

# THE WEEK.

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## The Week.

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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.

A VERY excellent movement has lately been set on foot by the Lundy's Lane Historical Society, under the presidency of Rev. Canon Bull, M.A., in offering prizes for the best essays on Canadian history, to be written by pupils of the High Schools in the county of Welland, and dealing with the War of 1812 as the first epoch they may take up. That such a movement will arouse a widespread interest in the history of their country among the young people goes without saying, but it will do more, for it will awaken anew the patriotic memories of their elders, so many of whom were connected in their youth with the very events it is sought thus to commemorate. Thus an enthusiasm will be awakened that must undoubtedly bear valuable fruit to the country. We do not wish to encourage the multiplication of text books for our schools, but there is a suggestion in the following note from an esteemed correspondent that may be worthy of consideration: "The want of a good school history of Canada is becoming more and more pressing. Something after the manner of the Goldsmith or Markham of our own school days is much needed. We have enough of a mere record of 'facts,' bare and hard. What is wanted is not a mere skeleton, but a lively presentment of the times and events with which the historian deals. Politics should be entirely eschewed, and events more vividly painted. The value of historical study to the youth is the cultivation it gives to his nobler emotions, his finer feelings, his worship of virtue and his love of country. A bare record of facts and dates can certainly not accomplish this much."

THE very natural wish of the Canadian public to hear from Sir John A. Macdonald in reference to the failure of the Fisheries Treaty and the threatened retaliation has been, to some extent, gratified. In his speech at the opening of the Kingston Exhibition the Premier referred to the subject, though, of course, in a cautious and guarded manner. If the report of an interview published by Mr. Blakely Hall in the New York Sun is reliable, it affords a fuller exposition of the views and purposes of the Leader of the Government. The general purport of both statements is that the Canadian policy is to be one of dignified delay. The present fishing season having closed, there can be no occasion or pretext for President Cleveland or his successor to take hostile action for eight months to come. Within that period the Presidential contest will have been decided,

and the Government of the United States will have entered on another brief period of comparatively smooth sailing. The circumstances, so far as this aspect of the quarrel is concerned, certainly commend Sir John's favourite Fabian policy. It is difficult to see how the Government could, consistently with Canadian self-respect, do otherwise than calmly await American action. It is extremely improbable that either President Cleveland or his Republican successor, should such an one be elected, would be guilty of the discourtesy of putting in force the harsh measures contemplated in the Retaliation Act without giving due and formal notice of the specific grounds of action, and thus affording the Canadian Government a fresh opportunity of re-considering the situation and re-stating its case. It is hard to believe, however, that Sir John is correctly represented as saying that there can be no further discussion concerning the Treaty of 1818. To shut off discussion as to the meaning of that Treaty, and the extent to which its interpretation should be affected by the changed circumstances wrought by railroads, international courtesies, and the changed spirit of the age, would be to render reconciliation and a future good understanding hopeless.

WITH regard to the other half of the difficulty, Sir John A. Macdonald's position is neither so clear, nor so satisfactory. He is represented as saying that "of late Canada had not discriminated against American vessels." It may be assumed that the words "of late," seeming to imply that such discrimination had been practised at an earlier period, were not so used by him as to convey that impression. The reporter proceeds to give, as from Sir John, the staple defence of the Government's course in respect to the tolls as follows: "According to his view they have a perfect right to go ahead if they choose; that is to say, they can, by going to Montreal, obtain the rebate just the same as Canadian vessels, and a Canadian vessel going elsewhere, say to Oswego or Kingston, does not get the rebate any more than the American. Canada can hardly be held responsible for the disinclination of American trade to drift toward the principal city in the Dominion. Canada is the smaller and the United States the bigger brother in the contract, and until the big one acts differently the young one will continue to do as before, but, at the same time, Canada resents the imputation that there has been any unfair treatment toward American vessels." The language, for which the reporter is no doubt responsible, is not lucid, but the meaning is, so far, unmistakable. Those Canadians who would have their country observe the spirit as well as the letter of a treaty obligation will regret to see the Premier offering a defence which is little better than a quibble. All parties to the Treaty of Washington must have known perfectly well that, as a rule, American vessels passing through the canal would be bound for American, not Canadian ports. Can it be supposed that the American Commissioners would have thought of accepting this article of the treaty in question, as it now stands, if they had for a moment supposed it would leave the Canadian Government free to discriminate against all the ports on their side the water, and in favour of those on the Canadian side. That such discrimination has been made in favour of but the one Canadian port and against others, does not in the least affect the principle involved. It is hard to reconcile the foregoing statement, that Canada will continue to do as she is doing, with the paragraph following, in which Sir John is represented as saying that Toronto and Kingston are interested in the abolition of all canal tolls, and that "if this advantage is gained, American vessels will share equally with those of Canada in the boon." The easier, and it may be hoped the correct, interpretation is that the abolition of all tolls is foreshadowed as the policy of the Government. This will, of course, settle this difficulty. Sir John is further represented as saying that, though the Commissioners of the Erie Canal have on several occasions "passed resolutions and made special arrangements for through traffic with the distinct and plainly expressed object of placing Canadian shipping at a disadvantage," the Canadian Government have not made it a cause of international trouble. To this the natural rejoinder is that, perhaps, in the defence of Canadian interests with which the Government is intrusted, it should have at least earnestly remonstrated, but that, in any case, one wrong can never justify another.

PREMIER MERCIER and his Nationalist supporters in Quebec are evidently preparing for a vigorous and determined resistance to the exercise of the veto by the Dominion Government in the matter of the Magistrates'