

Though the commercial-annexation agitation has been found so unpopular that its advocates have thought it wise to allow it to fall into the background, it would seem that it is still being pursued in an underhand way by the distribution of circulars in a somewhat objectionable manner. The *Empire* is our authority for the statement that these circulars are sent out under the parliamentary frank of Mr. James Trow, M.P., the Liberal Whip. This, if correct, is another abuse of the objectionable franking privilege which ought to accelerate its abolition.

Our American friends on the Pacific are just now a good deal exercised about their coast defences. General Miles, commanding in that region, has been pointing out their defencelessness, and has raised quite a scare, which, in part, takes the form of jealousy of the defences of Vancouver's Island. Why these good people should excite themselves is not easy to understand. All the forts England and Canada may unite in constructing will, as they ought to know, generate no aggressiveness, a tendency quite out of the question on our side. But while that tendency is so plainly manifest among our neighbors it certainly behooves us to spare no pains to render our Pacific strongholds as secure as may be, and we trust the work will progress both rapidly and efficiently.

Mr. A. Cleveland, of Brockport, N. Y., has, it appears, been awarded the contract for the Toronto Harbor improvements, his tender being \$350,000; and the contracts for beef and bacon for the N. W. Indians have been awarded to J. G. Baker & Co., an American firm, of which Mr. Davis, M. P. for Alberta, is said to be a member. This latter firm has had enormous contracts for the Mounted Police and other N. W. services for thirteen or fourteen years past. They are probably fair contractors, but we always regard with feelings of deep regret the award of contracts to American firms. Surely there are Canadian houses capable of furnishing such supplies, and even of carrying out harbor improvements. Why should Canadian money for such services go to the other side of the line?

The success of a young Canadian artist in France is worthy of record. Miss M. A. Bell, daughter of Mr. Andrew Bell, of Almonte, Ont., has achieved the honor of having a large picture hung in the Paris Salon. The subject is a domestic scene in the interior of Brittany, on a canvas of five feet by four. It has been highly praised by eminent French critics, who pronounce that "Miss Bell will arrive at the rank of a master." The winter works of the best French artists are exhibited at the Paris Salon. Many meritorious works are annually rejected, and the young painter who gains a place achieves a high distinction. Canadians have reason to be gratified at the success of this young lady, who is Canadian by several generations of descent, having a liberal share of good old United Empire Loyalist blood in her veins.

It is said of "good Queen Bess," that when she conceded she did it with right royal good grace and heartiness. The lack of this breadth of comprehension is painfully apparent among our legislators on this continent—not only those of Canada, but those of Newfoundland also. That Colony has passed a manhood suffrage bill, but in doing so has fixed the voting age at 25. This limitation seems very unnecessary. Law and precedent fix the age of responsibility at 21. Any young man of ordinary intelligence is probably as competent to exercise his vote at that age as at 25, and the restriction seems uselessly vexatious. It is probable, however, that, the principle being recognized, the new law will, before very long, be amended. It is not improbable that the question of Confederation may have had something to do with the decision arrived at.

We have received from an anonymous but evidently earnest "Subscriber," a protest against the tone of a recent Editorial Note in *THE CRITIC* on the deceased wife's sister question, accompanied by a long article from the *Church Times*, written from clerical standpoints, against these unions. We do not find in this article a single valid argument, a position which may be inferred from the extravagance of its concluding sentences, which run as follows:—"And all this for no better end and motive than to give license to the evil passions of a few wealthy reprobates of both sexes, who have either broken the laws of God and man already, or wish to do so. We do not alter our laws to facilitate burglary, arson, homicide; though the number of persons who would be sensibly relieved by such legislation is much greater than those who call for free trade in incest. Why should we make a difference in favor of the last?" Arguments which simply resolve themselves into wholesale imputations of infamy cannot but be of the weakest.

A Mr. Sandys has been amusing himself writing to the *Toronto Empire* about Halifax. His lucubrations are not ill-natured, and are intended to be partially facetious, but it must be confessed the pleasantry is somewhat far-fetched. Mr. Sandys does not like the fashion of ladies carrying canes, and considers that "one-half the population (of Halifax) is military, and the other half English, or tries to be so." By way of illustration this gentleman coolly up some conversations, of which the following is a specimen:—"Aw! my deah fellow, cawn't you join in something dwy?" It was dry enough, Lord knows, but for innate cussedness I'd say: "How's that? Wa-al pardner, reckon I will." "Where did I come from?" "Oh! up nigh to Detroit." "Aw! yes, me deah fellah; I fawnied so." This sort of thing may be very clever, but we are somewhat at a loss to imagine the sort of people who could be amused by it. It is very poor burlesque. Neither Englishmen nor their supposed imitations, as far as we have ever heard, say "cawn't" and "fawncy."

A very discouraging state of affairs seems to prevail in Victoria (Aus.) and more particularly in Melbourne, so long the seat of progress and prosperity. There has been a great "land boom," succeeded, as usual, by a financial collapse and a very complete depression. The courts are said to be engaged from week to week in trying cases of embezzlement by bank-clerks, lawyers, "young men" and others drawn into the swindling arena last year. The Exhibition "boom" has, by its failure, also added to the confusion, and the influx of English capital has nearly stopped, and "the only thing to speculate upon appears to be whether the Victorian gaol accommodation will prove equal to the demands made upon it." It is only to be hoped that this state of things will not be of long duration. On the other hand there are strong hopes of the opening up of a valuable coal field in Gippsland.

Professor Goldwin Smith, has, it appears, been yet further airing his views on the annexation question, this time through the *London New York Herald*. The Professor thinks the idea is gaining ground in Canada, and that the by-elections confirm this view. Mr. Goldwin Smith evidently catches at straws which do not even indicate truly the direction of the wind. The country has, we take it, sounded so clear and certain a note of repudiation that even such annexationists as hold to their unpatriotic fad in secret, lack the courage to confess it openly. As *Imperial Federation* observes—"No one in Canada pays any attention whatever to the opinions of the Oxford professor, and this is no doubt the reason why he is so fond of ventilating his views on Canadian political questions on this (the English,) side of the Atlantic, rather than on the other." This is no doubt quite true, and the sooner the English press becomes thoroughly aware of it, the better.

We congratulate Lt.-Col. Macdonald, late of the 66th, on having, as we are informed, succeeded in being retained for service, instead of being retired, on relinquishing the command of his late regiment. We do not know by what name the list, if it become a list, will be known, but practically Col. Macdonald seems to have achieved success in a battle fought years ago by another officer without the like good result. The contention was that a serviceable officer compelled, say from change of residence, to relinquish his position, should be, if he wished it, placed, not on a "Retired," but on an "Unattached" List, as he might at any time take service again in another battalion. The officer in question subsequently exemplified this position in his own person, and renewed his representations, but the Department was either too dense to understand, or voted the suggestion a bore—likely enough the latter—and having once issued its dictum stuck to it with distinguished obstinacy.

The new City Council has on its hands the carrying out of the law for the establishment of a city slaughter-house. By that act the city was empowered to purchase a site and to erect the buildings required for the keeping of animals intended to be converted into meat-food, for the slaughter thereof, and for the inspection of all animals offered for such purposes both before and after killing. The intent of the act is also that all meat, before being offered for consumption—wherever killed—shall be submitted to inspection at the city slaughter-house. The choice of a site, fees to be charged for the keep of animals, &c., are left for the regulation of the City Council. That the measure was not prematurely adopted is evident, as, if it is carried out as intended, the public will have the satisfaction of knowing that only healthy meat is offered for sale and eaten in the city. The institution will probably pay for its cost and incidental expenses from the start, and will be a sanitary benefit to the citizens, at the same time that it will relieve the sanitary inspectors of a branch of duty that other calls upon their time do not permit them to attend to as thoroughly as is desirable.

The *Canadian Trade Review* writing on the lobster fisheries arrives at the conclusion, after considering certain figures (given in another editorial note), that the mere extension of the close season is not sufficient to recuperate the fisheries, but that the fishing might with advantage be absolutely prohibited for several years. Mr. Inspector Hunter Duvar thus forcibly presents the case:—"The question is whether a shortened fishing is, in itself, sufficient to restore the fishery to a healthy condition. The small size of material used has naturally had the effect of reducing the quality of the goods, and further affords a grievous proof that the bulk of the lobsters used are young that have not reached the three to four years of age at which they are capable of reproduction. Since 1882, after the great fishing of 1881, the fishery has been dying rapidly. From the present small size twice as many lobsters are destroyed as were a few years ago in producing the same number of cans. Then it would have taken about 6,000,000 of lobsters to produce last year's quantity, whereas it has taken quite 10,000,000. With so large an increase in destruction, it must be a long time, if ever, before the fishery recuperates itself to its former condition—or, rather, never. It takes fully three years from the ova before lobsters begin to reproduce their species; lobsters of nine inches in clear length are a little over three years old. The average of lobster life is eight to nine years, some few giant males of great age notwithstanding. The practical question narrows itself to the important queries: Can the bulk of small lobsters that escape in the fishing season ever multiply so fast as to reach nine inches, despite the annual fishing, and bring the standard back in quantity and dimensions to that which existed before the industry was overdone? Or would three years of complete rest so advance the crop, by three years in the scale of age and reproduction, as to bring the small lobsters of to-day forward into mature spawning fish in the fishery of 1892?"