

pushing forward to Toronto and London of English mails by special train, and the increased cost of rent for post office boxes, to the latter of which the Board demurred. A reply to the memorial has been received by Mr. R. W. Elliot, President of the Board, in which the P. M. General seems to admit that the altered charge for boxes has been made in order to discourage their use and to encourage the free delivery system. As to the more important question of mail trains, Hon. Mr. Campbell says, "the matter is wholly one of expense"; and while a great convenience to the cities named, "the convenience is not one affecting the community of Ontario at large." This statement we must take leave to question. Toronto and London are not, we think, the only places which would be inconvenienced by rapid delivery of transatlantic correspondence. The other cities of the Western peninsula and smaller points have a decided interest in old country mails, for they have year by year more correspondence with Europe. We could name a score of places along the three principal railways which make direct exports across the Atlantic. Besides small places such as Brussels, Howick, Teeswater, which ship to Europe cheese, butter and oatmeal; Essex County has sent thither cattle and timber; Ayr and Brantford, implements; Oshawa, garden and field tools; Whitby, apples; Belleville, cattle and rye; St. Catharines, cattle and fruit; St. Thomas, woodenware; Brockville, butter; Woodstock, Kingston and Peterboro, cheese. Here is a group of points which we consider fairly representative of Ontario at large, which do a growing ocean export trade and whose interest in prompt mail service is just as keen in proportion as those of London and Toronto. We venture to say that the merchants at any of these points feel quite as much disappointed as Torontonians by such delay of their English letters, as is implied in the following case: The Allan Steamship *Sardinian* made a very rapid passage to Halifax, her mails were rushed through to Montreal by one in the afternoon of Sunday last, 30th ultimo, Montrealers getting their letters on Monday morning. The Western mails lay at Montreal from Sunday midday till 9.30 on Monday, reaching Toronto at about midnight on Monday, distributed here Tuesday morning. To overcome a delay of ten hours, such as occurred in this case, the Minister would have been doing a service to "Ontario at large" had he sent these mails on by special train, and enabled their contents to be answered by the mails which close here *via* New York on Monday or Tuesday.

THE FLAX CROP.

It is a matter to be regretted that the Flax crop in Ontario this year shows a very decided falling off as compared with former years. The crops of that article in 1877 and 1878 were disappointing, their results being unprofitable, and a number of the mill men falling into financial difficulty. This discouraged farmers from sowing; and in consequence there has been but a small acreage sown in flax during 1879. This season's crop is estimated to cover 2,500 acres, against 12,000 acres in 1877; this will yield about eight to nine bushels per acre, probably eight bushels is a safer estimate, or say 20 per cent. less than two years ago. The flax as a rule was very thin on the ground, but the straw has been good, yielding a very fair percentage of fibre. As nearly as we can ascertain, the quantity of seed has been about 20,000 bushels and there will be when scutching is finished about 240 to 260 tons of flax, instead of 900 tons as in 1877. The yield of coarse and fine tow we find will not exceed 200 tons, while to equal 1877 it should have been 1,600 tons. The flax is a very good article this year, being well rotted, the season having been very favorable for that purpose. Prices of flax the past year were twenty per cent. lower than has been known during an experience of twenty years. This, coupled with anything but good crops for this last two years has nearly ruined every one in the trade. A number of millmen have been crippled, and others have failed outright. The experiment of cultivation and manufacture, although energetically made and persevered in, seems to have met with a series of rebuffs. It will require several seasons of more prolific crop, and of more favorable circumstances, to lead to the extensive adoption of the best appliances for making the goods we now import.

THE ELECTRIC LIGHT ONCE MORE.—Mr.

Edison at length claims to have perfected the electric light, and he intends on Christmas eve to illuminate with it the houses in the hamlet of Menlo Park, New Jersey, where he lives. He has told the secret of the progress by which he overcame the difficulties that beset his path. Already the dynamo-electric machines, by which the current is generated, are in position in his laboratory. "The illumination," the New York *Sun* tells us, "will be by means of what might be called electric jets, but which more properly speaking, are small spirals of platinum and iridium in a state of incandescence in a vacuum." Mr. Edison has perfected a generator, by which the enormous loss of power sustained where

the old methods were used, is avoided. He has found a means of measuring how much of the electric current is expended at any one point. He claims to have overcome the danger of the light fusing the platinum, the fusing point of which is greater than that of any other metal. But platinum, which is supplied solely by Russia, is dear, and can only be used sparingly. To a great extent, therefore, brass is made to do the duty of resisting fusion, and the necessary amount of platinum will be so minimized that it is thought 50 cents worth for each spiral will suffice.

The practical question of what will be the effect on the gas companies revives. On this point Mr. Edison says:—"Let the gas companies reduce their price, and reduce it again, for it is well known they can do this and make money, and I can undertake to undersell them and make money." There will still be a use for the gas-pipes, however, as Mr. Edison proposes to run his wires along the pipes in New York. Holders of gas shares will look on the public test of Christmas eve with some degree of anxiety.

SAWN LUMBER TO SOUTH AMERICA.—We are glad to find the published figures confirm what has appeared in the last year or two to be the again increasing shipment of lumber from the St. Lawrence for South America, after several years of stagnation. Six years ago the trade was a large one, but in three years thereafter dropped to one tenth its volume, as the following statistics of export show, and even this year it is but half what it was in 1870.

Shipments.	Feet.
1872	28,420,000
1873	36,073,919
1874	16,262,000
1875	10,123,000
1876	3,437,000
1877	8,787,928
1878	10,885,246
1879	12,476,150

The chief points of destination of this lumber are upon the River la Plata, and the most of it is shipped from Hochelaga, a suburb of Montreal. The sudden falling off from the above large figures of 1873 to those of 1876 was caused as much by an over supply of lumber in South American ports, increasing the universally-cited "depression" of business in our own. However, now that Monte Video and Buenos Ayres are again receiving largely the products of our ports, we shall hope for a continued increase of intercourse, and a growing capacity on our part to absorb return cargoes. The Export Lumber Company (limited), of New York, is the principal conductor of this trade; and the company appear to have a