victory, but from the character of that victory. In this regard its decisiveness left little to be wished for by the friends of the Administration. It must, in fact, have been a surprise even to themselves. So far as we are able to judge, the question of trade policy, which is and must be the question of Canadian politics for some time to come, did not decide the issue in this contest. Certainly it did not enter into it to the degree that it is natural to expect in some other constituencies. Probably the point of greatest significance in connection with this election was its relation to the investigations and revelations at Ottawa during the last session. There had hitherto been nothing to indicate in any objective and practical way the extent to which the minds of the people have been affected towards the Government by those events. Now that North Lanark has spoken, it must be admitted on all hands that, so far as its verdict may be taken as a criterion, the Opposition may as well give up any hope they may have been building upon the "scandal" foundation. There is no indication that the electorate is prepared to try a change of Government, either by way of punishing those under whose management those things took place, or as a means of saving the country from danger of further disgrace and damage in the future. This result is susceptible of different explanations according to the party glasses through which the interpreter may look at it. To infer that the constituency, and the country as represented by it, cares nothing for purity of administration and honesty in the use of the public funds is unnecessary and would be humiliating. There are other ways of looking at it. For our own part, we should be sorry to believe that the electors in any constituency could agree with the views put forward by Sir John Thompson, the tenor and object of whose speech seemed to have been, we are sorry to say, to minimize the importance of the whole affair. We prefer to believe that the Quebec revelations, on the one hand, and those of the Election Courts on the other, led the people in North Lanark to the conclusion that under existing circumstances they had nothing to hope for on the score of political morality from a change of party leaders. As to the soundness of such a conclusion we do not feel called on to express an opinion, but we cannot refrain from observing that the remarkable results of the election trials, so far as they have gone, leave the Liberal leaders in a very awkward position. A great deal of explanation and we fear not a little purgation will be required to convince even those who may wish to be convinced, that they can fairly claim the honour of being regarded by unprejudiced onlookers as the party of purity, *par excellence*, in Canadian politics.

THOSE who are inclined to insist upon the full measure of "Provincial Rights" in matters affecting the relations of the members of our confederation to the central authority are sometimes met with the assertion that their views are counter to the spirit of the age. Everywhere, we are told, the political tendencies of the day are in the direction of agglomeration and consolidation. Experience has taught the nations that in this way lie strength and safety. Consolidation means strength, decentralization weakness. Reasoning in this way, we do not doubt, the late Sir John A. Macdonald was always of opinion that the adoption of the federal system was a source of weakness to Canada, and that, had a legislative union been formed at the outset, we should have escaped many evils, past, present, and to come. All this is, it seems to us, but one side of the shield. That there has been for some years past a marked tendency towards confederations among smaller states and alliances on the part of the larger is undeniable. But a little closer scrutiny reveals, unless we greatly misread current history, a still

more strongly marked tendency in the internal management of free states towards decentralization. "Home rule," "Local management of local affairs"—these and similar cries have become the mottoes of the smaller communities in their relations towards the larger of which they are or propose to become constituent parts. It is unnecessary to go for illustrations beyond the confines of the British Empire. The Canadian Confederation, the nascent Australasian Commonwealth, even the county and parish council movements in Great Britain—to say nothing of the larger and more debatable "Home Rule" demand which has been so long the rallying cry of the Irish, and which, in some modified form, is almost certain to be effectively raised in England and Scotland at no very distant day—these and kindred movements amongst the populations which have the freest governments and the greatest genius for self-government of all peoples, will suffice to explain and illustrate our meaning. And when we view the matter dispassionately, it is not difficult to see that the tendency is a most sensible and beneficent one within reasonable limits, though it may not always be easy to determine just where those limits are to be found. That is, however, a difficulty which is by no means peculiar to the decentralization movement, but is common to all spheres of politics and morals. But what can be more uncalled for, or a greater waste of time and energy, than for an august body like the British Parliament to occupy itself with the details of local legislation for every shire and village to the remotest part of the kingdom, when those details could be better understood and better managed by a dozen representatives of the people directly interested, sitting in a county or parish council? There can be no doubt that the completest localization in regard to local affairs, combined with the completest centralization in all truly national matters is rapidly becoming the ideal and is destined to become at no distant day the actual mode of administration in the best governed nations. Such a system of legislative units, combined and recombined in higher and still higher classes until the comprehensive and supreme national council, concerning itself exclusively with the things which belong to the nation as a nation, is reached—such a system is eminently rational and is based on the great models which are everywhere to be found in the natural world.

THE discussion of the question of a union of the Christian churches—its possibility, its desirability, its mode—is being kept up with great pertinacity in the press of Canada and the United States, the secular as well as the religious. For our own part, we should have more hope of a favourable result if we could discover more indications of a readiness to go back to first principles. What is the real origin of the differences in creed and practice which mark or make the dividing lines between the sects as they to-day exist? To what extent are those differences the outcome of unbiassed, personally-formed convictions on the part of those who now hold them? Of course the narrower the limits within which those making the effort at union in the first place are confined, the greater the possibilities of success. We imagine, for instance, that the chances of a favourable result are much improved when the question is confined to that division of the sects within which all are agreed in holding the views which are termed "evangelical." Suppose the discussion for the present confined to these, is there any one first principle from which all could set out as a starting point? Would all be willing to accept the sole and absolute authority of Scripture, or of the New Testament, as such starting point? If so an important step would have been gained. But then who is to interpret the law-book? To our thinking, it is evident that a further step forward would be impossible so long as each party represented in the conference should persist in looking at the question from the standpoint to which he is accustomed, viz., that of his own denomination. We have often thought that a census of the history of denominational opinions, or convictions, as most of us prefer to call them, were such a thing possible, would be a curious affair. It would call our attention to some important facts now too often lost sight of. The evangelical denominations all profess, we believe, to base their respective views upon the Bible. But how large a