

THE WEEK.

Fourth Year.
Vol. IV., No. 28.

Toronto, Thursday, June 9th, 1887.

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

CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES—	PAGE
The Liberal Opposition	443
Letter from Rome.....	L. L. 444
Scenes in Hawaii	Minnie Forsyth Grant. 444
Literary Notes from Paris.....	446
Contemporary Life and Thought in Germany	446
The Irish in America	447
The Situation in Afghanistan	447
TOPICS—	
Opposition Emolument	448
The Farmers and Commercial Union	448
The Retaliation Bill	448
The Fisheries Question	448
Decline of Gladstonianism.....	449
The Crisis in France	449
A Garfield Statue	449
International Copyright	449
NOTES	
THE "ANGELUS" (POEM).....	Kate Willson. 450
OUTWORN LITERARY METHODS	Sara Jeannette Duncan. 450
THE ACTING OF SARAH BERNHARDT	B. 451
ARTIST AND ACTOR	E. S. 451
THE AMERICAN MAGAZINES	452
RECENT MISCELLANY	452

THE LIBERAL OPPOSITION.

MR. BLAKE has resigned his position as leader of the Opposition in the Dominion Parliament. There seems at last to be no doubt of it. Rumours to this effect have for some time been current; but they have been generally discredited. Now, it seems, the matter is beyond a doubt. Mr. Blake's physician has declared that his retirement is a simple necessity, if his health is to be restored.

Such a catastrophe suggests reflections of a somewhat painful kind to Mr. Blake's friends, as well as his foes. To those who, like ourselves, regard Mr. Blake merely from a national or patriotic point of view, Mr. Blake's retirement furnishes food for very serious, even for very painful, considerations. Every one remembers the lines of the witty Goldsmith on the great Burke:

Whose genius was such,
We scarcely can praise it or blame it too much:
Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
And to Party gave up what was meant for mankind.
Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat,
To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote.

The parallel is far from complete. Mr. Blake is certainly a man of far smaller calibre than Mr. Burke, and his oratory is of a very much inferior type. On the other hand, Mr. Blake is almost infinitely more of a party man than Burke was. Still, there are resemblances. Mr. Blake strained his throat to get votes at the late election. To many persons he seems to have strained more than his throat—even his conscience. Others deny this; but then they say he had educated his conscience beforehand.

Mr. Blake resigns from ill health. Is it mere bodily sickness that interrupts his leadership? or is this the result rather of a "mind diseased?" To a proud, ambitious man, who has gone through the bodily and mental labour and fatigue which Mr. Blake underwent during the late election, and who has failed, it may be forgiven if the "brave heart within him" has refused to bear up his physical strength. Victory cheers and invigorates. If Mr. Blake could have put his opponent in a minority, we should probably have him still cheering on his battalions to the fray. Mr. Blake did not do this; and, now that he has marshalled his forces, they turn out to be even smaller in number and less efficient than they had promised to be.

There are times when defeat gives elevation to the mind and spirit. The spirit of the martyr makes death glorious. Mr. Blake has no such consolation or support. He has fought for place and for power, and it seems to the vast majority of honourable men in this Dominion that he has not been very scrupulous in the use of means to that end; and he has failed. It is not easy for one who has "eaten dirt" so abundantly to die with dignity. Even Julius Cæsar could hardly have gathered his mantle around him with effect under such circumstances.

Mr. Blake has helped to keep alive the worst features and tendencies of Canadian politics. Instead of meeting Sir John Macdonald face to face, either with a policy of his own, which he could commend to the country or explain to his opponents, or with a direct opposition to the policy of his rival, he has traded upon the rivalries of race and of religion, and sought to gain votes by pandering to the worst vices of national and religious sectarianism. And he has done all this in vain. No wonder that he should be sick at heart.

He bid for the French vote. Had not Sir John Macdonald done the same before him? What if he had? Has not Mr. Blake now put it out of the power of his party to reproach Sir John with his giving in to the Roman Catholics of Quebec? Besides, Sir John has never done anything quite as bad as Mr. Blake's espousal of the cause of the double-dyed traitor and murderer, Riel. If Riel had been an English or Scotch half-breed, not a hand would have been held up to rescue him from his merited doom. If Sir John had pardoned Riel, Mr. Blake and his followers would have raised the Protestant Province of Ontario against him. It is well known that they were preparing to do it. They did not even conceal their design; and when Riel was hanged, they had to turn their coats under the public eye. Could any one but a blinded partisan doubt what must be the result of this? "Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat." At any rate it was very mad conduct, and it led to destruction.

It was not enough to angle in such dirty waters for the French vote: the Irish vote must be tried for. And so with a mixture of ignorance and impertinence the spouters of the Reform party must preach up Home Rule, and dictate to the Imperial Parliament how they should govern Ireland. With many it was sheer ignorance. With many there was no real interest in the question whatever. With others, alas, it could only be sheer hypocrisy. With all, the ruling motive was the desire to gain the Irish vote. But it was of no avail. It was hard to eat so much dirt without succeeding. It was hard to fail after so deep a degradation. Theodore Parker, of Boston, once published an oration with the title: "What Killed Daniel Webster?" Mr. Blake is not yet very old, and he may have many years of useful life before him. It might be useful for him to read that oration.

But there is one more serious charge to be brought against Mr. Blake's party, the charge of disloyal and unpatriotic sentiment and conduct. They are never weary of underrating and decrying the country in which they have their means of subsistence, and Mr. Blake does not restrain them. We are quite aware that he and his followers disclaim all responsibility for the contents of a paper like the *Globe*. It would, indeed, be difficult to believe that the articles in that paper could give any satisfaction to a man like Mr. Blake. We have no thought of here discussing the *Globe*. As Dante says, "non ragioniam di loro, ma guarda e passa." But the members of the Reform party may feel assured that they don't gain the confidence or the favour of the country by their habitual endeavour to deny its prosperity, to throw doubts upon its progress, and to discourage its development. Such tricks may be admired in the midst of a fight, on the principle that all devices are fair in war; but in their calmer moments men do not like to have their country degraded in the face of the world, and this is at least attempted by many of Mr. Blake's party.

It is a favourable time for the party of Opposition in the Dominion Parliament to reconsider their policy. The Opposition is a most important element in parliamentary life and work. No Ministry can be entirely trusted, and it is well that watchful, even jealous, eyes should be upon them. But, to be efficient, an Opposition must be respectable. The habit of finding fault with everything that is done by the Ministry has the simple effect of destroying the whole value of their criticisms. It is the old cry of "Wolf." The wolf comes at last, and no one believes it, and the watchman is worse than useless.

Let Mr. Blake's successor lay these considerations to heart. They are urged from no spirit of ill-will, from no special regard to the party in power. They are simply the mature judgments of the vast majority of calm and dispassionate thinkers throughout the Dominion. We are aware that these count for little in the heat of an election; but all parties have to reckon with them in the long run.