

THE WEEK:

A CANADIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY, AND LITERATURE.

Second Year.
Vol. II., No. 6.

Toronto, Thursday, January 8th, 1885.

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

CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

	PAGE.
TOPICS OF THE WEEK.....	81
CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES—	
Taine's French Revolution.....	C. 85
Some Books of the Past Year.—I.....	G. Mercer Adam. 87
Art Notes.....	Delta. 87
HERE AND THERE.....	88
CORRESPONDENCE.....	89
THE HEAVENLY WAR.—Poem.....	Chas. W. Phillips. 90
SCRAP BOOK.....	90
MUSIC.....	92
PERIODICALS.....	92
LITERARY GOSSIP.....	93
CHESS.....	93

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AN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL OF POLITICS, SOCIETY AND LITERATURE.

Edited by W. PHILIP ROBINSON.

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

IT was of kings that the Swedish Chancellor spoke when he told his son to go forth and see with how little wisdom the world was governed, but he might have said the same thing with equal truth of the people. Not an election takes place without forcing on us the conviction that of those who, under the elective system, share political power, few as yet are fully competent to use it. In the municipal elections which have just taken place in Toronto, party politics once more asserted their malign influence. In vain, at Mr. Manning's meeting, did the chairman try to exclude them: in vain did Mr. Manning himself show his desire to avoid them: they were soon dragged in; and the chief transgressor was the late Mayor, who was personally bound by more than one consideration to act with reserve and delicacy on the occasion. Is it not almost incredible that any reasoning being, when the daily health and comfort of himself and family are at stake, and depend on the election of good men to the City Council, should be willing to sacrifice them to a party Shibboleth which has nothing to do with the matter and is in itself mere absurdity and nonsense? But party politics are not the only bane. Multitudes of people give their votes on grounds entirely beside the main question and utterly ridiculous. The grand and absorbing issue with many of the Toronto ratepayers, especially artisans, was not who could serve the city best at an important juncture, but who had voted for the Canadian and who for the American engine. The entire profit obtained by the sale of the Canadian engine, if divided among the working-men of Toronto, would not buy for each of them a mouthful of bread; yet upon this everything was to turn, and the side a candidate had taken on that momentous occasion was to be the single test of his fitness for a place in the city government. It did not signify that a man had acted conscientiously and preferred the American engine solely because he believed that it would pump the water better for us or cost us less than its rival: he had voted for the American against the Canadian engine and he must be punished, no matter how good his motives might have been or how great his merits and claims on other grounds might be. Is there an artisan in Toronto who of two kettles offered him for purchase would buy the worst and dearest because it had been made in Canada? Every man has a thousand interests in good government, but a great many men vote exclusively on one, and that perhaps not so much a real interest as a fancy or a pique; all the rest

they totally disregard. Then we wonder that the affairs of nations are not well managed, and think that they might be better managed if only more power were given to ignorance, class prejudice and narrowness of mind.

IN Montreal church property no longer enjoys absolute and unquestioned exemption from municipal taxation. Several churches have paid their assessments for the improvement of Dominion Square; and against the Cathedral, Christ and St. George's Churches, which refused to pay, the municipality has commenced legal proceedings to recover the amounts claimed, \$4,000 against the Cathedral and over \$600 against Christ Church. The terms of the capitulation of Canada to Great Britain are relied upon by one of the churches. The articles of capitulation were intended to oblige the conquerors to observe certain terms towards the conquered. But the conquered people of 1760 are free to make their own laws to-day, and the articles of capitulation cannot have the effect of a perpetual concordat and abridge the liberties of the people on whose behalf they were made. In Ontario, which was an unsettled country at the Conquest, there is no pretence that the power of the Legislature can be abridged by the capitulation of Montreal or the Treaty of Paris. If exemption is driven to its last defences in Montreal, on what pretence can it be maintained in Toronto?

ON the Canadian side of the border line in the North-West an ominous agent of justice, whose function is exercised only in the rudest stages of administration, has appeared in the person of Judge Lynch. He has a law of his own not found on the statute book—a law of unusual severity, in the execution of which all formalities are waived, the proceedings being pervaded with an intense belief in the necessity for the swift and certain punishment of guilt. More than half a hundred horse-thieves who crossed the Boundary Line from Montana to carry on their depredations in Canadian territory are reported to have been hanged by Vigilance Committees. This is a startling announcement. Lynch law is no longer confined to the neighbouring Republic; the same circumstances which gave birth to it there has led to its being copied on the Canadian side of the line: the difficulty or impossibility of preventing or punishing crime by the ordinary tribunals in a wild country where settlers are few and far apart. A hundred and fifty years ago different Indian tribes on these plains stole horses from one another, and in retaliation war was made on the offenders. The punishment, far from being confined to the actual perpetrators of the theft, was liable to fall not only on any individual of the offending tribe but also on its allies. Tribal feuds and tribal hatreds in this way arose, and were perpetuated. Lynch law is one remove less objectionable, the man hanged under its sway generally being the real culprit. The code which hanged for horse-stealing has been obsolete in England and Canada about half a century. But the objection to unauthorized and irresponsible executions is even greater than to the severity of the punishment. Hanging men by the sole authority of Lynch law for the crime of horse-stealing is not a procedure that should find encouragement in Canada. But stealing horses from a poor woman who was in consequence obliged to walk one hundred and fifty miles to reach her home shows great indifference to human life, and a severe punishment would under the circumstances be well deserved. But some means must be devised for meeting out punishment by regular and authorized agencies.

MONSEIGNOR SMEULDERS, the Roman delegate to Quebec, has set out on his return to the Vatican. He has kept his own counsel, and no one pretends to be able to tell the nature of the report he will make. On the University question the decisions of Rome have hitherto been in favour of Laval and against the Jesuits, and their scheme for establishing a rival university at Montreal. The Archbishop of Quebec went to Rome while the Apostolic delegate was in Canada; and the delegate left Quebec a few hours before the Archbishop's return. One of the two factions into which the Church is divided professed to see something ominous in this studied evasion of a meeting between the two dignitaries. Bishop Bourget, who has been the stay of the Jesuits, found his resignation eagerly and unex-