

THE WEEK.

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Contents.

	PAGE
CURRENT TOPICS.....	1135
EDITORIAL—	
Prison Labour.....	1138
The Atlantic Steamship Service.....	1139
CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES—	
A Brother of Sir Walter Scott at Quebec.....	W. D. Lighthall, M.A., F.R.S.L. 1139
European Affairs.....	Z. 1141
Field, Forest and Stream.....	On the Wing. 1142
Popularizing the Poets.....	Rev. W. G. Jordan, B.A. 1143
The Marriage Tie and Social Evolution.....	B. 1145
POETRY—	
In October.—A Dirge.....	Keppell Stroupe. 1141
On Leaving Kingston.....	Emily McManus. 1143
The Gold Miners of British Columbia.....	W. M. MacKeracher. 1146
The Cry from Ararat.....	William McGill. 1148
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR—	
The Canadian Flag.....	F. Blake Crofton. 1146
Mental Economy.....	J. S. Cole. 1146
BOOKS—	
Goethe on Music.....	Lois Saunders. 1148
Sweetheart Travellers.....	1149
Briefer Notices.....	1149
DEPARTMENTS—	
Music.....	1147
The Drama.....	1147
Art Notes.....	1148
Periodicals.....	1150
Literary and Personal.....	1150
Chess.....	1151
Public Opinion.....	1152
Scientific and Sanitary.....	1154

THE WEEK: C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, MANAGER.

Current Topics.

The Penitentiary Commission.
The appointment of a commission to inquire into the working of the Kingston Penitentiary recalls an interesting reminiscence in Canadian history. One of the earliest public duties undertaken by the late George Brown was an inquiry into the working of the same institution. The report which resulted from the investigation stirred up a great deal of ill-feeling against him, and came very near inflicting upon its author serious inconvenience, if not irreparable disaster. The original document was either accidentally lost or purposely abstracted, and as Mr. Brown's charges of mismanagement were on record there was some hope on the part of his enemies that he would not be able to substantiate them. Fortunately for himself he had kept a copy of the evidence for his own use, and when the Parliamentary assault was made upon him he was able to meet it instantly and effectively.

North-West Lands.
The Canadian Pacific Railway management has acted wisely in modifying the regulations which govern the sale of lands to settlers. Formerly the purchaser had to begin his payments at once, and, on the plan then adopted, his heavier payments came first. Under the new system he will be allowed two years, instead of one, in which to make the first payment, and all the payments will be equal. From an actuarial point of view, the Company loses nothing in money by the change, while the settler gains a great deal in convenience. The Company and the Government might well consider also whether a reduction in the price of unsettled lands would not be advisable. They have a joint interest in peopling the country, and in these days of keen competition in wheat-growing every legitimate means of inducing settlement should be adopted. An increase of paying traffic may be more profitable to the Company than a high price for lands sold.

Criminal Pardon.
Whether the change of Ministry and a sudden increase in the exercise of the pardoning power of the Governor-in-Council is more than a mere coincidence one may not venture to say, but it does look as if Sir Oliver Mowat had made up his mind to mark the inauguration of his administration of the Department of Justice by a display of leniency. To this no one is likely to object so long as the beneficiaries are convicts whose health is hopelessly gone, or prisoners of whose guilt there has arisen a reasonable doubt; but it is surely going a long way to commute the death sentence on a homicide simply because he has been subject to epileptic fits. So far as the evidence taken at the trial of Hansen shows, his crime was an utterly brutal and intensely sordid one. There seems to be no good reason to doubt that he killed his travelling companion for no other motive than to rifle his corpse of a little money and a few articles of clothing. Of course the commutation is based on the report of an "alienist," but it would be hard to find a criminal whom some well-known experts would not pronounce insane. The instinct of the general public revolts at the escape of such murderers on any excuse, and that instinct is sound. A witty Frenchman replied to a plea against capital punishment, based on the necessity of cultivating respect for the sacredness of human life, by saying that the "assassins should begin."

The "Canada" Luncheon.
Two very important speeches were made at the luncheon given on board the "Canada," by the Dominion Steamship Company to a number of eminent citizens of Montreal and some of the public men of the Dominion. Mr. Laurier, in his brief address, magnified the vocation of the farmer, whom he put foremost among industrial producers, and dwelt very strongly on the necessity of improving the St. Lawrence as the great artery of commerce for Canada. In this connection he reminded his hearers of the work accomplished in this direction by the late Hon. John Young and the late Sir Hugh Allan, both of Montreal, and indicated clearly that it is the intention of himself and his colleagues to endeavour to realize their great ideal. Mr. John Torrance, representing the Steamship Company, explained that the building of the "Canada" was commenced at a time when it seemed unlikely that the "fast service" project would be undertaken or liberally subsidized. He informed his audience that she is good for sixteen knots an hour, and then added a piece of information which amply corroborates the stand taken by Mr. Sandford Fleming in the article republished in another part of this issue of THE WEEK—that it is impracticable to provide by means of one and the same class of vessels the necessary speed for passengers and the necessary accommodation for freight. The "Canada," with a speed of sixteen knots, can "lift" 7,000 tons of freight; if she had been built for a speed of seventeen knots, her freight lifting power would have been only 4,000 tons; an increase of speed to eighteen knots would have caused a reduction of freight capacity to 3,000 tons, and an increase to twenty knots a reduction to 1,000. The "Lucania" and "Campania" of the Cunard line have a freight capacity of only 1,100 tons