

The Canadian Spectator.

VOL. III.—No. 36.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1880.

\$2.00 PER ANNUM.

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GENERAL NOTES.

Dr. Larocque has just summoned a conference of his medical brethren on the general mortality of the city, and has given for publication comparative tables, and has made deductions from them in favour of Montreal, of which deductions our contemporary the *Witness* has pointed out a curious error in a leading principle. Still the figures are important, although they are very far from showing Montreal, as a city, to be as healthy as it ought and might be made to be. But these were not the tables especially asked for in these columns, and which Dr. Larocque has not yet found opportunity to favour us with. Those were, as our readers know, the statistics of the mortality of children under one year and under five years in all our public institutions professing to offer these poor infants a shelter, and the deaths have also to be compared with the numbers admitted. These figures are only such as have been furnished to the public in former years by Drs. Larocque and Carpenter, and as there can be no good reason for denying them now, we are still looking for them at his hands.

Sad to say, some of the institutions in question are successful in saving but a minute percentage of the lives confided to them, according to all previous returns,—a state of things which is simply intolerable in a free and modern community that wishes to take rank with others. A few may, we will suppose, be able to show some better measure of success. The figures will not deal with causes in operation affecting the excessive mortality, but they form a necessary and only groundwork for public inquiry. The common sense of the people of this country will insist, for the protection of the lives of the feeblest of God's creatures amongst them, appealing by every claim to our common humanity and our national honour, that on its being pointed out by those able to judge, the best course shall in future be followed. The Royal Commission was spoken of. Of its need there is no doubt, and it will come afterwards. Though we gain these preliminary figures, we are not trenching upon its functions.

We shall look for that Commission, only remembering that free governments move slowly. Not the less do they move surely, when there is good in them, and guide themselves by settled principles rather than by favour in the long run. Now, the Chief Magistrate is doubtless responsible for the due application of the laws. We hardly think Mr. Alpheus Todd will contradict us on this point. There may be a disregarded tendency for the interests of the weak, the insignificant and the uncomplaining—that is according to rough social estimates—going to the wall, as the saying is, but, if so, that is the very tendency to be overcome. We cannot, and must not, always be thinking of trouble and inconvenience to prosperous people, so as to make of them an obstacle to the vital and essential rights of any class. Prosperous people of the right kind do not desire anything of the sort. On the contrary, many of them exert themselves constantly for the general good government. If they feel their want of power, their hands will be strengthened. The newspapers, too, hold a settled opinion, though sometimes slow to express it. The *Witness* has evidenced its thoughtfulness, lately, in articles on the difficult question of legal process against the seducer—the general improvement of nursing for well-to-do children. In its news columns the practices of

the vile abortionists have not been spared. Its conductors will see with us, that the question of the institutions in Montreal, often referred to previously, needs both clear statement and solid reasoning now. It may perhaps be said of people under free institutions that they are good at excuses. No doubt they are so. But if they prize their responsibilities they must also exercise them.

The *Witness* has come out with an uncommonly airy scheme for handing over the actual lands composing the Timber Limits of the Province to lumberers of a speculative turn. Does this worthy journal know anything of the vast extent of those limits? and are its conductors really led to suppose that a free people will ever endure to have their country taken from under their feet in that way? The writer is not long, however, in bringing an effective puff to bear against the bubble he had started, for he goes on to say :—

“The limit system offers great inducements to speculation. It affords temptation to men without capital to undertake enterprises altogether too heavy for them, forcing them often to reckless and desperate means in order to meet the heavy interest at which they have borrowed the money paid down.”

As if the locking up of the lands within their private precinct would make lumberers of that class, or of any class, the less speculative. That is all too absurd. To save our forests we ought to provide for thinning out the trees while young, as they do with the German forests and the Norwegian. The ground should be gone over for timber production at regular intervals of years, and adjustments should doubtless be made in the duties to prevent the present lamentable waste.

We have received from a correspondent the suggestions which follow, in connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway and the North-west lands :—

“The following conditions are suggested to the people of this country on account of their believed suitability for controlling the action of the extensive Railway and Land-holding Company to whom it is intimated to us that our future interests as Canadian citizens in the North West are likely to be largely committed. Grave consideration is requested for these points from all who enjoy a due sense of the privileges and duties of Canadian Citizenship :—

“1. A limit of time during which the railway lands should be held by the company in unsettled condition, at the lapse of which specified period they should *ipso facto* revert to the hands of the Canadian Government. The compensation claimable by the company for such transferred lands to be fixed in the original deed. This provision is intended to prevent the locking up of the lands in the hands of speculators, together with all the evils of the absentee proprietorship.

“2. The establishment of an Option of Purchase of the entire railway line in favour of the Canadian Government and people, such option to recur in certain specified years, in order that the people of Canada may not by any possibility be tied down to an irremediable monopoly of the future goods and passenger traffic, while during the intervals of years, the minds both of the public and of the company will be left free from disturbance affecting change of ownership. The element of bonus for such transfer of ownership to be considered. The periods suggested during which the national option should extend are the entire twelve months of each of the years being the 21st, the 41st, the 61st, and the 81st, years after the signing of the contract with the company; but other years might be fixed upon after due public discussion of this vital question.

“3. A limit to the quantity of land of which any one person may be seized as owner,—always excepting the Railway Company during the period of its occupancy for colonization purposes.

“4. The existing rights of settlers and of the general Canadian public in all lands outside of the territories now known as Railway Lands to continue intact. The conditions under which the company are to sell their lands to be also considered.

“As a session of the Parliament at Ottawa may be expected to take place at some period before the final confirmation of the contract now under discussion in London, the above principles, with others if deemed essential, should receive the thoughtful consideration of the public in advance of such session. And these vast and enduring interests ought not to be looked upon as involving questions of party. In a spirit of candour and patriotism all parties may unite to do them justice.”