

where the parties had at the last election been pretty evenly divided, where the candidates were now ranged in direct opposition on the reciprocity question, and where, moreover, that question might be supposed to excite very great interest, might aid us in forming an opinion as to the extent to which the arguments of Sir Richard Cartwright and his followers have found favour with the people. But here, again, the Government candidate has, somewhat to our surprise, not only been victorious, but has materially increased the former Conservative majority. How then is the result to be interpreted? Does it mean that the farmers of Victoria prefer the Government's policy of protection, on its merits, to the unrestricted reciprocity of the Opposition? Or does it mean that they have no faith in the ability of a Liberal Government to obtain unrestricted reciprocity on any terms that would not compromise either our commercial freedom, or our national self-respect, or both? Or does it simply mean that the promise of large expenditures in the locality by the Government, or direct purchase of votes by individuals, or both combined, have been too much for the political virtue of a number of Liberals or neutrals sufficient to have turned the scale? The Opposition, of course, accept the view last stated, but then the friends of the Government assert with equal vigour and we fear with equal truth that money was flowing very freely in behalf of the Liberal candidate. After making very large allowances for the prejudiced sources from which the reports are derived, it still seems impossible to doubt that bribery was rampant in the constituency to a deplorable extent. Pending the result of the trial in the election court, which is pretty sure to follow, we can only say that the revelations being made in these courts are a reproach and disgrace to our country. We fear that there is little hope that such degrading practices will be effectually prevented until both those who pay or offer bribes of any kind and those who listen to or accept them shall both be surely punished as dishonest as well as dishonourable citizens.

WE are glad to note that the Public School Board of Toronto has reported in favour of petitioning the Legislature for authority to supply books and stationery free of cost to the pupils under its charge. Every thoughtful citizen must be convinced that it is imperative in the best interests of the city and the province that the School Act be forthwith so amended, and such machinery for its enforcement provided, that its compulsory clauses shall no longer be a dead letter. The hundreds of children now in the city who, instead of being at school, are in training on the streets and lanes for lives of idleness, vice or crime, must be swept into the schools and kept there long enough to acquire, at least, the rudiments of a common school education. A few years of enforced mental activity, to say nothing of the knowledge actually acquired, cannot fail to have a most salutary effect upon the whole future lives of many of them. The great pity is that all the schools were not so equipped as to combine with this mental training a daily drill such as would teach them also the use of their hands, and help to form in them habits of manual industry. But, while we are waiting for that, there can be no doubt that the schools are, even from the lowest point of view—we are not sure, indeed, that it is not the highest point of view—the cheapest and best branch of the police system. But it would be manifestly useless to compel the attendance of the children of the very poorest classes, to say nothing of the waifs, without providing them with the tools necessary to enable them to do the work and get the benefit of the schools. There can be no doubt that the expense of text-books and stationery, trifling as it may seem to persons of moderate income, deprives the children even of many an industrious poor man of the advantages of our free school system. In fact the very term "free-schools" is obviously a misnomer, so long as the indispensable text-books and other appliances have to be provided at an expense which so many can ill afford, or cannot afford at all. There is no doubt that the same effect would follow here as in some cities of the United States, in which the attendance immediately increased ten per cent. on the furnishing of these articles free. Many parents may, we dare say, object to this indiscriminate use of books, passed from hand to hand, but there can be no objection to such furnishing their own children at their own expense, if they prefer to do so. By all means let the Government and the School Boards hasten to put the cap-stone upon our free-school system by making the text-books and other apparatus free, as has been done for years in the cities of Massachusetts, and some other States, with the best results.

CANADA, under some evil star, seems just now destined to attain a very undesirable notoriety as the land of the hangman. We have on former occasions pointed out the fact that the public, both in England and on this continent, has reached a stage of social refinement, genuine or spurious, at which every new report of a hanging adds intensity to the revulsion of popular feeling which is causing so many to cry out against capital punishment itself as a relic of barbarism. It is undeniable that the effect of the descriptions of gallows' scenes which are unhappily so frequent of late in Ontario cannot fail to be demoralizing to our own people, to say nothing of the effect they must produce on the minds of the people of other countries. It is also, we think, pretty clear that unless a process of hardening takes place and produces an undesirable callousness, the result, if the carnival of executions continues, must soon be to give rise to an agitation for the abolition of the death penalty, such as it will be hard if not impossible to resist. We suppose that very few intelligent persons will at the present day attempt to justify capital punishment on any other ground than that of its necessity as a deterrent, an awful example for the warning of those disposed to commit similar crimes. Yet it is a singular fact that the people and the newspapers almost habitually speak of the death penalty as an avenging, an expiation, a retribution, etc. This fact shows the popular tendency to look upon the act as one of vengeance, though nothing could be more out of harmony with the spirit of the religion which most of us profess. From the ethical point of view the teaching is, therefore, obviously bad. The crucial question is evidently that of the deterrent effect of hanging as compared with that of other sentences—we were about to say of other forms of punishment—showing how deeply the idea of retribution is embodied in our language. That question we do not now propose to discuss. It is in the nature of the case one which can be settled only by a comprehensive study of facts, such as have not yet been compiled on a scale large enough to be conclusive. Certainly the facts in our own country are not strongly in favour of the effectiveness of execution as a preventive of crime, if we may judge from the frequency with which executions are followed by atrocious murders, even in the same localities. The fact, doubtless, is that in almost every case either the crime is committed in a moment of ungovernable passion or drunken fury, over which the dread of death has no power, or the cool-blooded miscreant fully expects to so cover up his tracks that detection will be impossible. A further remark which suggests itself is that, however worthy of admiration on some accounts may be the inflexibility of our present Minister of Justice, that very inflexibility is, there is some reason to think, becoming one of the strongest forces at work for the abolition of capital punishment. The fact that no heed is paid to the recommendations of juries will tend to lessen materially the number of convictions. The further facts that in most cases the evidence of guilt is purely circumstantial and, consequently, never absolutely clear, sometimes obviously uncertain, that no distinction is made between the guilt of a Blanchard and the much more atrocious crime of a Birchall, a Day or a Lamontagne, and that the act of execution has necessarily to be committed to men of the lowest order, destitute of that sensibility and self-respect which belong to true manliness, all tend to create dissatisfaction with present methods and doubt as to the righteousness of the law which decrees death even to the murderer. The whole question demands the most serious reconsideration.

WHATEVER may be the decision with reference to the reduction of the rate of letter postage within the Dominion, it is greatly to be hoped that the Postmaster-General will spare no effort to bring about a cheaper rate between Canada and the Mother Country. Under the impulse given by the reaction of the McKinley Bill, our trade with Great Britain is increasing, and is likely to continue to increase with unexampled rapidity. This is a very desirable consummation, apart altogether from our commercial relations to the United States, and it can hardly be doubted that a reduction of the rate of Ocean postage to three cents or less would greatly stimulate the intercourse which is at the same time a cause and a condition of business traffic. We observe that an influential New York paper, referring to Postmaster-General Wanamaker's proposed reduction of the internal letter rate to one cent, says that it would much rather see postage between the United States and Great Britain reduced from five cents to two; thus facilitating intercourse between those two countries. It might be retorted, so far as our neighbours

are concerned, that it would be rather illogical for them to seek to increase by postal arrangements that intercourse which it seems to be the aim of their fiscal policy to diminish. But as it is now the avowed object of our Government to increase intercourse and traffic with Great Britain and with other colonies, to the utmost possible extent, it is obvious that reduction of postal rates would be directly in line with this policy. THE WEEK has, we observe, been censured for advocating the reduction of internal letter postage, without having due regard to the manner in which the problem is affected by the sparsity of the population. But the inter-communication has to be established and kept up in any case, and is it not probable that a reduction of the rate of letter-postage by one-third would increase the business of the officers by fifty per cent. in sparsely settled countries quite as soon as in populous ones, which is the real point at issue? THE WEEK has not the slightest desire to depreciate or deny the excellence of our postal arrangements, as at present conducted, but it is always in order to ask whether improvements are not possible and hence desirable.

THE consultation had the other day by a delegation of those interested in the shipment of cattle, with the Ministers of Agriculture and Marine, bids fair to bring about the only reasonable and right solution of the Ocean transit difficulty. Both ship-owners and cattle-dealers seem to see clearly the necessity for the adoption of stringent laws for the regulation of the traffic, and the prevention of the abuses and cruelties which have so nearly proved disastrous to it. The suggestions made by Mr. Routh, on behalf of the Marine Underwriters Association, show that the whole question is being carefully studied. No doubt a Bill drawn up in accordance with those suggestions will be passed at the coming session of Parliament. The Minister of Marine intimated that the Government was prepared to appoint an Inspector of cattle ships for the Dominion. Very much will depend on the selection of the right man for this responsible post. Evidently, as Mr. Routh suggested, he should be a sea-faring man, well acquainted experientially with the cattle-carrying trade. Such a man, armed with the necessary powers in a stringent Act of Parliament, would in a short time no doubt be able to bring about such a reform in the business as would meet all Mr. Plimsoll's reasonable demands, and establish the trade on a firmer basis than ever. It is safe to predict that one of the developments of the near future will be a line of cattle-ships specially constructed for the purpose and providing such accommodations as will render the ocean voyage a comparative luxury, instead of a season of torture to the poor beasts.

IF public feeling in Mexico is as favourable to trade with Canada as the editor of the *Financial Review*, the chief English newspaper of its capital city, represents, there seems to be no good reason why a large and mutually profitable interchange of products may not be brought about at an early day. No doubt the Mexican Republic feels seriously the effects of the unfriendly McKinley tariff, and it would be but natural if, in their resentment, its people should listen readily to any proposals the Canadian Government's emissary may have to make. The climate and productions of the great Southern Republic are such as to render free commercial intercourse with this northern country specially and mutually desirable, while the number of its population should make its custom decidedly worth looking after. Our neighbours have, of course, two great advantages over us, in their comparative nearness to Mexico and their prior possession of the field. But, on the other hand, conveyance by water is vastly cheaper than by rail, and the McKinley Bill is a powerful auxiliary for us. If both peoples are prepared to make some modifications of their respective tariffs, we can see no insuperable obstacle in the way of a large and growing commercial intercourse. The project is, at any rate, worth considering, and we shall await with a good deal of interest the report of the Minister of Finance on his return.

WHETHER or not the death of "Sitting Bull" will have the effect anticipated by the many on both sides of the line who are congratulating each other on the fact,—the effect, namely, of preventing the threatened outbreak, remains to be seen. There is some reason to fear that the resentment and thirst for revenge aroused by the mode of his "taking off" may render the fierce Sioux all the more implacable. The incidents connected with his death were certainly peculiar, and, had the victim been a