

**PROMINENT TOPICS.**

The reference of the Alaskan boundary question to a body of six Commissioners, three Americans, three British, is not a hopeful scheme, especially as two of the Americans selected have publicly declared that the case of Canada has no foundation. How can a man arbitrate in a dispute when he has pronounced that "there is nothing to arbitrate!" Then, as can hardly fail to be the case, suppose the three American Commissioners decide one way and the British ones the opposite way, how can such a dead lock be helpful in bringing the question to an end? The scheme seems to have no genuine arbitration element in it, and the outcome will not be worth the expense to either the United States or to Canada.

That the Alaska boundary is essentially a Canadian question, that this Dominion has a paramount interest and Great Britain only an incidental interest in its settlement, seems not to have been sufficiently realized by the Imperial Government.

The financial feature in the legislation proposed to settle the land question in Ireland will be somewhat startling under present conditions now the war debt is so large. But the buoyancy of English finance is indeed marvellous. The dignified tone of the British press in discussing the proposed expenditure of an enormous sum to do away with agrarian troubles in Ireland shows how deep is the conviction of England, Scotland and Wales that the pacification of Ireland must be accomplished at any cost to the Imperial exchequer, which means the people at large.

Mr. John Morley, speaking on this matter in the House of Commons, estimated that the Dunraven land purchase scheme would involve a free grant of 110,000,000, and a loan of \$500,000,000, but, he continued, if the matter was proceeded with in a cautious manner it would not be necessary to spend the whole sum at once. Other Liberals approved of the scheme, so its approval by the House of Commons is certain.

The proposed issue of \$2,000,000 additional stock by the Bank of Commerce, though not likely to be all called up this year, is a step onward towards this remarkably prosperous institution becoming a rival in extent of business to the leading bank in Canada. The Molsons Bank doubling its capital is another notable event which evidences the utmost confidence in the trade of Canada so continuing to increase as to find profitable employment for the large additions being made to the capital of the leading banks. It is only a few years ago since the question was raised as to whether it was not desirable to reduce the capital of one of the larger banks.

A veterinary surgeon in eastern Ontario has been sentenced to six months imprisonment and a fine of \$200 for irregular conduct in regard to the referendum rate. Several similar sentences have been imposed for impersonation in connection with the same vote. Were the perpetrators of 'ballot-box frauds when elections take place dealt with as severely, the very grave crime of stuffing the boxes, switching and cancelling votes, making false returns, accepting illegal votes, etc., would not be committed. The game would be too dangerous.

President Castro's Government having been ordered to lay aside 30 per cent. of Customs receipts as a fund for paying the debts of the Venezuelan Republic, these, sharp in one sense, but after all dull-witted persons have raised the tariff 30 per cent., so that the debt fund will, they expect, leave the Customs revenue at their disposal as large as before. Raising the Customs duties will raise the cost of goods to the Venezuelans, who will, by this process, contribute to the liquidation of their country's debt. Or, the extra duty will check importations, and the revenue will be reduced and the debt impost be so small as to be unsatisfactory to the creditors. That the European exporters who send goods to Venezuela will reduce the price of their goods to such an extent as to make the increased duty ineffectual in raising their price is an irrational supposition. The conditions under which exporters pay the duties on goods they forward to a foreign country are wholly absent in this case.

The Toronto City Council has accepted the proffered donation of Mr. Carnegie of \$350,000 towards a building for a public free library. The condition is that \$35,000 be spent in maintaining the institution. Toronto already spends nearly that amount over its Civic Library and Reading-Room, or rather libraries and reading-rooms, for it maintains three. The cost to the people of these institutions averages 15 cents per head yearly. Not a murmur has been heard as to this expenditure, so generally and so highly do the citizens of Toronto of all classes appreciate the City Free Libraries and Reading-Rooms. That more works of fiction are taken out than some purists like to see is true, as it is of all libraries. But, is it not infinitely better for young men and women to be reading novels than working themselves into a fever of nervous excitement playing euchre?

Novel reading to those engaged in intellectual occupations that weary the brain is a form of