

THE WEEK.

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The Week,

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE prorogation of the Dominion Parliament, which is expected to be almost simultaneous with the publication of these pages, is hailed with infinite satisfaction by the Government, not least by Sir John A. Macdonald, who probably thinks no act of which it has been guilty during the thirteen weeks' sitting became it so well as dissolution will. The continuous game of grab which has characterized the whole session must at the last have become somewhat monotonous even to the open-handed and astute Premier, who has borne the heat and burthen of a trying session with remarkable vigour for a man rapidly approaching three score years and ten. Probably no other man in Canada could have successfully handled a party composed of such incongruous and restive elements as the Conservatives in the Ottawa Parliament have proved themselves during the 1884 sitting. No attempt seems to have been made to add any measure of great public usefulness to the statute book, and the session just concluded will be remembered chiefly by that truly *ouvrage de longue haleine*, the Canada Pacific Subsidy Bill—which, octopus-like, spread its huge arms over the whole session—and as having been prolific of conflict between the Federal and the Provincial administrations. The speech of Mr. Blake on Saturday on the Quebec subsidies was looked upon as the last oratorical effort of the session—some who heard him claim it was one of his greatest speeches—after which “the massacre of the innocents” commenced, to be followed by the closing ceremonies. *Post tot naufragia portum.*

WE live in an age of centenary celebrations, varied by such other forms as bi-centenaries, ter-centenaries, and the like. It was only last November we were paying respect to the memory of Luther on the occasion of the four hundredth anniversary of his birth. At the present moment preparations are being made in England for a quin-centenary commemoration in honour of John Wyclif, and Edinburgh is in a ferment of rejoicing over the ter-centenary of her University. And now, some enthusiastic Torontonians, imbued with an absorbing desire to celebrate, are engaged in arranging a semi-centennial anniversary of the civic birthday, to be held in June. It is not difficult to understand the pride with which loyal citizens mark the fast strides made by Toronto since Governor Simcoe in 1794

selected a spot occupied only by the ruins of a French fort and a solitary Huron wigwam—where the beaver was rarely disturbed by human footsteps—as the site of his provincial capital. Everyone must appreciate the pride “that weds each bosom to its native soil,” and would invite neighbours and friends on such an occasion to partake of the hospitality of a city which, in fifty years from its inauguration, has grown through many chequered experiences to be one of the most beautiful on this continent. But we fear it will not be found that many outside of Toronto share this enthusiasm, nor is it probable that the advertised processions and other attractions will attract, in the absence of this *amor patriæ*, more especially as the well-known Industrial Fair is to be held in September. Indeed, it does not appear that the proposed semi-centennial celebrations are evoking a great deal of interest even in Toronto beyond the small circle of enthusiastic organizers, and those who will immediately profit by them. There is a strong impression that if the programme were added to that of Fair Week the result would be very much more satisfactory to all concerned.

CHICAGO did not discover that the report of Matthew Arnold's criticism on her Philistinism was a hoax soon enough to prevent the appearance of the following paragraph in the *Chicago Current*, a literary journal of the first class, and, it is safe to say, a representative of the highest culture and best manners of the city:—

“It is time to stop the opening of our purses, our houses and our hearts to distinguished English tramps who come over here to rob us. Among the more noted Englishmen who have lately visited us are Matthew Arnold, Sir Lepel Griffin and Oscar Wilde. They are in great social favour at home and may be taken as representative of English society, brains and manners. Of this proposition there can be no dispute. Therefore, taking it for granted, we are justified in saying that the representative ‘upper class’ Englishman of to-day is a pig-headed boor, an ungrateful, snarling cur, and a jealous, cunning and venom-soaked enemy of all things American. Those people, largely found within the corporate limits of New York City, who affect English ways should be pelted off the streets whenever they appear. The average Englishman, who has lived all his life in a narrow island, has not the breadth of vision to enable him to grasp the life, business and high purpose of the American people, whose domain has yet to be settled, its resources determined, its wildernesses conquered. Bah! Out upon these pigmies! What have they to show us as exemplary? Their metropolis, which is practically all there is of England, is the most depraved and pauper-stricken city in the world, its aristocracy is the most rotten, its Government the least liberal, when pretenses are considered. It has nothing essential to be commended to us as worthy of emulation. What is to be thought of a Parliament, professedly enlightened and keeping pace with the spirit of the age, that hesitates to extend the suffrage among the people, in order that they may lift themselves out of their miseries? The policy of England is robbery of the weak at the cannon's mouth. Everything it has must be held by force. No wonder that those who leave her shores, seeking asylums in America, yearn to die away from them! Why, therefore, should any American pay regard to the criticism of those who have made England what it is to-day? Whether or not Matthew Arnold has declared there is no culture here: it is the cry of his kind who receive our hospitality. American social life is on a higher plane of culture to-day than English life. In literature, in scientific research, in applied art, in inventive skill, in all the comforts of life, in all things that go to make life worth living and to bless it with opportunity, the American people are as far in advance of England and her suffering colonies, as Rome was once in advance of the rest of the world. Therefore, let the doors be shut upon English beggars of distinction. Let every American householder consider that if he admits one of them he runs the risk of finding his hospitality abused. In short, let us hear of and see no more affectation in this country of English manners and methods.”

The public of Chicago, we may be sure, has acuteness enough after reading this, to come to the conclusion that hereafter, as often as the *Current* may deal with the character of England or of Englishmen, it will be prudent, in estimating the value of the judgment, to make some allowance for emotion. Whether Sir Lepel Griffin paid his own hotel bill or not, we have not been informed. Mr. Matthew Arnold, as well as Lord Coleridge, came by special invitation, and so did Mr. Oscar Wilde. Joking apart, however, the paragraph is a revelation, extorted by a paroxysm of wrath, of something beneath the smooth and smiling surface, against which Englishmen who feel inclined to accept invitations to the United States, especially invitations to star it, will do well to be on their guard. Onlookers who know the ground have for some time been nervous on this score. The old hatred is gradually dying out; in the hearts of the native Americans it is almost dead; and when a native American reviles England it is usually as a tribute of political deference to the Irish vote; but there is still room for caution, and visitors must take care to be assured that they are really welcome in the first place, and not to outstay their welcome in the second. It is rather fortunate that this warning explosion has been called forth, not by any real imprudence on the part of an Englishman of mark, but by a hoax. Other Chicago journals, besides the *Current*, are screaming with fury, and emptying slop-pails of abuse on Matthew Arnold's head. Poor Bidy in her rage has quite forgotten her lessons in manners.