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LONDON, SATURDAY, FEB. 1.

DEGRADING THE NATION'S RAILWAY.

It is now proved that the Government is degrading construction on the National Transcontinental Railway east of Winnipeg set up by their predecessors in office. The correspondence between the Grand Trunk president and the chairman of the Transcontinental Commission and other documents are now before the House of Commons, to show what has been and is going on.

With the view of making the national road, owned by the Canadian people, of the highest possible physical standard, it was decided that no grades should be above four-tenths of 1 per cent, east, or six-tenths of 1 per cent, west. Not even these maximum grades were to be admitted if a lower rise could be secured without too great difficulty. But the commission has been ordering wooden trestles and grades up to 1 per cent, for speedier and cheaper construction. Major Leonard, chairman of the commission, wrote last July 19 that such modifications were in accord with the practice of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway on the line built by that company from Winnipeg west and from Fort William to Superior Junction. What a private company may choose to do does not affect the question of the standard for the national railway. It was, says Major Leonard, necessary in some cases to put in wooden trestles instead of steel structures; the "necessity" is not yet explained.

Major Leonard argues that 1 per cent. grades will make no difference to the hauling capacity and speed of engines, where there is space beforehand for gathering momentum. On the other hand, it is shown that in some cases a train has to make a stop at a station, and so will be interrupted in the necessary acceleration. In other cases, a wooden trestle will necessitate a slackening of the velocity of a heavily-loaded train, and particularly when, as at Poplar River, a long 1 per cent. grade comes in connection with such a trestle, the difficulty of surmounting the grade after a slowing on the trestle will be made all the greater.

President Chamberlin, of the G. T. P., changes that the lowering of grade standards is a breach of the contract of July 29, 1903, on which the G. T. P. leases the national line. Major Leonard replies that he fails "to notice in this, or in any other agreement or act relating to the construction of the eastern division, any provision relating to the gradients to which the line shall be built or the nature of the structures." Mr. Chamberlin stands by his interpretation of the agreement. Whichever view of the contract be correct, there is no longer any doubt of the fact that the specifications laid down under the late Government for the building of the nation's road are not being sustained. The commission seems likely to make a mess of certain parts of the line.

LLOYD GEORGE HAS NOT RETREATED.

Mr. Lloyd George has given the quietest to the report that he had dropped or suspended his land reform project.

It was inferred when Lord Haldane intimated that the Government would overhaul the educational system from top to bottom, that this new policy had been improvised to cover a retreat on the land question. There were rumors that the ministry was divided, and that the hitherto irrepressible Welshman had been repressed at last.

Mr. Lloyd George has chosen the annual meeting of the National Liberal Club to throw his hat into the ring. For months a special committee formed at a famous breakfast party at the Chancellor's house has been collecting data in all parts of the kingdom. Its report, the Chancellor says, will shatter the Empire by its revelation of the circumstances in which the agricultural laborers and their families work and live. These evils have always engaged the attention of social reformers, but the report will focus them as they have not been focussed since the corn law agitation. At the root of the question is the housing problem. Land is so costly under monopolistic conditions that the farm laborers are huddled into a dangerous minimum of housing accommodation. There is not only a monopoly in land, but in many districts a monopoly in laborers' cottages. Thus Hodge is pinched on two sides; his wages are too low, and he has to pay for a bad home more than it is worth. With no competition in the matter of rents, he is chained like a serf to a particular house and a particular landlord.

It is hardly necessary to say that there are benevolent landlords, but it is equally unnecessary to say that there are many who are not, or who are too much absent or otherwise engrossed to attend to the conditions of their lowly dependents. The tenant farmers, who have more direct dealings than the landlords with the farm laborers, have

themselves a heavy burden of rent to meet.

So the question of the laborer has to be attacked by the state, and from three sides. First, the housing; has to be improved, as to both quality and price. Second, a minimum wage has to be fixed as for other sweated occupations. Third, the land must be opened up to the workers; they must be given a chance to own or rent some of what they till.

Land reform will help not only the country, but is vitally important to the workers in the towns. Not only are there questions of taxation to be solved in the interests of city tenants, but rural reform itself indirectly affects them, as the recruits for the work in towns are drawn from the country. To keep farm laborers on the land by better conditions will tend to prevent unemployment in the towns, and also raise the level of wages there, especially in the unorganized trades.

DR. BEATTIE NESBITT.

It would be ungracious to use the occasion of Dr. Beattie Nesbitt's death to moralize at length on his life. At such a time the world tries to remember only a man's virtues. Dr. Nesbitt had many good qualities. No one could have wielded the influence he once possessed in the city of Toronto without some personal merit. Those who knew him well can testify to his unbounded gentleness and real kindness of heart. In his palm days his hand was in his pocket at every call of impecunious friends or parasites. His "bad eminence" as a party boss cost him dearly, but he spent his money ungrudgingly when he had it. He had the spirit of a boy, and a sort of juvenile enjoyment of the exercise of his power. He was naturally "a good fellow," and had genuine ability that would have won him the prizes in public life that he coveted if he had shown more caution and scruple in his methods. Perhaps he was only more careless of his reputation than other men who were no better, but preserved a better appearance. His consuming ambition, and love of doing grandiose things in a grandiose way, led him into innumerable schemes which proved his financial undoing. It is probable that he promoted the Farmers' Bank in good faith, but he could not resist the temptation to use it for other unfortunate adventures, and he was drawn into the troubles which engulfed him in his last days. The tragedy of his life, ended in his 47th year, is that it is a record of wasted gifts.

The Turks blame their defeats on German guns, but what about the man behind the gun?

Its treatment of National Transcontinental Railway gradients shows that the Borden Government is already on the down grade.

The British suffragettes are now ruling golf courses. Could a more expasperating method of annoying John Bull be invented?

The steel corporation in purchasing a town site near Sandwich is wiser than the average municipal corporation. If it goes ahead it will reap the increment of land value for itself.

Happily Westminster's loss of Dr. McCrae will be London's gain. He is a forceful preacher and will be a useful and influential citizen. He is hardly a stranger, having been so near a neighbor.

The late Dr. McDonald will be long remembered for his cheerful and companionable qualities. He was a keen currier and golfer, and his devotion to these games helped to keep him young to the last. His death after a few days' illness came as a surprise, as he was exceeding active for his years, and apparently in the full enjoyment of life.

Rebuked by Earl Grey, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, M. P., apologizes to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and says he had no idea of impugning his patriotism or loyalty. Now that his party has dropped food taxes, he should go the whole way, and admit that the free exchange of cattle, grain, and vegetables between the United States and Canada would not disrupt the Empire, or even spoil the Unionist policy.

THE CRAZE FOR LEGISLATION.

Saskatchewan, like Alberta, is showing symptoms of that uncontrollable impulse to legislate, which is characteristic of a young community as it is barren of practical results. The desire to make two, or four, or a dozen laws bloom where one had formerly eked out a precarious existence, is a sign of youth, rather than an evidence of such practical intelligence as this intensely practical world calls for. Unfortunately, it is not always easy to view it in this light.

WHAT A BIGAMIST IS.

An inquisitive reader writes to the editor of this column to ask what is a bigamist. A bigamist, as we view it, is a man who has more wives than judgment.

EASY TO SEE.

[Toledo Blade.]
"It isn't the fault of women," remarked the man on the car, "if one-half the world doesn't know how the other half lives."

THE WAR IN LONDON.

London is no place for a peace conference now. How can peace between nations be negotiated in the midst of war? The militant women are out again, and Mrs. Pankhurst has issued a proclamation. Under the speaker's ruling that the proposed amendments to the franchise bill in the interest of women who want to vote would make it a new bill, the ministry had nothing to do but withdraw the bill, with a promise to obtain the obviously necessary measures of electoral reform for which it provided by other means. Then the tocsin sounded. The police

were out in great force, tinorous shopkeepers boarded up their windows, and little Annie Kenny, formerly a mill hand, announced that the lives of public men would be made impossible. Poor fellows, many of them have found life next to impossible for a long time. The situation is almost new in history, in one respect, but in another it is as old as history's self. It is all very interesting, viewed from a point of safety 3,000 miles away.

NAPIER'S LOGARITHMS.

[Boston Transcript.]
All the world is invited by Scotland to celebrate the tercentenary of logarithms, the invention of that redoubtable Scotsman, John Napier. It has been the physical as well as the intellectual work of the world, the latter by means of logarithms, the former by methods suggested by those eminent road-builders, McAdam and Telfer.

TRYING TO DECEIVE.

[Yonkers Statesman.]
"Bacon—Did you say there is a black sheep in his family?"
Egbert—Yes, but they whitewashed him pretty well.

MAUD'S PROGRESS.

[Boston Transcript.]
"Has Maud succeeded in getting into society yet?"
"No, but she's rising in the social scale. She's being snubbed by a better class of people this year than last."

A NEW FAIRY STORY.

[The Filigree Blade.]
As the cobler stepped into his shop his scold of a wife started to leave him unmercifully for coming in late.
"Be quiet, Zenobia," said he affably. "Today I have had a great stroke of luck. Coming home I met a lady who had lost her way. I put her in the right track and out of gratitude she presented me with this pair of slippers. Whoever puts on the left one becomes invisible. Then if you put on the right one you reappear. You will see that this present is very valuable because we will be able to make lots of money with it."

Zenobia became still and stood over him with curiosity in front of her husband.
"Come," said he, "let us try it once." She slipped on the slipper—and positively in the same instant vanished away.
"It is really true!" said the cobler, astonished. "She's gone!"
Then he took the right slipper, went out of the house and threw it in the deepest well.

AT HIS OWN VALUATION.

[George Bernard Shaw.]
For ten years past, with an unprecedented persistency and obstinacy, I have been dining into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or on earth will ever change it. I may dicker and dote; I may pot-boil and puttitudinize; I may become the butt and chopping-block of all the bright, original spirits of the rising generation; but my reputation shall not suffer; it is built upon fast and solid, like Shakespeare's, on an impregnable basis of dogmatic repetition.

CONSIDERATE.

[Washington Herald.]
"You used to want to hold my hand before we were married," she complained.
"I'd like to now," said he easily, "but it would keep you from your housework, my dear."

THE RUB.

[New York American.]
"He says his poor children need another mother."
"Then why doesn't he take one home?"
"The children pay the rent, and they are very hard to convince."

OUCH!

[Brooklyn Life.]
He (pompously)—"I tell my wife all I know."
She—"How delightfully quiet you must be at home."

OTHER PEOPLE'S PROSPECTS.
[Washington Star.]
Into forgetfulness ambition sinks. When some one else is clamoring for his share.
The man who has his office often thinks.
That office-seeking ought to stop right there.

MINING'S DEADLY TOLL.

[Rochester Times.]
It is a terrible reflection upon our Government when life is held so cheaply, that the records in only one section of the State of Pennsylvania show that 17,083 men and boys have been killed since 1870 in mining hard coal—the number of others who died in Scranton. If that many lives were lost in a battle it would be accounted as one of the bloodiest of modern times.

CONTINUATION SCHOOL FIGHT STILL BEFORE COUNTY COUNCIL

Notice Received That Township Council Is Restrained From Acting.

A communication was read at the meeting of the county council this morning from Messrs. Meredith & Meredith stating that an order had been granted by the supreme court restraining the Township of West Nisour until next Thursday, when the case will be heard at the court in Toronto. At that time a further motion will be made to continue the injunction until the date of the trial.

The above solicitors, acting on behalf of Mr. John McFarlan, of West Nisour, have issued a writ against R. Fitzgerald, John Farley, James Simbert, Frank Wilson and the Corporation of West Nisour. The plaintiff wants to restrain the defendants named (the reserve and councilors) from acting upon an alleged illegal resolution of the township council, which provided that the Township of West Nisour guarantee the payment of all debts incurred by the West Nisour continuation school board, and that the same be deposited with the county treasurer as soon as ascertained. A declaration of the court is also asked stating that the resolution is null, void and of no effect, and also an interim injunction restraining the defendants from acting upon the resolution.

The educational committee of the council recommended that no action be taken in connection with the question, and the council adopted the recommendation. Mr. McFarlan is in favor of the establishment of the school, and if he can secure an order from the court declaring that the resolution of the township council is illegal, he will be in a position to

Famous Writers Addicted to Drugs

[By Special Arrangement With the Winnipeg Telegram.]

Whether a strict vegetarian diet would have any direct effect on a writer's literary style or not is a subtle question to answer either in the affirmative or the negative. When we touch upon the use of narcotics by authors we are, however, upon solid ground. Here we can say of a certainty that drugs and stimulants have produced such a state of mental excitability that strange results have been achieved. There are four writers of repute who have given to the world works of great merit, because of the assistance of drugs. Coleridge wrote his celebrated fragmentary poem, "Kubla Khan," when he awoke from a laudanum debauch; De Quincey's wonderful phantasmagoria, "The Confessions of an Opium-Eater," was the result of his habit, in the poppy's charms; Dante Gabriel Rossetti was addicted to the use of chloral, and I feel very sure that many of the dreamy, soft effects of his verse can be traced to that habit; another poet not so well known as the others I have just referred to was James Thompson, second of that name among English poets, the author of one of the weirdest and most fascinating poems in our language, "The City of Dreadful Night"; the author of this poem of blackest midnight born was also a drug fiend, and died in poverty and misery in 1852, at the age of 48.

The life of De Quincey, the opium-eater, is by long odds the most curious of any of the nineteenth century writers, Coleridge, Rossetti and Thompson. The pains and pleasures of the latter two cut short their lives, by their addiction to drugs, but De Quincey managed to live to a ripe old age and piled up an immense volume of written work in the course of his industry. The pains and pleasures of the drug are terrifically described in that unique work, his "Confessions." He was able to steadily increase the dose until at length he could take 320 grains of opium in the form of eight thousand drops of laudanum a day. The drug eased the pains of gastritis from which he was a constant sufferer all his life, but no one can read the "Confessions" without shuddering at the vivid recital of those midnight horrors which threatened him with madness. For some time he was incapable of any sustained intellectual labor and passed his days in gloom. But De Quincey was a man of great will to conquer the habit to such an extent that he restricted his daily dose to a minimum; he had spells when he increased it, but although he took it all his life, he managed to remain master, so that he could pursue his studies and his literary work. "How much," said Dr. Warburton Begbie, the Edinburgh physician, who attended him in his declining years, the substantial power and brilliant fancy of his writings had to do with the opium-eating I do not inquire; but that it helped to keep active and entire, the lock-up with his own hands, the feelingless, that large and constant working brain—that, in a word, it fed it—I have no manner of doubt."

In Mr. Sidney Low's capital edition of selections from De Quincey's writings (G. Bell & Sons, London), there is a masterly essay on the opium-eater's life and work. Although his eccentricities diminished during the last years of his life, Mr. Low refers to De Quincey's bad habit of filling up one house with papers and then when he could no longer move about abandoned it and rent another residence. He never refused to give alms to a beggar he met, hence his presence at drunken beggars, among whom borrowed babies and drunken old women were the largest of the references to his sympathy. "He was not," says his daughter, "a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on which he did not set anything on foot. The most recent incident being for someone to look up from work or book to say casually: 'Papa, your hair is on fire,' of which a calm 'Is it my love?' and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken." But it was of this genius that Carlyle said, "You would have taken him, by candle-light, for the beautiful little child; blue-eyes, blond-haired, sparkling face—had there not been something, too, which said: 'Eccevi, this child has been in hell.'"

Joanhoe.

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A FEW LINES MUST ANYTHING

Hiderow and his stable companion, Electrification, were wandering along disconsolately, when they came to 931 Wellington street.

"Well, I suppose we might as well go in with the rest of the goats," they sighed, as they dragged themselves in beside that old also-ran, Filtration.

This weather, in accordance with the spirit of the hour, is kaleidoscopic.

Yes, gentle reader, the favorite term of the fiction writers at the present moment is "red-blooded."

Every story written, the editors announce, is one for "red-blooded" men about "red-blooded" written by a "red-blooded" writer, who, if he is not real, prevents the fiction upon the suggestion of the editor to eat his meat raw. If truth could search him out in his studio, he would no doubt be found nibbling at a chocolate éclair or drinking pinkie tea with some aesthetic dame.

In other words, these heroes who tramp a thousand miles over the frozen north or cut their way through an Amazonic tangle and do other glorious things gloriously, impress us only with nausea, because they don't exist. The mantle of O. Henry was apparently spiritualized at the same time as his owner.

The "yeggmen" from the land of the free continue to make Western Ontario's banks and postoffice their favorite sport.

One goes to the picture theatre to study criminology and western romance, while right at our doors the most vicious type of criminal the country has ever known is operating at will month after month. The county and small town police system is so much a merry jest. One may expect to read that the chief of some small burg has wakened to find himself surrounded with his own handcuffs about his wrist. A hundred or more safes have been cracked in the vicinity of London in a few years, and the "yeggs" have been able to get away with it. They make the small towns their special prey, and have no difficulty in opening the type of safe found in the average small town postoffice or bank with a can-opener. If a few of the citizens would organize, possess and keep a few Winchester handies, they might land a few of them. Every town is sure to have a victim from them sooner or later. Crediton, up the Bruce, being the latest. Watch for a visit, Mr. Postmaster. They have sent out their cards. Provincial police? The biggest joke of the Whitney regime. Ever hear of one of them making an arrest? Neither did we.

We hear reports of drops to forty and fifty below in western points, but when we consult the official weather report next day we come to the conclusion that our eyesight is dimming for the point from which the blizzard was reported seems to be a garden.

We have an idea that Mr. Publicity Agent attends to the weather reports of those western Tampas and St. Augustines. Bermuda will have to go down of business as a winter resort if they don't stop it.

The corrugations are beginning to come out of the brow of the ice-man. The coalman is also able to sit up for a spell.

One sees some strange shapes in the

fire, and then there's Dundas street. Sir James Whitney has been told that he is a heavy-handed man, might add and hard-headed, also heavy-headed.

A tall man and a short man with a belt on his coat—both of them well-known "businessmen" were crossing Horton and Richmond streets. The gumbo was particularly adhesive at this point and the short man was without rubbers. Realizing that he might be "immersed in mud to his waist" if he proceeded, he sprang up on the back of the taller and was ferried across. The tall man had rubbers, and didn't mind being temporarily chartered as a ferry.

Now that the Americans are continuing to pour across our borders, why not start a "Back to Canada" movement for the good sons who are wasting their energy for Uncle Sam, while the old home has a whole cupboard full of opportunities waiting for them, not to speak of a whole parcel of fatted calves?

"Does your baby eat paper if he gets a chance?" we asked the doctor. "Yes, indeed," he responded. "He's regular literary digest."

YOUNG TURK PARTY NOT KEEN FOR WAR

But If Driven to Fight Skefket Promises a Battle to a Finish.

NO REVOLT IN THE ARMY

Criticizes Bulgars for Wanting to Keep the Whole of Adrianople.

[Canadian Press.]

London, Feb. 1.—Francis McCullagh, in a Constantinople message to the Daily News, sends an interview with Skefket Pasha, replying to the suggestion that his cabinet is a war cabinet. Skefket replied: "That I emphatically deny. It is utterly false. We came to power, not to make war, but to prevent the infliction upon the empire of the ultimate disgrace and humiliation of the loss of the whole of Adrianople."

"You know how I came into power; you know of that outbreak of national fury which placed me there. That conviction shows that the cession of the whole of Adrianople is impossible without chaos throughout Turkey and a general revolution. I yield my predecessor's fate will be mine, and neither Turkey nor the powers will be any better off. In my reply to the powers I have ventured as near as any man can to the precipice. 'I do not believe another statesman in Turkey would have dared to approach so near the brink, if I go a hair's breadth further, I tumble into the abyss. We Turks are soldiers, not hucksters.'"

On Verge of Unknown. "The Bulgars have got practically all our European empire, but those grasping, hard bargaining peasants want two kilometres more and are going to war for those kilometres. They are not only going to unloose the dogs of war in the near east, but probably all over Europe."

"We stand on the verge of the unknown. Everybody knows how slight a shock is required to hurl us all together into worldwide catastrophe. 'In my opinion this renewal of the war will be more than sufficient. As for me, I don't want war. I regret it. If blood flows it will be on the Bulgars' head, not on mine.'"

Skefket, says McCullagh, certainly has the fullest confidence in his troops. He said that all the nation was behind him, and all the army united at his back. He laughed at report of fighting among the Turks at Tchakodagh. "This will be a fight to a finish," he said, "one or the other of us will be wiped out. Yet he gave the distinct impression that diplomacy had not said his last word. He expects the powers to reply to his note and evidently expects them to bring pressure on the allies."

ONTARIO SHOULD KNOW QUEBEC

People of the Province Should Understand Those of Different Race to the East.

FRENCH GOOD PEOPLE

Local Option Is Strictly in Force in Many Places—Drunkennes a Rare Thing.

A charming word-picture of life today in a typical French-Canadian village was drawn by Professor Wrong, of Toronto University in addressing members of the Women's Canadian Club, and students of the Normal School in the assembly hall of that institution Friday afternoon.

The subject was one of importance. Professor Wrong stated, to "Normal School students, who would become teachers of Canadian children, and it should also appeal to members of the Women's Canadian Club. In the first place it was important that we in Ontario should understand the French people. It was a curious coincidence that the two ancient antagonistic types, the Teutonic and Latin, should be in Canada, building up a new civilization side by side.

Two powerful influences affect life in French-Canadian villages today, said the speaker. They are the seigneur and the cure. With the coming of the French to Quebec Province, the seigniorial system was introduced, and in many rural sections of the province today the seignior's authority is fully recognized by the simple-minded habitants.

The seigniorial system was not without its advantages. Settlers paid but a low price for lands, and the seignior could not raise the price to satisfy his own pocket. The seignior had many duties to discharge, was advisor, magistrate, and as a rule, however, the seignior was disappearing, but the influence of the cure remained undiminished.

Churches in Quebec. Professor Wrong stated that Ontarians should not be harsh in their judgment of the fine churches to be seen even in small places throughout Quebec. They were only built when the people desired them, and quite often the cost was not such a burden on the inhabitants as visitors imagined. The Quebec act gave the Roman Catholic Church authority to collect tithes, etc., for the erection of churches, but Protestants were not taxed.

Regarding the cure, the professor stated that he was paid by tithes of twenty-sixth the amount of grain or hay raised by the habitants. The life of a cure in Quebec was earnest and spiritual. He stood, as it were, between God and man, giving advice, spiritual and material, and his influence was on the whole, most helpful to his flock.

In many rural sections of Quebec local option is in force, and strictly so. Habitual drunkennes is a rare thing, and there are but few cases of domestic infelicity.

The French-Canadian. "The French-Canadian of today represents a very distinct and marked type of man," the speaker affirmed. "Don't make the mistake of trying to turn him into an Englishman. I believe the habitant to be the most tenacious type of man, excepting perhaps the Jew. He holds to his ancient traditions, and is among the most difficult races of people to assimilate that have been in Canada."

Unity, authority, and organization were the chief characteristics of the French-Canadian village, and Professor Wrong doubted if we could say as much for the small villages of our own provinces. He suggested to the members of the Women's Canadian Club to take up one county in Ontario, and endeavor to make of it a model county along every line.

Principal Radcliffe, of the Normal School, conveyed a hearty vote of thanks to Professor Wrong for the conclusion of his address, and a reception was tendered the students and members of the club by Mrs. Betts, president.

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