

THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.
Vol. II., No. 5.

Toronto, Thursday, January 1st, 1885.

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

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The Week,

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.

IN presence of the long list of exemptions, the average ratepayer exercises more patience than an impartial judge would be disposed to put on the list of his virtues. At a meeting in Toronto an attempt was made to pass a resolution shielding exemptions on Church property; but the majority rejected the proposed exception and denounced all exemptions. The resolution passed called for a permissive act under which any municipality would be at liberty to abolish exemptions. To confer the necessary authority on the municipalities an Act of the Ontario Legislature would cover the whole ground except that on which the exemption of the property of the Federal Government rests. To reach this property an Act of the Federal Legislature would be necessary. If authority for the municipalities to abolish the other exemptions were given there would be no good reason why the Federal Government should stand in the way of the abolition being made complete. It is not to be expected that the Government would consent to have its property taxed while other exemptions remain; but, if the Ontario Government can be induced to let other exemptions go, the defences which guard the exemption of Dominion property would be greatly weakened. The judges who are underpaid ought to receive adequate salaries, and the invidious exemptions in their favour might then go with the rest. Among exemptions it is usual to rank municipal property and public schools. But this property is necessarily exempted; to assess it and go through the form of collecting the taxes would be to incur a needless expense which would bring no compensating gain. The Federal Government might give the Archbishop a new sensation by making known its readiness to agree that Federal property should bear its share of municipal burthens, on the understanding that all other exemptions should, at the same time, be swept away.

ANOTHER discovery of anthracite coal in the North-West is announced on the line of the Canadian Pacific, several hundreds of miles west of Winnipeg; the bed is said to be fourteen feet thick. Mr. G. M. Dawson's "Notes on the Coals and Lignites of the Canadian North-West" shows that anthracite coal was discovered last summer on the Cascade River, near its confluence with the Bow River, and close to the Railway. It is described as "merely a special case of the inclusion of cretaceous coal-bearing rocks in the mountains." The area of these rocks, in that part of the

mountain, is large, embracing the head waters of the North Fork of Old Man, the Crow Nest and North Kootanie Passes, and part of the Elk River. The lignite of the North-West will have its value enhanced by mixture with the anthracite. In a country where abundance of fuel is a primary condition of existence, a supply of anthracite coal is of the first importance. Lignite alone burns rapidly, and a fire made altogether of it could not be relied on to burn through the night without being replenished at an unseasonable hour when the repose of the household cannot be disturbed without inconvenience. Between coal and lignite the supply of fuel in the North-West is so ample that no one need be disturbed by the fear that it will give out. This will go far to conquer the terrors of the winter in that region.

THE experiment of reducing the tolls on the St. Lawrence Canals by one-half cannot be said to have been a marked success. There was a decline of over two millions of bushels in the quantity of wheat carried, while there was an increase in flour of one hundred thousand barrels. On the whole, the gain is very trifling and not worth the cost. But it must be remembered that there was less wheat to carry than the year before, and if there had been no decline in the crop of 1883, the result would have been better. If we look at the whole history of the attempts to attract traffic to the St. Lawrence by reducing and abolishing tolls, the uniform failure of the experiments warn us not to put our trust in such devices. That the Canadian Pacific has been the first railway company to procure the construction of an elevator at Montreal tells of neglected opportunities which no weaker word than culpable will adequately qualify. If that example be followed, if Montreal and Kingston furnish themselves with the appliances necessary for the handling of grain, if they deserve success as they have never taken the trouble to deserve it before, they may do better in future than in the past. To experiment in the reduction or abolition of tolls need not involve any great sacrifice: the loss of revenue is measureable, and if the game prove not to be worth the candle there is no necessity for playing it again. But the cost of a third enlargement of the Welland Canal, if it failed to bring the sought-for prize of increased traffic, would prove an irrecoverable loss. The costly experiment already made of enlarging the canals beyond the capacity that would suffice for the domestic traffic, and reducing and temporarily abolishing canal tolls, have not brought a degree of success that offers much encouragement for their repetition.

FROM many different quarters come complaints that wheat is being sold at a price below the cost of production: in England, in some parts of the United States, and possibly in India. The number of persons who can afford to grow wheat at a loss must be small, and the number who will be content to grow it on these terms is smaller still. Reduced production may be relied on to bring down the supply to the limit of consumption. But a revolution must follow the demonstration that it is possible to produce wheat largely in excess of the world's requirements. Wheat cannot long continue to be sold below cost; but while the law of the necessary price asserts itself selection will go on. The average price must cover the cost of production; but the average price will cover the cost of cultivating only the soils most suitable for the growth of wheat, all the other economic conditions as well as fertility being taken into account. Many lands on which wheat has hitherto been grown will have to be applied to some other purpose. The process of adaption is not new; it has long been going on, even in Canada. The Province of Quebec, which eighty-four years ago exported a million bushels of wheat, does not now supply its own wants. In a less degree the change will come to Ontario; the North-West as a vast wheat field will flourish till the native qualities of the soil are exhausted. Whatever else happens, of this we may be assured: those who raise the world's supply of food will not long consent to do it at a loss.

THE republication of *La Lanterne*, by Arthur Buies, is not without significance. *La Lanterne* first made its appearance at Montreal, in Septem-