

CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, Dec. 9, 1882.

THE WEEK.

In our last number we published a diagram of the transit of Venus, which takes place on Wednesday of this week. The cut was taken from an important German paper, and was accompanied by an article by a German *surant* with an utterly unpronounceable name, in which, so far as we noticed, the majority of the words were upwards of six syllables in length, and the verb never came till we had got sick and weary of hunting for it. Is it wonderful that in face of evidence like this we considered that Herr Whatshisname had the best of us, so to speak, and that his diagram was as correct as his article was verbose? Imagine our horror, when Mr. Walter Smith stepped in to tell us that the whole thing was wrong, and that the planet crossed the sun's disc at the bottom instead of the top. Now the editor of this paper takes this opportunity of informing his friends that he is not a professional astronomer. He is, of course, like all editors, thoroughly acquainted with the Differential Calculus, all the ancient and modern languages, draw poker, engineering civil and mechanical, the philosophy of Hegel, foot-ball, the use of the globes, deep sea soundings, the latest fashion in hats, and the price of gas, but beyond these infinitesimal accomplishments he is scarcely anywhere, and hence his deep reverence for the German gentleman already alluded to won him to error, until his still greater respect for Mr. Walter Smith convinced him of his mistake. However, fortunately the remedy is easy, and those who wish to observe the transit of Venus in connection with the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, will please turn their copy of the last number upside down before commencing observations. There! Mr. Smith, will that satisfy you?

It may be news to some of our readers that the profession of an umbrella maker is hateful to the gods. It would seem that the nine lives with which tradition invests the ordinary domestic cat are, in the economy of nature, taken from the span of those who furnish us with those necessary but undeniably hideous products of modern civilization. So, at least, we judge from the communication of the correspondent of a Paris paper, who informs his readers that a young man flung himself off the Tarpeian rock, and was naturally killed, *as he was an umbrella maker*. The connection is obvious, though, so far as we have observed, this peculiar liability of the profession (or should it be trade) to mortal risks has never been before properly brought before the public. It would be a curious and interesting subject of inquiry as to the light in which umbrella makers are regarded by the Accident Insurance Societies. A gentleman who, if he does throw himself, in an excess of playful enthusiasm, off a rock, is certain to be killed then and there, is obviously not a risk with which a well-regulated insurance agent would care to meddle.

The passion for tobacco, in spite of Mr. Gerritt, and other opponents, is apparently spreading in the United States. The equanimity of the Philadelphia correspondent of the *Times* has been disturbed by a gunpowder explosion, which killed two men. "Parts of the corpses were found half-a-mile away. They had been smoking, and this had caused the disaster." A disaster caused by parts of corpses which had been smoking is too remarkable an event to be passed lightly over. It would be difficult, indeed to know exactly what steps to take for the conversion of a corpse which persisted in the noxious habit. Probably burial would be the best and most effectual way of putting out the pipe of a really obstinate cadaver. But this is only a suggestion, based upon no personal experience whatever. Our Philadelphia friend is still to be heard from on the subject.

The prosecution of the greatest of living historians by the greatest of living statesmen is a scandal, the magnitude of which is scarcely affected by its paltriness. A superior Court has quashed the decision of an inferior tribunal which had acquitted Professor Mommsen of the charge of libelling Prince Bismarck, and the trial

will begin again. Whatever may be the decision of the Court, the victory will remain with the eminent German scholar. Prince Bismarck's petty and vexatious proceeding is really an attempt to prosecute history. The pen which has drawn with graphic contempt, too faithful to the weaker sides of the characters it depicted, the tiresome respectability of Pompey and the fussy efforts of Cicero to convert a second-rate man of letters, according to Mommsen's injurious estimate of him, into a third-rate man of action, might take a signal revenge on Prince Bismarck. But the historian is probably more magnanimous than the statesman.

Some Philadelphians have formed a company to introduce a device intended to convey underground the telegraphic and telephonic wires and those for electric lighting, the disposition of which has become so serious a problem in all large cities. A public exhibition of the device has been given in Philadelphia during the past week, and experiments were made through some nine hundred feet of the various kinds of wires just mentioned. The device consists of a system of conduits, intended to be laid under the centres of the principal streets, containing several thousand insulated wires, and having room also for a passage-way from which the wires are accessible. In the side streets it is proposed to lay the wires under the gutter, with a removable iron curbing, which is to take the place of the gutter-stone.

The demand for some device of this character is unquestionable. But the disposal of the wires is only part of the problem, and perhaps neither the most important nor the most difficult part. The wires are certainly a nuisance and a very serious disfigurement, and the system will very soon break down under its own weight. Even if no pressure were put upon them to respect the rights of the public in the public streets, the companies must soon come to something better than the absurd method of stringing wires upon high poles along the highways.

As Commissioner Thompson's report showed, the chief nuisance and obstruction are already caused by excavations. The steam-heating companies which have dug up the streets of lower New York—some of them several times—over during the last year—have interfered far more with the rights and the comfort of the people of New York than all the telegraphic and telephonic and electric-lighting companies put together. What it is most needful to stop is the constant excavation of the streets for sewers, for gas mains, for water mains, for pneumatic tubes, for steam-heating, and what not. If these excavations are not stopped, they will increase until the public streets will be given over altogether, underground and above-ground, to private enterprises or to public undertakings which equally interfere with the free use of the streets as places of transit. This excavation can only be stopped, to make a bull, by being done again, and done once for all. A system of subways which shall hold all the municipal appliances now carried underground, and for which every private corporation using the ground under the streets shall be compelled to pay an equitable rent, and in which the wires now carried over the roofs of houses and along the streets shall also be housed, is what is needed, and what we must finally come to. Any contrivance which is intended to deal with a part only of this problem, however ingenious it may be, and however successful for its own purpose, is but a make-shift.

ANARCHISM IN FRANCE.

L'Etendard Revolutionnaire one day remarked that Montcau-lez-Mines had the glory of inaugurating the use of dynamite in France. The glory of having employed dynamite for the first time in the world appertains to the Russian Nihilists. A great number of those who were able to leave their country took refuge at Geneva, and Lyons was naturally found to be in the radius of their operations. It appears very probable that it is under their influence that French Anarchism has succeeded in giving a little consistency to its doctrines: the Anarchism of the associate Emile Gautier is in reality only the copy of the Nihilism of Bakunin. The near connection of the two parties is seen from more than one indication which is to be found in the collection of their journals. For example, in the first number of the *Droit Social*, we may read a letter from M. Elisée Réclus, who excuses himself for not being able to send anything for the moment, because he is occupied in writing the preface of a pamphlet by Bakunin; and in the sixth number we see Prince Pierre Krapot-

kin writing from London: "I cannot promise you an active assistance, but in all cases count me as your friend." Nihilism has not only given its theories to Anarchism, it has also handed over to it its means of action.

Under the titles "Revolutionary Tactics," "Anarchical action during the Revolution," "Dynamite and Pyrotechnism," "The Warfare of Barricades," the *Droit Social*, and after it *L'Etendard Revolutionnaire*, published a series of articles which contain a thorough system for the destruction of society, the origin of which is revealed by its coldly scientific method. I do not believe that any of our Anarchists, not even Gautier, would be capable of a similar plan, so minutely and thoroughly calculated. That belongs to the Russian student, who to the most cloudy and sickly mysticism in Utopia can join the most methodical mind in action. We are going to judge of this.

The ideal of Anarchism being the absence of institutions, its end is to destroy all institutions which exist at present. To arrive at this end it is necessary to recruit a certain number of adherents; the best means is to promote troubles which, by making the popular classes suffer, will exasperate them. That may involve many particular catastrophes—no matter. "We," said Fournière to one of his friends at Besseges, not without a point of courage, "we are the sacrificed generation; we are *la chair de canon*."

The little Machiavel of the *Droit Social* expresses his opinion on this subject in the number of the 12th of March thus:—"It is not injurious that, from time to time, grievous conflicts should spring up, like those of Villefranche, of the Grand Combe, and of Besseges. Better than all written or verbal propaganda, these skirmishes awaken latent passions, rouse everywhere the germs of revolt, riveting the bonds of solidarity which unite the poor, and increase at the same time their experience and energy for more decisive acts."

When Fournière fired a shot from a revolver at M. Brechard in Roanne, the *Droit Social* resorted to this idea. Some of its readers being astonished that it should make the eulogy of a murderer, it replies:—"When an act of this kind, under such circumstances, takes place, the artisans first ask themselves why the authors of this deed have acted thus; then, from argument to argument—especially if these deeds, instead of being disapproved of, are upheld by an active propaganda—they end by telling themselves that if all the workers act in this manner, exploitation and exploiters would quickly be done away with, and then they would have their ears open to social questions."

Besides, a revolution prepared by a series of acts of this kind could be no other than social, for the first care of the workman would be to take possession of the workshops, and accustomed to act thus by themselves, they would overthrow any Government, whatever it may be, which attempted to levy a tax the day after the revolution."

The Anarchists find an excellent word to define criminal attempts of this kind. It is "Propaganda by deed." To support the propaganda by deed some money would be necessary. The revolutionary tactician on several occasions insisted on the necessity of the formation of a bank for revolutionary propaganda. On the occasion of an affray which had taken place between the police agents and the workmen refiners of Paris on strike, he showed the services that it could render:—

"Thus," he remarks, "if the revolutionary bank had been able to distribute to the most unruly malcontents a certain quantity of revolvers, do people believe that the latter would have retreated before having the satisfaction of using their instruments? Oh, no! they would have seized with alacrity the opportunity of making some police spies bite the dust."

The *Droit Social* ends by opening a permanent subscription for the constitution of this bank. But it only produces ridiculous sums. The revolutionary tactician sought other resources; twice he pointed out the manner in which the Anarchists could procure the money which was necessary to them. "We said," he resumed, in the number of the 14th of May, in recalling an article of the 11th April, "that it is necessary for labourers to resolve to knock boldly at the doors, even if they had to break them open, of safes full of gold and banknotes, in order to establish an abundantly provided fund to meet the needs of the counting house of the Revolution. A plague on foolish scruples. We said it, and we repeat it."

On the 11th of June it again reverts to this question. This time a much more precise idea has occurred to it on the means of procuring money. In each town there is a tax collector's office, which at certain hours possesses a chest filled with the money of taxpayers.

"Ah, well! can we imagine that in one or more cantons there can exist a revolutionist without prejudices and disposed to furnish the coffers of the cause? If we may suppose that the latter would be quite able and with the greatest facility, to study the ways and means of penetrating to the safe, that he might know when the collector goes to his club or to the chase, and abandons his treasure moment (sic); once provided with this information, this revolutionist who will attempt nothing himself, and for a good motive, against the money of the Government, seeks in his interior and exterior connections for the ears of executors to confide to—

*An Anarchist agitator implicated in the riots at Besseges.

them the fruit of his observations, and the latter themselves on the track of advantages of this kind, set to work, and execute the operation, which thus cannot leave any trace."

The tactician consents that, however Anarchist they may be, they may have still some old remains of *bourgeoise* conscience which, aided by the fear of the gendarme, would restrain them. Thus he discusses a long time the rightfulness of this sort of robbery. He endeavours to destroy "the foolish scruples" which might still restrain them:—

"What! should we recoil when we know that the gold we are going to recover possession of would perhaps have been made use of to pay the police who ferret us out, the informers who betray us, the judges who condemn us, the gaolers who torture and the soldiers who shoot us! And when we know especially that this gold is the fruit of the theft of our salary of each day."

By virtue of this law, which makes one end by believing what is so often repeated, the *Droit Social* announces in all its numbers that the great struggle for the destruction of society is approaching, it ends by considering it as imminent; and the affairs of Montcau-lez-Mines and Lyons have shown that this belief was taken of by some of its readers.

HOW THE BANK OF ENGLAND WAS HUMILED.

Once, many years ago, a bill of exchange for a large amount was drawn by Anselm Rothschild, of Frankfurt, on Nathan Rothschild, of London. When the gentleman who held it arrived in London, Nathan was away, and he took the bit of paper to the Bank of England and asked them to discount it.

The managers were very stiff. With haughty assurance they informed the holder that they discounted only their own bills; they wanted nothing to do with the bills of private persons. They did not stop to reflect with whom they had to deal. Those shrewd old fellows in charge of the bank of the realm should have known and remembered that the bit of paper bore the signature of a man more powerful than they—more powerful, because independent of a thousand and one hampers that rested upon them. "Umph," exclaimed Nathan Rothschild, when the answer of the Bank was repeated to him. "Private persons! I will give these important gentlemen to know with what sort of private persons they have to deal."

And then Nathan Rothschild went to work. He had an object in view—to humble the Bank of England and he meant to do it. He sent agents upon the Continent, and through the United Kingdom, and three weeks were spent in gathering up notes of the smaller denominations of the Bank's own issue.

One morning, bright and early, Nathan Rothschild presented himself at the Bank, and drew forth from his pocket-book a five-pound note, which he desired to have cashed. Five sovereigns were counted out to him, the officers looking with astonishment upon seeing Baron Rothschild troubling himself personally about so trivial a matter. The Baron examined the coins one by one, and having satisfied himself of their honesty in quality and weight, he slipped them into a canvas bag, and then drew out and presented another five-pound note. The same operation was gone through again, save that the Baron took the trouble to take a small pair of scales from his pocket and weigh one of the pieces, for the law gave him that right. Two—three—ten—twenty—a hundred—five hundred five-pound notes were presented and cashed. When one pocket-book was emptied, another was brought forth; and when a canvas bag had been filled with gold, it was passed to a servant who was in waiting. And so he went on until the hour arrived for closing the Bank; at the same time, he had nine of the employés of his house engaged in the same work. So it resulted that ten men of the house of Rothschild had kept every teller of the Bank busy seven hours, and had exchanged somewhere about £22,000. Not another customer had been able to get his wants attended to. The English like oddity. Let a man do anything original and they will generally applaud. So the people of the Bank contrived to smile at the eccentricity of Baron Rothschild, and when the time came for closing the Bank, they were not a tenth part so much annoyed as were the customers from abroad whose business had not been attended to. The bank officials smiled that evening, but,—

On the following morning, when the Bank opened, Nathan Rothschild appeared again, accompanied by his nine faithful helpers, this time bringing with him, as far as the street entrance, four heavy two-horse drays, for the purpose of carting away the gold, for to-day the baron had bills of a larger amount. Ah! the officers of the Bank smiled no more, and a trembling seized them when the banker monarch said, with stern simplicity and directness:—

"Ah! these gentlemen refuse to take my bills! Be it so. I am resolved that I will not keep one of theirs. It is the House of Rothschild against the Bank of England." The Bank of England opened its eyes very wide. Within a week the House of Rothschild could be demanding gold which it did not possess. The gentlemen at the head of affairs saw very plainly that in a determined tilt the Bank must go to the wall. There was but one way out of the scrape, and they took it. Notice was at once publicly given that thenceforth the Bank of England would cash the bills of Rothschild the same as its own.