

THE CRITIC.

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

The government of Mexico is financially embarrassed, and it seems improbable that it will be able to extricate the country from its present difficulties without, for a time at least, repudiating national obligations. Ninety-five per cent. of the revenue is now required to meet the interest upon the national and floating debts, and the Mexican Congress positively refuse to increase the revenue by any further additions to the customs duties.

The Pacific mail steamers which have for the past ten years plied between the ports of San Francisco and Melbourne, Australia, are shortly to be taken off that route, owing to the refusal of the United States government to subsidize the line. During the past ten years the trade of the United States with the Australian colonies has more than quadrupled, having increased from four to seventeen million dollars annually, and as this increase is mainly due to the establishment of the Pacific line of steamers, the owners naturally feel that their enterprise deserves to be encouraged by the government, more especially as New Zealand, Victoria and New South Wales have willingly subsidized the line.

The Chinese government are about to float a loan of one hundred million dollars, the proceeds of which they propose laying out in the construction of railways in Southern and Eastern China. The opposition to the building of railways by the better classes of the Chinese is gradually giving way, and the Pekin authorities will now have the support of the Mandarins in their railway enterprises. One might naturally suppose that in view of the cheap labor to be obtained in China, one hundred thousand dollars would go far towards the railway requirements of the country, but the truth appears to be that at least one half of the amount of the loan will find its way into the pockets of the corrupt officials connected with the government.

We must needs feel thankful that the loss of life during the recent rebellion in the North-West was comparatively so small. No doubt this is partly due to the fact that General Middleton kept his men as far as possible under cover and that the enemy were concealed in their rifle pits; but the death roll still remains out of all proportion to the ninety thousand pounds of ammunition used by our troops, to say nothing of those used by the rebels and Indians. Well disciplined troops are certainly a desideratum, but their effectiveness in time of war depends more on the skill with which they use their rifles, than upon the promptness with which they go through their drill, or the polish or pipe clay they use upon their accoutrements. Our volunteer militia require more target practice than they now have, and the militia department should see to it that a reform be made in this respect.

The postage stamp swindle which has for many years been carried on in the United States in the most unblushing manner, is now being ferreted out by the police detectives, and the iron hand of the law is being laid upon those who have so successfully played upon the credulity of the public. No doubt many persons have been somewhat surprised at receiving private and confidential communications of these stamp operators, and the assurance that upon the receipt of one three cent stamp the writer of these anonymous epistles would forward, post pre-paid, a pamphlet containing startling revelations, etc., etc., has no doubt induced many persons to comply with the moderate request and forward the stamp. Hundreds of persons in the United States live in this way upon their wits; while tens of thousands, prompted by curiosity or the hope for gain, pay their poll tax to these swindlers without a murmur.

Louis Riel, the incorrigible rebel, has been condemned to be hanged on the eighteenth of September next. The sentence, though not unexpected by many, will be a relief to those loyal Canadians who feared that the rebel chief might, through the uncertainty of the law, find a loophole whereby to escape from justice. The only fear now is that the crown may be influenced by the dominating French party to commute the sentence to one of less rigor. This we say is now the danger, and it therefore behoves us one and all to raise our voices and insist upon the law taking its proper course. The clemency of the crown when wisely used in exceptional cases may be advantageous to the community, but it never should be used to shield from punishment a man who knowingly urged a peaceable people to take up arms against the government and at the same time incited to deeds of violence the cruel and blood-thirsty savages. Justice has condemned him to death, and in justice to the community he should suffer the penalty which his conduct merits.

A report is now going the rounds of the press to the effect that the German government is now negotiating with the Shah of Persia with a view to the latter country becoming a colony of the German Empire. The rumor, however, appears to be without foundation and has probably arisen from the fact that the German Ambassador at Teheran is endeavoring to arrange with the Persian government a commercial treaty similar to that enjoyed by Great Britain. As the free transit of German goods via the Caucasus Mountains has been interdicted by Russia, the German government feels it incumbent upon it to complete arrangements whereby German manufactures will be admitted at the Persian ports upon the same conditions as those of England and France, and we understand that Bismarck is likely to succeed in these negotiations. No doubt the report of the occupation of Persia by Germany would tickle the fancy of the Russo-phobists in Great Britain, but in view of a possible Russo-German alliance, Persia as a German colony would be an additional menace to British supremacy in India.

A correspondent commenting upon the class poem by Miss Emma Araminta Gilman which recently appeared in the columns of the *Morning Chronicle*, says with regard to it, "I do not want to break a butterfly on the wheel, nor yet to nip a budding Sapling, but does not a production such as this disgrace the manufactory? Would any teacher, possessed of one spark of poetical genius, have allowed such an effusion to see the light? Is this the sort of education we taxpayers are called upon to encourage? Rhyme, metre, grammar and sentiment are all utterly ignored in this class poem, which is more afflicting when we observe that in some quarters it is considered a work of art. Is it a *jeu d'esprit*, or was it fished out of the waste paper basket by the janitor when sweeping? It is just possible that politics, or partiality, or idiosyncrasy, or the hot weather may make it desirable that such 'poetry' should be approved, in which case of course even 'Critics' must be dumb, and of course anyone assenting to 'cut up a lady's prize poem must feel like the Egyptian schistes, and expect to undergo a shower of stones from all quarters."

This is the political holiday season, and journalists who, during the session of Parliament, penned yards of diatribes relative to those holding adverse opinions, may now complacently trim their quills and prepare to discuss matters which more nearly concern the interests of the country. The villainy of Sir John Macdonald and the hypocrisy of the Hon. Edward Blake have been chronicled and heralded so frequently that the people are beginning to question whether or not political leaders must needs be sinners. As we have now secured the shortest and best rail communication between Halifax and Montreal, *a la* Messrs. Daly and Stairs, and have extended the Washington Treaty, at least so far as the Americans are concerned, it is quite time for us to devote our attention to some questions, such as the Dry Dock, the Nictaux and Atlantic Railway, the Missing Link, the Short Line, the Hants County Railway, the Cape Breton Extension, etc. In this city and Province we generally take up our public works by half dozens—these we inscribe upon the respective faces of a die, and when this has for several years been duly shaken in its box, we toss it out upon the table, in order to see which enterprise we really mean to undertake. The Short Line shows up for this summer, next winter the Dry Dock may turn up.