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CURRENT TOPICS.

As we surmised, it is very likely that the assassination of President Carnot may lead to concerted action among the European Powers for the uprooting of the noxious weed of anarchism. It is evident that even England, which has just now felt it necessary to take almost unprecedented precautions for the safeguarding of members of the Royal Family, may not be unwilling to join in such an agreement. It will be impossible that the scattered Anarchists of Europe, few in number as those of the bloodthirsty type probably are, can long retain their capacity for serious mischief, with the hand, not only of every nation but of every citizen turned against them. Their propaganda must soon cease, even if they themselves do not at once disappear. Of course, great care should be exercised in discriminating the genuine anarchist of the

murderous heart from the various orders of socialists, with whom they are sometimes strangely confused. It would never do to let a movement for the suppression of anarchism degenerate into a war against freedom of thought and speech. This is a danger that would need to be carefully guarded against, especially in the more despotic countries.

Affliction and sorrow, which are often so salutary in their influence upon individuals, seem to have had a somewhat similar effect upon the French nation. The Republic has risen distinctly in dignity and self-respect since the assassination of its President. It has shown undoubted and unexpected wisdom in the choice of his successor. Not only so, but the manifestations of universal sympathy by other Governments and peoples have manifestly had a softening and broadening influence upon the national spirit. Nothing could have been in better taste or spirit than the action of Emperor William in seizing upon such a moment to pardon the two French officers condemned as spies. The heart of the French people seems to have been really touched by the act. The incident, though comparatively trifling in itself, may unfold possibilities of lasting good. Neither nation is destitute of generous traits. Both are capable of magnanimous sentiments. Who knows that this sad event, drawing them as it has nearer to each other than they have before been since the war, may not prove to be a turning point in the history of their relations to each other. It would be a blessing, not only to themselves but to Europe and the world, should such be the case. The period of disarmament would be very materially hastened by such an event.

Though it is, we suppose, diplomatically the correct thing, we cannot but think it tactically a mistake that the Intercolonial Conference is to be conducted under seal of secrecy until definite results are arrived at. One great *desideratum* in connection with the proposed innovations is an aroused popular interest in the whole subject, and the daily publication of an outline of the discussions, however informal or inconclusive, would do more to awaken such interest than anything else of which we can conceive. Those who can recall the incidents connected with the confederation of the four original Canadian Provinces will remember how great a part the publication of the proceedings of the Quebec Convention had in carrying forward the movement. The

people, at least the people of the Dominion, are even less disposed to-day to take recommendations at second hand, even from their wisest statesmen, and wax enthusiastic over them, than they were at that earlier date. They wish to know not only the results of such deliberations, but the processes by which such results were reached. They will claim the right to weigh for themselves the facts and arguments upon which the opinions which may prevail are based. The re-statement of these facts and the reproduction of the reasonings in a thousand varied forms, not only in the papers but at every street corner, would have popularized the various topics as they cannot be popularized in any other way.

It is to be hoped that Parliament, if called on to vote three-quarters of a million of dollars, or any other sum, as an annual subsidy for a line of fast Atlantic steamships, will take care in doing so to assure itself that some effective means of controlling freight rates, so as to keep them within reasonable bounds, shall be retained by the Government. The recent debate with reference to the alleged combine among ocean carriers at Montreal should not be without its lesson in this respect, to say nothing of the state of things existing at the present moment in the North-West, where the settlers declare that the freight rates by the railroad, which was well-nigh built with the money and lands of the public, are so nearly prohibitive as to render progress impossible. The same danger, that of suffering local interests to be sacrificed in the effort to promote through traffic, cannot be too carefully guarded against in any arrangements which may be made to stimulate trade and travel between Europe and the East *via* the Canadian transcontinental route. It is bad enough for the Government to be compelled to acknowledge its helplessness in regard to the carrying trade, in cases where there is free competition and no parliamentary aid. But in the case of railroads and steamboats, either originally aided or heavily subsidized from the public treasury, it is in the very nature of the case that there can be no competition. Full provision should, therefore, be made at the outset, that a certain reasonable and effective control by some constituted authority shall be the *sine qua non* of aid from the national funds.

Though the general result of the Ontario election was about what we expected, the outcome in different localities was not without its surprises, such as, *e. g.*, the election of the four Opposition candidates in Toronto by very large majorities, and the election of the two Government candidates in Hamilton, where their defeat was so confidently looked for. These and similar incidents elsewhere illustrate the fact, which was pretty well understood by all parties, that the situation was more complicated and the issues more uncertain than in any previous election. The fact that no great