

Our way of spreading butter thinly on bread, seems the height of absurdity to them, and indeed to other Asiatics. When they do eat it with bread at all, it is in the way which was taught us by a Bedouin, who, observing us sitting on the ground, and refreshing ourselves with buttered bread and dates, looked compassionately on our ignorance of the true use of butter, and to give us a valuable lesson on the subject, commenced breaking off a thin bit of bread, about the size of a crown piece, and heaping thereon as large a lump of butter as it would support, threw it into his mouth with great satisfaction. He pursued this instruction, until his rapid progress towards the bottom of our butter skin, obliged us to declare ourselves sufficiently instructed. Burckhardt, in allusion to the extraordinary use of butter among the Arabs, observes, "the continual motion and exercise in which they employ themselves, strengthen their powers of digestion, and for the same reason an Arab will live for months together on the smallest allowance; and then, if an opportunity should offer, he will devour at one sitting the flesh of half a lamb, without any injury to his health." This in some degree accounts for the extraordinary quantity of food which here and elsewhere we find prepared for a very few persons; or a better reason perhaps is found in the existing practice throughout Western Asia of producing at entertainments from five to ten times the quantity of food which the invited guests can consume, the residue going to feast the women and the host of servants and dependents which men of consideration support. It is the same in camps, where a great number of hungry Arabs or Tartars get some benefit from the feast which their sheikh or some wealthy person provides for a stranger.—*Pictorial Bible.*

### CANADIAN RAILROADS.

(From the Montreal Witness.)

An article appeared in the Montreal Courier of the 12th inst., upon Railroads, which well deserves the attention of the country. The following is nearly the substance of it.

1st, That there is not enough of capital in Canada to carry on its ordinary business without extensive credits from Britain, and consequently that there is, or ought to be, nothing to spend for Railroads.

2nd, That Railroad Companies cannot succeed either in selling stock or borrowing money abroad, as already exemplified in the case of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway, and others.

3d, That this difficulty would disappear, if, in addition to the security of the railroads, the British lenders had the security of the Canadian Government.

4th, That if the Government borrowed the money in this way, it would be done at a lower rate of interest than by private companies, even if the latter were able to do it at all.

5th, That the creation of a railway stock, with the double guarantee before mentioned, would present a more favourable investment for parties wishing to run no risk, and to have no trouble about drawing their interest, than any now in existence in this country.

6th, That railways owned and managed by Governments, are not only better planned and carried on from first to last, but rendered much cheaper and more comfortable for the public, as is exemplified by a comparison of the Continental railways with the British. Because among other reasons, the government does not make them a speculation or source of gain, and cares for the comfort of the poor as well as the rich, whereas the private companies seek to make as much money as they can, and make the lower class cars quite uncomfortable on purpose to induce all, who are able, to pay for the higher.

7th, That where the government is the sole railway proprietor, the expensive and jealous contests consequent upon applications for private bills are avoided.

8th, That for the management of a great provincial system of railways, there should be a board appointed, composed of the most efficient and respectable men that can be found, who should receive sufficient salaries, and devote their whole time to the duties of the office.

Such is the substance of the article, and no one can deny the magnitude of the subject, or the importance of the suggestions.

Nevertheless, so dangerous is what has been termed the centralization of power to which this plan would eminently tend, and so generally correct has the principle been found, that government should never do what may be done by individuals, and above all, should leave traffic and industry to individual enterprise: so well established are these points, we say, that any plan which goes against them should be very carefully considered before it receives the sanction of public approbation. We have endeavoured to give the careful consideration requisite in the case, and without pretending to foresee all the consequences, or to pronounce an opinion which we may not be led to alter by the arguments of those who may study the matter more profoundly; the following are the conclusions at which we have arrived:—

1st, That it would not in his case be an infringement of the axiom that government should do nothing for the people, which they can do for themselves; for the people cannot, for a time at least, make the rail-

ways, and the question is, whether it is better to have the roads made by government or not to have them at all.

2d, This is not like an established church, or a system of education, there are no moral or religious questions involved in it. By placing the railways of the country in the hands of government, it does not thereby obtain the mastery or direction of the national mind. Indeed there is probably no argument against this plan which would not equally apply to the management of the post-office by government.

3d, That the railway conveyance on the Continent is better managed, and equally or more comfortable at considerably lower rates of fare, is notorious, and as far as we have seen articles in the British periodicals on the subject, they give the preference to the continental plan.

4th, The great advantage of placing all the railways of a country under a competent, and disinterested central board, is, that the object in view in laying down lines would, it may be presumed, be the public interest alone. That is, the lines most needed and likely to pay interest would be laid down first. There would be no moving of heaven and earth to lay down a railway, leading to nothing, through an uninhabited country, just because the projectors have wild lands to sell in that direction.

5th, Much would probably be saved in the way of acquiring lands. A private company is looked upon as legitimate prey, and two or three prices are asked for the property it requires, it being well known that juries or arbitrators will give a most liberal award—but in the case of government the matter might be greatly simplified, and when disputes did come before a jury, the knowledge that every additional pound given would come not out of the profits of a company, but out of the pockets of the people in one shape or another, would correct, in some degree, the leaning always manifested towards private interests.

6th, In the private company system, although the rate of profit may be limited to, say 10 or 12 per cent, there are many ways of evading this stipulation, and drawing a larger revenue from the public—and the only way to correct an overly greedy company would be to oppose them by a parallel line, thus doubling the necessary outlay, whereas the interest would be all that government would require, over and above the expenses of management; and as traffic increased, the fares might either be lowered or the income derived from the roads would, like the New York canals, in a considerable degree relieve the people from other taxes.

These are the advantages, but on the other hand the difficulties are great.

1st, It would at first sight appear inconsistent, after having stretched the credit of the Province for the construction of canals, to lay down parallel lines of railroad at a great additional expense, in order to compete with these very canals for the carrying trade. In answer to this objection it may however be stated, that railways are not at all likely to take the heavy freight, which pays most tolls, from the canals, and that in cases where a railway has been laid down along a navigable river as on the banks of the Clyde from Glasgow to Greenock, it has paid well without sensibly diminishing the traffic on the river. In fact, Railroads must be sustained chiefly by passengers, and they have a certain tendency enormously to increase the number of travellers.

2d, The most formidable objection is, that it would be extremely difficult to keep the railways out of the vortex of party politics. The exact termini of any given line—the country traversed, the contracts for construction, the subsequent management, all might be made the reward of political partisanship. And failing a compliance with requests, however unreasonable, any ministry might be threatened with the opposition of quondam friends in all directions, whilst if it did comply with the said requests, an equal or greater number might be offended on the other hand.

The only remedies that suggest themselves for this great difficulty are either the election by the people of a Board, like the canal commissioners of New York, no way connected with the ministry of the day, to serve for a term of years, or the appointment of such a Board during good behaviour by the executive, to be as independent as the Bench.

We conclude by urging the whole subject upon public attention, and we would not be understood, in the foregoing suggestions, as recommending any particular course, but only attempting to lay the arguments pro and con, upon such a weighty question, before our readers. Would that our Legislators turned their attention oftener to these great practical questions, and less to personal and party contentions.

### THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

(From the Montreal Witness.)

The condition of the emigrants continues to excite the liveliest sympathy. There are now about 850 on the doctors' lists at the sheds, and many more very feeble and ailing. Eight sheds are occupied as hospitals, and a large staff of doctors and nurses, under the efficient headship of Dr. Liddel, are constantly in attendance. The deaths continue to average about 20 a-day, though generally speaking no malignant disease has yet appeared. Soup kitchens and new sheds are erecting for the accommodation of the healthy, under the zealous supervision of Mr. Barrett, an officer connected with the Board of works; every thing that the Doctor asks for is supplied at once by Go-