

dizement and the despotic exercise of power by Mr. Arthur or others. Why, the whole force of the argument that Canadians should own an independent line of railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and on their own territory, is taken away if the traffic is to be stopped after it is built, at the nod of a gentleman from the United States.

What the Government of this country should do forthwith is this: They should organize a force of "Locomotive Policemen," consisting of drivers, conductors, and all hands necessary to run a train in an efficient manner; they should arm these men with the same power as they have given to the Mounted Police! The whole railway, or any part, at any time, should be subject to the officers in charge in case of a strike. This body of men should be under the command of the Militia Department, and could be controlled in the same manner and with the same kind of organization as the Mounted Police. Think for an instant what the effect of a strike would be next spring! and what is to prevent it? With Locomotive Policemen the people would then have some protection, but with the whole North-West under one railway, and that railway officered by Yankee officers and dictated to by "Mr. Arthur, a gentleman in the United States," in case of trouble, neither the settlers, nor the public nor any part of our domain can be considered safe. Yours, etc.,

Ann Arbor, March, 1884.

HUBERT C. JONES.

PICTURESQUE CANADA.

To the Editor of The Week :

SIR,—When the above work was first brought out, we had the publisher's positive assurance, in prospectuses, announcements and advertisements, that it was to be a purely Canadian enterprise throughout, "embellished with engravings of the finest character, from original drawings made expressly for the work, from sketches taken on the spot by Bell Smith, Creswell, Edson, Fowler, Fraser, Judson, O'Brien, Peel, Perré, Sandham, Watson, and other Canadian artists." It was further guaranteed to be a "true delineation of our country," a "tribute to native art and native genius," a "beautiful specimen of Canadian art and Canadian workmanship," and much more to the same effect.

But as soon as the publishers had by these promises enlisted the press of the country, and secured a liberal subscription list by their aid and the use of the names of several well-known Canadians who had no real interest involved, they "dispensed with" all Canadian artists to whom they had promised work, moved their presses, plant and entire establishment secretly to New York, where the senior proprietor permanently resides, and all we have of "Canadian art" in the entire work (except some half-dozen small and unimportant illustrations) is from the pencil of a single Torontonian—the entire staff of artists, as well as engravers, printers, proprietors, and all others connected with the scheme being New Yorkers. Some of these New York "artists" were simply art-students, employed because they worked cheap; the unfortunate effects being everywhere visible in the "butchering" and utter misrepresentation of Canadian scenes at their hands. Many such instances have been severely denounced by the country press of the localities thus maligned. But worse than all (and this is a point which unquestionably invalidates every contract, and leaves with every subscriber the option of refusing further issues of the fraudulent work, and collecting back—if the publishers are responsible—what has already been paid on account thereof,) they have inserted foreign pictures, falsely named as Canadian subjects. A leading Canadian newspaper, which explained that it originally favoured and assisted the enterprise, recently stated that many such cases exist, and explicitly specifies a number of them; adding that in its particular locality (which the writer knows to be true of many other sections as well,) a great majority of subscribers have absolutely refused to take their books, while many threaten to sue for the money already paid out for the same; and that any quantity of the books can be procured from disgusted subscribers at 10 cents to 25 cents per part.

Further, the book was sold "straight" as a 24-part book; but we now find a "catch" condition on the back of the contract, saying it may run to thirty-six, while H. Belden stated on oath at the trial of a suit-at-law in this city last July, that he intended to run it to forty parts. Though steel-plates were distinctly promised with each part, and guaranteed equal to samples (each of which contained a full number, including steel engravings, of Appleton's *Picturesque America*), yet the only steel in the work is the frontispiece and title-page of Part I.—the comparative merit of which may be judged from the fact that the publishers "swore them through" the custom-house at a combined valuation of \$150, while the best quality of steel plates of the same size cost £100 stg. each in England, for engraving alone.

The great wonder is that those Canadians who were led into what now looks like a cunningly devised trap, that their names might be freely used in bolstering up the enterprise, did not insist upon the original conditions and promises being fulfilled—particularly when it came to be common talk that the publishers were the same people who "scorched" the rural district some years ago with the notorious "Belden Atlas," and are now trading under an assumed name to conceal their identity. Among those who in good faith, and in the dark as to the real facts, have recommended this work, are some authorities usually well-informed on such subjects. In this connexion it was a source of surprise to the writer to see something tending in this direction in a late issue of THE WEEK; and to explain the "true inwardness" of this metaphorical second edition of the disreputable "Atlas" swindle, attention has herein been called to a few of the many defections from what might have been a most creditable undertaking, if honestly carried out.

DISAPPOINTED SUBSCRIBER.

[We fear there is ground for these complaints, which have been put forward very circumstantially by more than one of our contemporaries,

and have not been answered by the Messrs. Belden. We should be very sorry to think that the literary review of two numbers of *Picturesque Canada* which appeared in THE WEEK had been in any way instrumental in promoting or encouraging an imposition on the Canadian public.—ED. WEEK.]

LUMINOUS SKIES.

To the Editor of The Week :

SIR,—At a time when public attention is directed to the luminous appearance of the evening sky in this and other countries, it may not be uninteresting to recall other occasions when abnormal atmospherical phenomena were presented in this country.

On the 9th of October, 1785, a short period of obscurity occurred at Quebec, about four in the afternoon, and during its continuance, a luminous appearance upon the line of the horizon, of a yellow tinge, appeared in the sky in the north-east quarter below the city. On the 15th, about three o'clock in the afternoon, there was a repetition of the same luminous appearance, in the same quarter, accompanied by a period of obscurity somewhat longer than that of the preceding day. Both of these periods were accompanied by violent gusts of wind, by thunder, lightning and rains. [Vide Quebec Gazette, 20th October, 1785.]

The morning of Sunday, the 16th of October, 1785, was perfectly calm and there was a thick fog, but the fog was not denser than is often seen at that season of the year; towards nine o'clock a light air from the north-east sprung up, which increased rapidly. The fog, by ten o'clock, was entirely dissipated; black clouds were seen rapidly advancing from the north-east, and by half-past ten o'clock it was so dark that printing of the most usual type could not be read. This lasted for upwards of ten minutes, and was succeeded by a violent gust of wind, with rain, thunder and lightning, after which the weather became brighter until twelve o'clock, when a second period of so much obscurity took place that lights became necessary and were used in all the churches. This period was longer in its duration than the first. A third period of obscurity came on at two o'clock, a fourth about three, and a fifth at half-past four o'clock, during which the intensity of the darkness was very great, and is described by those who witnessed it to have been that of perfect midnight. During the whole of these periods, and the intervals between them, vast masses of clouds of a yellow appearance were driven rapidly by the wind in a south-westerly direction; there was much lightning. The periods of total darkness were about ten minutes each, and although the intervals were not so dark, they afforded but little light. The barometer was stationary throughout at 29.5, and the thermometer, which stood in the morning at 52°, fell two or three degrees in the course of the day.

The water which fell from the clouds was extremely black, and the next day, upon the surface of what was found in different vessels, a yellow powder was floating which upon examination proved to be sulphur. A deposit of a black substance in powder was also found in the bottom of the vessels, but does not appear to have been submitted to any test. [Vide Quebec Gazette, 20th October, 1785, and Dr. Sparke's Journal.]

Similar phenomena were observed on the 16th of October, 1785, at Montreal. The clouds were of the same yellow tinge, and at five o'clock in the afternoon the darkness was so intense that, to use the expression of an eyewitness, "*jamaïs nuit ne fût plus obscure.*"

A medical gentleman of Montreal collected a certain quantity of the black, pulverized matter upon a piece of muslin, and by rubbing between the fingers, and by ignition, found it to be strongly impregnated with sulphur. [Vide Quebec Gazette, 27th October, 1785.]

Similar phenomena were observed on the 3rd of July, 1814, and are described by Captain Payne, of the Royal Engineers, who was at the Bay of Seven Islands, above Anticosti on the second and third of July, 1814. His narrative will be found in Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine. The introductory words are as follow: "Your philosophical readers will not fail to notice the coincidence between the phenomena and those which were observed at St. Vincent and other islands in the West Indies upwards of a year ago."

The narrative of officers who were on board the transport, Sir William Heathcote, states that on the 2nd of July, 1814, there was a heavy fall of ashes and sand, succeeded by a dense haze which increased until eleven o'clock, when it cleared up, and the sun appeared of a blood-red colour. Later at various periods of the same day darkness was experienced, and ashes during the whole time fell in abundance and completely covered the deck. The transport was the whole day off Cape Chat, and the wind blew gently from the north shore of the St. Lawrence. The neighbouring inhabitants declared there had not been any appearance of fire in the woods. [Narrative of Lieutenant Ingall, 15th Foot.]

A third narrative by an officer of another ship also lying off Cape Chat, on the 2nd July, 1814, completely corroborates the second narrative, and in addition says that "for three days previous some ashes and smoke had been observed; but on the second no symptoms of burning wood were felt. It may be presumed that some volcanic eruption has taken place in a north-easterly direction, which caused total darkness in a breadth of about fifteen leagues on each side of Cape Chat." [Vide Quebec Gazette, July 28th, 1814.]

Another narrative of the same occurrence is in these words: "July 3rd 1814—Sunday—A most extraordinary day. In the morning dark thick weather, and a fog of a deep yellow colour, which increased in density and colour until four o'clock p.m., at which hour the cabin was entirely dark, and we dined by candle-light; the binnacle also was lighted shortly after. * * * * * The wind during this obscurity was westerly with