

The stick sometimes fell on the empty basket on the back, and often on the folds of the skirt, and so loosely as not to hurt; but it was used regularly, and seemed, indeed, an integral item in the discipline. It was all free labour. Those engaged on it are paid; but the taskmasters, or gangers, had a certain duty to perform, and they went through it so unflinchingly that the lamentation and tears never ceased.

"Looking across the waste of waters, one saw islands growing out of them almost under our eyes. On these verdure was already sprouting from the rich soil, so that the warm brown of the Nile mud was like a chocolate silk shot with pea-green. Here were black and brown f-lahs swimming out to these islands with their clothes tied in bundles on their heads; there were half-naked husbandmen sowing at the edge from which the waters were receding, casting the seed to right and left with one hand, and holding up the solitary garment of linen containing it, like to pictures of the sower in the parable. There was no other break. In many places the land had been recently flooded, and one of our party, who had visited the Pyramids ten days before, pointed out the spot at which he had been obliged to take boat and perform the last two miles by water. But the Nile is receding rapidly, and much of the ground then covered already bears signs of the fruitful harvest which is to come.

"The Pyramids loom larger and larger as you progress; and about this time you become conscious of what you forget utterly afterwards—that there are two modern houses in their vicinity. One is the chalet built by the Viceroy for the use of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales; the other is—ana-chronism of ana-chronisms!—a modern hotel. Both seem unoccupied; but the Pyramids so absorb every sense when you are once upon them in their might, that the very existence of these houses is lost, and you neither see nor remember them until long after you have left.

"The ascent and the exploration of the interior of the Great Pyramids occupy some hours—not necessarily, but that haste would be repugnant and superfluous. Their vastness requires time for its comprehension. The blank feeling you succumb to, and which you mistake, at first, for disappointment, is really the sense of awe acting upon nerves which are highly strung. In vain do you gaze upwards and sideways, and endeavour to go through the process of mental gauging. The huge masses baffle you utterly, and every expectation based on reading or upon the oral evidence of friends, seems to have been untrustworthy. You cannot analyze, nor compare, nor pronounce any one particular to have been false; but the Pyramids you see, and touch, and climb, and the Pyramids as they have existed in imagination are things utterly distinct; and no convictions or impressions concerning them are stronger than this until you escape from their mystic glamour and view them once more in the distance and from the long and sandy plain leading to Sakkarah.

"The extent of the inundations and the magnitude of the works being carried on here by the Government are taken in at a glance. Looking downward, the black flies running to and fro on the yellow sands are Arabs completing the last portions of the road hither: the long strings of beetles harnessed in a line are camels laden with rock for its side wall; the tiny puff of smoke and the sharp report which follows comes from a blasting party bound to clear a tomb from the dust and rubbish of centuries by a certain day. The rich colour of the landscape, with its variety of browns and yellows relieved by the brightest green; the mud villages rising out of the waters as one might imagine colonies of beavers to do on the sudden subsiding of a flood; the Desert, arid, endless, and with a certain rolling look like yellow water, but showing countless hills and valleys; the back of the Sphinx's head, looking massive and mighty even from this height; and the groups of other pyramids to be seen miles off in the direction of our night's camping-ground are what one remembers best.

"The shadows have grown long, and the afternoon comparatively cool, before we can bring ourselves to leave the vicinity of the Great Pyramids. The interior of the king's and queen's chambers have been explored, the tombs brought to light within the last few months been admired in all their solidity and expanse, when our ride across the Desert to Sakkarah is commenced. As evening draws on, and the silent calm of the Desert asserts itself, native life here, and the nature of its varieties and vicissitudes, begin to be understood. The difficulties to be mastered, and the magnitude of the work undertaken to facilitate the transport and enlarge the field of observation of the strangers arriving are comprehended. Yonder patch of dried mill-stalks is a village. Its Sheikh is smoking on the ground outside a larger bundle of the dried leaves and straw than the rest, and behind this division, which is exactly like one of the partitions to a farm-yard, are his children and wives. A naked black boy, a buffalo or two, some turkeys, and half a score camels and as many men and women are at the doors of tents, or peer at us over the upright thatch. They were swept out of their village a few weeks ago by the flood. It stood where you cluster of palms peeps above the water; and this is their substitute for their homes. Asked whether he hopes to return soon, the Sheikh replies that he returns no more; that in his lifetime his village has been washed away three times, and that now, having had several of their number drowned and wives and children left desolate, he and his people have determined to abide in the Desert henceforth. Asked again by a traveller eager for statistical information whether he is heavily taxed, he politely evades the question, and says that, having nothing left in the world, he cannot pay tribute at all. He is a grave, handsome man of fifty, with an iron-grey beard, and a most dignified bearing, who insists upon our resting and taking coffee, and whose attendants refuse a gratuity on our leaving, protesting, with some of their master's dignity, that they are already under weighty obligations to the strangers for having honoured them with their presence. This simple hospitality stood out in stronger contrast from the hungry clamour of the dwellers by the pyramids, whom we had left; and when we were taken to the tent of a poor fellow whose hands and arms had been injured by an explosion of gunpowder, and asked to prescribe for him, it seemed as if the stories one has read of Arab goodness and Arab faith were fully realised. We pass another tribe of people, washed out of their homes, who are hard at work building a new village; as well as droves of camels, one with a genuine Bedouin leading it, spear in hand; and herds of goats and cattle. The colour of the distant landscape increases in softness and beauty after sundown, and when the brown villages and remote and lofty mountain range to the left are enriched by the afterglow. To the right, however, all is ugliness and desolation, the great Desert stretching

away in unbroken waves, or hills of sand and stones, and in no respect resembling the level plain one had been taught to look for. Darkness came on rapidly, and the shouts of one of our party rolling with his donkey head-foremost into a mummy-pit was our first intimation that we had reached the ancient Necropolis of Memphis, and were near our journey's end. We were in the Desert indeed, and with nothing round us but the bleached bones of men and camels, mummy-cloths of the sacred animals, most of which are now removed to the museum at Boolah, the mutilated statues and fragments of tombs, and the eternal endless sand."

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THE CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, JANUARY 8, 1870.

The new year does not open without a few clouds in the horizon, though it is improbable that they portend a serious storm. With respect to public questions in which Canada is more or less deeply interested, and by which its future may be affected, it is to be noted that in the East, Newfoundland has rejected Confederation; in the West, the Red River people have resisted it, and from the shores of the Pacific a protest has gone forth against it.

The action of the electors in Newfoundland is of no great consequence to Canada, except that it retards the completion of British American Union. The Provinces on the mainland have nothing to gain by union with the Atlantic Islands, for which they would not be compelled to pay at least full price. They can, therefore, afford to wait, or do without it altogether, in so far as any material advantage may be involved. But, there ensues a certain loss of prestige in the eyes of the world, from the fact that these small communities reject Confederation. Those who take no pains to study the causes which have led to this result, do not hesitate to draw conclusions from it adverse to the ultimate success of the scheme for the union of British North America. If Newfoundland reject Confederation, and Prince Edward Island will not even entertain the project—if both go directly in the face of the declared desire of the Imperial Government with respect to it, outside observers may, perhaps, be pardoned for entertaining the notion that it must be rather rickety; that, if it cannot go forward, there is some prospect of its receding, because of the great difficulty, in most political organizations, of standing still. Our impressive Republican neighbours are especially likely to arrive at this opinion, for, rightly or wrongly, they interpret every sign of a refractory spirit in the British American Provinces, as the manifestation of a desire for annexation. As they rejoiced at the Anti-Union agitation in Nova Scotia, a little more than a year ago, so they now take comfort to themselves because of the rejection of Confederation in Newfoundland. But, this purely sentimental drawback may be endured with equanimity, so long as political affairs work smoothly within the Union.

The Red River difficulty is one of a far more serious aspect. Here there must be a step either backward or forward, because, to stand still is impossible. True enough, the Hon. Mr. McDougall's proclamation was prematurely issued, for the issue of the Queen's proclamation had been stopped; and in law, the North-West is as much beyond the jurisdiction of Canada as ever it was. But, Canada has contracted with the Hudson's Bay Company for a transfer of its territorial rights and jurisdiction; and, in anticipation of its assumption of that authority, the insurgents have dispossessed the Hudson's Bay Company, and set up an authority of their own. To cancel the contract with the Hudson's Bay Company, is out of the question: yet, that is the only step backward that can be taken. To wait until the Company can give quiet possession, would be to postpone the completion of the transfer until the Greek Kalends. To make war on the insurgents would be to create complications, of which no man could predict the end. It is not with a handful of half-breeds that such a struggle would have to be waged, but, with the off-scourings and professional filibusters of the continent, backed by the sympathy of a class who, if not large, are sufficiently noisy to give direction to the surface current of American political sentiment. Already, it is said that President Grant has decided to issue a proclamation of neutrality "in the war of Rupert's Land (!)" warning the Englishmen not to invade the territory of the United States, and Americans not to invade the British Dominion. It is not difficult to understand the consequence of such a proclamation; it would be similar to that of the warning uttered by the mob orator to his auditory not to throw

an obnoxious individual into a neighbouring pond. Of course, the individual was ducked straightway; and, the moment President Grant issues a proclamation of neutrality—i. e., recognizes a state of war—the filibusters would flock into Dakota Territory, where no American force exists on the one side, to prevent them from crossing the boundary; and, on the other, no British force is ready to meet them. But, the President will hardly venture on such a procedure at present, though it is difficult to say how long the unchallenged sway of the provisional government would be allowed to pass unimproved by the Americans. We can readily believe the other part of the despatch from Washington, which says:—"The insurrection in the Red River Country is viewed in official circles as a serious impediment to the scheme of the English Government to unite all British North America in the new Confederation, and is not therefore regarded as a matter for regret, although the final success of the rebels is not counted on."

It is just because of the "impediment to the scheme to unite all British North America," that the Red River affair has any serious aspect for this country. Canada has undertaken to complete that scheme, and up to this point has laboured with considerable success. The only danger of failure now lies in the possible interference of political propagandists and armed interventionists from the neighbouring Republic. Opinion is nearly unanimous throughout Canada that an armed conflict with the parties at present holding Fort Garry should at all hazards be avoided; and that peaceful negotiation should first be exhausted before severer measures are adopted. But the Canadian Government will make a mistake if it falls back too exactly on the letter of its bond; if the payment of the money to the Hudson's Bay Company is withheld, and all effort to reconcile the settlers abandoned, until the Company guarantees quiet possession.

The principal grievance of the insurgents is that the people of the territory were not consulted as to the terms of the transfer. It is to be hoped that the delegates sent to Winnipeg by the Canadian Government will be able to destroy the force of this complaint; and that the Government will not fail to obtain from Parliament ample powers for the organization of a Local Government on a basis which would give the inhabitants such control over their own affairs as is enjoyed in other parts of the Dominion; providing for them, at the same time, a liberal representation in Parliament. It seems pretty evident that the effort to administer the public affairs—"Crown Colony" fashion—from Ottawa, will not be willingly accepted; and the sooner other expedients for the establishment of legitimate local government within the territory are adopted, the better it will prove for all parties concerned. The "snow blockade" will give ample time for reflection, as well as for preparation, with a view to future action; and we trust that neither the military arm, nor the *laissez faire* policy will be unduly relied upon.

With the Red River question, this side the Rocky Mountains, on our hands, it is, perhaps, scarcely worth while to bestow a thought upon the little comedy recently enacted beyond them, the closing scene of which was transferred to Washington and performed the other day, to the immense satisfaction of the participants. But, though the petition of some forty or fifty Americans and American sympathisers, residing in British Columbia, praying for the annexation of that colony to the United States, may be an insignificant affair, and its presentation to President Grant, more ludicrous than insignificant, it proves at least the active propagandism of the Americans. They appear to believe that it is the manifest destiny of the Republic to absorb every other State and Province in North America; and they prove the faith within them by working unceasingly to that end. They also accept as true the most improbable statements, both regarding the feeling in the Provinces and the policy of Britain. A few days ago, the New York *World* published a despatch informing its readers that His Grace the Duke of Argyll was coming to Washington as Ambassador of England, clothed with full power to settle the "Alabama" claims—which may be true—and that in lieu of the apology demanded by Senator Sumner, "the British Government will propose to transfer to the United States all their territory in British Columbia, and all their possessions on the Pacific Coast, in consideration of our paying a large sum of money,"—which is undoubtedly false. Yet the latter statement receives some colour of probability from the alleged state of feeling in British Columbia, as evidenced by the petition referred to, and from the supposed determination of Great Britain to permit her British American colonists to trade upon their allegiance at will.

Canada can offer no present attractions to British Columbia, it is true; but if the pacification of the North West is soon accomplished, and followed by comprehensive measures for its colonization, the British Columbians would have some prospect of reward for waiting. In the absence of immediate union, Canada can show them, by a