

# THE CRITIC:

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

The announcement that the Canadian Pacific Railway has been refused the bonding privilege by the United States Government is serious, if true. But, until the news is confirmed, it may reasonably be hoped that it is incorrect.

We have observed some weak attempts to manufacture political capital out of the employment of some Italian navvies by the railway contractors in Cape Breton. The wail raised does not seem very reasonable. It would no doubt be better if Canadians were employed, but the road is a Government railway, being built under contract. The contractors undertake to build a railway for the Government for a certain sum of money, but they do not undertake to employ any particular kind of men, and no contractor would take a contract with any such provision in it.

The following extract from the Boston Advertiser is not at all unpleasant reading, and might be taken as a hint by the restless spirits who attempt from time to time to discredit British connection.—"In Canada, from the highest to the lowest, the 24th of May is a day of general holiday and celebration. The same general spirit marks the occasion as with us on our 'Glorious fourth.' Railroad excursions, games and athletic sports, picnics and speech making are all combined to celebrate the occasion in a fitting manner, and the love of the motherland finds a hearty expression in every way. To those gentlemen who have been agitating 'annexation' ceaselessly, in season and out, we believe an excursion into any of the provinces on that day would have been a liberal educator."

The rigid enforcement of the United States law relating to contract labor with foreigners is now and then productive of curious and somewhat absurd positions. The founders of a new Roman Catholic University in Washington, who have either overlooked this law or construed it as not being applicable to their case, are, it is said, to be prosecuted for arranging with a staff of Professors imported from Europe to constitute the faculty of that seat of learning. The founders claim that it is impossible for them to secure the right sort of Professors in America. But the law is the law and has to be enforced. Probably its enactors did not contemplate its application to cases of this nature, but it is only another instance of the crudity of American legislation intended to meet some supposed emergency, and of the hastiness and rashness with which American legislators rush into it.

"The recent action of Great Britain and Canada," says Congressman Dingley in the *North American Review*, 'in granting a subsidy of \$300,000 per annum to secure the establishment of a British steamship line between Vancouver and China and Japan, with the object of driving off the American line between San Francisco and those countries, ought to arouse Congress to the importance of encouraging the establishment and maintenance of American steamship lines between the United States and the countries of South America and of the East.' The United States Government may perhaps do wisely in subsidizing their own steamship lines, but that a writer on the subject should misstate the establishment of a British-Canadian Line in the narrowest spirit is not creditable. Are we to halt in our progress whenever we approach a parallel to an American steamship or railway line?

The fact that the principle of the extradition of American refugee swindlers has been carried to a practical demonstration by a simple act of the Canadian Legislature is a very significant one. Among the other cries got up by those who are "onaisy in their minds," as the song says, about the future of Canada, is the necessity of Canada possessing the power of making treaties. Extradition has been generally considered a subject for treaties only, yet we now find a not unimportant section of those for whom extradition is desirable (not to themselves) provided for by simple legislation as effectually as if they were the objects of an elaborate treaty. The idea is not, however, entirely new. It was suggested in 1887 by a commission of eminent British judges. As there is an imperial power of veto on Federal Legislation for two years this action of the Dominion Legislature has been specially submitted to Lord Knutsford by the Minister of Justice, but it is of course a foregone conclusion that so eminently just and expedient an enactment will meet with nothing but approval on the part of the Imperial authorities.

Notwithstanding the reiterated professions of anxiety for the preservation of the peace of Europe on the part of the crowned personages with whom the responsibility lies, in which there is no doubt more or less sincerity, the remarkable outburst of excitement in France at the proposed visit of King Humbert of Italy to Strasbourg shows plainly enough how small a spark would suffice to explode the inflammable basis on which all continental Europe rests so uneasily, and there are possible elements of danger which might at any moment become imminent. So long as Prince Bismarck lives peace will be maintained if possible. But the great Chancellor is 75 years of age, and, though a man of exceptional power and vigor, he is not one who has taken special care of himself. Should the destinies of Germany come to be entirely in the hands of the fiery young Kaiser, there is no certain guarantee against a sudden outbreak. This consideration, combined with the restlessness of France, and the steady policy of Russia, which must sooner or later come to open demonstration, to say nothing of the uneasiness of Austria Hungary, compels the conviction that the European situation must still be regarded as uncertain in the extreme.

The Post Office regulation increasing the rate on drop letters from one to two cents in cities and towns where there is a free delivery by carriers has provoked much opposition throughout the Dominion, and in some places in Ontario post offices, or systems of delivering letters as private speculations, have been mooted, but a reference to the law has convinced most of the promoters of these enterprises that they are illegal. One firm in Hamilton, however, seems bound to test the legality of the Government's claim to a monopoly in postal matters, a decidedly foolhardy proceeding, as the Dominion statutes clearly give the Postmaster-General the exclusive privilege, subject to some unimportant and natural exceptions. A perusal of section 34 of the Postal Service Act will convince the most skeptical that private post offices are out of the question. In England the point was definitely settled about the year 1642, when Mr. Edmond Predeaux was appointed postmaster by an ordinance of both Houses of Parliament. As his emoluments were very considerable the Common Council of London endeavoured to erect another post office in opposition to his, till checked by a resolution of the House of Commons declaring that the office of postmaster is and ought to be in the sole power and disposal of Parliament. But it was not until 1657 that a regular post office was erected by the authority of the Protector and his Parliament, upon nearly the same model as has ever since been adopted. As it seems definitely settled that the Postmaster-General has the exclusive right to carry mails, a new point has been raised, and that is, has he a right to charge more for the service than private parties would be willing to undertake it for? There may be something in this, but our opinion is that Parliament having confirmed the two-cent rate on drop letters, there is no legal remedy. As the increased rate is decidedly unpopular, it will soon be demonstrated to the Postmaster-General that a return to the old rate is desirable.