High Church parsons," says the *Spectator*, "they all played, Bishops and all." The satires of Pope and Swift and the social gossip that has come down to us in history make it very clear that the ladies of the upper ten thousand took an unblushing part in the high gambling of the last century, so that even this deplorable social blot is not peculiar to our day. The *Spectator's* review of the whole evidence pretty well substantiates its conclusion that on the whole "the gambling of the present generation is less dangerous and less common in the highest circles than it has been in previous centuries, though the taste has now spread to classes which a few generations ago would have preferred highway robbery, or burglary, or elaborate conspiracies to defraud, to mere gambling." The fact, if such it be, that gambling and the vices which accompany it are sinking lower in the social scale, and are now much commoner among the middle and lower classes than they were a century ago, is sufficiently disheartening. Yet it is gratifying to be able to conclude that society is, on the whole, improving, and that even such incidents as that in which the Prince of Wales so undesirably figured afford no solid basis for the despair of the pessimist. But while it is probably quite true, as the *Spectator* argues, that we are apt to mistake the greater publicity given to what is wrong in these days, for increase in the thing itself, there is one important aspect of the matter which it quite fails to notice. Should not the conduct of the nobles and people of Great Britain to-day be judged by higher standards than those of a century ago? Have not the conditions of society undergone such changes in many respects, that to affirm that the morals of the present day, in any *stratum* of society, are but little better than those of the corresponding classes a century or two ago is to pronounce the severest censure?

We commented a few weeks since upon the Nicaragua Canal Bill, now before the United States Senate, the purpose of which is to give the guarantee of the National Government to the Company's four per cent. bonds, to the amount of $100,000,000. The ostensible object of the Bill is, of course, to enable the Company to sell its bonds at a much higher rate than would otherwise be possible. The real effect would no doubt be to give the United States Government a controlling influence in the management of the Canal. As we pointed out at the time, the matter is one in which all the maritime nations and especially Great Britain are interested, and it is by no means probable that the little republic through which the Canal is being built would either consent to yield such control to any one nation, or be permitted to do so, without at least a very grave protest from other nations. The Bill was not long since before the Senate in debate, and, while supported by some influential senators, was strongly opposed by others, on the ground that the passage of such a Bill would be an infringement of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty with Great Britain, which is a convention between the Governments of the United States and Great Britain for the express purpose of securing the neutrality of the Canal. Some of the Senators seem disposed to claim that this treaty is no longer in existence, though, as Senator Vest stated, the British Government has repeatedly since 1850 assumed it to be in force, while the United States Government has never undertaken to annul, or to modify it. The Foreign Relations Committee has, it appears, reported that Great Britain's rights under this treaty have been destroyed by the English settlement at the Belize and her control of the Mosquito coast, though it would seem to most persons that her interest in these localities, which surely contravenes no international agreement or right, would but give her a stronger reason for wishing to maintain the neutrality of the Canal. It is evident, however, that Congress is not very much in earnest to secure the passage of the Bill. Nor does it appear that any aid is really necessary to enable the Company to go on with the work, though it would, no doubt, be a very material gain to the stock-holders to have a Government guarantee. On the whole there is not, probably, much reason to fear that existing disputes between the two great Anglo-Saxon nations will be aggravated in the immediate future at least, by the passage of the Bill in question.

The unfortunate mistake made by the German Emperor and Ministry in permitting the Empress Frederick to visit Paris has postponed indefinitely all hope of a better feeling between Frenchmen and Germans. One scarcely knows which most to wonder at or to condemn, the unreasonable and un-French-like discourtesy of that section of the Parisians who became so excited over the well-meant visit of the Empress as to treat her with unpardonable rudeness; or the want of discrimination and self-control which leads the Emperor and his Ministers to resent the insult as if it had been offered by the French nation. The more reasonable of the German newspapers admit that not only was the attitude of the French Government correct, but that even the mass of the Parisian populace did not fail in respect to their visitor. Only a small group of Chauvinists were responsible for the offensive treatment. Seeing that the Emperor and his advisers were to blame for not having informed themselves better in regard to the probability of such an ebullition of feeling from this excitable crew; seeing, also, that some provocation was given by the very indiscreet course of the Empress in prolonging her stay, and especially in visiting Versailles, it would have seemed both generous and wise for them to have overlooked or ignored the affair. In that case even the Boulangists might have become ashamed of their insults to an inoffensive lady. But, if not, such magnanimity would have been but a friendly recognition of the difficulty in which the French Government had been placed by the ill-advised visit for which that Government was in no way responsible. Of course the refusal of the French artists to exhibit their pictures in Berlin, in consequence of the state of feeling in Paris, was well calculated to aggravate the difficulty. But the artists had surely a right to do as they pleased, and it is not easy to see how the conduct of a comparatively small number of private Frenchmen, especially when no overt act was committed, could justify the German Government in ostentatiously increasing the severity of its passport regulations on the French frontier, or the Emperor in a discourteous refusal to see the French Ambassador in other than an official capacity. It is to be hoped, in the interests of European peace, that the storm may pass over and the incident be forgotten. But it must be confessed that the situation is just now full of danger. Should Emperor William insist, as he seems disposed to do, on some kind of apology from the French Government, it is extremely doubtful whether the state of feeling in France would permit the Government to make such a concession, even were it otherwise disposed to do so. Even if the event does not precipitate the seemingly inevitable conflict, it is greatly to be regretted in that it has rekindled much of the old passionate hate in both nations, and thus frustrated for a long time to come what we may hope were the Emperor's good and pacific intentions.

RAILWAY COMMISSIONS.

The question of the formation of an independent railway commission to stand between the railways and the people in order to decide all questions of rebate, drawback, discrimination or exorbitant rates has been before the country now for quite a number of years, and, considering its importance, the only wonder is why something of a useful and practical nature has not been done ere this in order that there should be some speedy and fair way of disposing of the above matter.

The present position of this very important question seems to be shortly as follows:—

Several years ago Mr. McCarthy introduced a Bill into Parliament pointing in this direction, which after it had been brought up at more than one session was taken out of his hands by the Government, who, in 1886, appointed a Royal Railway Commission to enquire into and report the whole matter to the Government. The Commission, after taking a good deal of evidence on oath in the most important points in Canada, reported that they found that evils of the discriminatory class did exist on the railways, and as the Interstate Commerce Law of the United States had only then lately been passed, and it was likely that our Commission would follow in its path to some extent that it was better to appoint a "temporary" tribunal until the workings of the Interstate Commerce Law had been more fully tried, and for this purpose they recommended the appointment of the Railway Committee of the Privy Council.

This tribunal has now been appointed for about four years, and as far as is known not one single case has been brought before them; this would seem to point to the fact that there were none to be presented, but this appears not to be the case as the facts which have been stated continually in the papers, including some articles which appeared in the *Empire* some months ago, would indicate that there are still many and serious complaints being made, but it is the universal opinion of those aggrieved that the Railway Committee of the Privy Council is far too ponderous a body to apply to in matters of this kind, besides which it would be too expensive as well as too slow in dealing with such urgent and important matters which the interests of the public who maintain and support the railways demand should be readily, promptly and effectively dealt with. Those and other defects of this body were pointed out in the report of the Commission, so that at present the question is left until some member of Parliament will take it up again and press the necessity of the appointment of a tribunal that can be more easily got at and whose powers would be sufficient to deal quickly and satisfactorily with the pressing questions above named.

Perhaps no time would be more opportune than the present for again bringing this most important question under the public notice. The elections have just been held and every constituency in the Dominion has elected a member and as this is entirely a non-political question, and one which all can support, the public generally has now a good chance should they so wish to get a pledge from their members to support any move in the direction of getting such a Commission appointed as may be useful both to the country and the railways, as, although there is some opposition to it on the part of the railways, it would seem from the beneficial results derived under the State and interstate Commission in the United States, that it cannot but be a measure which will be beneficial to both the people and the railways.

Canada is too deeply interested in the railways of the country to wish in any way to damage them, but at the same time the people of this country have given such a very large and substantial aid towards the building of railways that the people naturally feel that they have a right to ask, at least, to be dealt with, all on the same basis, and that no one person or place should be discriminated against in favour of any other person or place, this desirable result is not likely to take place unless some such Commission as has been proposed is constituted.

Canadian.

PARIS LETTER.

Of all the extraordinary spectacles of Paris, a municipal ball has no equal. It is a kind of *kermesse*, a Fourteenth of July *fête*, under cover. A clean shave and a frock coat, such at least is expected on the side of gentlemen; as for the gentler sex the toilette my be low or high bodied, and the materials silk, satin, cloth, tulle, calico, etc., or a harlequin mixture of these, for motley is the only wear. Brummagem seems to be exhausted of its jewellery. The Hôtel de Ville building, in which these annual ratepayers' crushes come off, is capable of accommodating 7,000 persons, if they only keep as quiet as bundled sticks. Picture then the Black Hole of Calcutta, when 15,000 perspiring *invités* are wedged together. Yet that was the dismal happiness at the first municipal *rout* of this season. Imagine the dancing under such circumstances, and its homogeneity. Every couple had the air of "wheeling about, and turning about, and just doing so," on their own account—proof of independence.

Talk of storming a redoubt; that bravery is nothing to the ugly rush, the *sortie torrentielle*, for the buffet, to capture a penny cake, a sandwich of "*paté de canard*" *gras*, and a glass of the first questionable seizable beverage. Souls are always thirsty after a battle; at one time I thought the republican guard would have had to fix bayonets to keep back the tidal wave of funny folk. It was as difficult to move forwards as backwards. Several victors on gaining the buffet acted on the maxim, "*J'y suis j'y reste.*" I have seen at the Presidential balls a crowd during supper time pushing, panting, gasping and perspiring just as determinedly, though less roughly, than the guests of the Municipal Councillors at starvation hour. Hunger forces the wolf to quit the forest; a buffet, no matter how questionably stocked, illustrates equality of stomachic brotherhood. But the zenith of the practical joke was reached on the *invités* departing, and looking a fire escape thankfulness being met at the exit door by a platter shaken under their noses for an obolus for the poor. Of course charity covereth a multitude of sins even in etiquette. After a struggle to enter the hall of dazzling lights, and next working through the horrors of a middle passage to get away, while perspiring at every pore, to be thus bled on the threshold of liberty! President Carnot and his lady were thus squeezed out of a 1,000 fr. note each; but M. Carnot has 1,500,000 frs. yearly to cover that *pensez à moi*, besides a free residence and coal, plus *eau et gaz* for all the stories of the Elysée Palace.

M. Lipmann claims to have solved the great difficulty of permanently photographing colours at one pose, and which till now has been almost viewed as akin to squaring the circle. Many scientists—Herschell, Gros, Claudet, Becquerel, etc.—have touched the borderland of this triumph; but, although they were able to catch some coloured rays and fix them, these proved to be evanescent when in contact with daylight. M. Lipmann has been occupied with his experiments for three years—success was only won within the last two months—in his laboratory at the Sorbonne. He submitted to the Academy of Sciences proofs of photographed colours that remain unaffected by the action of light. His plan is to employ the common glass plate with the ordinary chemical emulsion, divested of granulations; behind the plate is placed a frame or bath of mercury, when the "taking" details proceed as ordinarily. Only the object to be photographed must submit to the "not stir" attitude, pending at least thirty minutes, and at most three hours, according to the nature of the colours; some requiring a longer time for impression than others.

At present, photography is instantaneous; but, when first discovered, three hours were requisite for a pose. The quickest proof that Daguerre ever took occupied fifteen