

# THE WEEK.

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## THE WEEK:

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### CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

TOPICS—	PAGE
The Trans-Atlantic Cattle Trade.....	627
The "Farmers' Meeting" a Failure.....	627
The North-West Wheat Crop.....	627
Is a Life Protection Alliance Needed?.....	627
Mr. Webster on the Behring Sea Dispute.....	628
U. S. Tariff Retaliation.....	628
The Nationalization of Railways.....	628
A Railway Manager's Opinions.....	628
Merits of the Strike.....	629
Extravagant Eulogy.....	629
Outrages in Armenia and Crete.....	629
PROBLEMS OF GREATER BRITAIN—II.....	S. E. Dawson. 629
THE APPROACH OF AUTUMN (POEM).....	H. W. C. 630
PARIS LETTER.....	Z. 630
THE COMING REFORM.....	W. D. LeSueur. 630
A MODERN MYSTIC—VIII.....	Nicholas Flood Davin, M.P. 631
REPLY TO PROFESSOR HUXLEY.....	Henry Wentworth Monk. 632
THE RAMBLER.....	633
IN LOVE'S DEAR THRALL—(Concluded).....	G. Mercer Adam. 633
CORRESPONDENCE—	
Frost in Manitoba.....	X. 634
Political Economy.....	T. Galbraith. 634
A MEETING (POEM).....	H. F. 635
"THE BYSTANDER" ON CURRENT EVENTS.....	635
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.....	636
OUR LIBRARY TABLE.....	636
LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP.....	637
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.....	638
CHESS.....	638

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#### PRIZE COMPETITION.

PRIZES of \$50, \$30, \$20 and \$10 will be given for the FOUR BEST SHORT STORIES by Canadian writers only on subjects distinctively Canadian, on the following conditions:—

- 1.—The MS. must not exceed six thousand words and must be TYPEWRITTEN, and on one side of the paper only.
- 2.—It must be delivered at THE WEEK office, 5 Jordan Street, Toronto, not later than 1st November, 1890.
- 3.—Each competing story must bear on the top of the first page a TYPEWRITTEN motto and be accompanied by a sealed envelope marked with the same motto and the words PRIZE STORY COMPETITION, and enclosing the name and address of the writer.
- 4.—All the MSS. sent in to become the property of THE WEEK.
- 5.—THE WEEK will award the prizes and will be judge of the fulfilment of the conditions.

SIR JOHN THOMPSON, Minister of Justice, is reported as having said to an *Empire* correspondent, since his return from England, that no danger to the Canadian cattle trade need be apprehended from the movement inaugurated by Mr. Plimsoll in the British Parliament, looking to the prevention of the transportation of cattle across the Atlantic. The reason given by the Minister is reassuring. It can be shown, he said, that no cruelty whatever is inflicted upon the animals in transit. This is directly to the point, and it is to be sincerely hoped that Sir John's confidence is well grounded. In any case his statement conveys a hint to those engaged in the trade, as to the proper mode of meeting the dreaded legislation. No one supposes Mr. Plimsoll to have any object in view other than that he assigns for his movement, viz., to prevent the infliction of horrible suffering upon the poor animals on ship-board. The right way to meet the movement is, therefore, not to raise an outcry that his proposals, if carried into effect, will destroy a profitable Canadian traffic, but to convince him and his supporters in the House of Commons, either that no cruelty is involved in the business as at present carried on, or that effective measures will be taken to prevent such cruelty in the future. It must be that the science and inventiveness of the day can devise means of carrying living animals across the ocean without subjecting them to intolerable suffering. If such means are not already employed only good can result from making them compulsory. There is, by the way, something very hard

to understand in the statistics quoted by Mr. Plimsoll touching the number of cattle dying on ship-board. We have not the figures at hand, but all will remember that the percentage of deaths of cattle on ship-board as given was astonishingly large, more than half of the whole were, if our memory is not at fault, represented as in some cases dying on the voyage. It seems very unlikely that so careful a legislator would make such statements unless well assured of their truth. But it is still more incredible that the business of transportation, if this or anything like this were its result, should survive for a single reason. The loss would greatly surpass any possible profits. The suggestion of insurance does not explain the matter since the insurance societies would speedily withdraw from so ruinous a business, or at least impose prohibitory rates, were they called on to make good the loss occasioned by the death of anything like such a proportion of the whole. Evidently there is some mistake in the statistics that have been going the rounds of the newspapers.

It is difficult to determine just what amount of significance belongs to the failure of the well-advertised "Farmers' Meeting" at Niagara the other day. That it was a signal failure so far as the object of the promoters is concerned is, we believe, beyond question. The most favourable report that we have seen did not claim that the farmers of the Peninsula were present in any considerable number. The greater part of the respectable audience was, it appears, composed of women, and the men present were in the main tourists and sojourners from both sides of the river, but very few of them Canadian farmers. Why did the farmers fail to attend? The orators were men of ability and influence, whose presence on almost any platform in city or country would suffice to draw a full house. Was the time chosen for the meeting unfavourable and the farmers too busy with their harvesting to attend? Perhaps so. And yet one would have supposed that the importance of the question to be discussed and its unquestionably close relation to their own special interests would have induced them to make some sacrifice. Was the place unpropitious? We have heard it said that farmers cannot be drawn in any large numbers to meetings in such places of popular resort, especially when an admission fee is involved, as well as loss of time. Yet had they felt intensely interested in the subject to be discussed, minor considerations of that kind would hardly have kept them away. The fact is, we are obliged to conclude, that they did not come because they did not care to come. Whether this was the result of thoughtless indifference to the really important questions treated of; whether their minds are so firmly made up on the one side or the other that they do not care for further argument; or whether they, as a class, are so loyal to the party in power, and have so fully adopted the views of its organs that they are beyond the reach of argument or criticism, we cannot undertake to decide. We should be sorry to accept either hypothesis. We should have been glad to hear that a very large number of representative farmers were in attendance, listening with intense and intelligent attention to the arguments presented, like men who were determined to hear both sides and form their opinions advisedly. Probably one lesson for politicians in the affair is that those, no matter what their standing, who would be heard by the farmers, must go to the farmers, rather than expect the latter to come to the place of their choice and convenience. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the Farmers' Meeting failed because of the absence of the farmers, and we are still without a clue to the real feeling of the farmers of Ontario on the great issue of the coming contest.

THE wheat crop in Manitoba and the North-West is becoming year by year a matter of increasing importance to the whole Dominion. Amidst the many conflicting reports which were current during the last two or three weeks it was difficult to determine with any degree of certainty whether the year was to be set down amongst the failures or the successes. It is gratifying to be now informed, on the authority of the Minister of Agriculture, that very complete reports have been received by his Department from all points, and that there is no longer

room to doubt that "this year's grain crop, most of which is now harvested, is a magnificent one, the yield heavy and the quality excellent." This is indeed good news, and, if confirmed by the crucial tests of threshing and marketing, will not only bring needed prosperity to the farmers and other dwellers on the prairies, but will help to confirm the reputation of the country for wheat-growing to an extent that must tell powerfully upon next season's immigration.

WE have received a communication in regard to the great loss of life by various kinds of so-called accidents, much of which is, the writer thinks, due to various forms of public neglect, and much to the economic greed of the great railway corporations. Our correspondent urges that the time has come for some organized action by the community and suggests the formation of a Life-Protection League, or some such movement, with a view to the lessening of the number of preventible fatalities. We have kept no record and have seen no statistics bearing upon the point, but we have an impression that the number of casualties reported from various parts of the Dominion during the last few months has been unusually large. To what extent these have resulted from preventible causes, such as the neglect of corporations, the lack of necessary precautions and safeguards, and so forth, we have no means of judging. We have repeatedly called attention to the needless and cruel sacrifice of human life on railways, owing to the absence of proper filling of frogs, and to the murderous practices of hand-coupling, running back and forth on the unrailed tops of freight cars, etc. It is a serious question, too, in our opinion, whether the stove and the oil lamp, which add so unspeakably to the horrors of railway disasters, should be any longer tolerated as means of warming and lighting travelling coaches. No doubt a vigorous association might, by proper investigation and agitation, do much to hasten reform in such matters, and to secure, when necessary, legislative action. Our correspondent suggests that the opinions of thoughtful persons be invited in regard to the desirability and feasibility of some such action as he proposes. We should be glad to publish brief communications from any who may have given attention to this important matter and can give information or practical suggestions.

THE New York *Herald* published the other day a lengthy account by its Paris correspondent of a conversation over the Behring Sea dispute with Mr. Sidney Webster, whose professional advice was, it is stated, asked in 1869-70, more than twenty years ago, on the very question now under discussion. The views of Mr. Webster, as here put forth, are curious. We pass by the preliminary assertion that "outsiders acquiesced in the exercise by Russia and the United States of the claim to exclude poachers from killing seals in Behring Sea," down to "1883 or thereabouts,"—a statement which Lord Salisbury distinctly contradicts in the diplomatic correspondence. Mr. Webster proceeds to say with special emphasis "that none of the Behring Sea has either by Russia or the United States ever been closed to innocent navigation. Whalers have always navigated it on the way to and through Behring Straits. The United States never closed our part of the sea to British or any other vessels sailing on lawful business. The entire navy of England may go there." This is as if a highwayman should claim acquittal on the ground that he molested only persons pursuing a certain course, or engaged in a certain occupation. The sufficient reply is that Great Britain and Canada have made no complaint that whalers or merchant ships have been interfered with in Behring's Sea. Is it possible that an educated gentleman like Mr. Webster is not conscious of the glaring begging of the question involved in the expression "innocent" and "on lawful business" in his argument? It is obvious to the simplest comprehension that if an Act of Congress or a Presidential proclamation can make the taking of fur seals on the high seas unlawful to-day, it can make whaling, or carrying merchantize equally unlawful to-morrow. Proceeding further we find one of the peculiar difficulties met with in carrying on negotiations with the Government of the United States strikingly illustrated in the following question and answer: