

THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Vol. I., No. 40.

Toronto, Thursday, September 4th, 1884.

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

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The Week,

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.

THE members of the British Association have been making good use of their time since they arrived in the country, and their future plans afford a guarantee for their continued activity during their stay. Before they take their departure, there will be no readily accessible part of Canada which they will not have visited. Some have traversed the Maritime Provinces, and a large number of them will come into visual contact with the Rocky Mountains: to reach the mountains they will traverse an immense space of prairie country, the capabilities of which will be to some of them an object of careful investigation. How well individuals among them have already taken stock of Canada's resources is shown by the able paper of Professor Sheldon on British and Canadian Agriculture. The Eastern and Maritime Provinces, he foresees, will become stock-raising and dairying countries, sooner or later, a change which will be for the best. As a wheat-growing country, he reminds us, Canada may before long find herself seriously handicapped by the cheap labour of India. But if Canada is to suffer seriously, what will be the fate of English farming? Seven bad English harvests, in the past, would barely be compensated by seven good harvests in the future, of which there is no guarantee. The North-West, which Professor Seldon regards as the future granary of Canada, has abundance of fertile soil, which can be purchased at the cost of a year's rent of an average English farm. The cheaper the carriage of grain can be made, the more favourable will be the conditions of the competition by which our grain growers may be pressed. This is a subject which a large number of our distinguished visitors will, in a short time, qualify themselves to discuss with Professor Seldon; and it is well that he, as a specialist, has led the way and laid down some of the conditions of the problems which the settlement of the North-West will aid in working out.

CANADA is to take a part, however humble it may be, in the relief of Gordon. The British Government has called for the service of six hundred French Canadian boatmen to battle with the waters of the Nile. Lord Wolesley has had experience of these men, and the present requisition may safely be traced to his reminiscences of the Red River Rebellion. The French Canadian *voyageurs* early learnt the whole art of the canoe-man's craft from their red brethren, with whom they were always ready to

fraternize. They have more endurance than the Indians, to whom everything like constant labour is irksome and insupportable. From the first the French Canadians showed great aptitude for encountering the perils of a wandering life, and after ten generations of experience they are unsurpassed as boatmen. To induce them to answer this call, it is not necessary that they should be fired by military ardour, and they will go to Egypt with much the same feelings as they would enter on a journey to Hudson's Bay. The French Canadians almost to a man sympathized with Riel in his attempt to close the Red River against the stream of Anglo-Saxon population, which the displacing of the government of the Company was sure to induce; but that feeling would not have prevented General Wolesley getting the services of all the French Canadian boatmen he required. The appeal to which they will now respond does not touch any chord of their patriotic sympathies. The excitement of the venture, coupled with remunerative employment, will furnish the all-sufficient motive. In these French Canadians the British Government will get the best men for the service which it would be possible to obtain. And they will go in charge of a Canadian who has the advantage of such experience as the Red River expedition could afford. If the appeal had been for soldiers, a large number of men, chiefly of British descent, would have responded. The attraction which the excitement of the battle-field may, under some circumstances, have for Canadians, is proved by the large numbers—usually put at seventy-five thousand—who, during the American Civil War, rushed into the armies of the North and the South. But then the battle raged on our borders, and the contagion of the feeling which animated the two parties extended across the frontier. Sympathy for the north was strongest, but the phalanx of southern refugees, with Jake Thompson at their head, who found their way into this country, made themselves the propagandists of a cause which, though tainted with slavery and doomed to failure, their industry found means momentarily to recommend. The weakness of the national feeling contributed largely to this military exodus, and the sympathies of race would, in a great emergency, prove a stronger motive to action than any which at that time was called forth.

IMMIGRATION to the North-West has disappointed the sanguine expectations formed in the spring. The failure is admitted, but the causes to which it is due form the subject of virulent party dispute. Looking calmly at the facts, it is easy to see that to no one cause is the falling off due. In the influx of settlers to the United States there has this year been a marked diminution. This decline probably spurred American agents in Europe into greater activity. In Manitoba, resolutions designed to check immigration, which were passed in the name of the farmers, have borne fruit. The high tax on agricultural implements gave these resolutions a force which it was impossible wholly to explain away. Party feeling, taking advantage of the situation, did the rest. Fiction and fact became so interwoven that the attempt to separate them was to the intending European emigrant a hopeless task. Under the circumstances, hesitation seemed to be prudence, and many who would otherwise have gone to the North-West resolved to wait till time should make certain what was then doubtful. Every year there will be an increasing number of witnesses to the actual state of things in that country; and should the estimate of a surplus of six or seven millions of bushels of wheat be realized, the figures will tell of capabilities which no one will feel justified in disbelieving. When this year's harvest has told its tale, English opinion on our North-West may be relied upon to conform to the facts which it will establish.

THE charge made against M. Mercier in connection with the election contest of Jacques Cartier is, if not true, one of the strangest ever invented by political malice, or, if true, ever published by imprudence and bad faith. It is nothing less than that M. Mercier took a bribe from his political enemies not to press, in his quality as counsel for the contestant, for the disqualification of M. Mousseau, who was at the head of the Government of Quebec, to which M. Mercier, a member of the Legislative Assembly, was politically opposed. This charge is being pressed before a Commission of Inquiry by persons who are anxious to be considered friends