

THE GREATEST QUESTION OF THE AGE.

There are strong indications of a revival in trade during the year 1886; but from the experience of the past fourteen years, we cannot hope, under existing circumstances, for any prolonged era of prosperity. The good old times, when demand and supply were fairly balanced, had about them an element of steadiness which enabled business men to estimate with a degree of certainty the prospective state of the markets. But to-day, the fluctuations in trade may be likened to the flickering light of a candle. Indeed, the element of uncertainty which now permeates the business of the world renders it almost impossible to give a correct forecast of the trade of a few months hence. There are at the present time, in the neighboring Republic, upwards of 500,000 mechanics and laboring men out of employment; these men are willing to work, but are unable to obtain employment. Modern statesmen have never yet faced the greatest question of the age—the labor question; but sooner or later, they will be obliged to give it the consideration it deserves. At no time, in the history of the world, has man's food supply been so abundant as at present, at no time, during the past, has his ability for manufacturing articles of comfort and necessity been so great; and yet, at this very time, when the products of exchange are the most abundant, men find it more difficult to obtain a livelihood than they did a quarter of a century since. The truth is, that the introduction of improved machinery has revolutionized trade, enabling us in a few months to manufacture all the products that can be consumed or exchanged during the entire year,—and yet we continue to carry on our manufacturing enterprises until the markets are glutted, being then obliged to shut down until the manufactured products are disposed of. Now, it is obvious, that if the hours of labor were shortened, over-production might be avoided, and the frequent recurrence of times of depression prevented. It may be somewhat of a radical idea to claim that six hours should be taken for the length of a working day, but if in these six hours the mechanic is, by the aid of machinery, enabled to produce more than treble the quantity of manufactured articles that he could have produced a few years ago in twelve hours, why, it may be asked, should he not be entitled to share in the benefits of improved machinery, by working fewer hours per day, instead of aiding in an over-production, from which he himself is the greatest sufferer? If all wealth be the product of labor, is it not time that the question of labor should receive more profound consideration, labor being the great foundation upon which trade and commerce are built up?

A NEW ENTERPRISE.

Among the many enterprises now before the public, that of the new Dartmouth Steam Ferry Company, meets with most general favor. The Company proposes to place upon the route between Halifax and Dartmouth first-class modern Ferry Boats, such as will insure to the travelling public, a speedy, pleasant, and comfortable trip in crossing the harbor. The boats are to be constructed in such a manner as to afford protection to market men and their teams, thus saving them from the exposure to the wind and weather, which they have hitherto been obliged to endure. The success of the enterprise may be said to be assured, as a large number of the residents of Dartmouth and the adjoining country have identified themselves with the new Company, and have, by the liberal manner in which they have subscribed to its stock, given practical expression to their desire for new and improved ferry service. The enterprise needs no special recommendation to capitalists. The fact that the ferry business is not affected by dull times, that the travel between the Dartmouth side of the harbor and Halifax is steadily increasing, and that a large number of those who use the boats are interested in the success of the new Company, should be a sufficient guarantee to investors that they will receive a fair return for their outlay. As the coach lines from Halifax have been superseded by the modern railway, so the ferry boats of the old company, which have done good service in their day and generation, are now to be superseded by first-class modern ferry steamers, which will at once meet the requirements of the travelling public, and be in keeping with the progressive spirit of the times.

DE LESSEPS.

The octogenarian genius that planned, and is now seeing made, the Panama Canal, has lately been seriously considering another enterprise of great pitch and moment. Not content with splitting the two continents of the New World, he has interested himself in a project for changing the face of the great "dark and dusky land." He proposes to transform the Sahara into a magnificent inland sea, by cutting a canal from it to the Mediterranean. In April next he will, so he says, form a company to carry out his plan. This is a most stupendous enterprise, and one that civilization should carefully canvass and investigate before giving it sanction. A French astronomer raises to the scheme the objection that it will totally destroy the planetary "balance of power," and result in other terrible consequences. A more plausible objection is that a large sea in the place of the Sahara would result in giving Europe cooler Southern winds, and thus ruin the chief industries of Greece, Turkey, Italy, &c., &c. Still another point urged against it is that if the Sahara is really so immense in length and breadth and as far below the ocean level as alleged, the quantity of water that would run into it would be seriously missed from the Mediterranean shores. In thinking of the venerable President of the Panama Canal Company and this his latest scheme, we come to the same conclusion as the *Paris Universe*, viz: if the old man finish the Panama Canal without doing any harm, and if he bring up his twelve young children well, so as to be some shadow of himself, he had better then rest from his labors, and repose on his laurels.

CANADA TO THE FRONT.

When it was proposed to allot to Canada 54,000 square feet in the Exhibition Building, at South Kensington, London, many an incredulous Canadian indulged in a smile, believing the space to be much greater than would be required to display the exhibits sent from the Dominion to the great Indian and Colonial Show; but it now appears that the space allotted to Canada is small in comparison to her needs, and that, notwithstanding the 6,000 square feet of additional space, which have been secured, it will be found difficult to arrange our exhibits within the allotted area, so as to display them to advantage. The Government exhibit of woods and cereals will be most complete; in addition to sections of the great Douglas pines grown in British Columbia, the products of our eastern forests will be fully represented. In the agricultural department, every effort has been made to secure an exhibit worthy of the country. The cereals, roots, and dairy products from each Province will be placed side by side, and will, no doubt, compare most favorably with those displayed by other British Colonies. Our mineral show, which is said to be most comprehensive, will give to the minds of the millions who visit the Exhibition, some idea of the extent, variety, and value of the mineral resources of Canada. Our fisheries exhibit will equal, if it does not surpass, that made in the Fisheries Exhibition at London. The educational exhibits of the several Provinces will be of a most creditable character; and we are glad to note that a special effort is being made to procure a collection of literary and artistic works, such as will show the "litterateurs" of the old world that Canada can hold her own in the intellectual as well as in the material and commercial world.

SOME NATIONAL NAMES.

In 1867, when the confederation of the Provinces was brought about, the name selected for the newly-formed Dominion was the one formerly borne by two of the confederating Provinces. It was, perhaps, a fortunate thing for the harmony of the union, that these two Provinces gave up their old name entirely, and adopted those of Ontario and Quebec. True, many people in the Maritime Provinces still call their Upper-Province countrymen by the name Canadian, in its old sense; yet they do this on their own responsibility, and the people of those Provinces employ the term only in its broader signification. There ought, then, to be no feeling of jealousy among the different Provinces on the question of name. The Dominion is to be congratulated on having adopted as its national designation an unambiguous, clear-cut, sonorous word.

The States of the American union, too, may be considered fortunate in having so impartially chosen the name United States, although the expression is not quite so convenient or so distinctive as might be desired.

It may well be doubted, whether the people of the different parts of Britain would not be better satisfied if the name of their common country were more accurately applied; for, unfortunately, England and Britain are often used as synonymous terms. We frequently hear of the power of England, or read of an English victory. Even when an attempt is made to use a broader term, we come upon an expression "Great Britain and Ireland," which is certainly well calculated to make the inhabitants of the latter island feel as strangers. The distinction is a natural and a correct one; yet we once heard an Irishman complaining of it; and what this illiterate man chafed at is equally galling to many thousands of his countrymen. Shakspeare asks—"What's in a name?" and adds—"That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet"; yet the choosing of a name for a young nation, or for a confederation of nations, is a much more serious question than may at first glance appear.

The migration of the Negroes from the Atlantic Southern States is just now attracting much attention in the old confederacy. The Negro has turned his face Northward and is seeking employment in the attractive fields of the Mississippi valley. The movement, which is very general, is caused by the lack of work in the Atlantic States.

Those who have read the speech delivered by the Honorable Mr. Chapleau at St. Jerome must feel thankful that the French were represented in the Dominion Cabinet by a man of such clear judgment and integrity of character. Chapleau might have held in his hands the balance of power had he stooped to the low grovelling position of a time-serving politician, but he realized that the interests of the French and English-speaking people of Canada were identical and that any attempt to foster the spirit of French nationalism would be prejudicial to both peoples alike. Chapleau deserves to be remembered as a patriot who places the country and its people before sectionalism and race-jealousies.

Owing largely to the fashion prevalent among wealthy Americans, of giving liberal endowments to colleges, some of the American colleges are enormously wealthy. The richest universities in the United States, and probably in the world, are Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Lehigh, and Columbia. Yale, Princeton, California, and Michigan, are not nearly so well off, financially, although their position as Universities is in the first rank. These latter own \$2,000,000; \$2,000,000; \$2,500,000; and \$1,500,000 respectively. The income of Oxford is \$2,050,000, from a capital of \$66,000,000; that of Cambridge is \$1,665,000, representing a capital of \$55,000,000. The capitalists of the Pacific slope show a disposition to vie with the Easterners in liberality towards colleges. Ex-Governor Stanford, of California proposes founding a university of Pals Alts, to cost \$20,000,000. In this country we have not such wealthy men; but we have many who could give sufficient sums to place our colleges in a position of affluence.