

inaccuracy is indeed somewhat notorious, but when they show a progressive decline of proportionate numbers, they may be taken as indicating a tendency. Of that tendency there are too many patent proofs which cannot be hidden. About fifty newspapers are denied the privilege of the Canadian post on account of objectionable matter, chiefly advertisements, which have a bearing on this subject, but even so, the worst offenders, unhit, make their appearance at every breakfast table. If the post office were absolutely impartial in its censure most of us would be deprived of our daily newspapers. This is bad, discreditable, highly so. The attention of the National Council of Women has been directed to this subject. It cannot do much by stopping the circulation of the smaller of the offending journals, and it will never be able to induce the Postmaster-General to cut off the greater sinners. Can these latter be induced to reform themselves? If not, is there any remedy outside of themselves that can be applied? For any practical purpose, repression is now too late; the evil has gone too far to yield to a treatment which implies absence of knowledge of good and evil.

Toronto has on hand a pale and not perhaps exact counterpart of the Dreyfus case. Some years ago there was an enquiry, before a single commissioner, into the circumstances under which the Toronto Railway Company obtained its contract with the city. That enquiry, it is now charged, did not get to the bottom of the matter; and it has been said that if the full truth were known two ex-aldermen now in exile would come back, and that the enquiry, at one stage, was made to take the form of an attempt to throw blame upon an innocent man. The city council, by a vote of 14 against 7, now asks that the enquiry be re-opened by means of a commission. Three names were mentioned as suitable for the work, but as this might look like dictation they were dropped, and the choice of the commissioners left to the Government. Part of the evidence to be produced before the commission, if one were appointed, consists, according to statements made in the city council, of certain letters written by the solicitor of the railway company and surreptitiously published. No one condones the treachery involved in the publication, but the facts becoming known, everyone is entitled to form his opinion of them; and though the court should continue the injunction, which is by no means certain, a searching commission might bring the facts to light. Ontario cannot afford to have suspicion attach to the work of the last commission if it can be removed, and if it cannot the public has a right to know.

Among the new agricultural machines which has this year appeared in our North-West is one that, in addition to cutting the grain, threshes it in the field while the reaping goes on. The saving is said to be about equal to the cost of threshing under the old system, reckoned at three cents a bushel. One possible drawback to the new invention is mentioned: the grain when cut is not quite ready for threshing, and it would harden better in the straw than when threshed in this immature state. It remains to be seen whether the new invention will make a revolution in reaping and threshing. The invention is Canadian.

At the Aurora banquet to Mr. Mulock, his colleague, Mr. Patterson, said that, under the Preferential tariff, Canadians could get their iron from Great Britain at a duty reduced by 25 per cent. True, but unfortunately the boon comes just at a time when it loses much of its value from the fact that the Americans, owing to their superior facilities, are able to produce iron at less cost than it can

be produced in England. To profit by the reduced duties we must pay a higher price for iron than it can be bought for elsewhere. The 25 per cent. may force the trade in a particular direction, but, economically, that is not an advantage to Canada. When preference operates in this way it has practically the same effect as protection; but it can operate only in the case of articles which some other country can produce cheaper than Great Britain. The number of such to be found in the United States is not great.

#### A LABOR PLATFORM.

In the platform of the Trades and Labor Congress, which sat at Winnipeg, the old and the new are mingled. There are besides, some things, such as the abolition of the Senate, which seem to be out of place in a labor platform, and the presence of which is suggestive of possible political intrigue. An eight-hours' working day, 48 hours a week, is among the demands. Unless it can be shown that labor during the shorter hours proposed would be much more effective, the reduction, if carried out, would mean a great lessening of production. When working hours were much longer than at present labor could not be expected to be as effective as it is now. In the second decade of the present century, certain kinds of manufacture kept the hands at work 13, 14, 16 and even 17 hours a day. According to Sir Robert Peel, a good authority, even children in the cotton factories of Manchester were worked these long dreary hours, and such of them as learned to write had to do so after their heavy task was over. Is the present working day so long as to be unduly exhaustive? Does it impair health or shorten life? Can it be shortened with due regard to the competition of other countries? These questions are raised by the demand for shorter hours of labor.

Total abolition of the labor of all persons under 14 years of age is called for. It is not quite plain whether this extends to labor on the farm or elsewhere outside of the factory. If it does, there is but slender chance of its being adopted, and if it were, idleness would be greatly encouraged, causing the formation of habits fatal to the youth of the country. That women ought not to work in mines all will agree, but that they should be shut out from "workshops, factories, etc.," where their labor comes into contact with that of men, and for that reason only, is quite unreasonable. Of prison labor the abolition is demanded for the same reason or want of reason. This has been tried in some of the neighboring States, with the result that an appalling proportion of the prisoners become insane. A prisoner is, in spite of his shortcomings, a human being, and his right to live is admitted in the term given to his detention; and having the right to live he has the obligation to labor for his living that free workmen are under. To deny him the right to labor would often be to condemn him to a worse than living death. The Socialist doctrine is, like the scriptural, that he who will not work neither shall he eat. The Trades and Labor Congress is eclectic in dealing with Socialism: it takes just what suits it and rejects the rest. In denying prisoners the right to labor it negatives the Socialist doctrine; in declaring in favor of the "public ownership of all franchises, such as railways, telegraphs, waterworks, lighting, etc.," it adopts the Socialist doctrine. That a municipality should own whatever is necessary to it, public opinion no longer questions; the public ownership of all the things mentioned would go far to install a system of experimental Nationalism, for which mankind is not prepared, certainly not in this quarter of the globe.