

It is now understood that the family of the unfortunate conductor Barber, whose forgetfulness was the cause of the terrible Humber accident, are in a very needy condition, and aid has to be extended to them at once to keep them from actual want. The statement comes from them, and it is no doubt correct, that his ordinary pay barely sufficed to keep the family in comfort, not allowing any margin to lay by anything ahead. The pay of nearly all the employees of the Grand Trunk is on such a meagre scale that probably very few of them manage to do more than just live comfortably out of what they get. On the other hand, the leading officials draw princely salaries and travel and fare in princely style. The same statement is probably true of the various other railways in the country.

The conductors and engine drivers on our railways have vast responsibilities, both as regards life and property, committed to their care, and it is a matter of very great public importance that only men of first-class reliability and intelligence should be placed in such positions. That can hardly be expected when the rates of pay to them are so low as they now generally are. The only wonder is that under a system of such low rates as has prevailed for years, considering the great personal risks and responsibilities to which they are exposed, such a good class of men has been obtained.

The Canada Pacific Railway has just been doing a very commendable thing in making a very sweeping reduction on its freight rates for grain from the various parts of Manitoba. It has always been felt, on all hands, that one of the weak points of the C. P. R. Company was that it is in their power to impose their own rates on grain and other agricultural produce which must necessarily find its way to market over that road, if marketed at all. The usual charges heretofore have been equal to at least half the value of much of the grain shipped, and in some cases even considerably greater than that. If the Company wisely resolve to keep down freight rates to a point about which there can be no reasonable grounds of complaint, they will do a good thing for themselves, a grand thing for the pioneer settlers, and a patriotic thing for the country.

There is no doubt but the C. P. R. Company got an excellent bargain—for themselves—out of the Canadian Government and People, but at any rate, they deserve due credit for an honest endeavour to carry out well their own part of the agreement. The road is being pushed into completion with a rapidity unequalled in the history of any other similar great enterprise, and there are the best of reasons to believe that the hardest part of the bargain, that of the construction of the road round the north side of Lake Superior, is being fulfilled to the letter. The road is also being much better built and better equipped than was generally expected. If the rates are only kept reasonably moderate the country may yet find out that it made a much better bargain than was at one time expected.

"Independents" in politics, especially if they happen to be somewhat prominent men, are not usually in high esteem by the great body of the people. It requires a very able man to play the part of an independent in Canadian politics and keep his head enough above the surface to be visible at all to the public eye. It is astonishing how few men of the independent class are now in any of our representative bodies, from the village council to the Dominion Parliament. The reason probably is that the great majority of the electors have had about enough experience with that class of men to stand in doubt of them. The Cincinnati Enquirer, a leading Ohio journal, is said to have been an independent for years and it has had a good deal to do with that class, no doubt. It now defines an independent as a political sorehead who has been snubbed by both parties. That is often about how the case stands. Our party men, however, might often show less subserviency.

In Texas things are managed quite differently from Canada, in many respects. A paragraph is just now going the rounds to the effect that of the students of the Texas University forty are females. In our Provincial University females are not admitted at all. Which country is adopting the most enlightened and wisest policy in this respect? Surely in a Province like ours there ought to be a more definite public recognition of the importance of encouraging higher education among women than our authorities now give.

The New York State Engineer of last year, gives an opinion in his annual report which may as well be carefully looked into by our leading men at Ottawa. In his deliberate opinion "canals as a successful and necessary means of transport have outlived their usefulness." This conviction is becoming more general every year. Railways are becoming abundant and in consequence of the many improvements made in connection with them railway transportation is becoming so cheap, as well as so rapid that inland transportation by water is becoming comparatively less and less each year. Canada has expended many millions on its great canals, which were very important and very necessary in their time, and it is expending millions each year now in connection with its canal system. There are several new canal projects, such as the Trent Valley and others, involving millions and millions more. Is it not about time to stop and consider for a little whether all these expensive canals will be of much real commercial value to the country if completed?

The Erie canal was made free not long ago, and the large expense of its yearly maintenance saddled directly on the tax payers of New York State, in hope of greatly reviving its declining trade. The success of the experiment is more than questioned by Mr. Seymour, the late State Engineer, and surely no man ought to be in a better position to know. He now asserts that the canals of the State have greatly deteriorated during the year and no less a sum than three and a half million dollars will be necessary to put them in efficient repair. Some able busi-

ness men have suggested emptying the Erie of its waters entirely and laying the bottom with railway tracks for heavy transportation purposes. That may yet be done.

A Massachusetts Governor has just been appointing some one else to the office of his private secretary when he has a boy of his own who might fill the place. This is rather extraordinary conduct for a prominent United States politician. When asked for some reason for such an unusual course, he gave it as his determination that his boy must prepare himself for some honorable work in life, and he was not going to have his family fitted with offices. Such language might put the blush on quite a large number of our well-known public men, but it is language honorable to a man occupying an honorable position. There is something truly demoralizing in the sight of a man in authority fitting offices to half his male relations, if not to his sisters, his cousins, and his aunts. The late Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald, near the end of his important official career, made it his boast that though he had had at his disposal hundreds of offices, he had never settled one of his own immediate relations in any one of them.

There seems a good deal of madness about many of the hot-headed Irish agitators, especially those of the dynamite class, but it is pretty evident that there is a good deal of method in the madness of some of them. The wild cry goes up for funds to be secretly expended in doing deadly work on British soil almost any where, and the cry is generally successful in drawing out a good deal of funds. A case in court in New York a few days ago went to show that O'Donovan Rossa, one of the best known and most blatant of all the dynamite class, has managed to get a good many thousands of dollars of funds committed to his control, and the judge did not hesitate to intimate his opinion that the largest share of the funds probably remained with him. One of his companions sued for a few hundred dollars out of the fund, but the verdict was against him, the Court deciding that if he wanted to share a fund he must do like O'Donovan, and get one in his own hands. During the last dozen years, probably a dozen leading Fenians in and about New York have been, in the end, accused by their own party of gorging themselves with plunder from funds committed to their care "for patriotic purposes."

Last year a very large fund was raised to make a present to Parnell. Probably the general impression among the contributors was that, in some undefinable way, Parnell would place the fund so as to do the most good to the greatest possible number of Irishmen. That seems to be just what he did—according to his own ideas at least. It turns out, however, that the greatest possible number in this case was "Number One." Parnell had at that time, it is said, some heavy mortgages on his Irish property, and these were at once paid off. Of course, all this went to "lighten the burden" of at least one of the Irish people. The balance of the money was put to his own

credit, so that it will "relieve oppression," it may be, from some future indebtedness. Of course Irishmen everywhere have a perfect right to pay out their money to pauper agitators, but it has an awkward look to see it thus squandered, while the whole world is being called on to contribute for the relief of furnished people in Ireland.

The body of Capt. Webb, the notable swimmer, has just been exhumed from its temporary resting place and re-interred with Christian and Masonic ceremonies. It now rests quietly beside the grave of the notable Niagara Hermit. It is well that there was but little demonstration made over the remains of the brave but misguided man. His death was little other than a suicide, with no object to serve for voluntarily undertaking such hazardous risks than additional notoriety. Had there been great demonstrations over the dead man, the effect would have been to stimulate a number of other madcaps to unnecessarily hazard their own lives to make a holiday for sightseers. The kind of "bravery" that prompts men to put themselves in positions of great peril merely to satisfy the public craving for excitement ought not to be encouraged.

Capt. Webb's widow has been left poorly provided for. She has now to maintain herself and her children by acting as bookkeeper in some Boston establishment at a small salary. Surely it looks like a cruel thing for any man, having given such hostages to fortune, to toy so recklessly with his life. His family might have been in quite a different position to-day had the man, with Capt. Webb's energy and skill, but taken a different course of life. The next man who proposes to jeopardize himself, in or about the Niagara, ought to be frowned upon severely.

What is to be done with all the helpless poor in and about us? The question is becoming more and more urgent, and as the winter advances and the hard times grow still harder the difficult matter must be grappled with in some other way than our present make-shift manner. The street of Toronto are all but swarming with poor, many of whom must beg, or steal, or be sent to prison, in order to keep from actual starvation. It is well known that some of them do not want to work, and will not, unless as a last extremity; but it is also well-known that just now, at any rate, many of them could not procure employment, however industriously inclined. There are, no doubt, cases each week of some poor creature committing crime for the mere purpose of being arrested and imprisoned. The Police Court news indicate that. Others probably commit crimes, driven to such acts by sheer poverty, some of the cases not having been detected at all. It is an unsatisfactory thing, to say the least of it, to allow this to go on in a Christian community, and it is a very unsafe thing for the people.

The old question runs, "When doctors differ who shall decide?" In connection with the state of things we now have in Canada, between the conflicting claims