

THE WEEK:

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE session advances, and it is evident that the question of further assistance to the Pacific Railway must in some form soon be before Parliament. All that can be said has been said already. We cannot stick where we are, with the road half finished. There is not the slightest reason for doubting the integrity of the President's character, or the honesty of his representations, and if his figures are correct and his calculation well founded the prospects of the road, as a commercial enterprise, are most favorable, and its value to the stockholders when it is once completed, will be great. In that case, the best course for the nation is to hold on to the security and make a further advance by way of loan. The land, as we have said, will not be of so much value in the hands of the Government, where it will be liable to the indefinite claims of the North-Western Provinces, as it is in the hands of the company who hold it as private owners. Bonds would be exposed to all the adverse influences and fluctuations of the money market. That the Government will propose assistance of some kind cannot be doubted. It must complete the road or fail. This its supporters will be told in caucus, and a fee will probably be paid to Quebec. There will of course be a raking fire from the Opposition, which will be directed as usual not against the policy but against the contractors. Charges of scamping the work, we are persuaded, will fall to the ground: the road has been solidly built, and is well equipped. The best point for the Opposition is the fact that the Syndicate, while they come to Parliament for further aid, are drawing dividends practically at the rate of twenty per cent. on a great mass of stock in their own hands. The defence is necessity: the money was indispensable to the progress of the enterprise and could not at the time be obtained in any other way. This unfortunately does not make the transaction right in principle or salutary as a

commercial example. But the nation, floundering in the quagmire of delusion, miscalculation and perplexity into which the party leaders have brought it, is ready to put up with anything, to overlook anything, and almost to pay anything if it can only see the end.

THERE are some very excellent Christians who seem not to have sufficiently laid to heart the saying of the Apostle that the strength of sin is the law. If Mr. Charlton, for instance, had his way, the verses of the Sermon on the Mount would probably become the clauses of a Charlton Act, with an interpretation clause defining meekness and a schedule enumerating the works of mercy. So long as people are tolerably disposed to be a law to themselves it is better to abstain from regulating their actions by cast-iron legislation, which deprives them of the pleasant sense of spontaneous well-doing and is apt to turn their zeal into coldness, if not into passive resistance. Mr. Charlton's Sunday Observance Bill was withdrawn at Ottawa, being pronounced beyond the powers of the Dominion Parliament, but it has reappeared and been passed in the Ontario Legislature under the auspices of Mr. Wood. It seems to be admitted by the reformers themselves that, on the whole and as times go, Sunday is particularly well kept in Ontario and generally in this Province. Certainly our observance is far better not only than that of New York but than that of almost any city in the States. If that be so, was there not a good deal to be said for leaving us alone? Why force us to think that in keeping the day of rest for body and mind, of respite from care, of renewal of spiritual life, we are doing the will not of nature and her author but of Mr. Wood? Sunday excursions, which it seems the chief object of the reformers to prevent, are no doubt open to objection on the ground that they impose work on the steam-boat people and the keepers of the houses of entertainment. Yet we should think twice before we voted for their prohibition. To people pent up all the week in the stores or factories of a city, no pleasure can be so great or so healthful as an excursion; it is a great point in its favour, too, that it is usually enjoyed by the whole family. The substitute for it, practically, is less likely to be a religious exercise than some amusement less healthy and less domestic: at best perhaps spending the afternoon upon the doorsteps in a frame of mind neither very happy nor very spiritual. In former days they carried out the principle thoroughly and compelled people by law to go to church. We cannot help at all events wishing that the framers of these religious and ascetic enactments could be required as a pledge of their sincerity themselves to make some sacrifice as great as that which they exact of an artisan or a clerk in taking from him his Sunday excursion.

THE magical effects of the Party lens were never more curiously illustrated than in the opposite versions given by the party journals of the rising in the North-West. Where Government organs see a trifling disturbance, such as a few policemen will soon suppress, Opposition organs see a formidable rebellion. Trifling the disturbance can hardly be, if it is true that the Winnipeg Militia has been called out and that General Middleton has proceeded to the scene of action. It is natural to surmise that the talk of despatching a Canadian contingent to the aid of England in the Egyptian War may have set the enemies of England at work to create a diversion. The probability of this is increased if the insurgents are well supplied with rifles. These can hardly have come from any armoury but that of the Fenians. A serious rising in that distant territory would be very embarrassing to the Ottawa Government. The settlers, scattered along a line of eight hundred miles, can hardly assemble for defence: they would be afraid to leave their homesteads and their families; probably they would make the best terms in their power, each for himself, with the enemy. Our chief reliance would be on the Mounted Police, which is undoubtedly a fine corps, but not ubiquitous. This affair brings forcibly home to us the remoteness of the North-West from Old Canada and the magnitude of the natural barriers which lie between. The same degree of military strength and compactness is perhaps not necessary to cohesion here which is necessary in Europe; but some degree is necessary even here. We have annexed a Continent in the Moon.