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## THE WEEK:

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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CURRENT TOPICS.....	1131
CHILD-SAVING.....	1132
THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS RATIONALISM.....	1133
Professor Walter M. Patton, B.D.	1133
A. J. F.	1134
MONTREAL LETTER.....	1135
A PAGE FROM MY NOTE BOOK (Poems).....	1135
Rev. Frederick George Scott, M.A.	1135
RAMBLINGS ABOUT THE SOURCES OF CANADIAN HISTORY: In the Footsteps of the First Explorers.....	1136
F. Blake Crofton.	1139
GLIMPSES AT THINGS.....	1140
A. D. Stewart.	1140
WAITING (Poem).....	1140
Pastor Felix.	1140
THE BORDER MINSTREL.....	1142
Z.	1142
PARIS LETTER.....	1143
Robert Elliott.	1143
REALIZATION (Poem).....	1143
CORRESPONDENCE.—	
The Patron Movement.....Hon. C. A. Boulton.	1143
TRANSACTIONS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF CANADA.....	1144
John H. Cornyn.	1144
MY NATIVE LAND (Poem).....	1145
ART NOTES.....	1145
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.....	1145
LIBRARY TABLE.....	1146
PERIODICALS.....	1147
LITERARY AND PERSONAL.....	1147
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.....	1148
PUBLIC OPINION.....	1149
SCIENTIFIC AND SANITARY.....	1150
MISCELLANEOUS.....	1150
QUIPS AND CRANES.....	1151

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## CURRENT TOPICS.

Both the Dominion Government and the country are to be congratulated upon the fact that the former has at length taken steps to recover by legal process the sum of which the Treasury was defrauded by means of the falsified pay-lists used by the Montreal bridge contractor, with the connivance of various officials in connection with the building of that bridge. It is true that the Government has not hitherto been very successful in its attempts to recover for the public the large sums lost, or believed to have been lost, through the dishonesty of contractors and other officials, high and low. The injury done to the country by such corrupt and fraudulent transactions is by no means measured by

the actual pecuniary loss to the country, considerable though that has been. In filching the money of the Dominion, the dishonest persons have also done much to take from it its good name. When we review the fraud and corruption which have been brought to light during the last few years, in connection with the Public Works and other departments of the Federal Government, it is impossible to believe that such a state of things as that revealed has been of brief or sudden growth. Even dishonest contractors and officials do not become so bold, or play successfully for such high stakes, all at once. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the discoveries made by any means cover the whole area of corrupt practices under the shadow of the public departments. Sir John Thompson at one time gave great reason to hope that he would prove himself the fearless, impartial and indefatigable purifier of political and departmental life. Many who thus hoped have since had their confidence seriously shaken by events which we need not now recapitulate. It may not yet be too late. The eyes of the country are upon him and his administration. Party loyalty is, in many minds, giving way to a broader patriotism and a truer sense of public duty. He has still an opportunity to win for himself lasting honor and the country's gratitude as the purifier of Canadian politics, and public life.

The dishonourable methods that were resorted to by a large number of Irish patriots of another party to gain admission to Mr. Blake's meeting in New York, coupled with the dastardly attempt to break up that meeting, illustrate the peculiar, if not fatal, weakness of that mercurial and quarrelsome race. It has long since been pretty evident in Ireland that the most potent influence now working to make Home Rule impossible, is that of the dissensions among the Irish themselves. Even the warmest friends of the people and of the movement must admit that the struggle between the Parnellites and the Anti-Parnellites, is going very far towards defeating the very object for which both parties claim to be unselfishly working. If one is disposed to make a still wider deduction, and conclude from such violent faction quarrels that the Irish race are themselves constitutionally unfitted for self-government, there is much in the history of Irish national movements to support such an inference. It is only when one turns to the history of Irishmen abroad that he is reminded that some of the greatest names in the list of

statesmen and rulers in Great Britain, in the colonies, and in other lands, are those of Irishmen. He may even turn to Edward Blake himself and ask what race in Canada or elsewhere can produce a better specimen of a broad-minded, self-poised, incorruptible man, in public or private life. It is undeniable that there are several men of a somewhat similar stamp among the present leaders of the Irish contingent in the British Commons. But great leaders cannot of themselves ensure successful government. The qualities which make successful and prosperous self-ruling nations, whether absolutely independent or constituent parts of larger empires, must exist in the people as well as in the leaders. Whether these qualities are to be found in the rank and file of the people of Ireland, at the present time, remains to be proved. To account historically for any deterioration which may have taken place, would no change the existing fact.

The attention of the English people and their newspapers have been of late so much taken up with the more imposing struggles and changes, past and prospective, going on on the public and parliamentary stages that they seem to have lost sight, in a large measure, of a most important and radical change to be introduced within a very few weeks in every considerable village and rural parish in England. We refer to the Parish Councils Act. It is astonishing to note how quietly the people are awaiting the coming into operation of a measure which, as a member of Parliament from one of the rural constituencies observed in a recent speech, is one of the greatest which have been passed during the century, as regards the influence it is likely to have in coming years on the lives of the English people. The aim of the measure is, as the same speaker observed, to bring self-government home to every cottage door, to make of the government of every village a little commonwealth. The working of municipal self-government is so familiar to all Canadians that they may find it difficult to realize how radical the change must be to the inhabitants of an English village. Hitherto "their rural villages have been governed from the point of view of the mansion, parsonage and farmhouse, rather than from the point of view of the cottage." Henceforth all that is to be changed. Under the new system, the Squire, who may own the whole village, will have but one vote, just as each cottager will have one vote, in the election of the little parlia-