

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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### CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPIC	PAGE
The Toronto Scandal	571
The Ottawa Investigations	571
The State of the Public Mind	571
The Vote on Commercial Reciprocity	571
Peace Prospects in Europe	571
Loy Salisbury on Ireland	572
The Troubles in China	572
"Sweating" in America	572
Copyright and Spelling	572
OTTAWA LETTER	572
A BOYISH OUTING	573
QUIS CUS? ODIET CUSTODES?	574
OLD LONDON PLAYHOUSES	574
PARIS LETTER	575
IN SEARCH OF ART IN NEW YORK	575
THE SONG OF THE SEA (POEM)	576
THE RAMBER	576
CORRESPONDENCE	
A Correction	577
A Business Men's Club—A Suggestion	577
CANADIAN GUIDE BOOKS	577
A PLAY-GROUND FOR GIANTS	577
THE NEGRO IN AMERICA	577
MODERN DOCTORS AT THE SORBONNE	578
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA	578
OUR LIBRARY TABLE	579
LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP	580
PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED	580
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE	581
SCIENTIFIC AND SANITARY	582
OBITUARIES	583

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WHEN Mr. E. A. Macdonald first took legal action to prevent the carrying into effect of the resolution which had been passed in the city council, by a large majority, in favour of giving the contract for working the Toronto Street Railway to the Kiely-Mackenzie-Everett syndicate, few of the more thoughtful citizens, we believe, attached much importance to his action. Corroborative evidence soon, however, gave the affair a more serious aspect, and Mr. Macdonald's strange letter announcing his withdrawal of the action gave a still deeper colour to the growing suspicion that underhand and dishonourable influences had been at work. Subsequent events have not proved that such suspicions are well founded, but they have so far tended to confirm them that it is now imperative that a thorough investigation shall take place. The bank cheque, a fac-simile of which has been published by the *Empire*, adds confirmation too strong to admit of doubt to Mr. E. A. Macdonald's statement that he was paid \$4,500 by Mr. Noel Marshall to secure withdrawal of the action which he had entered. The doctrine of probabilities seems strongly against the correctness of Mr. Marshall's statement that he paid this money out of his own private funds and without the knowledge of the principals of the syndicate, simply to prevent delay in the completion of the contract. Certainly the possibility, not to say presumption, of wrong-doing is altogether too great to permit the transfer of the road until the whole matter has been sifted to the bottom. If the members of the syndicate are innocent of any use or attempted use of corrupt means in their endeavour to secure the contract, they have much to gain by having the fact clearly established, even at the cost of some delay in obtaining possession of the road. They should not only assent to but demand the most searching enquiry, and let their uprightness be shown in the light of noonday. In that event the confidence of the citizens will be increased rather than lessened, in consequence of the serious attack that has been made upon them. It is to be hoped most devoutly that the rash counsels of those who are urging the immediate ratification of the contract may not prevail. The city of Toronto cannot afford to run any risk of hand-

ing over so valuable a property for so many years to a company that would stoop to bribery in order to secure it. It is time that Canadian corporations of all kinds, from the civic to the national, should refuse to entrust the property and interests of the people whom they respectively represent to any but upright and high minded men. The citizens of Toronto should with one accord demand that this very suspicious business be probed to the bottom, in order that the brand of dishonour, which certainly is merited by some, may be placed upon the right brows. By all means let the investigation be at once commenced, and let it be keen and thorough, and if possible short and decisive.

THE work of the Investigating Committees at Ottawa is still being pushed with vigour. Last week's proceedings added important links to the chain of evidence in support of Mr. Tarte's charges. Whatever may be the outcome in the case of the Minister of Public Works himself, the evidence already adduced is ample to prove that the state of things which has existed for years past in his department is a deep and lasting disgrace to Canada. The preliminary report of the expert accountants has placed beyond a doubt that the sums filched from the public chest by the one firm of contractors run up into the hundreds of thousands. It is well known, too, we believe, that the report of the engineers whom the Committee has called to its aid, which report will no doubt have been made public before this number of THE WEEK goes to press, will still further confirm the tale of fraud and rascality. And the end is not yet. The ears of the public are shortly to be made to tingle more keenly than ever, we are told, by further revelations from the Public Accounts Committee, or elsewhere. Certain events which took place in each of the Committees last week give some colour to these rumours. They have, at least, aroused a suspicion in some quarters that neither of the Committees is to be allowed so free a hand in the future as in the past. Sir John Thompson, for the first time, allowed his patience to fail, and gave utterance to what may be regarded as an intimation or a threat that legal restraints will be more rigidly applied to the proceedings of the Committee on Privileges and Elections in the future, than they have been hitherto. The Ministers of the Crown who are directing the course of the enquiries in the other Committee provoked a heated discussion by resolutely, not to say obstinately, limiting the scope of the evidence in certain directions. In both cases the Ministers may have been legally and technically right. We question whether they were not tactically, not to say morally, wrong. Affairs have now reached a stage at which anything that may be construed into an inclination on the part of Ministers to restrict or obstruct enquiry will be looked upon with distrust and will tend to strengthen the worst suspicions. Unless Sir Hector Langevin really fears enquiry—which would be tantamount to confession—he would be wise to insist that the Committees be allowed the widest liberty and helped rather than hindered, even in their alleged "fishing" enquiries. If it be not Sir Hector's fault, it is his sad misfortune that the circumstantial evidence is very strong against him. If he is really innocent of gross corruption he cannot be proved guilty by any possible evidence, and his wisest course would be to insist on the fullest investigation of every suspicious incident.

TO what extent is the public sentiment of Canada really aroused by what is going on at Ottawa? Indications are not wanting that the facts there being brought to light are telling unfavourably upon the reputation of the Dominion abroad, especially in England and in the United States. That Canada is disgraced and is in danger of being still more deeply disgraced in the eyes of the nations is a humiliating fact. Nothing else could be expected. But what is the effect in Canada itself? The *Globe* complains that the ministers of the Christian churches are not taking up the question as they should, in view of the great moral interests involved. We are sometimes assured that the whole country is in a ferment of anxiety or indignation, but we must confess that we are unable to perceive any very marked indications of such a state of feeling. Perhaps it is too soon to expect strong manifestations. Perhaps the justice-loving instincts of the people, irrespective

of party, are prompting them to hold their judgment in suspense, until all the evidence is before them. If this is so, it is well. Hasty judgments are often unjust, and always unreliable. But we are inclined to suspect that other causes, causes growing out of the intense partyism which is so characteristic of the majority, are at work. Said, in effect, a man of intelligence and education the other day, when reference was made to the scandals: "Tell me, what does all the shouting amount to? I take a daily paper, but have not time to wade through column after column relating to these investigations, and if I had I should be almost as much in the dark after as before, because I would not know what to believe and what to disbelieve. Though a party man, myself, I have learned to have a profound distrust of the party paper as a medium for the conveyance of facts in regard to party questions." The result was, in this case, that the speaker had little or no real knowledge of the evidence that has been brought to light. He had formed no opinions and was really giving little thought or attention to the matter. We suspect that the case may be typical of thousands, and that to this want of knowledge, rather than to any characteristic indifference to the conduct of public business, or the state of public morals, it is due that there are as yet so few indications of deep public feeling in the matter. And this profound distrust of partyism lies at the bottom, we have no doubt, of the seeming apathy of the pulpit, of which complaint is justly made. There are many honourable exceptions, no doubt, but as a rule it is to be feared that Canadian preachers are not fearless preachers of political righteousness. Nor have we noticed any very marked demonstrations of virtuous horror in the religious press of the country. These are probably absent partly for reasons similar to the above, and partly because editors realize that the question of public morals has not yet emerged with sufficient distinctness from the region of party politics, to admit of safe handling. They do not, perhaps, realize that they might and should lend powerful aid in lifting the moral question out of and above the mire of partisanship. It is strange and somewhat discouraging that good men and good journals on both sides of politics do not more clearly perceive that the best interests of their respective parties, as well as the honour and reputation of Canada, demand the complete purification of the political atmosphere, and a determination on the part of all that the men in public life in Canada shall henceforth as a rule be, as an exceptional few on both sides now are—men whose honour is above suspicion.

THAT the reciprocity amendment of Sir Richard Cartwright would be defeated in the Dominion Commons as soon as it reached a vote, there never has been any doubt. The amendment offered to Mr. Foster's motion to consider the Government Tariff Bill in the form of a resolution requiring the Government to "reduce all duties on articles of prime necessity," and to conduct the proposed negotiations with the United States "on the basis of the most extended reciprocal trade." This was a flat contradiction of the Government programme, and to have carried it would have been sufficient cause for the resignation of the Ministry, and so the Government put forth effort to defeat it. This they succeeded in doing in a full House by a majority of twenty-six. This majority significantly shows that the revelations of official corruption have not yet broken the ranks of the Conservatives, as the Liberals had hoped and some Conservatives had feared.

IT will be very gratifying to lovers of peace to learn that Lord Salisbury takes so hopeful a view of the present state of affairs in Europe. When one looks at the state of things actually existing among the great powers it is difficult to avoid querying whether the Prime Minister's view may not err on the side of optimism. Great and constantly growing armies and military preparations increased to a point which lays upon the shoulders of the unfortunate peasant an almost intolerable burden of taxation, afford a strange if not a precarious foundation for lasting peace. Can Europe be called tranquil at a time when an offensive and defensive Alliance has just been again concluded between three of its great powers, while a counter understanding which, though it may not yet have taken