

While the Militia are only getting bi-annual drills, and are notoriously deficient in valise and other equipments, and while Sir Frederic Middleton waxes weary of urging reforms which he has at heart for the welfare of the National Forces, it does seem extraordinary that the Minister of Militia with, as is asserted, a free railway pass, cannot visit British Columbia at a less cost to the public than some \$1600. It is said at Ottawa to be difficult to get anything done, and there is no doubt that there are points connected with the Militia Department that require sharp looking to.

No regnant sovereign, except perhaps Ysabel of Castile, ever shed as pure a lustre on the throne she graced as Victoria. But the best of women and of Queens are but mortal, and the best of subjects must fain acknowledge that Her Majesty is a terrible stickler for etiquette as she understands it, not to say a trifle obstinate. It has been a hard struggle to her, apparently, to concede a very small indulgence in the matter of décolletée dresses, tho' it is quite a puzzle how the extreme of such a fashion can possibly recommend itself to a lady of unquestionable purity and propriety. It is said that Mrs. Harrison's ideas on this point are, very rightly, tho' not extreme, somewhat different.

It is much to be regretted that Mr. Mills of Annapolis should have committed himself to the buffoonery of introducing in the House of Commons a Bill for the Annexation to Canada of the New England States. Of course such a piece of impertinence and bad taste is universally scouted, but it is disreputable that any member of the Canadian Parliament should emulate the bad examples in that line of American politicians, which have created so much disgust in Canada. It might have been thought that the very fact of our having been the mark of such an impertinence would have sufficed to deter any Canadian legislator from imitating it, at a time moreover, when it is most desirable to cultivate courtesy and friendly relations.

The one point of interest connected with the abdication of the King of Servia is that, somehow or other, all the second-rate potentates of the Balkin Peninsula who are distasteful to Russia get dethroned. King Milan was a very poor specimen of a monarch. He began by plunging his country into a war which he was not soldier enough to conduct with a minimum of credit; then he got at loggerheads with his Queen, in which his dissoluteness put him entirely in the wrong, and now, having it seems made himself obnoxious to Russia, where Queen Natalie is in favor, it is quite on the cards that that impulsive lady may be made use of to serve Russian policy. The King of Roumania is a Hohenzollern, or he would probably soon be made to follow suit, but there is danger in that quarter of Germany calling "hands off."

A correspondent furnished us last week with some remarks on the publication by a Halifax paper of a list of 300 more or less harmless persons whom it dubbed "aristocrats," "blue bloods," and other absurd names. About the same time the *St. John Sun* editorially remarked "This is a business not well suited to the democratic customs and feelings of Canadian cities, however well it may be adapted to New York and other cities in the land where snobbishness prevails. If consideration for those whose names do not appear on the list is not sufficient to prevent publication of these absurd catalogues, some consideration is due to the three hundred themselves, who must be made to feel extremely foolish." The last sentence of the *Sun's* comment exactly hits the mark. People are made to feel exceedingly foolish by having their names paraded in such a connection.

Alluding to the probable completion this year of the Dry Dock "equal in every respect to the best in the world," the Chamber of Commerce goes on to say "year by year the steamers visiting us for repairs, coal, etc., are increasing in number and tonnage. With the great natural advantages of our harbor, our grain elevator, deep-water terminus," (tho' this last is far from being on the scale it should be) "and soon our splendid dry dock, the question of winter port should be pretty well settled." Yet in the face of railway interests which have set in a current totally inimical to Halifax, it is difficult to look to the future in a sanguine spirit. If the politicians who, at the time of Mr. Van Horne's visit, were engaged in shouting themselves hoarse to discredit the government for its Pacific Railway Policy, had met that gentleman in a different spirit, the prospects of Halifax to day might have been very different.

In a lecture on "Pygmy Races of Men" Professor Flower referred to the curious fact that the tallest and shortest races in Europe are respectively the Norwegians and the Laps, living in almost the same region. In Africa, also, the diminutive Bushman and the tallest race of the country, the Kaffirs, are close neighbors. These facts indicate that climate, soil, and other physical conditions have but small influence on human stature, and suggest the question whether it is due to social or moral agency. The comparative history of the Laps and Norwegians indicates that it may be so. The Vikings were always a fighting race; the Laps certainly are, and so far as we know, always have been, an exceptionally peaceful people, and the Esquimaux, with whom they are so nearly connected, are the same. The Laps live on the snowfields of Norway, and the Esquimaux on the bitterest parts of the Arctic regions, just the places to which the weakest would be driven by conquerors who have appropriated the more fertile regions. The consequent hardship and semi-starvation would probably stunt the growth of the weaker people, while, on the other hand, the conquering warlike race, in the days of hand-to-hand fighting with outsiders, and struggling for chieftainship, would continually kill off the feeble and short armed, and multiply the big men by the "survival of the fittest" for such conditions.

We remarked last week on the futility and injustice, and more particularly on the extreme inexpediency, of the proceedings under the Crimes Act against Home Rule Members of Parliament. An incident which occurred in the arraignment of Mr. O'Brien is a striking example. It is the obvious cue of these persons to seize every opportunity of posing as spurious martyrs. Mr. Healey, acting as counsel for O'Brien, purposely made himself so obnoxious to the court that he was forcibly ejected. This sort of thing is of course all that the opposition journals want for a text, and accordingly the whole country rings with their simulated indignation. The Coercion Act discredits the Government, and at the same time furnishes endless opportunities to the Irish Party to discredit itself in the eyes of all who would desire to see it respectable, and we could wish for the return of Mr. Gladstone to power in order that it might be repealed.

In no particular are the innate and essential vulgarity and low sensationalism of the mass of the American Press more conspicuous, than in the ill-bred pandering to the lowest curiosity, which it exhibits with regard to the unfortunate lady who may happen to be the wife of the Chief Magistrate of the United States. It jars with every instinct of a gentleman to drag the name of a lady before the public in any connection except one which may reflect honor upon her, and at the same time be a perfectly legitimate subject of comment within the bounds of delicacy. We are told that Mrs. Harrison, a lady, so far as we can learn, of a high type of matronly dignity, is intensely and righteously disgusted with certain comments of the Press under such headings as "The personal charms of the Lady of the White House," &c., &c., *ad nauseam*. It is no wonder that some critics begin to believe that the traditional reverence of the American for women is as false a veneer as that of the Frenchman.

The Report of the Fisheries Protection Service for the past year reveals a startling falling off in the mackerel fishery. The total catches, American and Canadian, for the last four years are given as follows:—1885—478,450, 1886—232,292, 1887—209,653, 1888—100,000 barrels. This terrible decrease is due to the use of the purse seine too early in the season, and the following up and harrassing of the shoals by the American fishermen. American legislation protects the fish on United States shores to the 21st June. In our waters similar protection, to be effective, would have to be extended to the 21st July. The destructive capabilities of the purse-seine are much increased by the recent American use of steam seine-boats. In consequence of the want of protection one third of the catch is of unspawned fish, and Lieut. Gordon believes that the unrestricted use of the purse seine simply means the total destruction of our mackerel fishery within a few years, their almost complete extinction in certain places they formerly frequented having already been observed. Lieut. Gordon is also a believer in the injurious effects of sawdust. It is evidently time for legislation to meet altered conditions.

The several points touched on in the Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce, published last week, and the courses suggested by them, must not be allowed to die out of men's minds. Without the completion of the Short Line the fast Atlantic Mail Service will be shorn of half its utility to Halifax, yet, both the answers of the Government to the Maritime Delegation, and the attitude of the C.P.R. are utterly unsatisfactory. The completeness with which Halifax has been made to suffer by those grand enemies of Nova Scotia, the C. P. R., the G. T. R., and the Allan Line, leaves nothing to be desired by all who rejoice to see one of the first four harbors in the world of no more account than if it were a fishing village at the mouth of a creek. That our subsidized mail steamers should make their terminal points in a foreign country is an intolerable disgrace to the Dominion, which the report of the Chamber expresses in worthy terms. The lesson which it appears to us ought by this time to be learned is, that in working for the changes required, the Maritime Members of Parliament should put aside party differences, and as a solid phalanx make the Government feel the weight of their vote. A course of this kind is what all our people and public bodies should insist upon. The neglect of maritime interests generally, but of those of Nova Scotia in particular, is no longer to be borne with patience.

Public Opinion says:—Victor Hugo, like many other great poets, had to pay the penalty of greatness by writing letters to admiring or ambitious correspondents who dedicated poems to him, or sent him their own poems with a request for his opinion of them. The answers of some eminent authors to this reverential class of beggars have often been curt enough and not always polite. But Victor Hugo had quite a passion for saying something beautiful and melodious to all the world. To the dedicator of an ode he is reported to have written, "My master, you pass before like a comet, and illuminate my path!" An American poet, who dedicated a romance to the great Frenchman, was rewarded with the following acknowledgment: "You possess a sublime inspiration, the tender streams of your harmonious speech impart to my feelings a sense of recovered youth; I press your hands across the ocean." On one occasion a drawing was sent to him. He replied by writing to the artist: "Each of your lines is a verse; you could say 'Thou' to God!" A poor stonemason in Roubaix, who had an enthusiastic admiration for Victor Hugo as poet and as politician, amused himself during his leisure hours in attempting to compose verses. He ventured to send some of them to the poet. "I can trace your image," replied Victor Hugo, "in your poetry. Each of these thoughts must have proceeded from a head encircled with blond locks. O, my child, for many a year may you preserve untinged with gray those locks which the shears of age have not yet touched!" The poetic mason, says the narrator, was fifty-five years old.