

THE WEEK.

Vol. XI.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, APRIL 20th, 1894.

No. 21.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics,
Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. Subscriptions payable in advance.

Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 12s. stg.; half-year, 6s. stg. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the publisher.

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Address—CARTER TROOP, Manager,
5 Jordan Street, Toronto.

C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

The budget brought down by Sir William Harcourt in the British House of Commons on Monday will no doubt give rise to some vigorous debates. It is no easy matter, even in a wealthy country like Great Britain, to raise twenty-five millions of dollars of additional taxation without pressing heavily on some classes of the population. British citizens do not take more kindly to heavy taxation than the people of other countries, and under the direct system which is their cherished policy, the people know more exactly what their taxes are than those of most other countries. From the few particulars given in the not very favourable cablegrams which have been transmitted, the burden is, it appears, to be laid mainly upon the well-to-do and wealthy classes. It seems reasonable that if taxes must be collected they should be drawn, within reasonable limits, from those

best able to pay them. It cannot be said, however, that this has always been the practice of Governments. At any rate, it is doubtful whether the policy of seeking to lay the heaviest burden upon the rich was ever more in favour than it is at the present day, as witness the income tax bill now before the American Congress and the British budget in question. Sir William Harcourt proposes to lay the burden mainly upon three classes, viz: heirs of estates, those in receipt of large incomes, and those who indulge in what may be called luxuries of a certain kind. Each of these proposals involves what may be termed class legislation, and is open to criticism accordingly. Yet, it will be difficult, probably, for the Opposition to suggest any less objectionable methods of raising the immense sum required.

Is there any other great national assembly in the world, save the United States Senate, in which it would be thought seemly for a legislator to advocate openly on the floor of the House, and in the hearing of the nation, hostile tariff legislation against a neighboring and friendly people, with the avowed purpose of forcing them into annexation? Yet that is just what Senator Hale did the other day at Washington, if the newspaper reports may be relied on. Canadians are not, of course, any longer surprised at such displays of statesmanlike courtesy at Washington, but they may well be surprised that any Senator, with sufficient intelligence to command the attention of the Senate, is so much in the dark in regard to a matter of current history as to believe in the existence of an annexation sentiment in Canada, at the present moment, to be fostered by such measures, or as to be seemingly unaware that, so far as the stimulation of such a sentiment is concerned, even the McKinley Bill has been a conspicuous failure. If we were of the same opinion as many of the advocates of protectionism in Canada, who have so little confidence, seemingly, in the loyalty of their fellow-Canadians as to dread the effect of friendly and intimate commercial relations with their neighbors, we should commend to Senator Hale and those who share his views, to study the old fable of the sun and the wind, in their strife to see which could the sooner dispossess the traveller of his coat. But having too much confidence in the steadfast purpose of Canadians to carve out a future for themselves, in spite of either friendly blandish-

ments or unfriendly pressure, we would simply remind the astute Senator that fair mutual trade means mutual profit and at the same time promotes mutual confidence and friendship.

The work and aims of the National Council of the Women of Canada, happily described by Lady Aberdeen, at its first annual meeting last week, as "mothering" and "home-making," must commend themselves to all who love their fellow-beings and their country, whether men or women. Passing by other lofty and Christian sentiments in Lady Aberdeen's address, the following strikes us as being specially worthy of attention: "Day by day, strangers, young men and young women, are coming into this country and the home-maker has a responsibility to these." "The characters of these young men and women may be moulded through the influence of the homes that open their doors in welcome to them." Unhappily the homes that open their doors in welcome to the young man or the young woman who fails to bring influential introductions, are few and far between. Probably few who have never been placed in such a position can fully realize the loneliness of many a worthy young person of good character, who finds himself, or herself, through the force of circumstances, a stranger in a great city. How often such may live thus for years without having ever had a welcome to a real home. As a rule the more modest and unassuming the individual, the greater the likelihood of being shut up in the utter loneliness of the boarding-house and the city streets, and every one who has tried it knows that there is no loneliness like that of the crowded street or even the Christian church, in the heart of the strange city. Every father and mother can understand the feelings which prompt the heads of city homes to guard carefully the doors of the home sanctuary against the entrance of the unworthy. But few, perhaps, realize sufficiently their duty to the "stranger that is within their gates," or stop to consider the fierceness of the temptations from which many such might be saved by occasional admission within the sacred precincts of a true home.

The main argument on which the Minister of Education relied, in his speech in opposition to the use of the ballot in all elections of school trustees, was that the supporters of Separate Schools do not want the ballot, and that it should not be forced