

# THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.  
Vol. II., No. 9.

Toronto, Thursday, January 29th, 1885.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 7 cents.

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.

Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE question of Senates and their composition being now under discussion in connection with the demand for a reform of the House of Lords, Senator Alexander was asked, as the only member of the Canadian Senate independent of party, to state once more his opinion as to the effects of the system of nomination. He repeated the conviction which he had already placed on record that the nomination of Senators by the party leader of the day was a total failure. He spoke in the most respectful and kindly terms of his fellow Senators personally; but averred that party services were the invariable ground of appointment, and that no attempt to fulfil the ideal of a Senate, as a body representing the great interests and the high intelligence of the country, independently of mere partisanship, had ever been made. The Senate, he said, had been justly called a pocket borough of the Ministers. It was completely under the Minister's thumb, and no independent voice raised in the interest of the country alone had a chance of being heard. It was the manifest duty of a Senate to check improvident expenditure on the part of the Government; but this duty a nominee Senate had totally failed to perform, the consequence of which was that the finances of the country were drifting into a dangerous condition. He quoted the words of Washington: "However partisan combinations may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time to become engines by which cunning, ambitious and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and use their position for their own selfish ends." Being asked whether appointment for life placed a Senator personally beyond the reach of Government influence, he replied that it did not; there were still hopes of preferment, such as Speakerships, Lieut.-Governorships and departmental offices, which could be held out, in addition to the trammels of party, and the pledge virtually given to the party leader when the appointment was accepted at his hands. Social influences also were plied with assiduity and effect. Senator Alexander wound up by emphatically re-asserting the absolute subservency of the Senate as at present constituted to the Minister, and the hopelessness of any independent action while it remained unreformed.

tions which do not in any way affect the principle of the plan. She would perhaps have assented to a measure which is held to involve the necessity of removal more easily before her beautiful new chapel had been built; and in that respect, as well as in regard to the recent growth of Queen's as a separate institution, there is reason to regret the unfavourable reception with which Confederation met when it was propounded fourteen years ago. The terms asked by Trinity, especially with regard to compensation, are such as it would be difficult for the Government, well-minded as it is, to grant, University Education not being a subject on which the heart of the Local Legislature responds enthusiastically to an appeal. But where there is no fundamental difference of opinion and the object is of the highest importance, diplomacy and patience may find a way. The fortress parleys; the lady listens. An important ratification of the principle at all events has been obtained. The eminent men who are the head of Trinity, being themselves alumni of Oxford or Cambridge, must feel the fatal narrowness of their personal sphere and perceive the hopelessness of creating anything worthy of the name of a university with forty students and the nominal affiliation of a Medical School. They must also be well aware that any church or school of thought condemns itself to weakness by standing aloof from the centre of intellectual power. At Queen's, on the other hand, there is strong and, for the present, probably insuperable opposition to the scheme. Nor is it wonderful that, when so much effort has just been expended in building up a separate institution and personal feelings have been so much identified with the work, an invitation to union should be unwelcome, even though the utmost care may be taken to assure the continuance of individual life. Local feeling is also evidently strong. The local magnates come forward in strong opposition, and their influence, it may without breach of courtesy be said, is likely to be more formidable than their reasoning. It is useless to confute arguments when motives will remain unconfuted. No competent judge can really believe that in these days of exact learning and science, when the field of knowledge is constantly expanding and the lines of study are constantly multiplying, a petty university can be a good one. It does not appear that the Presbyterian body is by any means unanimous in its dislike of Confederation. The Confederationists will find a nucleus in Knox College. Time will unfold to the eyes of the friends of Queen's the necessities of the situation. It will be seen that a railway journey of half a day is not an obstacle sufficient to countervail the attractions of greatly superior teaching, much better apparatus and degrees of far higher value. The outlook, we repeat, though not cloudless, is on the whole still fair.

THE large amount of money which the Government has put into the Canadian Pacific Railway causes a strong public interest to be felt in the progress, position and prospects of the road. In the sense of desiring to understand all about it, every one regards the undertaking in a more or less critical spirit. To canvass the merits of the several moves made by the Government in the progress of the work is not necessarily to act in an unfriendly spirit either towards the Government or the company. But there are critics who are avowedly hostile, and do all they can to embarrass the financial arrangements of the company. Here business rivalry and political opposition come into play, and when they unite they are sure to be formidable. To injure a rival by preventing the sale of stock is a game which has been played without scruple, and circumstances favoured its success. Even the Loan Act of last session, which gave the Government the right to take possession of the road under its mortgage, might easily become, and did in fact become, an obstacle to the sale of the stock on which it is quite plain the company must in its actual situation have relied. The failure of this resource must be a serious matter when it is considered that the company has spent during the past year several millions in connection with the main line and the branches included in the Government lien on elevators, improvements and other objects for which no part of the Government loan could be used. That the company could, under the circumstances, be in a condition of financial ease is impossible. At the same time, the company appears to have unshaken confidence in the future earning power of the road. For the five months from August to the end

It in the quarter of University Confederation the outlook is on the whole still fair. The accession of Victoria appears almost certain. The Halls already clustered round the University buildings have promptly and cordially accepted the scheme. Trinity qualifies her acceptance by condi-