

amongst the sturdy sons of toil, who are the backbone of a country's strength. In a recent number the *Mail* indicates more clearly the kind of evening educational institution it would like to see established. It would have, in a central location, a building containing a number of convenient class-rooms, a science laboratory, and a commodious lecture-theatre for popular lectures and concerts; also, if practicable, a museum, an art gallery, and a library, in which special works of reference might be kept. It would propose that the work should commence with classes in such subjects as arithmetic and algebra, chemistry, physics, mechanics, French, English, and Canadian history, English literature, singing, geography, etc. No one can reasonably doubt that were such an institution once opened in good working order, and a fair attendance once secured, the work would rapidly grow in interest and importance, and ultimately become a great boon to thousands of the most worthy and ambitious of the class for whose benefit it is designed. Institutions somewhat similar are, we believe, working with great success in some of the cities of England. The mental vacuity, which the *Mail* deplures as the result of the absence of a taste for useful reading and the want of other profitable occupation for the evening hours, is injurious, not only to the individuals affected but to the communities to which they belong. Any wisely directed effort to stimulate the indifferent, and direct the studies of the industrious and ambitious in right channels, should have the sympathy and aid of all right-minded citizens. The institution in question would, as the *Mail* points out, have to rely at the outset wholly upon voluntary contributions and efforts. The *Mail* proposes to give further suggestions for the establishment and working of a society for the purposes indicated. These should be considered on their merits.

AN important discussion has grown out of the proposal of the Manitoba Government to place its Educational System under the control of a member of the Government. The relative advantages and disadvantages of having the Public Schools controlled by a political and, as a necessary consequence, partisan Minister are being vigorously canvassed. We freely admit that there is much to be said in favour of having the work of Public Education in charge of a Minister of the Crown. Such an arrangement has many advantages. It makes the Department more directly responsible to the people. It gives the Head an opportunity to explain and defend his management, to make known the wants of the service, to obtain the necessary supplies, and to account openly to the people for his policy, expenditures, etc. It thus gives the people a more direct control than they could exercise in any other way. But, on the other hand, what can be more undesirable than that the methods and spirit of party warfare should be imported into the management of Educational affairs, so that the most profound and delicate questions of Educational policy must henceforth be settled, not on their merits, or with sole reference to what is wisest and best, but with a view to the promotion of party interests? That this is inevitable is beyond question. The conflict now going on in reference to the use of French in Ontario Schools is an illustration. He would be an unsophisticated observer indeed who could suppose that the issue will be decided solely with a view to the highest interests of all concerned, instead of on grounds of political expediency. Is it the aim either of the Opposition or of the Government to find out just what is wisest, discreetest, best, and to have that done? Can any one doubt that the desire to make political capital is far stronger with many who are prominent on both sides than the desire either to deal fairly with the French, or to act on principles of genuine patriotism? Does any one suppose that the Minister chosen by either party to manage the Department will be selected solely with reference to his merits as a scholar, educator and administrator, or that capacity for usefulness to the party will not count for more than all other qualifications? If it is said that the same argument may be applied to the management of any other Ministerial Department, and is therefore valid as against the whole system of party Government, we can only bow to the impeachment, and plead that it is not the fault of the argument but of the system. But the more intimate relations of the Education Department to the whole people make its manipulation for political ends particularly undesirable.

THE final dropping of the Sugar Bounties Bill is but one of many indications of the strength of the grasp which Free Trade principles still have upon the minds of the English people. For a time it seemed as if the results of the

International Conference would be accepted as a triumph of commercial diplomacy. One might almost have been ready to prophesy that the abolition of the continental sugar bounties would remain in history as one of the achievements of the Salisbury Administration. But no sooner did free discussion disclose the real character of the measure, and the people and their representatives bethink themselves that for the nation to pledge itself not to buy sugar from any country giving a bounty upon its production was really to put up a barrier to prevent its people from procuring that commodity in the cheapest market, than a revulsion of feeling took place. The postponement and abandonment of the Bill is the consequence. Rightly or wrongly the great majority of British Statesmen and economists, as well as the great mass of the common people, are still firmly persuaded that it is better that the many should obtain a given product at a cheaper rate from abroad than that the few should profit from its manufacture at a dearer rate at home. This conclusion is greatly strengthened in this particular instance by the fact that the cheap continental sugar imported becomes the raw material of other industries to an extent which goes far to compensate for the losses inflicted upon British industry by the decay of the sugar refining business. The possibility of a like result in other cases is one of the unknown quantities which complicate the general problem of Protection vs. Free Trade.

IF the decision of the British Home Secretary to commute the sentence of death pronounced upon Mrs. Maybrick to imprisonment for life is not glaringly illogical, it is saved from that category by what will seem to most minds a very fine distinction. It is understood to be based upon the view that though it was proved beyond doubt that the convicted woman administered arsenic to her husband for the purpose of causing his death, it was not absolutely clear that the arsenic thus administered by her was the actual cause of his death. Such a distinction may be clear enough and valid enough in itself, but it immediately gives rise to other subtle questions, such as whether, admitting that his death was due to arsenical poisoning, the considerable amounts given by her must not have been at least contributory; if so, what degree of contributory effect would be necessary to constitute wilful murder; whether such questions may not be raised in almost any conceivable case of murder, especially by poison; and so on. Moreover, if the design was to spare the woman's life without derogating from the reputation of the Court, it is difficult to see why it is less a reproach to imply that that Court failed to give due weight to such a consideration as that which prevailed with the Secretary, than that its sentence fell short of absolute justice in any other respect. Apart from all such hair-splitting it is clear that the British public would have welcomed the commutation no matter how weak or illogical the reason assigned for it, or in the absence of any reason. The very general interest aroused in the case and the amount of popular sympathy bestowed upon the convicted woman constitute a curious and difficult problem. Probably the most rational explanation is that the public mind was not satisfied with the evidence of the woman's guilt. Seeing that the chain of circumstantial evidence was almost as complete as it can be made in the great majority of cases, a further inference is that there is a growing repugnance to the infliction of the death penalty upon any circumstantial evidence whatever. Of course there is a gross inconsistency in the infliction of a lesser punishment instead of a greater simply because the evidence of guilt was not quite strong enough to warrant the greater. Still further, the worst cases, those in which the crime is plotted and carried out with studied secrecy, are the very ones which would get the benefit of the doubt, while less flagrant murders, committed in the presence of witnesses, would incur the greater penalty. It is thought that a remoter result of this agitation will be the establishment of a Court of Appeal in criminal cases, but the tendency of it is in the direction of the abolition of the death penalty.

THE plan proposed for the prevention of strikes in Germany is peculiarly Bismarckian. It appears to be simply to require the workman to put himself under such conditions in relation to his employer that he cannot strike without rendering himself legally liable to punishment for breach of contract. In a freer country such a law would be unworkable by reason of the impossibility of enforcing it in cases in which thousands of offenders would usually be at once concerned. The German military system furnishes a solution of this difficulty. Prince Bismarck, if

we understand the measure, proposes that the military may be employed when necessary to enforce the new law. The German people have already submitted to so much absolutism that it is possible, though it seems highly improbable, that they may submit to be thus dealt with. It is easy to see that the effect of such a law must be to put the employee more than ever at the mercy of the employer. The latter has but to take the advantage of the competition in the labour market, or the necessity of the case, to constrain their workmen to sign a contract for a length of time, at starvation wages, and the whole power of the nation becomes pledged to enable him to enforce the contract. We do not know whether the rule is to work both ways, binding the employer as well as the employed. That might seem to be only fair, and would go a good way towards mitigating the hardship. But it is highly improbable that the employer would consent to be bound to retain a workman at a fixed rate of wages and for a fixed period, irrespective of his efficiency or faithfulness. Even with such a compensation the law would still work injustice, because the lack of equality in the conditions of the two parties to the contract would always give the capitalist a very great advantage. The strike is an unwieldy and barbarous bludgeon at least, and bids fair to fall into disuse. But to put it out of the power of workmen to use it in the last resort would be to deprive them of a weapon, whose possession has hitherto done much to enable them to improve their condition and gain a larger share in the products of their toil than they could otherwise have obtained. It can hardly be supposed that they will now suffer the weapon to be wrenched from their hands, without a terrible struggle.

#### LETTERS FROM MICHILIMACKINAC.—I.

WAVE-WASHED, green-grown, rising to majestic heights that may be seen twelve leagues distant, shelving slowly to a pebbly beach of clearest amber, a mass of whitish-grey calcareous rock showing false turrets and walls of stone that seem to emerge from the clinging ivy of distant fir—the Island of Michilimackinac, commonly and too prosaically called "Mackinac" or "Mackinaw," rises from the pellucid and gleaming waters of historic Lake Huron. No platitude of simile will avail to describe its peculiar beauty. A gem—cast upon the heaving bosom of the great inland water—it is this; an emerald—tipped with shafts of darker jet-like pine—it is this; a moss-agate—set in opalescent waves that gleam silvery white at night, turquoise blue at noon—it is this, and more. There exists no beauty which Nature is capable of conferring upon certain favoured localities that is not met with here. Michilimackinac—in original Indian *Mishinimakinang*, "at the great uplifted bow," "at the great hanging arch," or, according to other and as popular traditions, the "land of the Giant Turtle"—contains within its charmed radius not, however, only beautiful and unique scenery, panoramas of wood and water, forest and glen, shore and meadow, but a mine of historical and traditional lore that must ever greatly augment its importance in the eyes of beauty-lover and health-seeker. For once and for all let the horrid term "summer resort" vanish. Happily, many as are the gaily painted and aesthetically appointed boats that come into her harbour, the work of deterioration is slow. The tourist comes and the tourist goes, but in the main cannot be said to have materially affected the surpassingly rich and varied natural phenomena of the Island. It remains very much the same, when once the little town, with its hotels and wide white foreign-looking piazzas, is passed, as when the early Jesuit Fathers skimmed in their light canoes past its hanging arch, its towering beetling crags in 1670. Truth it is, that this Fairy Isle, in its mixtures of sylvan loveliness, quaint survival of ancient block-house and Indian stockade, and the modern paraphernalia of war, as evinced by the guns and sentinels of the U. S. fort high on the hill, *should* belong to Canada. It belongs to the same period and to the same generation as the walled and noble city of Quebec, the primitive but neat and picturesque villages of Lower Canada and the interesting suburbs of Chambly or Valois. It requires the same appreciative enthusiasm, the same eloquent discrimination that one must ever bring to bear upon a place, not only beautiful but interesting, not only picturesque but romantic. And as the history of Mackinac trends largely if not altogether upon the arrival and career of the French in these western wilds and gleaming lakes, it should be all the more important and interesting to us, we who are indebted to the French ourselves for the only approaches to local colour and national heraldry, so to speak, we have.

In the fall of 1670 Father Claude Dablon, Superior of the Jesuits on the upper lakes, planted a new missionary establishment at *La Pointe du St. Esprit* on Lake Superior. This site had formerly been called *La Pointe de St. Ignace*, and the mission is still commemorated by the name of a small settlement across from the Island of Mackinac. This mission was of course mainly a religious one, attended by Indians, mostly the wandering Tionontate Hurons. But the first white man who appears to have