

The Free Press, LONDON, ONT.

Friday, March 1, 1889.

RAILWAYS AND THE PUBLIC.

When a terrible accident such as that which took place on the Grand Trunk on Wednesday evening occurs, it is very bad policy on the part of the railway people to withhold information concerning it, but they should give it at the earliest possible moment, and in the fullest manner. The public mind is naturally in a condition of much excitement. Many lives have been lost; many injuries have taken place, and a species of terror inflicted upon the community. Dear friends and acquaintances have been involved more or less seriously in the calamity; and what so natural, what so imperative as that the railway authorities should of themselves undertake the duty of giving to the public—who are their patrons—the fullest and most exact particulars concerning it? Instead of this it is the general policy, with some of them, at least, to hide all that they can, and to hinder the collection of news on the part of those who undertake to collect it to the best of their ability and opportunities. But it is evident that the duty of reporting the results on any and every accident should be one that the railway officials should themselves undertake and perform in the general interests. On Wednesday evening the residents of this part of the country, as well as at Hamilton, Toronto and elsewhere, were painfully afflicted at the news that had leaked out as to the shocking accident at St. George's. Why could not the G. T. R. people, who have the fullest telegraphic facilities at their command, have sent messages to all points giving ample and true particulars of the calamity? And not only in this particular instance, but in all cases in which the interests of the public are concerned the officials of the various lines should have distinct and imperative instructions to afford the public the fullest possible information. Instead of that there is ever present a painful reticence which tends to baffle inquiry, keep up a painful apprehension, and gives rise to reports of an exaggerated kind, by which that apprehension is intensified. The newspapers, ever on the alert to give the most authentic information, are usually hindered in the very quarters which should be the most prompt to disclose every incident that may have taken place, so that unnecessary solicitude may be allayed and the facts truly given. There is no doubt, we think, that public opinion will, before long, force upon the railway companies this necessary duty. The policy that has been so far adopted has been the very reverse. And to such an extent has this been carried that an employe who is known to have communicated facts to the press is at once discharged, as if he had committed some grave crime, instead of having done the public a real service. It is high time that the policy of withholding from the public those things which, in the nature of the case, they have a right to be made acquainted with, should undergo a radical change, and that the dark-lantern methods of procedure should give place to the greatest possible illumination.

COMPELLING WOMEN TO VOTE.

Some "reformers" are very anxious that it should be obligatory on all those who are or may be in the possession of the franchise to vote at all elections. And there are others of the same class who think that society will never be what it should be until the women of the country are able to vote at political as well as at municipal elections. Now, if these two classes of "reformers" were to have their way they would place the ladies in a very awkward fix. They would impose duties on them which they do not care to undertake, which if they did not perform they would be open to fine if not to imprisonment. It is not singular, then, that the Bill that was introduced into the Ontario Legislature by Mr. Waters should have been altogether squelched, and that none of the leaders on either side concurred in the proposition. It is evident that to mix up domestic affairs with those of public business would be a very sorry policy. And it would be the means of disturbing those tender relations between the sexes which have hitherto subsisted. It has not been observed that the female portion of the community at large have any burning desire to be compelled to attend political meetings, and be hurried to the polls so as to record their votes upon matters in which they are able to feel very little interest. True it is that some women are found who are anxious to shine on the platform, but they are in most cases out of place, just as a man-milliner is known to be. Some men have the faculty of being able to fit dresses for ladies' wear to perfection, but though they thus perform a useful task opinion is not altogether in favor of their undertaking such affairs. As the sexes wear different clothes so as to distinguish one from the other, so it may be said that their line of action in life should be different. Nature has made them dissimilar, and no attempt that legislators may essay will be able to alter its behests. Man, the rough and rude; woman, the gentle, modest and kind. Why should any attempt be made to lessen the attributes of the latter by assimilating their line of life to the harsh duties of the former? Mr. Waters' Bill to say that women may vote, and the desire that others have that they shall be made to vote, are things that will well bear to stand aside for some time to come.

The Toronto Architects' Guild is endeavoring to form a Provincial Association. It has been decided to form a local association in Hamilton. This movement is due to the employment of foreign architects by the Mowat Government.

THE CASE IN NEBRASKA.

What is the matter with the market of Nebraska? We have seen how poorly farmers in other States are getting along with all the advantages so much boasted of by certain disgruntled politicians in Canada, at their doors. In Ohio, they are in debt to at least three times the amount of their brethren in Ontario. In Wisconsin, the farmers are poor owing to low prices; in New Jersey the same complaint is made. In New York State the farmers are getting more and more into debt—being ten per cent. more now than a year ago. But what of Nebraska, which every one has been talking of as a rich state, where the farmer has new land, comparatively, and full access to the market of sixty millions. A most significant petition has been sent to the Washington Senate from the farmers of Nebraska. The farmers tell a doleful tale. They say that while the production of wealth is unprecedented in their State and the country at large, the condition of the producers of wealth is not improving, "but it is, on the contrary, retrograding." The farmers "are sinking deeper and deeper into debt. Many who were once owners are now tenants. Country merchants with difficulty avoid bankruptcy. The value of mortgages on the farms of Nebraska is estimated to be \$150,000,000. Artisans and laborers suffer in company with those who till the soil, and thousands must fight to keep out of the poorhouse. Such are the complaints of the Farmers' Alliance, which the Nebraska Senate has considered and referred by resolution to Congress. The unfortunate men who complain can see only two classes that are safely prosperous—the money-lenders and the owners of railroads. They pray for legislation that shall save them from ruin, and first of all they ask that Congress shall increase the volume of currency so that money shall be more plentiful. The 'plaint of the Nebraska farmers is one which calls for the sympathy of all. No Canadian could wish them any worse condition than they themselves reveal in the petition referred to. We only use their case to show to our own farmers how infinitely better off they are on the average than their brethren in this Western State with all the lauded advantage of a wider market for their produce.

MIDDLESEX SCOTT ACT PETITION.

We understand that, in all cases, where counter petitions have been lodged against petitions to repeal the existing Scott Act, a period of two weeks is allowed by the Secretary of State in order to afford an opportunity to the petitioners to prove their allegations if they can. The whole matter of the validity of the petition for the repeal of the Scott Act for the county of Middlesex, and the counter petition, is in the hands of the Minister of Justice, and nothing further can be done until he fixes a day on which he will hear the case; or a day on which he will give the legal representatives of the petitioners for repeal of the Act and the counter petitioners, so that both sides may be present and hear the argument.

ATHLETICS IN EDUCATION.

Prof. Shaler, who has had over thirty years' experience as a student and teacher in Harvard, and in that time has come in contact with several thousand students, communicates his experience and conclusions on the question of Athletics in Education in a current magazine. He starts by establishing that physical culture attained through the sportive motives is essential to the bodily and moral welfare of the race. He mentions the curious fact that nearly all our sports are based upon the effort to get possession of a ball, and examining the relative advantages and disadvantages attendant upon the different forms that ball-play assumes, gives the first place to football as an athletic sport and school game. Lacrosse comes next in commendation, then baseball and cricket. Gymnastic exercises lack the stimulus given by co-operation between an individual and his mates. He holds it probable but not certain, that excessive cultivation of the body in youth does not lead to speedier decay in middle life. Prof. Shaler argues that one of the greatest advantages of athleticism is in retarding the development of the mind, that a high measure of physical activity tends to postpone the period of mental maturity. "I think," he says "the youths 'who have been much given to field sports, 'or who, in other words, have attained a vigorous growth are apt to be from one 'to two years behind their mates in their 'intellectual development.' The slower growth prepares for longer life and higher flight. Discussing the moral benefits of athletic sports he mentions several facts that between 1865 and 1880 it was not uncommon to find men so sodden with tobacco that they were unpleasant to have in a small lecture-room, but since the foundation of the new gymnasium and the development of the athletic motive he has found but two or three persons so offensively affected with tobacco.

It is not often that one can look to any portion of the criminal classes to advance the interests of society. But a curious development of this nature has taken place in England. In consequence of the numerous robberies of valuables that have taken place of late, especially at country mansions, it has been found necessary to order safes in which to keep jewellery and other costly articles from the clutch of the robbers. The great houses of Hobbs, Hart & Co., Chubb, Milner, and others concur in saying that the safe manufacturing business was never so brisk as now—for the reason stated; so that the gentle burglar has conferred a benefit on that class of manufacturers and their employes. But for all that we do not suppose that any will esteem the predatory rascals blessings to society.

CURRENT TOPICS.

We learn from the report of the Interior Department that the Crown Timber agents at Winnipeg reported prices of fuel as follows:—Cordwood, on car at Winnipeg, \$3.25 to \$4.50 per cord; at Portage la Prairie, \$2.50 to \$3. American anthracite coal was offered at Winnipeg on the cars at \$8.50 per ton, and native soft coal at \$7.50.

Montreal Gazette:—Perhaps it was in order to impress upon the people of Ontario the great need that exists in the province for a proper system of technical instruction that Mr. Mowat gave to an American architect the task of preparing the plans for the new legislative buildings. Canadian architects, nevertheless, think that some of them could have acquitted themselves equally well of such a task.

Reference is made in the report of the Minister of the Interior to the progress of the work in laying out the Rocky Mountain Park at Banff, one of the most charming places in the world, and which is gradually growing in popularity on account of the curative nature of the waters from the hot springs. The revenue derived from fees for bathing amounted to \$976.20, or twelve per cent. on the outlay of the year. This park promises to become an early day one of the most attractive resorts in the world.

Dr. Willard Bliss, one of the physicians who attended President Garfield after he was shot in July, 1881, died in Washington on Thursday. Dr. Bliss had been in bad health for several months, and on Tuesday night was stricken with paralysis, followed by cerebral hemorrhage. He was not widely known until called to attend President Garfield, and his reputation faded again from public view with the death of his distinguished patient. During his practice in Washington Dr. Bliss was almost impoverished through an attack made upon him by rivals because of his endorsement of a specific remedy (condurango) for cancer.

Mr. Adolphe Nielsen, the newly-appointed Superintendent of Fisheries, in Newfoundland, is now about to establish a cod-hatchery on the most approved lines, the necessary apparatus for which is being brought from the United States. By means of this hatchery he hopes to distribute no less than one hundred million cod eggs during the season, and the strongest hope is entertained that by a continuance of this method of replenishment the restoration of the depleted bays and coastal waters will be accomplished. Having thus put cod-hatcheries in operation, Mr. Nielsen will be expected to give attention to the other fisheries of Newfoundland.

In Japan a picture in which a rooster and a drum cut the principal part appears so often as to challenge the inquiry of strangers. To such the explanation is made that ages ago it was the fashion of the Japanese to keep a large drum at the door of the Mikado's palace. If any one was dissatisfied with the conduct of the Government he had liberty to pound on the drum in signification of his want of confidence. There was once an emperor of Japan so popular that a rooster and a hen set up housekeeping in the drum, and raised quite a family without being disturbed by disgusted citizens. The picture referred to typifies the Japanese idea of good government.

Fraudulent horse and mule insurance has taken the place of graveyard and marriage insurance in Pennsylvania. A company was started in Reading three years ago to do a legitimate business in insuring horses and mules, but according to the statement of its President, ex-Alderman Fisher, some bad men slipped in as agents, and did business very like the graveyard insurance agents did a dozen years ago. Sick horses were insured just as sick people have been. The horses soon died, the claims were collected, and the assessed stockholders were swindled, not through any work or knowledge of the home officers of the company, but by the unprincipled sub-agents. The allegations are that the dishonest agents went about to designing men, wherever they could be found, who owned old or dying horses, for \$10 or \$20 cash the agents insured such animals, pocketed the money, and in a few days, when the horses died, sent on the proofs of death, and the stockholders had to pay their assessments and satisfy the fraudulent claim.

An appreciative life of Dickens has just been published in France, the author being a M. du Pontavice de Henssey. He says England owes a good deal of the moral progress she has made in all directions within the last half century to Dickens. Bred in circumstances of the most depressing poverty, he became, as no great English writer had ever done before him, the spokesman of the poor. His novels, according to this writer, have done more to humanize English society, in the widest sense of the word, than all the speeches delivered in Parliament, for their unbarred doors, prisons, reformed workhouses, called into life a new class of hospital nurses, and laid bare the odiousness and stupidity of the arrogant and purse-proud; Dickens being animated by the conviction that the poor wretch in rags, when inspired by a spark of divine kindness, is better than the pompous plutocrat or the heartless noble.

All fortune seems to follow the noted racehorses bought in England for shipment to the United States. Prince Charlie, who was purchased by an American only six or seven years ago, died soon after his arrival, and his owners at once secured Lord Fal-mouth's Derby-winner, Kingcraft, to take his place. Kingcraft died on the voyage; Gown, the winner of the Derby two years before him, also died at sea. Stranger still, the same fate has befallen Ossory, brother of the mighty Ormonde, who cost Milton Young over \$10,000 a few weeks ago. Ossory could not have been shipped at a worse season, yet Mr. Young did not think it necessary to insure his life. Though high class, his breeding being as fashionable as that of any animal in England. There are at the present time two Derby-winners in the United States—the American bred Iroquois and the imported St. Rhaia.

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Rev. Mr. Crosby, a native of Ontario, who for 27 years has been a missionary among the British Columbia Indians, has been giving his experiences to a Halifax audience. He told of the customs of the mothers taking their female children to the woods, stuffing their mouths with straw, allowing them to die rather than have them grow up to become the slave of a chief and lead a life of shame. Of the poor women who were the burden bearers, carrying a big load with an infant on top, while a chief strutted behind like a king decked in his blankets, of the suffering of the aged, who were left to die, it being too much trouble to move them. Conjurings and witchcraft has a terrible hold. The man eaters were men who went away to the mountains and professed to fast for some days, while being secretly supplied with food. They would come back like a lot of wild beasts and bite the flesh from the arms of any one who came in their way. To get out of their way meant loss of caste. He did not believe the people were cannibals. They only did this to show their power. Then the dog eaters would come from the mountains in the same way, and the man who ate the most live dogs was declared the best doctor. There are 121,000 Indians, and of these 100,000 are pagans. While he asked God's blessing for the mission in Japan, China and other places, he did not think Methodists need go so far to find the dark places.

Here is Motley's account of the home of Bismarck:—"I am there all day long. I am one of those houses where every one does what one likes. The show apartments, where they receive formal company, are on the front of the house. Their living rooms, however, are a salon and a dining-room at the back, opening upon the garden. Here there are young and old grandparents and children and dogs, all at once, eating, drinking, smoking, playing and pistol firing (in the garden), all going on at the same time. It is one of those establishments where every earthly thing that can be eaten or drunk is offered you; porter, soda water, small beer, champagne, Burgundy or claret are about all the time, and everybody is smoking the best Havana cigars every minute."

The polariscope in the sugar sample room of the chemist's laboratory at the Appraiser's office in New York was found to have been "fixed." The design was to falsify Chemist Leary's sugar testing instrument. The discovery was made over a month ago, but the Government detectives kept the secret pretty successfully.

The New Asylum.

Orillia Times (Grit). As spring comes on, the people of Orillia begin to wonder if the Ontario Government really does intend to complete the Orillia Idiot Asylum this summer. The fact that provision is made in the estimates for a large-sized building, means little or nothing, for do we not know that the same plan was voted in 1888, and the main building had not appeared yet. Will it be the same this year? Is the question the people are asking; or is the Government going to let the idiots of the province languish in the goals of the country for another year?

This way of estimating expenditure which is never made is scarcely a fair way of dealing with the people. The understanding is that when the figures are brought before Parliament, the Government intends to expend the country's revenue for the ensuing year exactly as it is there laid down. If at the end of the fiscal year the people find that they have been fooled, as it were, and the same grant reappears in the estimates, they are inclined to regard the Government as little better than mere fakirs, who, having over-confidence in the reins of power, imagine they can turn or drive the people at their will. This will not do, and we are inclined to think that if Premier Mowat makes a second appearance as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, before an Orillia audience, he is likely to lose in popularity. We want that main asylum building, and are not to be put off with promises. They won't work.

In this connection it might be remarked that although the estimates show the substantial sum of \$28,500 for completing the asylum buildings here, no contracts have been let as yet. This is a significant fact, and we would, in a friendly way, ask the Ontario Government what it is going to do about it?

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