

perous or unfortunate in business, and it is easy to see that at the least it would be found dictating to the Government on all occasions, where anything was to be gained by that course. With such dictation it is needless to tell Canadians our liberties would depart. If the Canadian people shall unwisely refuse to bear in mind what they already know, and to make themselves fully masters of this plain but grave issue, the loss will be their own, now and in transmission.

Private companies, on the other hand, may be trusted with the working of a Government railway on terminable leases of not excessive length, because they would always be under the supervision of Government and people in such case. Ownership of the great highways through the prairies, whether by one company or several in combination, which would be precisely the same in effect, running through, organizing and creating new Provinces, which is the primary work of the state itself, is a matter not to be tolerated, because such delegation would certainly threaten the very existence of this young Dominion. The country, as we rightly assume, is bent upon having this railway, and will be equally desirous that it should be vested in Her Majesty's name for the people's benefit. The appanage will help to make our respected Queen an Empress of free communities. The Government of Canada would have the option either to work it themselves, when completed, or to provide for its efficient working by such leases as we have spoken of, running over moderate terms, to a company or companies, who would thus be delivered from most painful risks. Give the line away we must not. The State does not build railways to give them away when finished. The state of all human powers is best able to await the hour of their fruitfulness. Examples confirmatory of the true view will soon occur to the mind. King Charles's Rupert's Land liberality; the Nova Scotia coal charter; the Prince Edward Island land patents; the Seigniorial system of Louis the Fourteenth, and many European charters which we need not just now cite. grim warnings as they have all become to a thinking people, were but small seeds when first cast upon the ground, for they dealt merely with unvalued expanses of waste lands; but they grew into extensive and very inconvenient realities, with the effects of which the present generation—as it has felt the oppression of those feudal monstrosities—has the best opportunity of acquainting itself; and we will draw to a close this already extended article, by commending the careful study of their several histories to all of our young Canadians who, in a spirit of patriotism may be educating themselves to promote the greatness of their country.

The Pacific Railway Act, as framed, we must all perceive contains provisions that are neither Liberal nor Conservative, but only defective and suicidal. It also seems to involve a sort of method of avoidance of its own defects. But such is not the form in which it will be likely to be ultimately accepted as a practical measure. We regard it, in fine, as a foregone conclusion that it will have to be amended in these important particulars before there will be any hope of building an inter oceanic railway by its means. The inevitable delay of surveys, hindering the commencement of the work, is the only consideration that has prevented popular anxiety on these grounds from developing itself. A Ministry that has risen to power on the ruins of the inadmissible scheme of the late Government, can never afford to adopt the flagitious principle which has worked all the evil that the constituencies of the country arose in so determined a manner to remedy.

The creation of a new party in any country is not a matter of outburst or sudden growth. Neither is it the offspring of any single mind. Hence we are not a little amused to read periodically of projects of this sort in the United States and elsewhere. The latest of these across the border is the Trade Party, said to be headed by Senator Morton, and whose platform, draughted at Washington by a few Congressmen, contains the following magnificent ideas: A call for a constitutional convention to effect several changes in the fundamental laws of the United States, among which will be the election of President, Vice-President, and Senators directly by the people; subordinating all corporations to the National Government; disallowing special privileges to any corporation; adding largely to the authority of the General Government in matters affecting the transportation and trades of the country; and making such banking provisions as will allow the General Government to institute banks under its own authority; an immediate agitation for committing Congress and the nation at once to the carrying out of the scheme of the five great artificial water routes recommended by the Transportation Committee of the Senate—that is, the opening of the mouths of the Mississippi, the connection of the Mississippi with the lakes, the ship-canal around Niagara, the enlargement of the

Erie Canal, and the joining of the James River with the waters of Ohio by a canal. The construction of at least two direct freight railways under the authority of the General Government, so as to regulate the charges of the main lines of the country.

New Brunswick is in the very heat and fire of general elections. The Local House has been dissolved, and an entirely new representation is being canvassed. The sole issue is the School Act. Shall there be separate or denominational schools? It is notorious that nothing so inflames the wildest passions of men, blinding their judgment and blunting all their sensibilities, as sectarian discussions. New Brunswick is no exception to this rule. The contest now going on within its borders is of the fiercest. Papers which have fought shoulder to shoulder in Federal politics, such as the *St. John Telegraph* and *Freeman*, are now at daggers drawn on this Provincial issue. From present appearances it seems probable that the separate school party will win the day.

It is all the fashion now-a-days to decry France and everything French; yet in the matter of finances the United States might stoop to learn a lesson from the volatile Republic. The French have borne their misfortunes with fortitude, and set about repairing their losses in a business-like way. Though weighed down by a heavy debt they have repudiated inflation and fantastic money schemes of all sorts. Since the 1st of November, 1873, they have reduced their paper circulation \$91,000,000, and put \$74,000,000 in specie in the Bank of France. At present the country is \$165,000,000 nearer resumption than at the end of last October, while the United States are \$20,000,000 further away from that happy consummation.

Lower Canada has always been famous for its fruitful women. The following is only one case among many. Madame Gedeon Roy, *née* Françoise Richard, died on the 18th of last February at the age of 88, after 69 years of married life. She had 15 children, 4 of whom died without issue. The others had descendants to this extent: Isabelle, 91; Eléonore, 95; Emélie, 68; Flavie, 40; Narcisse, 54; Marie, 21; Joseph, 29; Clara, 17; Marguerite, 30; Pierre, 29; Célie, 14—a total of 488 children. To this number add the 15 of Madame Roy, which make this excellent lady the mother of a patriarchal family of 503 at the time of her death. Is not this increasing and multiplying with a vengeance?

The Centennial Resolution or Bill providing for the national celebration of the first centenary of American Independence, at Philadelphia, on the 4th July, 1876, has just passed the American Congress. One of the clauses confers upon the President the authority of inviting foreign sovereigns and rulers to attend the celebration. There is to be an international exhibition a world's fair, but it is distinctly provided that the government of the United States shall not be liable for expenses incurred by foreign exhibitors.

Boston is particularly enthusiastic in its advocacy of a renewal of the Reciprocity Treaty. While in this respect it is only at one with the other leading cities of the United States, there may be reason to suspect that it is actuated by a laudable selfishness in its desire to attract the Canadian export trade and become our winter shipping port instead of Portland. It is natural that Boston should bestir itself in the matter, as it is about to lose the service of the Cunard steamers, and thereby the grain trade of the West.

ROBERT TANNAHILL.

One hundred years ago, on June 3rd, Robert Tannahill was born in Paisley, Renfrewshire, a tender child of genius, ill-fitted to ward off the buffets of the rude world, on which he had entered. His parents were industrious, respectable persons; but like most of their class, bestowed upon their son, Robert, a good, common school education. They afterwards apprenticed him to the weaving trade. At the loom he was a diligent student; and at an early age, fired with the enthusiasm caused by the triumphs of Burns, he began to write verses. Though perfectly conscious of the nature and value of his gifts, he displayed none of the offensive bearing too common among aspirants for the poetic wreath. Like a true child of the muses he was rather humbled than exalted in spirit by the visions given him of the beautiful in nature, with which his mind was so truly in harmony. Each varying phase of human emotion found through him its corresponding setting in the ever-changing face of the beautiful earth. The mysterious union he conceived to exist between the animate and inanimate creation, which he poured forth in song of exquisite beauty, made life to him full of solemnity.

From the very first the songs of Tannahill found appreciation among his acquaintances. Much of the early success was due to the skill with which his friend R. A. Smith, the composer, set some of his best songs to music. In 1807, the poet published his "Poems and Songs" and he had no reason to complain of the manner with which the public received his

book. The truth, and delicacy, and deep insight of the tuneful interpreter of nature compelled admiration. In cottage and castle his songs were sung. He had touched the chords of the human heart. "Jessie, the Flower o' Dunblane," "Gloomy Winter's noo awa," "Loudon's Bonnie Woods and Braes," "The Braes o' Balquhider," "The Bonnie Woods o' Craigielee," and "The Lass o' Aranteenie," made vocal the land; and far over the seas, deep in the back woods of America, in the jungles of India, in the wastes of Australia—wherever Scotsmen wandered from the old loved land, the tender and beautiful utterances of the bard of Paisley were made their own. The wealthy, the educated, and the elevated in station, now sought the acquaintance of Tannahill; but this only seemed to deepen the natural despondency of his nature. Soon an event occurred, which shattered the finely-strung soul. George Thomson, the correspondent of Burns, and Archibald Constable, the publisher, failed to accord him the recognition he deserved. His despondency assumed the form of a settled melancholy. He burnt his manuscripts, including many unpublished poems. Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, visited him and strove, and not unsuccessfully for a time, to banish morbid thoughts from the mind of his suffering brother poet. On parting, however, Tannahill said with a hopeless despair: "Farewell, we shall never meet again."

For a period he attempted to drown rankling thought and a sense of injustice by intoxicants. The remedy aggravated the disease. From the artificial elevation thus temporarily attained, he sunk only the more deeply into the profound abyss of sadness and gloom. He complained of a prickly sensation in his head. "You should give up drinking," said his younger brother Matthew, "for I've heard that such a feeling often precedes insanity." But the end was near. Consumption marked him for death. Shortly before the end he went to Glasgow, and so marked were the symptoms of mental derangement that a friend accompanied him back to Paisley. On reaching his home he went to bed. In the evening his brother who attended him, finding that he was sleeping soundly, went away for about two hours. When the brother returned the bed was deserted. The delirious poet had gone from the house. Next morning he was found in a pool of water at Ferguslie, which now bears Tannahill's name, by a negro who had formerly been a slave in America. Thus gloomily, and in dread sombre colours, was this bright flame of Scottish genius extinguished, on the 10th of May, 1810.

Paisley, all honour to her sons, has carefully kept green the memory of her bard. The poet's brother, when old age compelled him to cease from labour, was provided with a competency by his fellow townsmen. The Tannahill Club has always observed his anniversary. This year the centennial of Tannahill's birth, the 3rd of June, will be observed as a general holiday in Paisley. The inhabitants are to decorate their dwellings; societies will march in procession to the "Braes of Glenifer," where appropriate festivities will be held; and in the evening a literary banquet and concert will take place. Paisley is to honour the centenary of Tannahill with all her glowing enthusiasm; and no doubt Scotsmen everywhere, whether as individuals or societies, will pay heartfelt tribute, not unmixed with sorrow, to the memory of the man who was so richly gifted by Scotia's muse, and whose songs are a priceless lasting heritage of the land he loved so much.

CHOOSING A PIANO.

In choosing a piano people are liable to be led away by the desire of possessing what they call a powerful instrument—forgetting, or not knowing, that mere loudness is of itself anything but a recommendation, and may be, as it often is, the result of a defect rather than of any excellence in its construction. It is the quality, not the strength of the tone, by which a piano (or indeed any musical instrument) should be judged; and as this quality, or timbre, is a thing which cannot easily be described, it would be well for a novice to take "Counsellor's opinion" before purchasing—that is, to get some musical friend, who knows what tone is, to make the selection for him. As a rule, general evenness of tone throughout is a good sign, carelessly made or ill-revised instruments being frequently uneven in tone and weak about the tenor middle part of the key-board. Pianos are either unichords, bichords, or trichords—that is, have one, two, or three strings to each note. Unichords are not much in vogue and are now rarely made unless to order; for though sweet in tone, being incapable of imperfect unisons, they were liable to get much out of tune before a tyro, in the absence of the dissonant false unisons, would be well aware of it. Cottage, cabinet, and square pianos were generally bichords, but for the last dozen years and more, upright trichords have been largely made, with advantage to the possessors of them in every way, with the trifling drawback that they take rather longer time to tune. Other things being equal, the quality of tone is best in a trichord, and for that reason it has our preference. Grand pianos are almost invariably trichords, and they are, and always must be, from the plan of their construction, the most perfect instruments. But their cost shuts them out of the majority of middle-class households, and they are further much too powerful and resonant for the small rooms of a middle-class dwelling house.

A word as to the treatment of the piano. It is a fact, odd as it sounds, that a piano may, in a sense, be educated to a good behaviour. It should be kept in a dry atmosphere, at an even temperature, not in a current of air, and not fronting the fire too near. New pianos need not be expected to stand very long in perfect tune, but if a piano is well tuned frequently—say once a month for the first year of its existence, and somewhat less frequently for a year or so afterwards—it will, so to speak, acquire the habit of keeping in tune, barring any radical defect in its material or its construction. The reason is, that there is a tendency in a strained string to remain at any degree of tension to which it has been long subjected—may, if a string which has stood at a certain pitch for months be let down or drawn up a quarter of a note, and so left, it will be found after the lapse of twenty-four hours to have gone back in a very appreciable degree towards its former tension or pitch; a curious fact this, which any reader owning a piano-forte or a violin can easily test for himself. It is much to be desired that people should tune their own pianos; the process, though it would appear somewhat complex to a beginner is really not difficult for any person to acquire who possesses an accurate ear; though doubtless considerable practice is necessary to enable any one to tune rapidly and well.