

Union tells us that in a leading editorial it recently said: "About half-a-dozen of Tory papers in the Dominion of Canada have pronounced against annexation to the United States." This would be hard to beat as an example of the skilful combination of the *suppressio veri*, with the *suggestio falsi*. We doubt if even half-a-dozen Republican papers in the United States have pronounced against annexation to Canada, but it had not occurred to us to draw any such sweeping inference as the *Telegraph* seems to have suggested to the *Christian Union*. Had the *Telegraph* been able to name half-a-dozen newspapers of standing and influence in the Dominion which had pronounced in favour of annexation to the United States, our New York contemporary might have been justified in inferring that there was at least a small movement of the kind indicated. That there is a considerable party in Canada in favour of reciprocity with the United States is true, but that is a very different matter, though the *Christian Union* seems to confuse the two things. It is equally true that a number of influential men in the United States are in favour of reciprocity with Canada. But we can assure the *Christian Union* that if there is a phenomenal movement or any movement, not of the very feeblest kind in Canada in the direction indicated, we have not before heard of it, and we have good reason to believe that the great majority of the people of Canada have not heard of it. The Canadians as a people have the highest respect and the most friendly regard for their kinsmen in the United States. They are willing to trade with them in the future, as in the past, or even more freely; and to cultivate the most intimate business and social relations, as they have long been doing, but they prefer their own laws, customs and institutions, and are fully resolved to retain and maintain them, believing that their country is moving forward to a higher national destiny and one more worthy of their ambition, than that of absorption in the Great Republic.

SAID Mr. Blaine, a couple of weeks since: "The contest that is now waging for membership of the next Congress is not properly a contest between the Republican and Democratic ideas. It is a contest between protectionists and free-traders." As Mr. Blaine, in common with other members of the Washington Cabinet, has declined to see the interviewer since the election, we have no means of knowing whether he adheres to the above opinion and admits that the people of the United States have declared for free-trade. It is very likely that he now regrets having made so strong a statement. He may attempt to explain away the significance of the astounding defeat which the Protectionists, or the Republicans, or both in one, have suffered. It is possible that the statement itself was an extreme one, but even that fact would not lessen its significance, since it is clear that in making the assertion Mr. Blaine believed himself to be using the strongest argument that could be urged in favour of the Republican party. The event shows, however explained, that the protectionist cry was utterly powerless to rally the people to the support of the old party of which Mr. Blaine is the puissant leader. Whatever minor causes, such as Speaker Reed's arbitrary rulings, Senator Quay's reputation for unscrupulousness, the proposed Government control of Southern elections, etc., may have contributed to the result, there can be no doubt whatever that the overwhelming victory of the Democrats is a most emphatic condemnation of the McKinley Bill. It is doubtful if a revolution in popular sentiment so sudden and radical has ever before taken place in the history of American politics. It has more than justified the sagacity of those who predicted that the McKinley Bill would prove to be the beginning of the end, the last desperate effort of a failing cause. In contemplating the marvellous overthrow of the party which fancied itself entrenched so impregnable, one is reminded of the adage too trite to quote, "Whom the gods," etc. The American people have declared in the most unmistakable terms that they will not submit to war taxes in time of peace, that they will not consent to have the cost of the necessities of life artificially increased in order that rich manufacturing and other monopolists may be made richer. That is the one undeniable and chief meaning of the vote of the 4th November.

WHAT will the Democrats do with the great victory which has come to them? Time alone can tell. It is evident that they did not expect so complete a triumph, were unprepared for it, and, consequently, have no plans matured for turning it to account. The meaning of the

vote as a condemnation of excessive taxation is more strikingly manifest in view of the fact that the result was not due to any astute management or supreme effort on the part of the successful party. It cannot be attributed to the prowess of any great Democratic leader, or to any special policy or strategy of the victors. Their general hostility to excessive taxation alone can account for the result. The peculiar political system of the United States will prevent the will of the people so clearly expressed at the polls from taking effect at any early day in legislation. A similar indication of public feeling in England or Canada would be immediately fruitful. The condemned cabinet would be displaced, and the control of legislation given over almost at once to the hands of those in whom the people had voted confidence. The views of the Senate would scarcely be taken into the account. In the United States the Senate is the more powerful body, and there is no constitutional means of changing its political complexion for five or six years to come. Hence the chief political interest will continue to centre in that body. Its leaders may adopt one of two courses. They may either refuse on various pretexts to accept the mandate of the people, and so continue the McKinley Bill in operation, relying on the potent and in many cases sinister means of influence, in the use of which they are adepts, to bring about the desired change in public sentiment before the next election, or they may bow with more or less grace and sincerity to the popular verdict and shape their legislation accordingly. The latter course would expose them to so many selfish but powerful antagonisms that its possibility need hardly be taken into the account. In any case, it is perhaps as well that no immediate reversal of policy is possible. Sudden or violent change might lead to reaction. It is very likely that further education of the people with the McKinley Bill as schoolmaster may be desirable. The situation can scarcely fail to give the whole Democratic party a powerful impulse in the direction of a revenue tariff, if not of absolute free-trade. Meanwhile it is highly probable that Canada's prospects of reciprocity on some fair basis will be considerably improved by this unexpected turn of affairs in the great Republic.

CRIMINAL LITERATURE.

WE have not been accustomed to think the Newgate Calendar the choicest reading *virginibus puerisque*—the sort of literature that we would introduce into the school-room, or even tolerate in the drawing-room. Books of this kind may be a sort of necessity on pathological grounds, but right-thinking adults will hardly consider them to be the best means of recreation or amusement. As a matter of fact, they have been found mischievous reading for boys, never or hardly ever deterring from evil doing, but sometimes actually proving an incentive to crime.

For these and other reasons, which need hardly to be specified, most right-thinking persons have regretted very deeply the morbid eagerness of the newspapers to obtain details of no real interest and of no moral or rational significance in relation to the unhappy man who is lying under sentence of death in the jail at Woodstock.

We are, of course, quite aware that, in cases of this kind, there is need of a certain amount of publicity. This is necessary, in the first place, for the sake of obtaining evidence, so that the guilty may be brought to justice. Moreover, it is a fundamental principle of justice, as understood in modern times and under constitutional governments, that the trial of an accused person shall be conducted in public, and that all the details of the evidence, unless so far as the judge shall consider it hurtful to public morality, may be reported in the newspapers. It may sometimes be very offensive to the readers of these papers that they should be under the necessity of wading through a quantity of matter of a very disgusting character, or else of abstaining altogether from reading the account of a trial. This, however, cannot be helped. So long as vice and crime remain among men, and trials have to be held, and punishments inflicted, so long we must put up with such inconveniences, and recognize them as necessary evils.

So far there is a general agreement of opinion, and if these limits were observed there would be little necessity for criticising the doings of our daily press on the subject under consideration. But the question here arises whether there is to be any limit to the publication of matters which concern the doings of criminals during their trial and after their condemnation. And we cannot doubt that, in the case of Birchall, these limits have been greatly exceeded.

We can hardly imagine any reasonable or lawful state of mind to which these newspaper reports have ministered, and we feel quite sure that their publication has been, in many ways, most mischievous.

If the effort of the reporter had been to throw light upon the character and history of this most miserable man, we could not have blamed the efforts made. It is of real interest, it might even be of some utility, to discover the steps by which a young man, well-born, as we say, with the advantages of moral, religious, and cultivated surroundings, should have developed into the hard, callous, reckless criminal who has stained his hands with the blood of a fellow-man with as little compunction, apparently, as he would have felt in shooting a dog. There is no difference of opinion, that we have heard of, in regard to the strangeness of this phenomenon, particularly when it is remembered that, in his ordinary behaviour, the unfortunate man does not appear to have been of a cruel or unamiable disposition. Anything which would help to clear up this problem would, doubtless, be of interest to persons who make a serious study of abnormal humanity, but we doubt whether even this comparatively reasonable provision would have been very profitable for the general public.

How far the newspapers have gone beyond the utmost limits that could be conceded on such grounds as these, we imagine that everyone knows, and it is high time that legislation should interfere, if it does not already provide for some greater restraint in the publication of the doings of criminals. Who is responsible, we should like to know, for permitting continual communication between a condemned criminal and reporters of the newspapers? Such a phenomenon is something new (to us) in the annals of crime. If a man under sentence of death is dead to the law, has he the right to sell the copyright of a biography or any other literary production of his last days? This is a question which it is in the public interest to have answered.

The publication of "Birchall's Biography" in the columns of a paper of the high standing hitherto occupied by the *Mail* is one of the most shocking things in modern newspaper literature. If the wretched man wished to earn a few hundred dollars for his unhappy wife, any claim which the law might have had upon his writings might have been relaxed or set aside. Even in that case the publication might have been deferred. It is greatly to be feared, however, that Birchall is influenced quite as much by the desire for the quasi-heroism of his biography being read by thousands during the last hours of his life, and that he is enjoying the vulgar satisfaction of seeing his own miserable writing and vulgar sketches reproduced in the copies of the daily *Mail* which find their way to his apartment.

If the writing had any interest whatever, literary, intellectual, or moral, its publication would be somewhat intelligible, but it has none of these qualities. A composition which seems partly that of a half-educated school-boy, and of a horse-jockey not educated at all, is hardly the thing to lay upon the breakfast tables of our ladies and gentlemen, or upon the desks of our men of business. We confess that this description is the result of a very slight perusal of the disgusting document. But we dipped into a good many places in the hope that some passages might be found of a redeeming character, but anything more weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable we cannot remember. We are persuaded that hardly anyone would care to read a dozen lines of the trash, but for the fact that it is the production of a murderer under sentence of death.

It is asserted that the other daily papers denounce the publication because they failed to obtain possession of the precious manuscript. We sincerely hope they made no attempt to do so. If they did, we congratulate them heartily on their failure. The *Mail* is jubilant over the number of copies sold of the numbers containing the first part of the biography. We are afraid that there may be grounds for this jubilation, but we are quite certain that, if it has increased its temporary circulation, it has certainly damaged its general character. It is the business of papers which look at these subjects from a disinterested point of view to say plainly what educated men are thinking and saying on this unprecedented literary venture.

THE sounding made by the French engineers on this side of the English Channel in connection with the proposed Channel bridge are now completed. The results of the survey are, it is stated, not so satisfactory as was hoped, the floor of the Channel between Folkestone and Vannes being somewhat unfavourable to the scheme. In this case another route will have to be found—probably between the nearest land points—namely, Cape Grisnez and Dover.