

that during the sixteen or seventeen years that have elapsed since his appointment the mileage of the Grand Trunk system has been about trebled, and its earnings have been increased from less than two millions to about five millions of dollars per annum. As the tendency of freights has been downward, the volume of traffic must have increased in still greater ratio. One of the modes in which the penetration and foresight of the head of a large institution of any kind are most severely tested is in the choice, retention and promotion of assistants and subordinates. It says much for Sir Joseph Hickson's capacity in this respect that it has been found possible by a series of promotions to supply his place and that vacated by his successor with so little difficulty, and, so far as appears, with the hearty approval of all concerned. We are glad to learn that Sir Joseph proposes to continue to reside in Montreal, and thus to enjoy in Canada the rest he has so well earned in her service, for it cannot be doubted that in developing and improving the oldest of our great trunk roads, he has also been promoting the prosperity of the Dominion.

THE circular sent out a week or two since by the Ontario Department of Agriculture, containing a time-table of about one hundred meetings of Farmers' Institutes to be held during the current month in different localities all over the province, and announcing that each meeting will have the advantage of the presence of a Professor of the Agricultural College, a representative of the Fruit Growers' Association, and one or two of the best known farmers in the Province, in addition to its own local talent, shows that this Department, under its new Minister, is doing useful and energetic work. One of the great wants of the country and time is the diffusion of scientific and practical knowledge among the tillers of the soil. These Farmers' Institutes, conducted by skilled agriculturists and horticulturists, seem one of the very best means that could be devised for supplying this want. This work, together with that being done by the Dominion Agricultural Department along similar lines, by lectures on dairying, etc., cannot fail to confer lasting benefit upon the farming industry, and through it upon every branch of industry, since upon success in agriculture success in every other industry in large measure depends.

A PART from the startling view presented of the state of the Provincial finances, the transactions of the session of the recent Quebec Legislature are mainly of local interest. A good deal has been said in regard to the Bill empowering the clerical authorities to expropriate lands for cemetery purposes, but it does not seem likely that this power in itself can do a great deal of harm. It is, we believe, a wrong and pernicious principle which gives to the Church any control over the property of citizens, but this principle is so deeply embedded in Quebec legislation that it seems hardly worth while to quarrel seriously with this new application of it, unless on the ground that it is but the forerunner of other and still more objectionable encroachments. Had the power of expropriation been extended as was desired by the representatives of the Church, to the ground required for mission churches and other ecclesiastical purposes, its objectionableness would have been much more apparent, though the principle would have still been unchanged. This, it is very likely, will be the next step. The subservience of the Government, Legislature and people of the French Province to ecclesiastical influence and dictation is, indeed, one of the most remarkable phenomena of the day. It is probably unique, in the case of an essentially self-governing community, in this last decade of the nineteenth century. We are glad to turn to another enactment of the Session which is worthy of unqualified commendation. We refer to the provision for the opening of night schools in the cities and towns at the expense of the Province. Leaving out of sight for the moment the question whether the financial situation of the Province warranted any liberal outlay in any direction, it can hardly be denied that the establishment of such schools, if proper care is taken to make them free and efficient for the classes who need them, is a movement worthy of any Liberal Administration. We have not the details of the measure before us, and so can pronounce no opinion upon its special merits. But on general principles, as we have before urged in these columns, there is no argument in favour of a free public school system, much less in favour of the professional departments of State universities, which does not apply with greater force to schools intended for the practical education of those large classes of

citizens who, having enjoyed little or no school advantages in their youth, are desirous of improving their minds and of gaining some insight into the scientific laws which underlie their special occupations, during the only hours they can spare for the purpose. But when we turn to the financial exhibit of the sister Province, in order to ascertain how well she can afford this and other large expenditures to which her legislators have committed her, the figures presented may well create alarm. An annual deficit of two millions and a floating debt of five or six millions, in addition to a bonded indebtedness of twenty millions, make up a rather formidable total. It is clear that the new loan of ten millions, when contracted, will do little more than cover existing and prospective deficiencies. It is true that new and ingenious, not to say oppressive, taxes have been devised, and it may be hoped that these will do something towards balancing income and expenditure, but it is scarcely possible that that feat can be accomplished without driving the overburdened taxpayers out of the country in still larger numbers. On the whole the situation is such as may well create apprehension that the Dominion will again be called upon at an early day, and that another re-adjustment of Provincial finances will be demanded. When that day comes some very serious questions touching the relations of Dominion and Provincial exchequers will have to be settled.

THOUGH the return of Hon. Mr. Foster from his tour in the West Indies has been looked for with some interest, it would be unreasonable to expect immediate results in the way of enlarged commercial intercourse. All that he is able to say is that he was everywhere received with the utmost cordiality, that his suggestions and proposals looking to freer trade relations were listened to attentively by those in authority in the various islands visited, and that these will be duly and, as far as possible, favourably considered by the legislative bodies concerned. We do not suppose very much will be added to our stock of knowledge on the whole, though it may be advantageous to prospective dealers to understand more clearly the specialties of the respective islands or groups of islands. But all are well aware that so far as natural and agricultural products are concerned, these Islands and Canada are to a large extent the complements of each other. They thus seem to have been intended by nature for the freest interchange. Still it is never easy to turn commerce out of channels to which it has become accustomed, though in this case, so far as the Islanders have hitherto dealt with the United States, the McKinley Bill should be a powerful influence in our favour. Probably the chief difficulty will arise, so far as most of the Canadian manufactured goods are concerned, from the necessity of competing with the cheaper and perhaps better products of the Mother Country, under her free-trade system. The inequality under which our exporters would be thus laid would, it is likely, have to be counterbalanced by large reciprocal tariff concessions. Granting that both the Dominion and the West Indies can agree in regard to the mutual adjustment of these relations, and that the formidable obstacles interposed by clauses in existing treaties can be removed, it will still require no little magnanimity on the part of the Mother Country to consent to such discrimination against herself, mainly for the purpose of diverting a portion of her own trade to the Dominion which taxes her goods so freely. We dare say, however, that even this concession will not be refused. But all these arrangements will require a good deal of time. Meanwhile it is possible that steamship subsidies, judiciously bestowed so as to secure low freights, may do a good deal to foster at least certain lines of traffic. It is fortunate that the Jamaica Exhibition is coming off just at the right moment, and that the Dominion is likely to be so well represented there. A better opportunity for applying a practical test to determine the possibilities of the situation could hardly be wished for. It is to be hoped that Canadian exhibitors will act on the Minister's advice, by having good representatives on the spot to push their goods into notice.

THE correspondence just laid before Congress contains little that is new on the Behring Sea question. With the substance of Lord Salisbury's August despatch the public was already acquainted. Though Mr. Blaine's answer bears date so recent as December 17, the tenor of it also was for the most part familiar. This letter must be, we suppose, the document referred to in the notice given a day or two since to the news agencies by the British

Foreign Office. Mr. Blaine's course in delaying his reply, with its new proposal, from August 2nd to December 17th, and then sending the latter immediately to Congress, without giving time for consideration or answer, seems peculiar, whether contrary to diplomatic usage or not. If the statements from Washington with reference to the reinforcements of the cruisers in Behring Sea, said to be resolved on for the coming season, be correct, the situation is not free from danger. The tone of polite defiance adopted by the London *Standard* is too suggestive of gunpowder to be pleasant, as coming from a journal standing in such relation to the British Government. An exchange of shots between British and United States' warships would be the saddest event of the last quarter of the century. Yet if the American Government refuses arbitration and every other form of settlement not meaning unconditional surrender, and if it persists in capturing British vessels in the open sea, the British Government will have, so far as we can see, no alternative but to protect its vessels and its citizens. We cannot believe that the sensible and Christian people of the United States will permit Mr. Blaine to plunge the nation into a war on a question in regard to which many of their own best authorities declare him to be unquestionably in the wrong.

PENDING the slow movement in the direction of international copyright, an ingenious plan of coöperation between English and American authors has been proposed. It will be remembered that the first pirated edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" failed because some of its articles had been written by American authors, and the copyrights held by these in their own country protected the whole work. Acting, probably, upon this hint, and remembering that, as is alleged, the Copyright Acts already in existence do not require that the joint authors shall disclose the exact portions written by each, it is thought that by the plan of joint authorship, with secrecy on the point indicated, all the benefits of international copyright can be secured. If the facts be as stated, there seems nothing to prevent the success of the plan, and joint authorship may be expected to become unusually popular.

EVENTS have sadly confirmed the fear we intimated in a former note that the killing of "Sitting Bull," on which so many were congratulating themselves as an end to the danger of an Indian outbreak, would have the opposite effect. Human nature, especially the Indian variety of it, being what it is, it is not wonderful that the desperation of terror, and the thirst for vengeance should have combined to precipitate the horrors his cowardly slayers hoped to ward off by his death. The massacre, amounting almost to the extermination of a whole band, after their sudden attack on the troops at Wounded Knee, has sent, as well it might, a thrill of horror throughout Christendom. The provocation was no doubt great, but that it justified the indiscriminate butchery, without distinction of age or sex, no Christian can believe. The so-called treachery of the victims is surely no justification; though it may be some palliation of the horrible crime. We say so-called treachery, because, when we take all the facts into consideration, it is questionable whether the ruse of the Indians differs materially in principle from the cunning surprises which generals and soldiers are constantly studying to effect, and pride themselves in effecting, in the most civilized warfare. Would a comparatively small band of American or British soldiers, if surrounded by savage foes, and with the terrors of torture or death staring them, as they supposed, in the face, hesitate to conceal, if possible, their arms and use them at the most unexpected moment, in an effort to break through the enemy's lines? Would not their shrewdness and bravery be applauded, if they were successful? It reflects no credit upon the troops or their commanders, that they, by their want of proper precautions, afforded their crafty foes so favourable an opportunity for a last desperate struggle. There can be little doubt, we suppose, that the Indians, thus surrounded and called on to surrender their arms, feared the worst. It is not unlikely that they looked for death, or imprisonment, which they would regard as worse. There is no evidence that any reassuring explanations were given them. It is doubtful if their scanty knowledge of the language would enable them to comprehend any promises that might be made. If otherwise, the bad faith which had so often been shown in regard to treaty obligations had left them little reason for trusting to the white man's word. They must have known but too