

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK :

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### CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPICS—	PAGE.
The Ontario Government Reconstructed.....	115
The Toronto Registry Office.....	115
Compulsory Education.....	115
Principal Grant on School Systems.....	115
The Political Situation.....	115
Sir Charles Tupper on the Fisheries Dispute.....	115
The Jesuits' Estate Bill.....	116
Politics on Provencher.....	116
The Newfoundland Fisheries Dispute.....	116
British Naval Defences.....	116
Free Speech in Chicago.....	116
General Harrison and his Advisers.....	116
The Sam' an Affair.....	116
The Test Election in Paris.....	116
King Milan and the Skuptschina.....	117
Prince Bismarck and Mr. Gladstone.....	117
SERVIA.....	117
WANTED, A PROFESSOR!.....	117
LONDON LETTER.....	118
MONTREAL LETTER.....	118
IN THE CANOE (POEM).....	119
LOUIS LLOYD'S LETTER.....	119
RETARDING INFLUENCES ON CANADIAN LITERATURE.....	120
A CANADIAN ABROAD.....	120
THE FIRST CHRISTIAN BELL ON THE AMERICAN CONTINENT.....	120
SONNET.....	121
NEW POEMS BY AN ENGLISH WRITER (Review).....	121
CORRESPONDENCE—	
Tax Exemption.....	121
THE EUROPEAN OUTLOOK FOR 1889.....	122
TENNYSON AND POLITICS.....	123
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.....	123
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.....	124
OUR LIBRARY TABLE.....	124
LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP.....	125
CHESS.....	127

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

HOWEVER partisans may differ as to the character of the changes announced in the Ontario Government, all will agree in sincerely regretting the cause—the continued ill-health of the Hon. T. B. Pardee, late Commissioner of Crown Lands. It was highly desirable that this important office should be taken in charge by some one who, in addition to the necessary ability and industry, could bring to the work administrative experience and special knowledge of the duties of the position, and Mr. Mowat could hardly have done better than choose Hon. A. S. Hardy, who, in addition to his other qualifications, has had oversight of the Department during the prolonged illness of Mr. Pardee. The selection of Mr. J. M. Gibson, M.A., of Hamilton, for the portfolio of Provincial Secretary, resigned by Mr. Hardy, has met with very general approval. A fitter appointment could hardly have been made. Mr. Gibson graduated with high honours from Toronto University in 1863; was called to the bar in 1867, and was first elected in 1879 to the Legislature, of which he has ever since been a member. In addition to his other qualifications, his intelligent interest in educational questions cannot fail to add to his usefulness as a member of the Government.

THE vigorous protest of the Board of Directors of the Torrens Land Transfer Association against the proposed division of the Toronto Registry Office and appointment of an additional Registrar is of more than local interest. The principle involved is of no little moment, and of wide application. The policy of paying public officers by fees is in itself questionable. If admitted, justice to both officers and the public demands that emoluments should be kept, by the adoption of a sliding scale, or some other mode of adjustment, strictly within the limits of a reasonable maximum and minimum. The case in question is that of an office in which the income from fees has become so large as to be quite out of proportion both to that of other public offices and to the amount of work performed. The natural remedy would seem to be either

a reduction in the fees or the adoption of a different mode of payment. The device of appointing a second unnecessary officer to share the emoluments seems so clumsy and irrational that it is difficult to think of any other ground for its adoption than the more than questionable one that it preserves and increases the Government patronage. To say nothing of the other weighty objections urged by the Board in view of the proposed early adoption of the Torrens System, why should the Government compel the public to pay twice or three times as much as is necessary for a service of that kind? Certainly no business man would think of going to work in that way to correct a similar irregularity in his private affairs.

A SERIES of articles in the *Toronto Mail* have brought to public notice two sets of facts of great public interest. The first is that in the rich and flourishing city of Toronto some thousands of boys and girls are attending no school, and receiving not even the rudiments of education. It even appears that not only are the compulsory clauses of the Education Act utterly disregarded, but that the schools are already overcrowded so that there is no room for these children even should they wish to attend. The question immediately arises, if in this one city so many children are growing up in utter ignorance, how large is the number of such in the Province and in the Dominion? The other set of facts collected from the police, prison, and reformatory records confirms anew, and with startling emphasis, the well established truth with regard to the close connection between illiteracy and crime. We have not space to particularize, but the figures clearly demonstrate, in the words of the *Mail*, "that a large proportion of criminals of every class have received no education whatever, that fully 80 per cent. of the total criminal class have had none, or, at most, a very limited education, and that scarcely 20 per cent. have received a good education." The lesson taught is very clear—and the *Mail* has done well to bring it home to rulers and citizens—that it is a duty owed to themselves, to the waifs, vagrants, and truants in their midst, and to society, to enforce, strictly and stringently, the provisions for compulsory education which are, or ought to be, found in all our School Acts. To our mind, the excuses that are made for the lack of school accommodation in Toronto, based upon the rapid increase of population, do but add to her blameworthiness, as they prove her wealth and prosperity. The city that can build fine residences by the thousand should surely be able to put up a dozen or two additional school houses.

PRINCIPAL GRANT'S active brain seems to have treasured up for the public benefit the results of much careful observation during his recent travels. In his reply to the address of the Kingston School Board he lets fall, amongst others, one practical suggestion which, it strikes us, embodies a truth of great value. As a deduction from the study of the various school systems he became acquainted with while abroad, he concludes that the best feature in our system is the comparatively important place held by the School District and Local Board. "I would advocate," he says, "the gradual increase of the power of Local Boards, both of Common and High Schools." In this direction lies, we have no doubt, the best development and the highest success of our educational methods. The more the tendency of our school system to crystallize into a great, ponderous, inflexible machine can be counteracted, the more local action can be stimulated, local individuality fostered, and the sense of local responsibility strengthened, the better for all concerned. When once the parents in any district are brought to feel that the public school is theirs; that it can be made, as a means of culture both intellectual and moral, just what they through their Board determine it shall be; that the teachers may be men and women of just as high attainments and character as they may choose, and are willing to pay for, the ideal school system will have been established in that locality. Dr. Grant's wise words are worthy of being remembered.

WHETHER the wish, or the dread, or something more nearly related to knowledge than either, is the source of the rumour that Parliament is to be dissolved after the coming session, the public has no means of knowing. It

is far from improbable that the thought may have entered Sir John A. Macdonald's mind, but it seems very unlikely that any final determination has been reached. The chief, if not the only apparent, motive that could prompt him to anticipate the regular time for an appeal to the country, would be, evidently, a desire to check the Unrestricted Reciprocity movement before it had gained too much headway. But whether this agitation has made, or is making, any real headway is a question in regard to which, notwithstanding all that has been said and written, it is very difficult to form an opinion. Reliable data are almost wholly wanting. The most contradictory statements abound in the party newspapers. The significance, whether it be deemed much or little, of such incidents as the election of an advocate of Unrestricted Reciprocity (not, it appears, an Annexationist, as we had been led to believe by repeated newspaper assertions) as Mayor of Windsor, and the triumph of the Opposition candidate in the recent contest in Joliette, can scarcely be more than sufficient to neutralize the confident assurances of the Government press that the movement has been crushed by the alleged proof of its disloyal character and tendencies. The recent assertion in an Ottawa despatch to a Government paper, that the Liberal leaders had decided to remove the Reciprocity plank from their platform, if designed, as seems probable, to challenge the contradiction it called forth, would indicate a degree of anxiety in Government circles quite in keeping with the rumour of a possible dissolution. On the other hand, the obstacles in the path of the Liberal leaders seem sufficient to discourage more determined men. Chief among these obstacles there is, in the first place, the very serious doubt created by the assertions of many influential American politicians whether Unrestricted Reciprocity could be had on any terms short of political union, and the still stronger doubt, amounting almost to a certainty of the negative, whether it is attainable in any other form than that of the Commercial Union which the Liberals themselves seem, by their actions, to admit would be unacceptable to Canadians. The whole situation is complicated and peculiar, and further developments will be awaited with anxiety.

SIR CHARLES TUPPER is reported to have declared, at the banquet to the American Minister, his confident belief that the Treaty of 1888 will form the basis of an early settlement of the Fisheries dispute. A subsequent cablegram states that the Foreign Office shares this hopeful view on the ground of "the ready acceptance of the treaty in question among the foremost spokesmen of both parties in the United States, as a reasonable and honourable settlement." We can but hope that these sanguine anticipations are based on better information than any which is in possession of the Canadian public. It would almost seem as if the Foreign Office must have received a version of the Congressional debates quite different from that published on this side of the Atlantic. It must be confessed that to the cool Canadian observer the signs do not seem so promising. The party which caused the Treaty to be rejected, almost with contempt, by the American Senate, will shortly have control of both Houses and have its representative in the Presidential chair to boot. Neither the tone of the leaders of that party, as reported in Canada, nor that of the Canadian press supporting, and supposed in some measure to represent, the Canadian Government, has, of late, been such as to foreshadow an early and amicable arrangement, such as can result only from mutual concessions in the interest of peace and international goodwill. Petty and vexatious interpretations of the tariff laws are tending to irritation rather than conciliation on both sides of the boundary. Even Mr. Mowat does not hesitate to speak on a public platform of the United States as a hostile country. Nor does the aspect of relations between the United States and the Mother Country seem much more hopeful, seeing that each country is, for reasons well understood, without an accredited Minister at the capital of the other. Nevertheless it is quite possible, partisan politics being what they are, that all these unfavourable indications may count for nothing, and that the incoming Washington Administration may leave the past to bury its dead, and inaugurate a new era of friendly intercourse and common sense statesmanship. All but the Jingo in both countries will hope that the event may prove Sir Charles Tupper a true seer.