

THE CRITIC:

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The editor of THE CRITIC is responsible for the views expressed in Editorial Notes and Articles, and for such only, but the editor is not to be understood as endorsing the sentiments expressed in the articles contributed to this journal. Our readers are capable of approving or disapproving of any part of an article or contents of the paper; and after exercising due care as to what is to appear in our columns, we shall leave the rest to their intelligent judgment.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

We are glad to learn that one of the Postal reforms we have advocated is to be instituted. The Government has decided to allow an increase in the weight of letters that may be sent for one rate, from half an ounce to an ounce.

We commend to the serious consideration of the Hon. Mr. Haggart, the propriety—not to say the necessity—of issuing stamps of larger denominations or values than those that have hitherto been in use. The highest value of single stamps in use in Canada is only fifteen (15 cts.) cents. Under existing postal regulations the sender of a package is absolutely unable to comply with the law, which prescribes that the stamps required to prepay postage must be placed on the address side of a letter or package. The writer has had on several occasions to pay over a dollar in postage on a package, besides a registration stamp. The address to many foreign countries occupies from five to eight or ten lines. The address thus covers nearly the whole of that side of the wrapper, and there is not room to place the stamps required to prepay postage. With her increasing foreign trade and consequent correspondence, Canada should have, in addition to those now afforded, stamps of the values of 25 cents, 50 cents and \$1.

The choicest morsel we have yet come across is in a report of the debate in Congress on the Nicaragua Canal Bill. It is altogether too rich to be allowed to go unnoticed. Said Mr. Chipman, of Michigan: "We have put ourselves where, though we may not be pecuniarily liable, we shall be morally responsible for the safety and protection of a great American enterprise which will help to spread our country over the world. I, for one, hope this step is only the prelude to the day when the nation will follow, and we will plant our feet on these regions, and when our flag shall wave over the State of Nicaragua as a State of the United States." [Applause.] Dingley of Maine favored the report. O'Neill of Missouri said that "the trouble with the American people was a lack of self-assertion." The astuteness of the distinction drawn between pecuniary liability and the "moral responsibility" which is made to do duty as the basis of spread-eagleism is delicious; but, when Mr. O'Neill so naively explains to us the extreme modesty of the American people, a doubt arises whether the lack of self-assertion is not induced by utter exhaustion of the power, prodigious as it is, of screaming.

It appears from the reports of recent explorations that the resources of Australia have been underestimated. The greater portion of the interior has been set down as a desert. Travellers who have had the courage to penetrate the region during the past two years have found one great lake 200 miles long and numerous others, with large rivers and well-watered plains. The interior is not a desert. A railway is soon to be run across the continent, for it is nothing less, and its development will proceed more rapidly than ever.

Some fragmentary papers have been published at Washington which throw some, though not a very definite, light on the Behring Sea question. It appears that instructions have been sent to the U. S. Ministers to the northern powers of Europe and to Japan to invite arrangements for a close season for seals, to obviate their undue destruction. It is therefore evident that the untenable claim to the control of a great open sea is relinquished, and an acknowledgment of the piratical nature of the seizures of Canadian vessels.

Whether the presence of lobbyists or the paid publication of the speeches in the daily papers is most answerable for it, it is astonishing what a lot of time it does take our "locals" to do so little business. Before Confederation, when our Provincial Parliament had many more important subjects to legislate upon, we believe the average length of the sessions was no greater than it is at present. Thirty-two State Legislatures in the American Union hold biennial sessions; only six meet annually. We should not be above taking a useful hint from our neighbors.

The result of the completion by the G. T. R. of its connection via Mas-sena Springs with certain American Lines south of the St. Lawrence, is equivalent, it appears, to a removal of duty on bituminous coal—at least as regards Montreal. The distance between Montreal and Ohio is about half that to Nova Scotia, and the American Lines can handle coal freight much more economically than the Intercolonial. American soft coal can now, therefore, undersell Nova Scotia coal at Montreal in spite of the duty. Coal is in consequence cheap and abundant there this winter, which is all very well for Montreal, but, like every other result of action of the G. T. R., inimical to the Maritime Provinces.

DeLesseps has thrown up the sponge, and it is impossible not to feel a touch of sadness at the ultimate failure of splendid ability and energy. The tone of the letter in which the grand old Frenchman admits that the Company must pass into the hands of liquidators is touching in the despair he can no longer fight off. Meantime the American Nicaragua project, the requirements of which have been persistently and exhaustively surveyed throughout and estimated, is coming to a head, and will doubtless secure a firm hold on the American mind. The total length of this canal from ocean to ocean is 169 miles, of which 56½ is by lake, 84½ by river, and 28 only by actual canal. The lake is deep, but the San Juan river requires deepening, though the labor would not, it is said, be excessive. The summit level is, however, 110 feet above the sea, and six locks are necessary. Extensive harbor works are also requisite at Greytown on the Atlantic, and at Brito on the Pacific. These do not, however, seem to daunt the projectors, who assume, after very careful calculations, that the whole cost would not amount to more than \$65,000,000, while the Panama Company's liabilities to-day amount to \$422,000,000. The country is also said to be much healthier than on M. DeLessep's line.

We are glad to see that the idea of a summer carnival for Halifax is being taken up by the Press all over the Province. There can be no doubt of the benefit, not to Halifax alone, but to the whole Province, which would accrue from it. The various attractions which it may be made to combine would be far in excess of those which Montreal can display under the limitations of winter. The presence of a garrison and a fleet are in themselves no small adjuncts. These would doubtless be allowed to contribute to the general display, perhaps again in the form of a sham fight. A regatta, athletic sports, horse races, polo, a firemen's demonstration, cricket, baseball, picnics, excursions, and various other amusements and spectacles would furnish a profuse programme. The influx of visitors who would leave with a favorable impression of the Province would be enormous, and we would suggest in this connection that large numbers of sight-seers from the old country would probably be secured by timely consultation with those universal providers of tourists, the Messrs. Cook. The management should by no means be allowed to fall exclusively into the hands of the city council, but it would be a good initiative if His Worship the Mayor were to call a public meeting at an early date to start preliminaries.