

THE WEEK.

Fourth Year.
Vol. IV., No. 38.

Toronto, Thursday, August 18th, 1887.

\$3.00 per Annum.
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

	PAGE
BEYOND THE RANGE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS	H. W. Cross, 607
THE IRISH PROBLEM.....	608
LAW AND RELIGION IN THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC.....	N. M., 608
TOGETHER (Poem).....	Edgar L. Wakeman, 609
MONTREAL LETTER.....	609
THE PROGRESS OF SCIENCE FROM 1836 TO 1886.....	610
SCENES IN HAWAII.....	Minnie Forsyth Grant, 611
TOPICS—	
The Oka Indian Difficulty	612
The Habitant and Commercial Union.....	612
Mr. Laurier and Senate Reform	612
English and American Journalism	613
Mr. Walter Besant's Active Philanthropy.....	613
The American National Opera Company	613
An Independent Opinion.....	613
COLLECTION OF SCOTTISH SONGS.....	William Wye Smith, 614
SOME NEW NOVELS.....	614
ROBERT BROWNING	615
ART NOTES.....	616
THE STAGE.....	616
CURRENT COMMENT.....	617
LITERARY GOSSIP.....	617
OUR LIBRARY TABLE.....	617

"BEYOND THE RANGE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS."

THE constant use made of this expression illustrates the advantages certain tribes of savages derive from the practice of "taboo," and it may be cited as a further evidence of the immutability of human institutions; bearing witness, as it does, to the fact that an interesting savage custom is not without its useful counterpart in the most enlightened communities. The necessity of confining political discussion to subjects that are ripening for legislative treatment has obvious advantages. In Great Britain the press, in its loyalty to the hardly-worked public men of that country, generally follows their lead; and the rule prevails of avoiding enlarged discussion of subjects that have not been adopted by some one holding a responsible position in the State. In America such loyalty is less practised, and perhaps its necessity is less felt. At the same time, the phrase, "beyond the range of practical politics," is equally potent on both sides of the Atlantic. It is useful in relieving those upon whom the task of carrying on the affairs of Government devolves from being called upon to consider crude proposals, and also in limiting the efforts of the press to educational work of immediate necessity.

We have before us a remarkable instance of the dominating influence of the phrase. There is a proposition that commends itself to the judgment of most of us, but because it is "beyond the range of practical politics" no politician's voice will proclaim, and no political writer's pen will trace it. As a result of this respect for a necessary safeguard, we have the spectacle of high-minded men advocating enlarged trade relations with the United States who cannot really be desirous of seeing the disappearance of our rapidly vanishing forests hastened; and to whom the possibility of the growers of barley receiving a part of the duty charged thereon by that country cannot commend itself as an adequate reason for revolutionising the manufactures and commerce of Canada. They may lead the *ignis fatuus*, but it is difficult to imagine them being led by it. In plain language, they believe that the union of the English speaking race for offensive and defensive purposes would be a boon to civilisation of so positive and far-reaching a kind that any sacrifice on Canada's part would be a small matter in comparison therewith. But because this part of the case is "beyond the range of practical politics," it remains unnamed; and we are puzzled at finding trifling reasons urged in favour of a momentous change. The advantage of the largest union of the race is apparent, but the hope of those who dream of so brilliant a combination rests upon a basis void of substance. The only conditions that would render such a consummation a possible one for the people of the United States to consider have not arisen. They are not menaced from without, and are at present quite satisfied with their municipal vastness. As yet they have hardly risen to the sense of obligation to the less civilised races. Their foreign commerce is immature, and their connexions with the "ends of the earth" are so limited that to expect that sense of obligation to exist in

sufficient force to have political weight would be to look for a spiritual manifestation.

Nor are the conditions for the favourable consideration of such enlarged relations much more advanced in England. The smaller problem of Imperial Federation presents grave difficulties, although there is a sentimental unanimity of opinion on the subject felt by our fellow citizens in all quarters of the globe. The discussion of this question has removed the taboo from a wide range of subjects. There are men whose words carry weight wherever they are read who deny the advisability of any statutory Federation, even could one be devised that would be acceptable to all concerned. Professor Freeman in his "Greater Greece and Greater Britain" contrasts unfavourably to us the expansion of that ancient people. He would like to see all political ties loosened, and our scattered colonies held together by no stronger bond than that of affection, as were theirs. The very policy that Mr. Freeman admires led more than all others to the political extinction of that gifted race. The Asian colonies fell before Athens' achieved greatness. Those in Italy and Sicily fell to Carthage and Rome before the latter's conquest of Greece proper. The idea of unity presented itself to the national consciousness at an early period in its recorded history. Panhellenism is a very ancient expression, but unworthy and short sighted jealousies ever kept it a mere idea. The Amphictyonic league never embraced all the Greek States, nor was the fealty of those composing it ever strong. The Synedriion of Corinth was a less weak attempt to knit the scattered people but it failed to hold the measure of success it did obtain. It would be idle to speculate as to what the probable history of the world would have been had the union of a part of the Hellenes imposed by the sword of Macedonia been a willing one. Had it grown some centuries earlier, and won the loyalty of the whole race, we might have been spared the long blanks of the dark ages. The fact stares us in the face that the race which has given to history her brightest records of heroism and genius was absorbed in fragments by those whose highest praise it is that they learned to imitate the civilisation of the people they conquered. If history viewed broadly has any decided policy to teach us in these latter days it is surely the value of unity—the value of sinking minor differences and of standing shoulder to shoulder in presence of a common enemy. By making the glory of each section of the race the common possession of the whole, the higher ideals may be maintained. In this way the ever present tendencies to reaction may be met, and the lapses from light to darkness prevented. Expansion such as ours during the last century must have in it varied elements of weakness. Intelligent co-operation may safely guide us to the light. Expansion with disunion can only invite the gathering together of the powers that make for darkness.

Other nations are learning the lessons of history. Without the past to guide them who can believe that the German States would submit to the rule of Prussia; and dedicate so large a part of their adult male population to military service. The principle of local autonomy is as dear to Italians almost as it is to Germans. The glory and the fate of Rome, of Venice, of Florence and of other States, are not forgotten; but Italy united "from the snows of the Alps to the flames of *Ætna*" is preferred. Pan Slavism too, that danger to Eastern Europe, is the strength of Russia; nor is the apparently illiberal policy of that State, in striving to make the heterogenous peoples of her vast Empire one in language, without historical justification. The ruling and thinking classes have good grounds for believing that their national permanence depends upon the success of this policy.

Nothing but the strangest infatuation could excuse the belief that the Anglo Saxon race is above or outside of the influences that have hitherto moulded the destinies of humanity. The discussion regarding increased trade relations with the United States has opened up wide questions of a political nature, reaching beyond that of Annexation. It is not surprising that some of those advocating change should be influenced by these larger considerations. The strange thing is that the fear of getting "beyond the range of practical politics" should lead men to advocate a change which the arguments advanced utterly fail to justify.

It may some day become an accepted doctrine that an injury done to the least of the peoples of the earth is an injury to all. That as the strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link, so the greatest