THE WEEK.

Vol. X. TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24th, 1893. No. 13.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics, Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, $3: eight months, $2; four months, $1. Subscriptions payable *in advance*.

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. stg.; half-year, 6s. stg. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the publisher.

ADVERTISEMENTS, unexceptionable in character and limited in number, will be taken at $4 per line per annum; $2.50 per line for six months; $1.50 per line for three months; 20 cents per line per insertion for a shorter period.

No advertisements charged less than five lines.

Address—T. R. CLOUGHER, *Business Manager, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto.*

European Agents—SMITH, AINSLIE & Co., 25 Newcastle Street, Strand, London.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, *Publisher.*

CONTENTS.

All articles, contributions, and letters on matter pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

CURRENT TOPICS.

To the ordinary lay mind the list of omissions, anomalies, errors, etc., said by Judge Taschereau, in his open letter to Sir John Thompson, to be found in the criminal code passed at the last session of Parliament, presents a very formidable array. That—e. g., to select a very few out of a long list of specifications—the code should take no note of such offences as compounding felonies and malfeasance in office; that it should nowhere define what is an accessory before the fact; that infanticide by starvation, or neglect of natural duties, should be made henceforth a simple misdemeanor; that an accessory before the fact to the seduction of a girl under fourteen, is, if a perfect stranger to the girl against whom the offence is committed, punishable with imprisonment for life, but if he is her guardian, is punishable by fourteen years only, while if the guardian himself commits the offence against his ward, he is punishable only by a fine, or at most two years' imprisonment, would seem to indicate imperfections of so serious a character as to require prompt attention and amendment. But Sir John Thompson, replying to a question in the House, is reported to have said that all the subjects to which the learned judge refers had been carefully considered by the joint committee of both houses, who went over the bill last year; that the judge's views had been utterly condemned by nearly every judge of the United Kingdom who had expressed an opinion on the subject, and that, therefore, he did not propose to comply with those views. Surely some further explanation is needed for the enlightenment of the non-professional public.

Mr. Edgar's exposure of the workings of the cotton combines of the Dominion, if his facts can be established, is one of the most powerful arraignments of the Canadian protective system which has yet been made. In view of the declarations of the present Premier in his capacity of Leader of the Commons last session, it is difficult to see how he can refuse to grant substantial relief, save by a sweeping denial of the alleged facts. Every intelligent Canadian should read the speech and insist on knowing whether the facts are as represented. It can be a matter of indifference to no one whether the people of Canada last year, in addition to paying $1,114,424 as duties on imported cotton goods, were mulcted to the extent of $4,000,000 for the benefit of the domestic combines. Every Canadian is interested in knowing whether it be true that, whereas under the Dominion Companies Act, a company applying for incorporation for any ordinary and legitimate purpose with a capital of $5,000,000 would have been obliged to show that one-half of that amount had been actually subscribed, the Dominion Cotton Company was incorporated with a capital of $5,000,000, with subscribed stock to the amount of only $50,000. There is an evident defect in the computation by which Mr. Edgar seeks to show that the Cotton combine, in addition to the $4,000,000 which they were enabled by law to take from Canadian consumers of cotton last year, reaped a profit of $8,000,000 on the year's transactions, for in reaching that conclusion he takes account only of the cost of the two items of raw material and wages, whereas it is evident that other expenses, such as interest on capital, cost of management, insurance &c., would add to the cost of production; nevertheless, if his figures approach to correctness in other respects, the profits of these combines are enormous. The Government's answer and action will be awaited with interest by every one who takes the trouble to think about the matter.

That was a spirited and somewhat amusing discussion which was set going in the House of Commons the other day by Mr. Mills' strictures upon the action of the four Conservative gentlemen who called upon the Governor-General, to lay before him the facts and their fears touching the purchase by an American syndicate of large coal areas in Cape Breton. If these gentlemen desired to induce his Excellency to bring pressure to bear upon his constitutional advisers in order to constrain them to advise him in turn to disallow the act of the Nova Scotia Legislature, they were only doing what was done by nearly the whole body of Liberal members on a former memorable occasion. If, however, as appears from their statements in the House, they are not looking to any possible action by the Dominion Government, but acting simply in their capacity as British subjects and with a view to Imperial action, it is not easy to see why they should be denied the citizens' right of petition or appeal to the throne. Perhaps, however, they should have gone directly to the Queen, or should at least have approached her through the medium of her own constitutional advisers. Inconvenience might result were it to be admitted that British subjects in Canada may approach the Queen's representatives here in regard to an Imperial, as distinct from a Dominion matter. In any case if there was anything wrong in the matter, the onus of responsibility must rest upon the Governor-General for allowing himself to be unconstitutionally approached, rather than upon those who thus approached him.

A much more serious matter is that which gave rise to the interview in question. While it is clear, on the one hand, that the agreement with the coal syndicate was quite within the sphere of local legislation and that the interference of the Dominion could not be justified or tolerated, it is almost equally clear that the transaction itself is very questionable, if not wholly indefensible. The Nova Scotia Government poses, we believe, as a Liberal administration, but the legislation in question is surely in direct opposition to sound Liberal principles. It gives to monopoly the authority and sanction of law. It alienates for a period so long as to be a virtual perpetuity, a large part of one of the most valuable and indispensable of the natural resources of the Province. In hands over to a private and even an alien corporation the property and barters away the freedom of action, not only of its own generation, but of two generations to come. However necessary the principle of government which binds successive administrations and legislatures to observe the engagements entered into by their predecessors, this transaction forcibly suggests that the time may be near when a constitutional limit will in some way be set to the power of one such government and legislature to tie the hands of its successors for a century in advance. In the absence of some such limitation, which should have been, one would