

The work of finishing the City Hall progresses very slowly. It appears that some hitch has occurred between the Board of City Works and the parties who tendered to put the steam heating pipes into the building, and whose tender was accepted. Much of the interior work, such as plastering, carpentering, etc., cannot be proceeded with until these pipes are placed in position. The result seems probable that the opening of the building for public purposes and uses will be indefinitely postponed. The entire history of the erection of this building has been a story of bad management and disappointment.

The war in Egypt seems likely to assume larger proportions than was at first anticipated. The force recently defeated with heavy slaughter by Col. Wodehouse may have only been an advance guard, or possibly a feint. At all events the number of British troops despatched with urgency to the scene of action, and the assumption of the command by General Grenfell, indicate that the situation is looked upon as somewhat serious. At any rate it is to be hoped and seems to be the case that the government will not court discredit by the too frequent error of sending on inadequate forces in the first stages of a contest.

The sawdust question is still an open one. We observed last week a letter to a contemporary on the recent Bridgewater excursion, in which it was claimed that the ill-odors of the mud stirred up by the *Halifax* in the LaHave River were not due to sawdust, which some say does not suffer decomposition in water. This is a point on which we are not competent to pronounce, only it seems to us that as the wood itself becomes rotten with long immersion, the sawdust could hardly avoid the same ultimate fate. Be this as it may, whether the evil effluvia resulted from sawdust or mud, the universal and distinct testimony of the excursionists leaves no shadow of a doubt as to its overpowering character.

We cannot but deprecate the introduction into Nova Scotia of the agitation against the Jesuit Act. One of the highest merits of Nova Scotia is her tolerance and mutual charity in religious matters, and it would be a thousand pities that her record should be broken by a most useless and mischievous agitation. We have still, however, perfect confidence that it will die out. It is not in the least likely that the Government will veto the Act before the 8th of August, and when that date has taken its place in the past, the movement will have lost the sustenance of hope without which no sentiment can live, or if it live must be cherished in private by those who are unable in their hearts or consciences to accept philosophically an irrevocable decision. That the subject has no great hold on even the Presbyterian section of the Province is indicated by the fact that St. Matthew's failed to be filled to listen even to so able, original and popular an orator as the Rev. Mr. Macdonnell when he spoke on the subject.

If it be true as reported that slack coal is being admitted into the Dominion duty free and allowed to compete most injuriously with Nova Scotia coal, it is high time that our coal-mine owners made themselves heard in remonstrance. By simply being slack, the coal in no wise loses its bituminous character and the customs tariff clearly places a duty of 60 cents per ton on the latter article. Coal dust is scheduled at 20 per cent., and it may be that the customs authorities are levying the latter duty on slack bituminous coal, but, if so, they are certainly straining the tariff in favor of coal imported from the United States, and are placing Nova Scotian coal in an unfair position. It seems that the irrepressible Mr. Erastus Wiman is largely interested in a patent furnace which burns slack and gives astonishing results. This furnace is rapidly being put into all large manufacturing works, and as a result slack coal is largely superseding the use of the lump and round article. The admission then of slack coal duty free is a direct menace to our coal trade, and, as some one has evidently blundered in interpreting the provisions of the tariff, it would seem that it only requires a thorough ventilation of the subject to have the wrong remedied.

"The ideas of the Babylonians on religious matters," says Professor Delitzsch,—"such as the power, knowledge, and omnipresence of the gods, who see and judge everything, in whom is man's only help, and without whom man can do nothing—are of a singularly pure and lofty character. If we except certain episodes of the Nimrod epic (which bears all the marks of a popular song appealing to the imagination of the masses,) there is nothing immoral about these ideas. But above all Marduk, the god of Babylon, is one of the purest, holiest, and most attractive figures in the Babylonian pantheon. He is the god whose only occupation is to show mercy to mankind, who carries aid and healing from town to town, who delights in causing the dead to live. 'From the days of my youth I am bound fast to the yoke of sin,' says a Babylonian psalm. Hence come all the illness, grief, and misery of human life, from which only the merciful hands of the gods can deliver and preserve man. If any trouble distresses the Babylonian, be he in high or low station, his conscience tells him that, intentionally or unintentionally, he has offended his god. So he examines himself with questions. 'Have I estranged father and son, brother and brother, or friend and friend? Have I not freed the captive, released the bound, and delivered him who was confined in prison? Have I resisted my god or despised my goddess? Have I taken territory not my own or entered with wrong motives the house of my fellow? Have I approached the wife of my fellow man? Have I shed man's blood or robbed anyone of his clothing?' With many other such questions he seeks the cause of his sufferings. Reclining and sitting, eating and drinking, writing and riding, on shipboard, at sunrise and sunset, on entering and on leaving the house—everywhere and in every condition he asks why he suffers. He longs for reconciliation with the gods, and prays for the same with sighs and tears."

We clip the following edifying bandying of contradictions of unfair ways of putting things from the *St. John Evening Gazette*:—"The *Halifax Echo* accuses the editor of the *Quebec Chronicle* of falsehood in speaking of Halifax Harbor. The *Chronicle* said that Halifax was troubled by fog and that the harbor sometimes was frozen over. The *Echo* thereupon responds:—"The editor of the *Quebec Chronicle* being a St. John man, may naturally be expected to lie when Halifax Harbor is concerned." We fail to see where the lie comes in, and in order to test the question we invite the *Echo* to answer the following questions. 1st. Was not a mail steamer detained by fog off Halifax Harbor and prevented from entering it for eighty hours this spring? 2nd. Does not Halifax Harbor sometimes freeze over, and was it not closed by ice for thirteen days on one occasion?" We venture to suggest a somewhat fairer fashion of question; viz:—How many times in a given number of years have serious detentions of vessels by fog outside Halifax Harbor occurred? How many times in a given number of years has Halifax Harbor been frozen over, and how long ago was it closed by ice for thirteen days?

The discussion on Royal Grants seems likely to be productive of some sound economical reforms in the Royal Household. It is pointed out that the abolition of a number of useless and expensive offices would furnish means for providing for the eldest son of the Heir Apparent, to which the nation has no objection, and the chances are that some sweeping steps will be taken in this direction, as Mr. Labouchere is resolute in his attitude to the extent of disagreeing with Mr. Gladstone, who is under a pledge to consider some provision for the Duke of Albany when that prince shall have arrived at an age to require an establishment of his own. It has long been the idea of both parliament and people that grants for scions of royalty other than the immediate successor to the throne should cease with the Queen's children, and this will probably be that which will prevail and be definitely settled. Among the items of Her Majesty's expenditure to which attention is now directed, the very large sums expended on monuments, mausoleums, and houses, such as Frogmore, are being brought into prominence. No doubt the full discussion of these matters will produce beneficial results to the British tax-payer.

The state of New York, after a great deal of indecisive legislating, has put on its statute book a law which embodies some very good provisions. One new departure, which may not be without its advantages, is that sentences shall be for indeterminate periods, for example, in the terms of an act, "for not less than two, nor for more than ten years," the actual limit of incarceration to be determined by a Board with reference to the prisoner's record. Where this is satisfactory a prisoner may on application be released under surveillance on the completion of his minimum term. Such prisoner on parole, so to speak, may be finally released by the Board, or re-arrested for lapse into criminal ways or company. There are some not altogether unfair regulations for the preventing of the undue competition of prison labor with certain branches of trade, and a provision for the classification of convicts into three grades. The first comprising those who are esteemed corrigible and likely to maintain themselves honestly, with a modification in the second grade, while the labor of the third is to be directed solely "to such exercise as is necessary to preserve health or the manufacture, without machinery, of articles needed in the public institutions of the State, and will not compete with free labor." This, says the *Nation*, "is a concession to the feelings of those who cannot bear that the worst convicts should support themselves, but insist that free laborers shall support them." The payment of a small percentage of the value of articles manufactured in wages is also a good innovation. Altogether some of the provisions of this new law seem worthy the attention of our own Prisoner's Aid Association in its endeavors to improve the methods of dealing with criminals, which are commanding an encouraging consensus of opinion from the secular and religious press and legal authorities of Canada.

The visit of the Pressmen of the Upper Provinces to Halifax was but a chance, partly arising from want of knowledge of Maritime localities and lines of travel. It was, however, a singularly happy chance, for it served the excellent purpose of removing from amongst a most important section of the body politic very erroneous opinions of the beauties and capabilities of our Province and Capital City. The enthusiasm with which these were recognized by our visitors was in the highest degree satisfactory, and will doubtless lead to the broad dissemination of better information concerning the lands (and especially the City) by the sea. How favorably the visitants were impressed may be gathered from the pithy utterance in his speech of Dr. Dewar, Editor of the *Toronto Christian Guardian*,—"To visit such a spot is in itself a liberal education," while of the Public Gardens he said "the only thing I ever saw approaching it was the gardens of Versailles," and he had no idea there was such beauty of scenery and kindness of heart in Halifax. If this was the result of the visit of a limited number of gentlemen, what an extended knowledge of Halifax and its surroundings may be anticipated from the visit of the numbers who will see the good old city in her carnival dress. To all those, however numerous, Halifax will extend a welcome in accordance with her proverbial hospitality, and we feel quite sure it is superfluous to inculcate upon her citizens individually and collectively the duty to their city of lending their most energetic aid towards sending away at the close of the carnival both one and all of the visitors with impressions as favorable and enthusiastic as those carried away by the Canadian Press Association. If Halifax has sometimes been charged with slowness and want of public spirit, we rest assured that carnival time will blot out the reproach for ever. The Committees have worked with zeal, and, for the most part, with well-directed energy, and we have every belief that the results will be commensurate with their exertions.