

# THE WEEK.

Vol. X.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, MAY 19th, 1893.

No. 25.

## THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics,  
Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. 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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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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## CURRENT TOPICS.

The recent report of Engineer Keating goes far towards clearing up what has long been a mystery in connection with the Toronto Water Works. Believing, as we thought we had good reason to do, that the point of intake of our water system, before the breakage of last winter, was located seventy or eighty feet below the surface of the lake, it was always a puzzling question how and why after every storm the turning of our taps should give us water impregnated with an unsightly and unsavory admixture of mud and sand. The Engineer's statement that there is no reason to believe that the conduit south of the Island was ever connected with the deep water intake, and that consequently that portion of our drinking fluid which did not leak into the conduit from the Bay was taken into it from a point outside the Island at a depth of not more than twenty feet, where the water was agitated to the bottom by every

gale, throws a flood of light upon the subject. The new hope begotten by the discovery allays our indignation. It may be that we are not now getting any considerable infusion of the contents of the Bay, and that once the connection is really made with an intake at a proper distance from the Island and at a proper depth, we may enter upon an era of comparatively pure water. The Engineer will, we are sure, lose no time in making the connection, and making good his claim to our lasting gratitude.

The setting apart of 1,300 square miles of wood and water at Algonquin as a Provincial park must commend itself to all thoughtful minds as a wise policy. So far as we are able to judge, the location is well chosen. The district is said to comprise a large part of the watershed which contains the sources of many of the rivers and streams flowing both into the Ottawa River and into the Georgian Bay. The importance of preserving the forests about the head waters of the rivers and streams upon which the fertility of large sections of the Province depends cannot easily be overestimated. The preservation from the extermination with which they are threatened, of many species of birds, fish, and fur-bearing and other animals; also of useful and ornamental trees and shrubs, and of rare wild plants and flowers, is a strong recommendation of the project. Nor is the effect which a large forest has in modifying the climate of the surrounding region to be overlooked. The settlers in many parts of Ontario and other Canadian provinces are every day experiencing to their cost the unwisdom of the practice of forest extermination which was followed by the early settlers, many of whom, as we have heard an old pioneer declare, had endured so much toil and hardship in clearing their farms that they came almost to look upon a forest tree as a personal enemy, to be destroyed by the quickest and most effective process available.

The New York Nation calls in question the propriety of ex-Secretary Tracy's course in discussing the Behring Sea question in the North American Review while the case, submitted by the Cabinet of which he was a member, is before a tribunal for adjudication. It rather caustically suggests that he would have done better to have taken up the Barrundia case, in which he propounded some novel and apparently very dangerous doctrines which he has never taken the trouble to explain or defend. The writer

in the Nation is disposed to make merry with Mr. Tracy's notion, expounded in the Review article, that there exists a "law of nature which does not need the sanction of general recognition by mankind as binding on the human conscience, and to which anybody who pleases can appeal and interpret it on his own behalf." "This," he says, "is probably as fantastic a conception as ever arose in a legal bosom." He proceeds to lay down the common-sense principle as follows:—

"The only 'law of nature' of which either jurists or moral philosophers have ever taken notice until now, is a law which the human race or the civilized part of it has acknowledged to be a law or custom. 'Nature' here means 'human nature,' and human nature pronounces its moral judgments and lays down its rules through civilized man. We should like to hear from Mr. Tracy of some of the 'acts which are immoral independently of any prohibition'—that is, to which the human conscience has nothing to say and has said nothing. He might as well tell us of things highly coloured without light."

The attitude of the great majority of the members of the Ontario Assembly in relation to the class legislation sought on behalf of druggists, architects, undertakers, etc., and especially such able and forcible speeches as that of Mr. Balfour, show that the people's representatives are having their eyes opened to the true nature of such legislation, and gives ground for hoping that there will be little more of it in Ontario. Sir Oliver Mowat's plea that the Government had favoured class legislation only when they believed it to be in the public interest was surely a very weak defence. It may be that there are certain cases in which the people, who should ordinarily be trusted to take care of themselves, may need special protection. Even when such a case is made out it affords no justification for entrusting their protection to the hands of a close corporation, composed of the very persons whose interests are promoted by restriction. Ordinarily it will be sufficient that the individuals practising any profession be held strictly responsible for the results of their own incompetency or malpractice. In special cases a system of official inspection, or of governmental licensing, may be justifiable. But the argument that extraordinary privileges, such as those now enjoyed by the legal and medical societies, are needed for the protection of the people, who must, it seems, be treated as children or imbeciles, incapable of taking care of themselves, is of precisely the same kind as that urged by