

# THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Vol. I., No. 51.

Toronto, Thursday, November 20th, 1884.

\$3.00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 7 cents.

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.

Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

TERMS:—One year, \$3.00; eight months, \$2.00; four months, \$1.00. Subscriptions payable in advance.

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## TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

In England compromise prevails, and the Franchise Bill is to pass. No one who considered the elements of the situation can have much doubted that such would be the result. It was evident that all the moderate Liberals in and out of the Cabinet, a large body of moderate Conservatives, the Prime Minister, and the Court were labouring together to avert the impending conflict. Their united efforts were pretty sure to prevail. It seemed for a moment as if the success of the Conservatives in the Warwickshire election was likely to turn their heads and lure them to their ruin; but the more cool-headed of their leaders discerned the accidental and illusory character of the victory. The compromise is, of course, denounced as a surrender by all those who were thirsting for the battle: by Lord Salisbury and Lord Randolph Churchill on one side, as well as by Mr. Chamberlain and the Radicals on the other. As the Redistribution Bill must be framed by Liberal hands, it is scarcely possible to doubt that the real surrender is on the part of the Lords. Such manifestly is the opinion of Lord Salisbury. It is difficult to see how the Marquis can retain his leadership after being thus a second time thrown over by his followers upon a question of first-rate importance. The country is spared a dissolution, which under the present circumstances would have been fraught with danger; for there would in all probability have been some Conservative gain, parties would have been made more nearly equal in strength, and the Parnellites, who would, most likely, also have gained seats, would thus have been enabled to hold the balance, whereas the Government party, when united, is at present strong enough to vote them down. The Lords are wise in declining the battle; but they were unwise in challenging it, and the discussion which their institution and its record have undergone will probably be found to have inflicted a mortal wound.

SIR JOHN MACDONALD'S fortieth birthday of public life is to be a cause of party rejoicing in Montreal, and of party reorganization in Toronto, where a convention of the faithful is to be held. On both occasions, it will be hard if some opportunity of showing gratitude for expected favours cannot be found. The leading spirits by whom political demonstrations are promoted generally expect to make good their claims on the recipients of the testimonials of party esteem; and it frequently happens that the men who speak loudest of the glory of the chief are thinking most intently about how the trumpeter can best exact the largest reward for his services. At Montreal Sir John will be at home; by the Bleus he will be cordially welcomed as becomes their most trusted ally in Ontario. It was long his boast that he was Cartier's double; but in an evil day the political twin-brothers quarrelled over a bauble. Cartier, the rebel of 1837, on whose head a price was set, and on whose track the political bloodhounds were

put, lived to sigh for the dubious honour of knighthood; and for once Sir John was found to have stumbled in taking the measure of his man. When knighthoods were being tossed about, none went in Cartier's direction. Sir George, to the surprise of most people, resented the omission as a slight, and a friendship which had been more than political, and had borne the force of every other strain put upon it, snapped with the weight of resentment which Cartier experienced at a neglect which could have been only fanciful. Sir John, if he had suspected what Cartier longed for, would probably have placed a dozen knightly recommendations at his disposal rather than have lost so valuable a thing as his friendship. As soon as he could in decency do it, Sir John atoned for the omission by securing for his estranged friend the higher prize of a baronetcy, in place of the coveted knighthood. But the seam in the broken glass could never wholly be effaced; and Sir George did not live long to toy with the new bauble which was balm to a heart that even Sir John did not suspect of coveting such a treasure. But Cartier dead, his old friends are still Sir John's fast political allies; and from them he may rely on a reception which expectants are always willing to accord to a man in the plenitude of power. In Toronto another scene will open on his vision. Luckily for him the U. E. Club, which did its best to shipwreck the party on which Sir John relies, is no longer in a position to do mischief. A political convention as an instrument of celebrating a political birthday is something new under the sun. The experiment is not without its dangers. A party demonstration at best, the convention makes it doubly so, and repels neutrals, much more all who profess a politic faith antagonistic to the chieftain whom it is proposed to honour. Is Conservatism effete, or what makes it necessary to form a new political association on the fortieth year of Sir John Macdonald's entrance into public life?

SOME allowance is usually made for after-dinner speeches, and a speech at a Lord Mayor's banquet should be allowed the usual indulgence. When Sir John Macdonald, by an oratorical phrase, transformed the colonies of Great Britain into so many "auxiliary kingdoms," he took the liberty of making history by anticipation in the most facile and the least reliable of ways. These suppositious kingdoms he wishes to see forming so many parts of an Imperial Federation of some undefined pattern. All Sir John ventures to outline is "some sort of an union" as shadowy as any castle in the air which imagination ever created. In the "auxiliary kingdoms" we get a glimpse of definite form, the child of creative imagination, which has not even probability to rest upon. In North America, at all events, the colonies are not so shaping themselves as to promise the birth of new kingdoms. The materials of a monarchy do not exist, and are not being developed. The elements of society are overpoweringly democratic. By no possibility can a nominated Senate permanently survive, and an aristocracy of knights, if it had any leavening power, could not leaven the whole masses and give a monarchical tinge to what is democratic. To threaten the possible enemies of England with the sword of non-existing kingdoms of which the future gives no promise of being, even if regarded as an attempt to terrorize by the use of phantoms, would not, in this unghostly age, be likely to be very effective. But this is one of the occasions on which a loose expression unwarrantably used must not be supposed to imply intentional offence. Any serious attempt to establish new kingdoms in North America would cause an inevitable appeal to the Monroe doctrine to be made: a doctrine which is quiescent only because there is nothing to provoke it into activity. Canada, besides having no marked monarchical tendencies, is not in the least inclined towards Imperial Federation, with all that such an union implies, especially a federation that would drag her into England's wars in all parts of the globe. That thousands of Canadians would readily fly to England's succour if she were in serious peril is unquestionable; but this is a very different thing from the country being placed in the position in which in any English war, in any part of the world, her people might of right be called upon to bear part. The surrender of autonomy, implied in the necessity of parting with the right to make her own tariff, is an abnegation to which Canada is not likely ever to consent. Here lies the initial difficulty in the way of every scheme of