

THE WEEK.

Vol. X.

TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17th, 1893.

No. 12.

THE WEEK:

A Canadian Journal of Politics, Literature, Science and Arts.

TERMS:—One year, \$3; eight months, \$2; four months, \$1. Subscriptions payable in advance. Subscribers in Great Britain and Ireland supplied, postage prepaid, on terms following:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half-year, 6s. 6d. Remittances by P.O. order or draft should be made payable and addressed to the publisher.

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CURRENT TOPICS.

The announcement that there is to be a revision of the voters' lists this year has again called public attention to the enormous burden which is entailed upon the country by this most cumbersome and expensive system. A significant and hopeful indication is the fact that some Conservative municipal bodies are protesting against the Act and calling for its repeal. It is to be hoped that some of the independent supporters of the Government will include this most indefensible measure in the list of Government devices which they can no longer support. A contemporary has hazarded the statement that the quarter of a million, or thereabout, of dollars which the revision will cost would suffice to compensate the revenue for the loss that would ensue from a reduction of letter postage to two cents, which would be a great boon to the country.

According to the Postmaster-General's calculation the loss would be about \$700,000. But do these figures include a reasonable allowance for the great increase in the number of letters which would result?

That the President of the Manufacturers' Association should be opposed to a reduction of the tariff would surprise no one. Mr. McNaught's arguments and figures were marshalled with a good deal of skill, but on examination they will be found to be, for the most part, familiar, and to abound with weaknesses which have been again and again pointed out. What for instance, could be more fallacious than to build an argument for protection upon the progress of the Dominion as shewn by statistics during the last ten or twelve years, without taking any account of the facts that within that period something like a hundred millions of dollars of borrowed money have been spent in the country, and the rich and boundless prairies of the Northwest made accessible by rail—neither of which facts have any necessary connection with protection? Touching the argument from statistics, we beg to commend to our readers a careful study of the last of the three extracts which are quoted by Dr. Wicksteed in another column. A reliable analysis of the statistics of Canadian industries, after all were eliminated which cannot be fairly shown to be dependent upon the protective tariff for their existence, with a view to determine as nearly as possible the relative numbers of those who pay the taxes to Government and to protected manufacturers, and those for whose benefit the taxes are paid, would, we fancy, open the eyes of a good many who may never have looked at the matter in that light.

The decision of the Ontario Government to open a summer school at Guelph for the benefit of teachers whose duty it is, or will be, to strive to interest their pupils in agricultural pursuits and in rural life generally, is a step, though but a small step, in the right direction. It is now too late in the day to cry out against practical and technical instruction in the schools. There is no ground on which state-supported public schools themselves can be defended, which cannot be shown to be equally available in favor, not only of agricultural teaching, but of general manual instruction. But such work as it is proposed to have done by teachers, with a view to create an interest in the minds of the children in the sights and sounds, the occupations and pleasures of country life, needs no defence on narrow utilitarian grounds. It is not difficult to conceive of such studies being pursued in such a manner—and that is the only right manner—as will make them highly useful from the general educational point of view. Such exercises as are contemplated are, in fact, adapted to cultivate some of the noblest faculties of the mind—faculties which have hitherto been too

much neglected, to the great loss of both individuals and the State. But why confine the experiment to the rural teachers and schools? What better service could be done for thousands of children in the city schools than to inspire them with a taste for rural life and agricultural or horticultural pursuits? To our thinking this would be a more hopeful undertaking than the attempt to check merely the exodus of the country boys.

It is not wonderful that the announcement that Ferdinand de Lesseps had been sentenced to imprisonment for five years and to pay a fine of 3,000 francs, should have created a profound sensation throughout not only France but the civilized world. The fame of the veteran engineer is world-wide. It is a thousand pities that the magnificent qualities both of genius and of courage and persistency which enabled him to conceive and carry to successful completion the Suez Canal, should have suffered so complete a moral eclipse in the closing days of the great engineer's career. Yet it seems impossible to doubt the justness of the sentence. The "swindling and breach of trust" charged against his son and his comrades in crime and disgrace, have been proved beyond possibility of doubt and it is incredible that these operations, so stupendous in extent as well as in turpitude, could have been carried on without the knowledge and co-operation of the one man whose name and fame were the powerful levers by which the whole financial structure was raised. It is happily not often that a man of great scientific reputation and ability is found lending himself to a scheme for the robbery of the public. Ambition, the crime by which "fell the angels," rather than any more sordid motive, no doubt led to his terrible downfall. None the less, France is to be congratulated if her tribunals shall make it really clear that justice in the Republic is neither blind nor a respecter of persons. That, however, cannot be said to be even yet demonstrated. Without fuller knowledge of the evidence it would be unsafe to offer an opinion, but there seems some reason to fear that the acquittal of the deputies may have given some just ground for the charges of failure of impartial justice which are now being so freely hurled against the French Government by its opponents.

Logically, the quarantining of Canadian cattle by the American Government is but the natural sequence of the action of the British Board of Agriculture. Actually there is reason to fear that it is designed partly as a measure of retaliation against the Mother Country in return for the persistent scheduling of American stock, and partly as an expression of the dislike felt for the present Canadian Government at Washington, as the latter is quite in keeping with President Harrison's recent message to Congress touching the bonding privileges accorded by treaty to Canadian rail-