

# THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.  
Vol. II., No. 40.

Toronto, Thursday, September 3rd, 1885.

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

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE  
Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

THE new Minister of the Interior in entering on his office proclaims, and no doubt with perfect sincerity, his intention of devoting his best attention and faculties to the administration of the North-West. He even intends to pay a visit to that region, to see it with his own eyes, and to make enquiries on the spot with the aid of local intelligence and experience. This is most creditable to him and very gratifying to those whose affairs he is going to manage. But what the North-West specially wants is not administration: it is more self-government. With more of self-government, and more liberty to develop its resources in its own way, it would have attained a larger measure of prosperity, and would have had no Half-breed rebellion. Mr. White, let him do what he will, is a member of a distant Government, and in his bureau at Ottawa he must be beholden to channels of information the trustworthiness of which he has no means of surely ascertaining. He is a member of a Party Government, the basis and controlling force of which are probably in Quebec, and certainly not in the North-West; while the small representation which the North-West nominally enjoys at Ottawa has, with perhaps the exception of one man, been captured by the usual allurements, and has practically gone into the pocket of a Premier who has never set foot in the North-West, and whose paramount aim is, and must be, to keep his party in power. In the use of patronage the claims of partisans must be satisfied, and they must be preferred to the interest of the community: if Mr. White has formed good resolutions on that subject, as we willingly believe, he will find that they will gradually ooze away. The very first man appointed to the Lieutenant-Governorship was a politician whose subsequent adventures clearly enough show how he might have been expected to behave in the administration of a distant trust, and what sort of influence he would have been likely to exercise on the character of a young community. He has been followed by a train of men appointed on similar grounds, under the pressure of the same party necessity, and with as little regard for the interests of the settlers in a remote territory. Both the parties in this respect have sinned alike, and both may plead the same excuse. Partisans are importunate, and at Ottawa North-West opinion is not felt. It has also plainly appeared

in the case of the late rebellion that a local office-holder suspected of having brought on by his misconduct the greatest disasters, if he belongs to the party in power, is safe under the party screen, so that practically official responsibility does not exist. An administrator who has had a glimpse of the country and the people over which he is to rule is better than one who has not even had a glimpse. But daily familiarity with the affairs to be managed is better still if there is brain for management, as we have no reason to doubt that there is among the enterprising and vigorous population of the North-West. That the new Minister means to be a new broom we may be sure. If he does not make everybody in the North-West contented and happy the failure will be due not to his want of good-will, but to his remoteness and to the untoward influences of which Ottawa is the seat.

AFTER a long and tedious investigation the Commission appointed to enquire into the charges made against Warden Massie's management of the Central Prison has got through all the direct evidence; only some enquiries into prison discipline elsewhere remain to be made for purposes of comparison. The general impression made on unbiassed minds is that the case for the prosecution was extremely weak; the principal charge, that of religious favouritism on the Protestant side and religious hostility on the Catholic, failed altogether, as the leading counsel against the warden admitted. Some bad meat was proved to have been served out to the prisoners; but it was withdrawn from use when its deficiencies became known to the warden. Most of the witnesses against the warden were convicts and ex-prisoners, some of whom were men of exceptionally bad character, and guards who had been drawn into the intrigue set on foot to procure his dismissal. That the object was to supplant Mr. Massie by a Roman Catholic warden is generally believed, and the belief rests upon facts which it would be difficult to explain away. He was charged with showing hostility to Roman Catholic prisoners as well as the priest. The priest practically admits that he insisted on subverting the prison discipline by setting up the rules of his Church against the authority of the warden and the law of the land. It seems to have been made an imperative condition that one of the commissioners should be a Roman Catholic. In the contention between the warden and the priest we may be sure the latter would have the approval and support of the Archbishop; and Mr. Massie, who, resolved to be guided by what he believed to be the dictates of duty, refused to release a prisoner from close confinement on the demand of the priest, was at once marked as a victim. A discreditable system of espionage was employed in the hope of making out a case for dismissal. Under guards thus corrupted, a serious relaxation of discipline must have taken place, and the necessity of restoring the full authority of the warden has been made apparent. This can only be done by relieving from duty the officials who allowed themselves to be seduced from their fidelity to the chief officer and used the opportunities of their position to attempt his ruin. It is quite clear that the warden and the rebellious guards cannot work together in that bond of mutual confidence which is a necessity of their relative positions. The management of the prison may not have been perfect, and the inquiry may have disclosed some defects of discipline which require to be reformed; but that the warden was a monster of cruelty, or that he did intentional wrong in matters of serious import, has been clearly disproved.

THE steady progress in Montreal of a disease so completely controllable as small-pox is not without its special cause. In vain do employers of labour insist that their workpeople shall be vaccinated if the nuns succeed in persuading that part of the family which remains at home to resist the use of the preventive. And this appears to be what is happening, with the result that the disease, having established a number of centres, is spreading in every direction. From the same cause small-pox was, on a former visitation, more fatal in Connaught than in the rest of Ireland, and six times as destructive as in London. The excessive mortality resulting from the cholera in Spain is due to a defiant neglect of sanitary precautions, which the Church, if it exerted its power, could mitigate or prevent. When the small-pox broke out in Montreal, the