

# The Dominion Illustrated.

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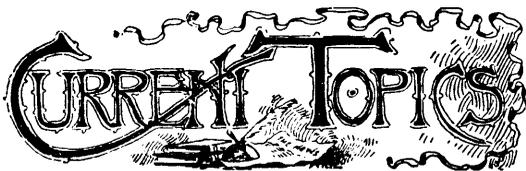
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## The Cattle Export Investigation.

It would have not only been much more satisfactory to all parties, but eminently better calculated to attain the object he had in view, had MR. PLIMSOLL frankly acknowledged at the recent investigation on the cattle export trade, that he had been mistaken in the statements he had published relative to the treatment of animals *en route*. As far as the latter were concerned, the result was a complete vindication of the Canadian exporters from the charges of cruelty; not a particle of evidence was produced to substantiate such accusations. MR. PLIMSOLL'S action in declining to come down at all from the high ground he had first taken, in the face of the statements of all parties concerned, high and low, was, we think, unworthy of him and of the high reputation he justly bears. Investigations of this sort, however, usually bring to light existing circumstances of a minor nature, but none the less deserving of correction, and the case in point is no exception to the rule. The treatment accorded to the human beings in charge of the cattle was fully shown up in the corroborated evidence of the men who had themselves experienced it, and it is to be sincerely hoped that the result will be a marked amelioration in their condition. While allowing for a good deal of exaggeration in the statements brought forward, there can be no doubt that their treatment is unnecessarily harsh and their existence while on board rendered uncomfortable to a degree. The fact of young lads having been enticed on board these vessels and then being left in England to sink or swim, was clearly shown by MR. DICK'S evidence, and we trust that some check on this practice will be imposed in the legislation which will, no doubt, follow the report of the Commission.

## The Elgin Marbles.

The proposal that England should return the Elgin marbles to Greece is still the subject of much debate in the London press. The strongest argument in favour of their restoration is that they form an integral portion of the Parthenon; the claim that they belong to Greece and were illegally taken to England, is absurd in view of the fact that LORD ELGIN paid nearly £100,000 for them. While no one will dispute that their presence in Athens—among the remaining ruins of the Parthenon—would be in strict artistic harmony, they would be practically lost to the great mass of art students, while in London they are accessible to the world. Other weighty reasons against the proposed restoration are the liability of Greece to be drawn any day into some European quarrel, in which case Athens would run a remarkably good chance of being vigorously shelled by any energetic iron-clad that would steam up the Gulf of Aegina; also the

bad precedent that such an action would form; for if the highly-virtuous English public commence returning to the original owners antiquities purchased or otherwise honestly acquired, there is no knowing where such a craze would stop.

## Hurtful Reading.

Many of our elderly and well-to-do readers who imagine, no doubt, that the marvellous degree of cheapness to which the price of first-class fiction and standard literature generally has been brought has been productive of a corresponding general use of such works by the masses, would receive a genuine surprise were they to take post inside a news-shop of the least pretentious type, on or near a busy thoroughfare, and note the class of reading almost universally called for by the patrons. While really excellent and interesting novels are kept on sale in such a place—new and second-hand—at prices sometimes not much above that of an ordinary newspaper, their sale is limited to the smallest possible percentage of the day's business; the almost entire demand being for the choice and spicy tid-bits served up by the lowest class of American weekly literature. This is in two distinct classes; one, weekly illustrated papers, devoted largely to pugilism and to the divorce court, embellished (?) with wood-cuts of a vivid and startling nature, representing the most striking scenes and denouements in those two picturesque departments of life; the other, a series of vividly sensational stories, each complete in itself. Incident crowds on incident; love, murder, shipwreck and a large amount of detective work fill the pages, the only illustration being a racy one on the first page. The effect of all such trash cannot but be extremely injurious to the reader, especially to lads from ten to fifteen years of age. But something interesting and exciting they certainly will read, and the problem is how to supply a healthy and harmless national literature, which will have interest and sparkle enough to displace the foreign rubbish so popular among certain classes. It would be an excellent subject for philanthropists to take up, and, if properly managed, might result in a financial profit. Not only is the literature (or rather reading-matter—it is almost a libel to call it literature) complained of distinctly injurious to youthful minds and morals, but its effect, in a national sense, is equally hurtful. The American sailor and soldier is glorified as a hero, the Fenian as a patriot, the dynamiter and assassin as a martyr; everything British is treated with the most insulting contempt, and all that every Canadian school boy has been trained to honour and respect is sneered at or vilified. Such reading must tend to the destruction of all *amor patriæ* in the growing mind, and should be displaced, or in some measure debarred from use, even if solely for that reason.

## A Canadian Historical Society.

It is a matter very greatly to the credit of the United States that so much interest is taken by the more intelligent and literary classes in the history of their country; interest, moreover, of a decidedly practical nature, inasmuch as not only does an historical society exist in almost every state and in every city of any pretensions, but one can be found in many towns and localities of comparatively small population, thus speaking volumes for the literary and national zeal of the people. Many of these societies date back into the last century, when not only was the population of the whole country numerically very small for the vast territory it covered, but also comparatively poor, with two great objects before its members, the building up of individual and family prosperity, and the successful development and welding of the scattered colonies into a powerful nation. In addition to these all-absorbing pursuits, it must be borne in mind that literature of any sort was scarce, and that practically there were no means for the dissemination among the masses of what few books and newspapers existed. In the face of these drawbacks, the energy and far-sightedness of a few men of literary and historical taste led them to overcome every impediment in the way of establishing

such societies, knowing well that every year saw the death of the men and women who had helped to make the history of the nation, and who alone could supply invaluable material in the narration of the reminiscences of their lives. From such small beginnings has sprung the present goodly array of historical societies in the Union, and which makes that nation lead the world in the number of such organizations and in the value and interest of their publications. Canada has been singularly behindhand in this respect. The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec is the only one of any age throughout the Dominion, and one of the very few that have published their collections and transactions systematically and regularly, the principal others being the Nova Scotia Historical Society, La Société Historique de Montreal, the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Montreal, and the Manitoba Literary and Scientific Society. Many other organizations of this class have been formed from time to time in various localities in Canada; a few of these are still in existence, but by far the greater number have faded away. The general experience has been that after the first year or two the majority of members not only decline to go to the trouble of preparing papers or notes to be read, but even fail in their attendance, and throw the entire work on two or three zealous ones, who become disheartened after a while in view of the general apathy, and cease their efforts. The literary associations that have died in this manner throughout the Dominion may be numbered by hundreds. Is there a remedy for this state of things, so detrimental to the sustenance and growth of interest in the history of our country, a history rich in the picturesque variety of the vivid incidents of centuries of Indian conflict, the fierce struggles of two great European nations, and in strongly marked political and constitutional change? We think there is; at any rate the experiment could be made without hurt to anyone, nay, good would result if it had but one year's life. We urge the formation of a Canadian Historical Society or Association; an organization not to supersede local and existing associations of the sort, but to strengthen and solidify them. It need have no permanent office; the Secretary or President's residence during his term of office constituting the practical head-quarters of the Association. The object of such a society would be the encouragement of historical study, and its duty would be the care and development of existing and new organizations devoted to that subject. All local societies would affiliate with it; once every year a session would be held, at which reports of the progress of each society would be read, and an historical paper on its own district read by a delegate or by proxy, for which a medal or other suitable medal should be given; such annual meeting to be held each year in a different locality; if in summer, on some battle-ground or place rich in historic interest. The expenses of such an organization would be very slight, in excess of the annual medal; all could be covered by affiliation and subscription fees. This is a mere outline of what would, in our opinion, do much to keep alive the spirit and interest of historical research in Canada.

## Literary Notes.

An interesting contribution to the constitutional history of the United States has been made in the publication by the Virginia Historical Society of Dr. Hugh Blair Gibby's 'History of the Virginia Federal Convention of 1788,' which is introduced by a biographical sketch of the author by Dr. R. A. Brock, secretary of the society. The book contains some new anecdotes, among them one of Patrick Henry, who, in the course of a thrilling portrayal of the dangers that might result from the large powers given by the new constitution, suddenly exclaimed, "Why, they'll free your niggers!" Laughter was excited by the droll prophecy of the thing that came to pass.

A memoir of Mrs. Felicia Hemans has been written by Mr. Sutton, the librarian of the Manchester Free Library. The book will be published at an early date.