

# THE WEEK.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE author of the just-published "Canada under the Administration of Lord Lorne" has scant consideration for the press of this country, and has the courage to say in his new book that "the intelligent ones among our readers have no respect for the critical estimate of the [Canadian] newspapers." An unprejudiced reader of a recent issue of the *Globe* would be inclined to find ample justification for the statement in the circumstance that it was thought fit to refer in the editorial columns of that journal to a letter which ought not to have found a place in a leading organ without a liberal use of the pruning-knife. It not only contained what the editor ought to have known were misrepresentations—if not fabrications—but these were worded in the language of intentional insult to a writer whose offence is the outspoken expression of his convictions. Fortunately the letter was its own antidote, so apparently was it the vapourings—not of an over-heated imagination, but of a would-be literary assassin, *avec malice prepense*. The letter has, of course, been ignored by the writer assailed, for the same reason that in the days of duelling a gentleman could not fight with a blackleg. *Noblesse oblige*. But it may be worth while to point out that it is the admission into its columns of billingsgate for argument and slander for logic that has made it possible for an unbiassed writer to speak of the Canadian press as he does in the work already referred to. The apostle of a new creed expects and welcomes criticism when it is conducted upon possible lines: it has been the unvarying fate of thinkers who have lived to see their doctrines adopted by the men who opposed them. And if those Grit politicians who object to "Bystander's" utterances would take cognizance of the fact that Tory organs, such as the *Hamilton Spectator*, are just as much dissatisfied with his course, they would see the absurdity of discovering in him a masked Conservative, and of ascribing covert motives. Such a mode of attacking a writer *sans peur et sans reproche* is a boomerang policy which will not stand the test of experience. It is too absurdly ridiculous to serve even a present purpose: for everybody knows the "Bystander" has no temptation to be otherwise than impartial. He is out of politics, and notoriously

has no desire for place, political position, or anything which he does not already possess. Intelligent men of all shades of politics must grieve to see such treatment accorded to him. It was only the other day that a journal published in Toronto, and another printed in Hamilton, circulated reports of "Bystander's" visit to Buffalo which their conductors must have known had been officially contradicted, capping them by hysterical screeds against him as the propounder of an "annexation doctrine." The authors of such stuff would save themselves much unnecessary tribulation if they would previously and honestly read the writings they undertake to comment upon.

It is pointed out to us that the information upon which we based our remarks last week on the County Board of Audit was not exact. County Attorneys, as such, are not members of the Board. The body consists of the County Judge and two members of the County Council. By a recent statute the County Councils are authorized to pay to these nominee auditors certain fees for their services. Two of the Board are practically the paid servants of the County Council, and their duty is to strike off the accounts of all constables every possible item. If they fail in this respect, their places will be filled by more subservient successors. The only independent member of the Board to whom the constables can look for a liberal and equitable taxation is the County Judge. Unfortunately, this their sole safeguard is wanting in some counties, owing to the action of the County Council in annually voting a "honorarium" to the County Judge for his services. The unfortunate constable who faces this extraordinary tribunal—judge and jury all feed by the county—has a hard time of it in getting his just dues. The public official to whom we alluded last week as having protested against a niggardly policy on the part of his board of audit which practically amounts to "consideration for thieves," and who was so pompously rebuked for protesting, had just the hybrid board last mentioned to contend with. The Board of Audit is a cumbersome and absurd tribunal, and, with rare exceptions (as, for instance, where the County Judge happens to be a painstaking, liberal-minded man), its treatment of constables is harsh and illiberal. As the law stands, the disbursements incidental to the pursuit of a criminal have to be borne, in the first instance, by the officers of the law; and whether they ever receive them back depends upon a board of audit who are feed to disallow the bill, if possible. In any event, the unfortunate constable has generally to wait from three to four months after his advance before he can recover his own. A more objectionable system than this it would be difficult to devise, but notwithstanding the periodical remonstrances made to the Local Government by those who suffer under it, the redress so often promised has not yet been given.

A CONTRIBUTOR to the *Canadian American* who has been touring through Ontario gives some of his impressions to the readers of the journal named. He says that whilst "the drinking customs of the country are very prominent," he saw "less drunkenness than he would have expected to see in the States." He was much impressed with London, and thinks "the cathedral they are building there would be a credit to a city of a hundred thousand population." Canadian business people he found were not in such a hurry as their American cousins. He seems surprised that anyone in business can say "thank you" and mean it. "The manners of the alespeople are not so conventional as with us, and when they say 'thank you' they really seem to feel it." "Manners are much more seen in public ways and places than with us." He does not think much of the average Canadian's "directive" power, and was glad to hunt up places for himself. "The greatest fault and wonder is, they do not seem to believe either in themselves or in their country. They disparage their land and the crops they produce. They compare opportunities with the States unfavourably to themselves. They will swear by England, and die for England." The writer does not see why Canadians should migrate to the States. He grants that more money is made in his own country, but thinks Canada has more health and comfort. "I know no place where they seem to get as much comfort out of life. The women, especially, look much healthier; they are, in nearly every instance, strong and hearty, but they are not usually as good looking as the men, while in the States it is generally the reverse. I do not know that Canada, or even London, would be a good place to move to, but I feel that it is not the best place to move from."