

THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.
Vol. II., No. 14.

Toronto, Thursday, March 5th, 1885.

\$3.00 per Annum.
Single Copies, 7 cents.

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Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

"THE whole policy of Great Britain is opposed to aggressive war; and in any other war the people of Canada will be ready to take their share of the responsibility and the cost"—when Sir John Macdonald said this the war in the Soudan had already commenced, and was therefore covered by the words characterizing British wars as aggressive. It is not upon a distinction of this kind that any practical rule for our conduct on this momentous question can be based. What constitutes an aggressive war? The first blow or the original provocation? Was the Crimean War aggressive? Was the war with the Sepoys? Was the war in Afghanistan, which was commenced by Lord Beaconsfield for the purpose of securing a scientific frontier, and which, like the war in the Soudan, must apparently be held to be covered by the words of Sir John Macdonald? International morality has so far advanced since the days of Sennacherib or Timur that every government at the present time would disavow aggression; and it would be impossible for the Prime Minister of Canada to declare the Imperial Government guilty of that which it disavowed. What war is aggressive, what defensive, it is impossible to determine. Need is the only practical criterion, and at this moment England is apparently in need. But all this is little better than idle talk. Suppose the Mother Country were to be assailed by a manifest aggressor, suppose her to be actually threatened with invasion, what force military or naval would Canada be able to send to her assistance? England has been told that we have an army of forty thousand men, that we have an army of four hundred thousand men, nay that our whole population is organized on a military footing and ready to spring to arms. Lord Dufferin was allowed to transmit a formal offer of ten thousand men, to which nothing corresponded but a scroll of names. On each of these occasions there was a burst of jubilant gratitude from the British Press, and an impulse was given to an ambitious and dangerous policy. Twelve days of drill are nothing, nor would it be worth while for such a consideration to carry a Canadian militiaman across the Atlantic. The reasons for not undertaking to contribute to British wars are perfectly intelligible and it is not surprising

that they should prevail, though the refusal is totally fatal, not only to any formal project of Imperial Federation, but to the theory of a United Empire. Only let us look facts in the face, suit our professions to the facts, and if we cannot give real assistance to the Mother Country at her need, at least abstain from luring her by light promises into a policy which may prove her ruin.

TOBOGGANING by moonlight has been denounced by a priest in Quebec. He does not propose to legislate against tobogganing, and in warning his flock against anything which in his opinion leads to immorality, he is simply doing his clerical duty. The ecclesiastics in Quebec wield the spiritual sword with vigour; they forbid waltzing, and their prohibition is not ineffectual. They keep a tight hand, too, on the theatre. A bishop thunders against Opera Bouffe, calling it the Vestibule of Hell, wherein, perhaps, though his phrase is somewhat Dantesque, he is not very far from the truth. Quebec, like New England a religious colony, has remained a theocracy, while New England has lost that character. A full measure of praise is due to the clergy for their fearless and conscientious efforts to make their congregations moral; nor are they unsuccessful; from immorality of the sensual kind at least the people of Quebec are remarkably free. Yet the result of ecclesiastical discipline administered through the confessional can, at best, hardly be anything but a Paragony. Take these sheep out of the fold in which they are so paternally tended, and they will show but little power of self-control. Even within the fold, if they ever revolt against the crook, their downward course is apt to be as precipitate as that of a toboggan.

MR. CLEVELAND'S career as President has opened happily by the appointment of Mr. Bayard to the Secretaryship of State. Mr. Bayard is not a demagogue, but a patriot, a man of honour and a gentleman. While Foreign Affairs are in his hands we need fear no Ostend Manifestoes, no filibustering or blustering of any kind. He will no doubt uphold the rights and the honour of his country firmly and with dignity, as he would uphold his own; but he will not try to make capital by an overbearing demeanour or insulting language towards foreign governments. Such at least is the promise of his whole career. The United States are the great power of this continent; it would be absurd to ignore their position or to suppose that they will allow the powers of the Old World to interfere with them in the field of their legitimate influence. The idea that the communities of this hemisphere are colonial, that they belong to a grade inferior to that of nations, and are under the patronage and subject to the intermeddling of communities the rank of which is established, has ceased to agree with facts and will have to be finally abandoned. But we may be sure that while his government is treated with respect and justice, Mr. Bayard will treat all other governments in the same spirit. With the Fisheries Question in prospect Canada may think herself fortunate in Mr. Cleveland's first appointment.

THE union of the Conservatives with the Parnellites on the Vote of Censure was not a fortuitous concurrence of atoms: it was a combination for which the more violent of the Conservatives have long been manoeuvring with the connivance of their leaders. A flag has been repeatedly waved to the Parnellites from the Tory benches. Such a coalition, it may safely be said, had not before been seen. That of Fox and North, on which the vials of historic wrath have been poured, was in reality much less profligate. Fox and North had been opposed to each other on the question of the American War, and their opposition had become personal enmity, at least on the side of Fox; for North's lymphatic nature was scarcely capable of animosity: but the American War was over, and personal enmity, however bitter, may always be laid aside without dishonour. At the time of the coalition no question of principle separated the two men. The Parnellites are avowed enemies of the realm; they are in league with a foreign organization which has twice invaded the Queen's dominions; and, as has been already said, they openly sympathize with the Mehdî in the war which it is the ostensible object of the Conservatives to prosecute