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All articles, contributions, and letters on matters pertaining to the editorial department should be addressed to the Editor, and not to any other person who may be supposed to be connected with the paper.

THE logical inference from Lord Lansdowne's remarks in his Ottawa speech, to which we referred in our issue of last week, would seem to be that Canadians should be content to remain as they are, refraining from radical innovations of any kind. This is the very thing that they seem at present unable or unwilling to do. The spirit of unrest is abroad. For some reason the impression has taken hold upon the popular mind that the country is on the eve of important change. This feeling may be to some extent accounted for from the fact that "the times" are somewhat "hard," business rather "dull," and a good deal of financial stringency felt in commercial circles. As a contributory cause, the unreasonable expectations that were created in connection with the National Policy have now sobered down, and the inevitable reaction has set in. Then, again, the immense growth and development of the adjacent Republic—next-door neighbour as it is to every part of the Dominion—cause it to operate as a perpetual magnet, drawing young and enterprising spirits across the border. This exodus is, unquestionably, one of the most serious causes of the prevailing disquietude. But whatever its sources, the existence of the feeling of unrest is undeniable, and the fact has to be reckoned with. Lord Lansdowne fails, we think, to take this phase of the "public sentiment," to which he wisely attaches so great importance, sufficiently into the account. He certainly does not point out how it is to be met and satisfied.

STUDENTS of Science will deeply regret the state of health that compelled Mr. Herbert Spencer to cut short his reply in the *Nineteenth Century* to the Duke of Argyll's critiques in a previous number of that magazine. We commented briefly, in a former issue, upon some of the points made in the Duke of Argyll's article. Mr. Spencer's "Counter Criticism" deals with but a page and a half of that article, but within that short compass he dissents entirely from various of the statements made and conclusions drawn by the Duke of Argyll. One question briefly discussed is of very great interest to the scientific inquirer, viz.: "Are acquired characters hereditary?" Whereas the Duke of Argyll represents the inheritance of "func-

tional and structural decline," on the one hand, and of "increased strength and development" on the other as generally admitted facts of heredity, but seems to imply that the facts are not of sufficient importance in their bearing upon the doctrine of the development of varieties to be worth "making a fuss about," Mr. Herbert Spencer says that "both are disputed and, if not possibly denied, are held to be improved." He himself of course holds strongly to the doctrine of the inheritance of functionally-produced modifications, modifications that is, resulting from the use or disuse of special organs, but he differs widely—and in this every thoughtful reader must agree with him—from his critic with regard to the extent and magnitude of the effects of such a form of inheritance. He shows that there are involved in the doctrine most important questions not only of physical, but of mental and moral structure, and that the notions we form of the genesis and nature of our higher emotions as well as our sociological beliefs; in a word all our "views of life, mind, morals, and politics," must be largely influenced by our acceptance or rejection of this hypothesis. The question of its truth thus "demands, beyond all other questions whatever, the attention of scientific men." The discussion is one of intense interest, and it is well it should be put so clearly, but none the less is to be regretted that Mr. Spencer was unable to address himself to the crucial point of the Duke of Argyll's criticism on which we commented, which he has been compelled to leave untouched.

FROM various points come announcements either of the discovery of natural gas or of active and hopeful search for it. In a constantly increasing number of places this gas is being utilized as the cheapest and most convenient of fuels, even after it has been conveyed long distances, as in the case of Buffalo and other cities in the United States. But the series of disastrous explosions which took place in Buffalo a few weeks since, following as they did several of a less serious kind in other places, have put a temporary damper upon the ardour of some of the more sanguine explorers. The question now suggested is, Can natural gas be made a safe, as well as a marvellously cheap, convenient and cleanly heating agent? The probability is that the combined resources of chemical and mechanical science will find an affirmative answer, for the time being, at least. The question for present solution is mainly the practical one of controlling and regulating the pressure. What the ultimate effect of the steady withdrawal of this subtle fluid from its subterranean chambers is a matter less easily settled. It depends, we may suppose, largely upon the nature of its as yet unknown origin. If it is the product of chemical agents and forces which are steadily operating to keep up the supply, the inference would seem to be that that supply may be drawn upon with impunity for an indefinite period. But if, as is perhaps more probable, the gas comes to the surface as an outflow from the internal storehouses in which it is confined until the reservoirs are tapped by accident or design, one cannot refrain from speculating with some apprehension upon the possible results of a long process of exhaustion. Experiment alone can decide this question, and there will be no lack of experimenters wherever a vein of the inflammable material can be found.

THE opinion seems to be spreading, in thoughtful circles, in the United States, that the Republic is on the eve of a great struggle to preserve its Public School system intact, against Romish aggression. The *Christian Union*, a paper wielding much influence amongst an influential class, has taken the matter up, and is publishing a series of carefully prepared papers by writers specially selected for the purpose. The first of these papers, written, the editors tell us, by a fine classical scholar, and a man of thoroughly candid and catholic spirit, deals with the Plenary Council at Baltimore, and shows what were its positions and demands with respect to secular education. This is a point in regard to which there is, however, no room for doubt. The attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, as represented by its prelates, towards Public School systems, is plain and unmistakable. Such schools are regarded as godless and pernicious—pernicious, not only on account of their godlessness, but by reason of their mixed character, as admitting both sexes. From either of these characteristics, the Roman Catholic prelates and clergy expect nothing but evil. Their opposition is therefore open, avowed. No good Roman Catholic, who accepts their instruction, can conscientiously send his children to the