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## NOTICE.

The index of the last volume of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS has been printed, and is now ready for delivery. Those who preserve and bind their copies, and we invite all our subscribers to do so, may have the index by sending us a post-card requesting it. It is chiefly in bound volumes that the permanent value of such a publication as ours becomes manifest. The amount of information on all topics, with the pictorial treasures, is then found to be far beyond expectation.

## CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, January 20th, 1877.

### STOPPING THE MAILS.

There are many aspects under which the late Railway Strike may be viewed, and the press has very properly given it full consideration. We need not go over the ground again, but shall confine ourselves to a single point. We refer to the stopping of the mails. From the Friday night, when the movement began, until the following Tuesday afternoon, when traffic was partially resumed, the mail service to and from the West was completely interrupted. During all that time, there was no communication beyond Belleville, except by telegraph. This is the situation depicted in our front-page cartoon. The Postmaster-General vainly plies whip and spur. The traditional and legendary donkey sketches out both fore and hind feet, and refuses to stir an inch. Nothing can be done further, or rather, nothing is done, and the consequence is that the multitudinous and spacious mail bags are left standing in the middle of the highway.

As no good result can come of political diatribe, on the one hand, so there is no need of expending sophistry and paradox

on the other. It is the simple truth that the situation was an anomaly. It is an elementary duty of every Government to protect the mails, and never allow individuals or corporations to interfere with them. Her Majesty's mails are particularly inviolable. They have the right of way always and everywhere. We have seen a mob, in this city, scatter spontaneously to allow a Post-Office van to pass through its ranks. We ourselves remember that, travelling on a stormy winter night, between Longueuil and Chambly, we had to throw ourselves into a snow-drift, at the sound of the postilion's horn. Nay, when that functionary buried his sleigh in a snow-bank, we were duly summoned to come forward, and assist him out of his trouble. The engineers of the Grand Trunk can stop work if they like. That is a purely personal matter. But they have no right to interrupt the public service and the passage of the mails by violence. If they resort to this violence, they at once put themselves outside of the law, and it is then the Government's clear duty to step forward immediately to quell the violence. It was perfectly ridiculous that, during the four memorable days, letters had to be sent from Montreal to Toronto, by way of Albany. It was equally ridiculous to hear that arrangements had been made to send the English mail by way of New York, instead of keeping the route open to Halifax. Statesmanship consists of prescience and opportunity of action, and the Government have learned a lesson which leads to the hope that the late abuses will not be repeated. The Grand Trunk is, in winter, what the St. Lawrence is, in summer, the main artery of the country's material life, and the Government are the appointed custodian of the inviolability of this great channel. The stoppage of the mails is like highway robbery, and it is a disgrace that it should be tolerated.

### WEATHER PROPHECY.

We give to-day an amusing picture of the two rival prophets who have been engaging public attention throughout the country for many months back. Mr. VENNOR, a civil engineer and naturalist, has made several happy hits, and seems to have raised himself to the belief that he is really a prophet of the weather. He sends down little paragraphs to the papers which are oracular in their brevity and dogmatism, and has lately published an almanac full of wise saws and pleasing generalities. So long as Mr. VENNOR simply afforded amusement to the wits of the press and the clubs, we regarded him with sentiments of gratitude, but now that he takes his avocation *in serio*, it is time that he should be set up against his Caughnawaga rival, as we have done in the present issue. For our part, we deny that Mr. VENNOR has ever made a forecast which others could not have made, or that any of his "prophecies" are based upon scientific data. The Caughnawaga Indian, on the contrary, has no pretension to weather knowledge, except that derived from the observation of natural phenomena—that is, phenomena of fauna and flora—and the consequence is that some reliance may be placed upon his reckonings. Meteorology is an infant science, and it will never do to force it beyond its present limits. The barometer can and does give indications twenty-four hours in advance, and the clouds are a pretty sure guide of proximate change in the atmosphere. But since the days of Admiral Fitzroy, whose weather-rules have their value, down to the conscientious work of "Old Probabilities" for the past four years, there has not been classification and generalization enough to place meteorology among the exact sciences. The Indians and *voyageurs* have always shown wonderful perspicacity in their reading of the heavens and their remarks on the habits of birds and beasts, as connected with weather changes. Our cartoon represents the famous brave of Caughnawaga intent upon observation of the sky and

landscape; and as between him and Mr. VENNOR, we leave our readers to choose, with this simple caution, that the trickery of science must always yield to the simplicity of common sense.

### A CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION.

No honest man can deny that every one who pollutes the purity of the elective franchise by bribery or terrorism creates a heinous crime, and no honest citizen will deny that for the commission of such crimes, when duly and legally convicted, the perpetrator should receive condign punishment. Now it is an extraordinary fact that in the Dominion of Canada several elections to the Dominion Parliament have been set aside, and declared null and void on account of bribery, or terrorism, or undue influence practised by some persons, some of one and some of the other of the two great rival parties; and yet, with this flagrant fact glaring us in the face, we have yet to learn of a single prosecution by indictment against any of the offenders of either political party. Why is this? Who is to blame for this remissness? If the public prosecutors of either party have neglected the duty of bringing such offences to the notice of the Grand Juries, they are disgracefully culpable and should themselves be arraigned, and if not placed in the dock for their criminal neglect of duty, should be brought to the bar of public opinion by the public press. In considering the subject, we have been impressed with some views, in regard to the course prescribed by the law against candidates who have themselves been, in the opinion of the Judge who tries the election case, guilty of personal participation in the bribery, or illicit practices. We have heard the opinion which, we know, is concurred in by several leading members of the Bar of both political parties, that the clauses in the new Election Law, relating thereto, are utterly repugnant to the fundamental principles of the British Constitution and the vital doctrines of British liberty. By those principles and these doctrines, no British subject can be convicted and punished for a crime, except by the verdict of a Jury of his Peers, after trial upon an indictment found by a Grand Jury, or upon an information legally preferred by the Crown Prosecutor. True it is that statutes have been passed, authorizing the waiver of such privilege by the accused, and consenting to a summary trial by a magistrate. These cases, however, are mostly of petty and police offences, and in them, if the accused insists upon his right, he cannot be denied a trial by Jury. A trial by Jury, as has been emphatically said, is "the palladium of British liberty." Can it be supposed for one moment, that if a Canadian Parliament, or the British Parliament even, were to enact a law abolishing the trial by Jury, in cases of an accusation for murder, or burglary, or rape, or forgery, or any other heinous offence against the civil laws, and instead thereof, substitute the ancient French mode of trial by a Judge, it would be submitted to by British subjects, or sustained by the Courts? It is true that in times of public peril, when the Civil law is temporarily waived, and Martial or Military law put in force, in lieu of trial by Jury, Court Martials are resorted to, and their sentences enforced, even against the life of a criminal. But *inter arma silent leges*, and this shows the importance of adhering in times of peace to the practices and maxims of the Civil Law which the preservation of the liberty of the subject demands should be upheld. The tyranny of a single Judge is as odious to the law as the despotism of a military commander. Now the disqualification of a candidate, declared by a Judge, because in his opinion he had both been guilty of bribery or illicit practices, and the judgment disfranchising him and decreeing his ineligibility to be a candidate for Parliament or to hold office under the Crown, is as severe and degrading a punishment as it would be to send him to the penitentiary. It makes such candidate a pariah

amongst his fellow men, a leper to be shunned and avoided. What is insisted upon is that no such sentence can be legally and constitutionally rendered by any Judge in Canada upon his mere naked opinion and *ipse dixit* of guilt, without the intervention of a Jury, and it is affirmed that the Act of Parliament allowing such a course, however recent English precedents may excuse it, is utterly subversive of the rights of British subjects and hostile to the principles of British freedom. We shall be astonished if no one whose personal rights are thus infringed upon does not raise the question and have the error in the law rectified.

In Louisiana the Democrats are decidedly gaining ground. Senators Demas (colored), Wheeler and Hamlet, with Pinchback, entered the Democratic Senate and were greeted with cheers. After a short executive session, the two former were admitted to seats and sworn in. Hamlet was granted permission to make a personal explanation, which he did. Not being elected, as the Democrats claimed, he explained that he had withdrawn from the Republican Senate and would not serve with it—after which Pinchback was granted permission to make a personal explanation. He said the action of himself and these Senators was only decided upon after mature deliberation, and they intended to stand the hazard of the die; they had come there as Republicans, because they believed the interests of the State to be above party.

The result of the general elections in Germany shows a dangerous revulsion of popular feeling in favour of the Socialist Democrats, some of whom achieved astonishing victories at the polls. The doctrines of this party are of an extreme type, and include the theories of redistribution of property and social equality. Even the army, which was supposed to be kept thoroughly in hand, is tainted with socialism.

In England they are getting nearer to the root of that dreadful disease, drunkenness. At a recent temperance meeting in his diocese, the Bishop of Ely said that he attributed drunkenness in poor men not to a desire for liquor, but to the comfort of the public house and the discomfort of their homes. How very, very true!

The Russian papers are commenting in extremely hostile language on the proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India, and one of their number states that the Ameer of Afghanistan is arming against England.

### OUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

ANCIENT MOENS BUILDERS' FORT.—We give this week an illustration of an ancient Fort in the western part of the County of Elgin. This Fort was first discovered by white men upwards of fifty years ago, and, even at that time, gave evidence of having been hundreds of years old. This singular earth-work is situated in the midst of a dense piece of woods, and unmistakable signs show that it was built by a people far in advance of the Indians, as we have known them. From north to south the enclosure measures 300 feet, and from east to west 250 feet, and the double embankments encircling it measure 30 feet across. On the west side there are traces of a stream of water which flowed towards the north, and without the Fort was made still stronger by flowing water between the embankments. Oak, hickory, elm and beech trees from two to three and a half feet in diameter are growing on the embankments, and a careful examination shows that the earth was not thrown up around the trees, but that the trees commenced to grow after the embankments were made, which proves the Fort was made long before white men had made their appearance on this continent. Traces of several entrances to the Fort can be seen. The embankments are at the present time from four to five feet in height.

THE MEMBERS OF THE EASTERN CONFERENCE.—On this group of statesmen hangs the peace of Europe at the present time. The biographies of most of them have already appeared in our columns. It will be noticed that while Russia, Austria, Italy and Germany are represented only by their ambassadors at Constantinople, England and France have Special Commissioners. The total number of the Board is nine, presided over by Siefert Pasha, a shrewd diplomatist.