

# THE CRITIC:

A Maritime Provincial Journal.

DEVOTED TO

Commerce, Manufacturing, Mining and Agriculture.

1 50 PER ANNUM. }  
SINGLE COPY 5 CTS. }

HALIFAX, N. S., OCTOBER 31, 1890.

{ VOL. 7  
{ No. 44

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## THE CRITIC,

Published every Friday, at 161 Hollis Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

BY  
CRITIC PUBLISHING COMPANY.

Subscription \$1.50 per annum in advance. Single copies 5 cents.

SAMPLE COPIES SENT FREE.

Remittances should be made to A. M. FRASER, BUSINESS MANAGER.

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

It is worthy of attention in connection with the exportation of eggs to England that the Government has received advices from an English authority stating that there will not be the slightest difficulty in obtaining the highest price for Canadian eggs provided they weigh over two pounds and a half to the score. The highest price cannot be expected for small eggs.

Jeremiah was a great prophet, and so would be Professor Goldwin Smith if only he had a clearer vision of the truth. Not content with the long series of inky lamentations which he has hurled forth to damp the faith and ardor of Canadians, he finds a fresh target in the hopeful enthusiasms of Australia. He has marked with fine scorn the movement of the Australian colonies in the direction of such a confederation as that of Canada; and he warns them solemnly to pause ere it be too late. It is proof of the sincerity of this indisputable great, but sadly myopic Jeremiah, that he urges the Australians to come and observe for themselves the working of the Canadian Confederation before attempting to reproduce it in Australia. He seems confident that such observation could only confirm, in Australian eyes, the justice of his denunciations and the timeliness of his warning. What is this strange defect in Mr. Goldwin Smith's eyes, which causes him to see a challenge in every expression of ardent hope or enthusiastic patriotism, and a premonition of calamity in every evidence of progress?

On the 6th of October the Mormon Church officially announced that polygamy as a tenet of its faith had been abandoned. The reason for this move is that the prophets found it useless to strive against the laws of the United States any longer. The resolution is one of policy simply, and much doubt is thrown upon the sincerity of the church's action in the matter. For many years polygamy has been stigmatized as a crime by act of Congress, but the Mormons continued to practice it in spite of everything. It is scarcely to be believed that they intend to abandon it even now, for it is only a short time since a number of women landed in New York, fully imbued with the notion that polygamy is a sacred institution, and, notwithstanding the remonstrances of persons who tried to persuade them from their purpose, they continued on their way to Utah, there to become wives to polygamous husbands. However, if the church is sincere, it means the removal of a reproach on the civilization and christianity of the United States. The new edict affects only future marriages, but polygamy deprived of the support of the church as a religious institution, will soon be a thing of the past. This being the case, there will no longer be any objection to the admission of that territory as a state, but it may be as the New York Herald fears, that once given the sovereign power of a state it might see fit to make polygamy lawful, and then neither Congress nor any other federal

authority could interfere. Polygamy has been pronounced a failure, not because they believe it is wrong, but because it is inexpedient. An abominable practice is abolished, not because they would, but because they must, and have recognized the inevitable. The new departure will have important effects in American politics, into which a solid Mormon vote will enter and demand its price.

The circulation of a petition asking for the commutation of the death sentence on Birchall, the Woodstock murderer, is an abuse of the privilege of the subject. The man has had a fair trial, and has been adjudged guilty of a brutal murder, for which he must lose his life, if capital punishment is to remain on the statute books. The only possible ground on which this man's life might be spared is sympathy for his wife, and although this may be strong, it is far from sufficient cause for allowing him to escape from justice. It is an impertinence to ask the Executive to commute Birchall's sentence, and a great tax upon the forbearance of those who are asked to sign the petition. The softer hearted among those may be moved by pity for Mrs. Birchall to put their names to a document which their sober judgment cannot endorse. If ever there was a case where the law should take its course it is this one, and while our hearts may be deeply moved to sympathy for the unfortunate wife of the murderer and his other relations who feel the disgrace, we must not forget the unfortunate young man who lay dead in a lonely swamp—lured to this untimely death by Birchall, the man whose life is now asked to be spared. It is improbable that the petition will have any effect. The crime was too serious and the prisoner deserves to die for it.

Late despatches announce that negotiations are in progress between Great Britain and France with a view to the settlement of the Newfoundland difficulties. Great Britain, it appears, proposes to buy out the claims of France to the French shore for a pecuniary consideration. France, however, demands in addition a considerable extension of territory in Africa. In spite of the energetic protests of Mr. Stanley against the free-handed fashion in which Lord Salisbury has been tossing great slices of the Dark Continent, as sops to the several hungry mouths of the European Cerberus, we cannot but think that a little more African territory might be well spent in purchasing the removal of French influence, not only from Newfoundland, but from St. Pierre and Miquelon as well. As for a little African wilderness more or less, it would seem, for the immediate present, of no great consequence. When any particular section of it shall have become by chance, or by the laudable efforts of Germany or France, particularly desirable in Anglo-Saxon eyes, it is not at all unlikely that the genius which presides over our destinies will shake the ripening plum into the receptive Anglo-Saxon lap. It would not be the first time that France and Germany have labored, and Great Britain has reaped the benefit of their labors. If we remember that history repeats itself, and that we have every ground for the sturdiest faith in the future of our race, we will not be too much concerned over the cession of regions in which there is a great deal of rough work to be done before they can be made suitable to our requirements.

The British American Citizen, of Boston, has sent a circular letter to all the leading firms in that city engaged in the Maritime Provincial trade, asking the following questions.—"1. What in your estimation will be the effect of the McKinley Tariff on imports from the Provinces? 2. Has there been any falling off in such imports? 3. On whom will the additional burden fall—the producer or the consumer?" The answers from such well known firms as E. T. Russell & Co., George C. Rockwell & Son, Barclay & Co., H. E. Woodward & Co., Hatheway & Co., DeLong & Seaman and F. L. Clements, are to the effect that the duty will seriously cripple the trade, and that in all cases the consumers will have to pay the duty. L. W. Rockwell and Woodside & Co. believe that the duty will be divided between the producer and the consumer, the later firm stating their case in the following terse manner:—"We think the burden will be divided between the producer and consumer. When the supply is short the consumer will have to pay nearly all the duty; when the supply is in excess of the demand the producer will have to bear the weight of the burden." All unite in condemning the extra taxation as in the interests of the favored few, and Mr. L. W. Rockwell hits the nail squarely on the head in the conclusion to his letter when he says.—"I am decidedly of the opinion that the burden falls upon both the producer and consumer. Then, sir, this being the fact, the door opens for further inquiry, viz., Who are the beneficiaries? My answer would be, a favored few—few indeed when compared with the great mass of consumers—a few producers at home, protected in mistaken promises by cowardly legislation, at the expense, intellectually, socially and physically, of the great mass of the people." Evidently the McKinley Bill has not strengthened the Administration with the leading mercantile firms of Boston.