

THE WEEK.

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TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

BEFORE the issue of our next number the Provincial Capital will be *en fête* and the town will be beset with throngs of sight-seers come to witness the Semi-Centennial celebration of Toronto's incorporation as a city. What amount of enthusiasm the citizens themselves will manifest remains to be seen, though a whole week's delirium, in the summer solstice, is, we fear, likely to be too much of a tax on the not over-emotional nature of a Toronto populace. Civic rhetoric, no doubt, however, will be effective to keep up excitement; while the glory of municipal pageantry may be trusted at least to lure the small boy into the streets. Semi-Centennial demonstrations, we cannot help thinking, are a little absurd, as are those domestic weaknesses, which modern society encourages,—the wooden, the tin, and the china wedding. They suggest the idea of a premature explosion of feeling, akin to the defect in the mechanism of a fire-lock, which has a tendency to go off at half-cock. Could we have whispered into the ears of our city fathers to postpone their "Gog and Magogery" for another decade, they and the citizens would then be in a position to make high holiday over the centenary of the founding of the town—a more notable and interesting event. But the city is now committed to the affair, and "loyalty to the chief magistrate," or rather, ex-magistrate, calls for the due exercise of civic emotion and a becoming display of civic pride. The demonstration may not be regretted if it contributes in any degree to the fostering of a healthy public spirit and the inculcation of national pride in the breast of youth.

In the commemoration of the settlement of the U. E. Loyalists in Canada, Toronto, however, has legitimate excuse for the manifestation of civic fervour; and, no doubt, this feature in the celebration will receive its meed of honour. The War of Independence over, Sir Guy Carleton and his red-coats set sail for old Albion, and Washington returned to his estates on the Potomac, what scenes heaven was the witness of in the incoming of that loyal band of Britons among the solitudes of Upper Canada, only the silver-tongued orator is competent to say. With the beaching of their boats on the pebbly shores of the lake, the country began its national as the town began its industrial and social life. To send memory back to these times is to rain dew on the patriot soul and stir it to the depths. Only a hundred years, and lo, what a change! But fifty, and how much has been accomplished! Could the city be re-peopled with its old townsmen—the familiar characters of its muddy streets—how little they would know of the place! The Strachans, the Robinsons, the Sherwoods, the Allans, the Baldwins, the Boultons,—with those thorns in their flesh, the

Gourleys, the Mackenzies, and their turbulent following—were they to re-appear, how wistfully would each of them look for the old marketplace, the lounging-steps of the old fashioned Court-house, the spectral corridors of Russell Abbey,—and rub his eyes at the wonder that has arisen in their stead! The seine drawn up on the beach of old York, the island a desolate marsh, the town full of pit-holes, with its open creeks eating their way through the streets, the dear old Meeting-house, with the hour-glass at the preacher's side,—things now wholly of the vanished past, and all but faded from the memory. Is it said "happy the people whose city has no traditions?" Reverse the aphorism, say the old men, and we will give it assent.

We give below the concluding and summarizing portion of Goldwin Smith's Brighton Lecture on the Conduct of England towards Ireland, which some of the angry partisans of Mr. Blake are describing, evidently without having seen it, and on the faith of an Irish-American version of its contents as "denunciatory," intended to inflame English hatred of Ireland, and composed for the purpose of "stirring up or aggravating mutual hatred"—as if anything could be more calculated to stir up and aggravate ill feeling of all kinds than the calumnious and almost delirious pictures of English conduct and sentiment towards Ireland which Irish nationalists are in the habit of drawing. It is further suggested on the same trustworthy authority that the "diabolical" object of the Lecture was to "harden the English heart against the wise remedial legislation which Mr. Gladstone was then preparing," though the Land Act had been passed five months before the lecture was delivered and is repeatedly mentioned by the lecturer who expresses his conviction that "the same hands which have given disestablishment and the Land Act are ready to give any feasible and rational measure of Home Rule."

Be not weary of well-doing. Remember, in half a century of popular government, how much has been effected, what a mountain of abuses, restrictions, monopolies, wrongs, and absurdities has been cleared away. In face of what difficulties has this been achieved! what prophecies of ruin have all along been uttered by reaction or timidity, and how one after another have those prophecies been belied! In the case of England and Scotland, the fruits of a Liberal policy are visible in a wealthier, a happier, a better, a more united, and a more loyal people. In the case of Ireland they are not yet so clearly visible; yet they are there. The Ireland of 1882, though not what we should wish her to be, is a very different Ireland from that of the last century, or of the first quarter of the present. Catholic exclusion, the penal code, the State Church of the minority are gone; in their place reign elective government, religious liberty, equality before the law. A system of public education, founded on perfect toleration of all creeds, and inferior perhaps to none in excellence, has been established. The Land Law has been reformed, and again reformed on principles of exceptional liberality to the tenant. Wealth has increased, notwithstanding all the hindrances put in the way of its growth, by turbulence; the deposits both in the savings' banks and in the ordinary banks bear witness to the fact. Pauperism has greatly declined. Outrage, on the average, has declined also, though we happen just now to be in a crisis of it. Under the happy influence of equal justice, religious rancour has notably abated; the change has been most remarkable in this respect since I first saw Ireland. Influential classes, which injustice in former days put on the side of revolution, are now at heart ranged on the side of order and the Union, though social terrorism may prevent them from giving it their open support. The garrison of Ascendency, political, ecclesiastical, and territorial, has step by step been disbanded; an operation fraught with danger, because those who are deprived of privilege are always prone in their wrath to swell the ranks of disaffection, which yet has been accomplished with success. If the results of political, religious, and educational reform seem disappointing, it is, as I have said before, because the main question is not the franchise, or the Church, or the public school, but the land. With that question a Liberal Parliament and a Liberal Government are now struggling; while its inherent difficulties are increased by Tory reaction on the one side and by Fenian revolution on the other. Of all the tasks imposed by the accumulated errors and wrongs of ages, this was the most arduous and the most perilous. Yet hope begins to dawn upon the effort. Only let the nation stand firmly against Tory and Fenian alike, and against both united, if they mean to conspire, in support of the leaders whom it has chosen, and to whose hands it has committed this momentous work. If separation even now were to take place, what has been done would not have been done in vain. Ireland would go forth an honour to England, not a scandal and a reproach, as she would have been if their connection had been severed sixty years ago. If any one doubts it, I challenge him once more to compare the state of Ireland with that of any other Roman Catholic country in the world. But of separation let there be no thought; none at least till Parliament has done its utmost with the Land Question and failed. Let us hope, as it is reasonable to hope, that where so much has been accomplished, the last and crowning enterprise will not miscarry. Settle the Land Question, and that which alone lends strength to political discontent, to conspiracy, to disunion, will be gone. Passion will not subside in an hour, but it will subside, and good feeling will take its place. The day may come when there will be no more talk of England and Scotland governing Ireland well or ill, because Ireland, in partnership with England and Scotland, will be governing herself, and contributing her share to the common greatness and the common progress; when the Union will be ratified not only by necessity, but by free conviction and good will; when the march of wealth and prosperity will no more be arrested by discord, but the resources of the Island will be developed in peace, and the villas of opulence perhaps will stud the lovely shores, where now the assassin prowls and property cannot sleep secure; when the long series of Liberal triumphs will be crowned by the sight of an Ireland no longer distracted, and disaffected, and reproachful, no longer brooding over the wrongs and sufferings of the past, but resting peacefully, happily, and in unforced union at her consort's side. The life of a nation is long, and though by us this consummation may not be witnessed, it may be witnessed by our children.