

Rumor would seem to indicate that the results of what Mr. Blaine no doubt intended for a grand political *coup* will scarcely ensure the harvest of popularity which that enterprising statesman probably prepared to reap to himself by means of it. Dissensions are said to have broken out in the Pan-American congress, and the success of the managers in pouring oil on the troubled waters is thought to be doubtful. There is jealousy of the larger States on the part of the smaller ones, and the withdrawal of the Brazilian delegates deprives the conference of an important contingent. Trade questions irritating to protectionists have been brought up, and more serious still, some of the South Americans are men of great ability and insist on examining into every matter placed before the convention with a thoroughness distasteful to the American delegates. It is said that the only motions passed have been those of adjournments, and it is whispered that the congress will probably effect little more than a disposition of a part of the United States surplus.

In a note in our last issue we adverted to the unprofitable nature of "replies" to such books as "Robert Elsmere." We might perhaps have added that such books are in themselves unprofitable, inasmuch as they serve but to unsettle the ideas of people who have not sufficient acquaintance with polemical literature to have attained any sound basis of opinions. To "Robert Elsmere" has succeeded "John Ward, Proacher," a work considered by some to be more powerful than its predecessor. We have glanced at "Robert Elsmere," but confess our patience failed us to wade through it. We have not read "John Ward," and it is unlikely that we shall take the trouble unless we accidentally come across it. The review of it which we extract from the *Week* and publish in our contribution column of this issue would alone be sufficient to justify our indifference, and we think we are doing a service to the reading public in reproducing it, as it affords evidence of the crudeness and one-sidedness which destroy any value such a work might have were it free from those drawbacks.

How often timely warning is in vain. Warning has been some time since given to the Government by the Press in various parts of the Dominion against the concession to the Mormons, who are flocking into the North West Territories, of any large block of land on which they might make one of their compact, and at the same time extensive, settlements. It is quite reasonable to suppose that the Government would have acted on the premonitions it has received had not another circumstance intervened, *i. e.*, the ownership of lands by speculative companies, which, it goes without saying, have neither conscience nor principle in a question of money-making. Of this the astute saints are reported to have taken advantage, and to have purchased from one of these companies a block of 20,000 acres, which will doubtless serve their present purposes at all events. Having thus stolen a march on public sentiment, there would seem to be no alternative left but special legislation stringent enough to prevent this detestable sect from becoming as foul a blot, and giving as much trouble, in Canada as they have been, and have done, in the neighboring republic.

The arbitrary and ill considered Foreign Contract Law of the United States appears to be almost, if not quite, nullified by the omission of certain provisions. "The law as originally passed provided a punishment for persons who imported labor under contract, but made no disposition in relation to the laborers. The last Congress amended the law by inserting a provision for the return of laborers at the expense of the steamship company which brought them over, but it did not give jurisdiction in such cases to any court. The conclusion arrived at by the Treasury officials appears to be that if arrests are made under the law, a writ of *habeas corpus* will lie in each case, and that consequently laborers imported under contract can remain in the country without let or hindrance." The Act was passed as a concession by the politicians to the unreasoning labor element of the country. It might be justifiable in United States legislation to endeavor to exclude hordes of ignorant foreigners, but the law has not in fact excluded them, while it has kept out highly skilled laborers and even professional men, for both of which classes there is demand, and the former of whom, as he is certain to support himself from the start, it is absurd to taboo. It is only another instance of the haste and crudity of so much of American legislation.

It was for some time difficult to conjecture the significance of the recent elections in some of the States of the American Union. Sufficient time has, however, now elapsed to afford some indication of an at least probable tendency of public feeling and opinion. Allowing for local and personal causes the general results would seem to indicate some measure of re-action against the Republican party, some revulsion against extreme protectionism, and some growth of opinion in favor of a reduction of the tariff. The defeat of Mr. Mahone in Virginia may be taken as a rebuke to those who would trade on race prejudices, Mr. Mahone having run as the negroes' candidate and depended on the solid negro vote for his return. Incidentally the results have suggested it to Mr. Chauncey Depew to emphasize the probable fact that the patronage falling into the hands of a party on a change of administration never fails in the year succeeding to be a source of weakness rather than strength to the party in power. This opinion is no doubt based on the fact that the distribution of patronage in itself tends to create unpopularity for the administration. One very satisfactory lesson has also been taught in the marked success of the Australian, or, as it should be more properly called, the Canadian ballot system. The ballot, as known in Canada, does not perhaps completely guard against every form of corruption, but there is no doubt that it has materially mitigated many of the gross and outrageous practices which have discredited political methods in the United States, and from which Canadian elections, partly at least, by reason of the ballot system are fortunately more free,

The Midland Railway, of England, is now running three trains lighted by electricity. The dynamo is in the guard's (conductor's) van and driven from an axle. In one train 85 lamps are run from one set of accumulators in the guard's van. The light is said to be very satisfactory. The work is still regarded as experimental, but, as an experience of four months has induced the company to extend it, it may be taken as a precursor to the general lighting of trains by this means, which would remove one source of combustion in cases of collision.

Frequent allusion has been made for some time to the great age of the veteran Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Provo W. P. Wallis, who is now close upon his hundredth year. It appears that the neighboring republic boasts of a naval veteran of the 1812-14 war time who is within ten years, or less, of the age of the English Admiral. This venerable officer is Commodore Joseph B. Hull. He was born in 1799, and was appointed midshipman in 1813. He is a nephew of the Capt. Hull who commanded the frigate *Constitution* when she captured the *Guerriere*. Commodore Hull performed gallant service during the Mexican war and war of the rebellion. He was in command of the Philadelphia navy yard from 1864 to 1866. Although 90 years of age he is hale and vigorous and enjoys meeting old friends.

The electric light is continually developing new and sometimes quite unexpected fields of utility or convenience. One of the latest may prove of great assistance to traffic in foggy weather. A small incandescent globe and reflector are now placed on the forehead of a horse, insulated wires being carried along its body to a small battery stowed in the vehicle. The current is turned on at pleasure, and an unmistakable blaze of light illumines the murky surroundings. Another curious use has been found for it in Russia, *viz.*, for illuminating saintly images in cathedrals. Thus a magnificent figure of the Madonna, just placed in the Alexander Newsky Monastery, loaded with precious metals and gems of immense value, stands glittering in the focus of an electric beam, which is also the case with the "Kasan" Madonna in St. Petersburg. From near and afar thousands make pilgrimages to these shrines. It has also been decided to light the ancient Monastery of St. Ursula at Olmütz with it—the first instance on record of its being used in a monastery. It will no doubt come to be generally adopted, with the view of diminishing the risks of collision, by vessels at sea.

It would not be amiss if those who are foolish enough to desire the annexation of Canada to the United States would qualify themselves to form a sound judgment on such a question by a fair study of the peculiarities of the American Constitution. A point to which attention has been recently directed is the remarkable power vested in the Speaker of the House of Representatives—a power, be it remarked, totally at variance with the theory of constitutions based on British ideas. The speaker is, after the President and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the most powerful executive officer of the Republic, inasmuch as his position enables him to almost absolutely control the course of legislation. Being always elected by the House upon a purely partisan basis he is, of course, the nominee and representative of the majority. With him also rests the appointment of the Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means. All the patronage of the House is in his hands, and he also strikes the Standing Committees and appoints their chairmen. As these have it in their power to kill or modify to their opinion any bill coming before them, and are controlled by their chairmen, it is practically impossible that legislation can take a course opposed to the speaker's wishes, and he can absolutely block the way to all measures but those of which he approves. This is a power in which politicians trained in British ideas of parliamentary practice could see nothing to admire, and is in keeping with the irresponsibility of the President and his cabinet, and the mischievous control of the Senate. All these points are alike objectionable in comparison with the working of our own system of Government by the majority in Parliament.

It is the opinion of journalists of considerable weight in Canada that the warning of Mr. Hill, an English Member of Parliament, as to the probable effect of the apparent indifference of Great Britain to the interests of Canada in the Behring Sea matter, may not be without result. The Government has been reminded that the movement for independence in Australia was caused by the refusal of the Imperial authorities, in the face of the entreaties and demands of Australia, to assume a protectorate over New Guinea, and thus forestall the menace to Australian supremacy in the Pacific which their supineness has now partially brought about; and it is pointed out that Australia ad not nearly so distinct a grievance as that under which Canada is now suffering. There is no doubt justice in these remarks; yet, under the peculiar circumstances of the year now passing away, any precipitancy of action brought about by complaint, might have easily induced fresh complications in an international matter in which at present both Great Britain and Canada have a clearly good case—a case, indeed, which may almost be said to be flawless. Undoubtedly the delay has been aggravating in the extreme, and our sealers have had to put up—temporarily, let us hope—with great losses and inconvenience; but it is not to be supposed that Great Britain will fail in her duty in the long run, and we have assurance in the President's Message that all outstanding questions between her and the United States are in process of amicable adjustment. About the Behring Sea question it would seem impossible that the American claim to exclusive domination can be seriously maintained; while, if any sense of justice yet inheres in the American people and in American diplomacy, it is difficult to believe that Canadian claims to compensation for vessels arbitrarily and unwarrantably seized on the high seas will not receive the liberal consideration becoming to a great nation to afford.