

harmless, perchance a useful institution, and who, in the face of indignant public opinion, dared to assert so monstrous a proposition, was a vile corruptionist, and utterly unworthy of public confidence. It is evident, therefore, that a man of no ordinary talents was required to bring the road nearer to the standard demanded by the people. This man was C. J. Brydges. The task of re-organizing departments was inaugurated by him immediately on his taking possession, and very shortly a more efficient, prompt, and energetic spirit began to prevail.

After four years of hard work and persevering labour—requiring, too, no small share of diplomacy—Mr. Brydges has succeeded in securing for the Grand Trunk Railway a reputation higher, to say the least of it, than it ever previously enjoyed. Newspaper correspondents have asserted that his influence with “the powers that be” is greater than is necessary for the ordinary management of the railway. However this may be, the fact is apparent to every mind, that to the energy and ability of this gentleman the people of Canada are indebted for largely increased facilities for the display of that commercial activity which is the life of a nation. The great field now opening, in the Confederation of the Provinces of British North America, gives a grand opportunity for the display of railway enterprise and genius. Mr. Brydges has already identified himself with this movement, and will, no doubt, play a prominent part in the programme of action.

The Saturday Reader.

WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 22, 1866.

Original contributions, coming within the scope of this Journal, are invited from Canadian Authors. Articles when used will be paid for.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE.

NEVER since the time of the first French revolution has the world been in such a perturbed state as it is at present, notwithstanding that no great wars are, for the moment, raging. It is true that the wants of Italy have been satisfied by the acquisition of Venetia, and that the long cravings of Germany for a united Fatherland have been partially gratified by the incorporation of several of the minor German States with Prussia and her federal supremacy over others; but even if those countries were fully contented with their gains in the recent struggle with Austria, there are signs throughout the rest of Europe of coming troubles and changes. To begin at the South, Spain is evidently on the eve of one of her periodical outbreaks, which will probably result in the expulsion of the last of the Bourbons from the last of the thrones filled by that once numerous and powerful race, and the not improbable union of the Peninsula under the King of Portugal. Such an event would be highly desirable, perhaps for Portugal, certainly for Spain, for her princes retain nothing of the qualities which they once possessed, except their weaknesses and vices. The Spanish Bourbons of recent days exhibit all the bigotry of Charles the Fifth and Philip the Second, without the strong will and deep policy which characterized these monarchs, and which imparted a dignity to their faults and even their crimes. These Spanish Bourbons are plainly doomed, and their subjects, degraded as they are, cannot much longer submit to the rule of beings so abject as they have become. We doubt, however, if the Portuguese will be persuaded that they shall be benefited by a union with their more numerous neighbours, though both nations would thereby acquire a position which they cannot obtain singly. But be that as it may, Spain is apparently on the threshold of a revolution, which may break out at any moment. Of France we need not say much; all the world is intimate with the affairs of that country; but if Louis Napoleon has not seen his best days,

we are widely out of our reckoning. His German policy, and his Mexican policy, have placed him in the situation of a baffled trickster, and if he does not effect something to retrieve his character, he will fall back to the place in public estimation which he held after his absurd displays at Strasbourg and Boulogne, when he made himself the laughing stock of Europe. To free himself from the ridicule which attached to him from these escapades, he massacred the Parisians in 1850. He may attempt something of the same kind now; but if so, it will likely be at the expense of foreigners—the Prussians, it may be, when his army is supplied with breech-loaders; or it may be the Americans, in revenge for their interference with his Mexican schemes. It is not impossible that Mr. Kinglake, in his history of the war of the Crimea, has truly estimated Napoleon's character, and that his talents have been much overrated. It is easy for a man, filling the throne of France, to acquire a high reputation for ability, with the genius and knowledge of the entire nation at his service; and it is certain that neither the acts nor the writings of Napoleon indicated an intellect of anything approaching to the first order of minds, prior to his elevation to power. Even his *Life of Cæsar*, admitting that it is all of his own composition, cannot be ranked as a great work. We do not mean to say that the French Emperor might not be a great statesman without being a great writer. Cardinal Richelieu's poetry was execrable; Frederick of Prussia's was worse, and his prose was generally very indifferent, when it was not thoroughly bad. But we repeat that a man at the head of the French nation may gain, without deserving it, a high name—and lose it. Louis Philippe, during the first half of his reign, was considered the wisest prince in Christendom—the “modern Ulysses, the Napoleon of Peace;” and we know in which light he was regarded, when, disguised as Mr. Smith, he fled from Paris to find refuge in England. The intellect and pride of France are assumed of, and becoming disgusted with the place the grand nation holds among free countries; and we are satisfied that his *prestige* once gone, he cannot long retain his crown. But who and what shall succeed him and the empire? The Republic is viewed with dread by a vast majority of the people, and the name and fame of the first Napoleon have supplanted those of the Bourbons so completely that if there is to be a monarchy at all, the monarch must be of his family. We imagine that the true way to secure power at home and good government would be by the Liberals, the Royalists, and the Orleanists accepting the Bonaparte family as the destined rulers of France, and by the Emperor establishing the political institutions of the country on a sound constitutional basis. But at present there is slight hope of such a consummation.

The period is now at hand when Italy shall have to test her qualifications for freedom and self-government. Internal discord and strife have been her curse for centuries, and her subjection to foreign rule and ascendancy has been the natural result. If a real love of unity be cherished by the people and their leaders, now that they have at last driven forth the stranger from the land, and broken his yoke, Italy might soon take her proper place among the nations. We doubt, however, if the soft denizens of the southern portions of the kingdom will willingly undertake the rough labours which render a country prosperous, or exchange their long habits of indulgence for those by which alone liberty can be guarded after it has been obtained. The question of the Poppedom is one upon which we must refrain from expressing an opinion, further than stating our convictions that it would be unwise in Victor Emanuel to make Rome the capital of his dominions. The most glorious incidents of Roman history and tradition are republican, and his object is to found a kingdom. Rome might be a fit capital for a state such as is contemplated by Mazzini, but not for that desired by the King of Italy.

Notwithstanding her great acquisition of territory, power and influence, we doubt if the position of Prussia is still safe. Her neighbours

regard her increase of strength with jealousy. France, as the first military nation of the continent, sees in her a rival; Russia is aware that the seaports she will now possess may eventually render her mistress of the Baltic, and besides that, the union of Germany may in the end lead to the liberation of Poland, a contingency far from unlikely; Austria, of course, hates and fears Prussia, and will be anxious to blot out the disgrace which has fallen on her arms, and to recover the losses she has suffered in Germany, if not in Italy. Such, then, being the state of affairs, it is no exaggeration to say that seldom has the condition of the European world been so menacing; and yet we have not enumerated a tithe of the signs of the times. Nor are events on the American continent of a more cheering aspect. But the space at our disposal will not permit of our continuing the subject.

We regret to be obliged to issue the *READER* this week without the cut for “The Lion in the Path.” Owing to the negligence of our London Agent it has failed to reach us in time.

LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, August 23, 1866.

I hope and believe, Mr. Editor, that your readers are disposed to be charitable towards a poor correspondent who is hard up for a topic. My business is to record events; but if events will not transpire, what then? Why then “Othello's occupation's gone.” I know what my friends who sub-edit our English journals do under such circumstances. They fall back upon gigantic cauliflowers, calves with six legs, “three children at a birth,” and other pleasant and unpleasant natural vagaries. I have been looking during this week over all “this broad realm of England,” not to mention Scotland and Ireland, in the hope of finding matter of a similar calibre, but without much success. Therefore it is that I have gone across the channel to France, the Beautiful, for a topic or two which may be of interest to your readers.

We were getting thoroughly alarmed the other day about the Emperor. He was reported to be seriously ill, and suffering from I know not what combination of diseases, the issue of which was doubtful; assuming the truth of this as we did, there was cause for alarm. Heaven only knows, in the present condition of European politics what would be the result, if the wise head and strong hand now presiding over France were removed. If the dynasty survived the shock, there would of course, be a Regency, with Prince Napoleon as its inspirer, and he, I need not say, is a man of strong feelings with little discretion. Happily the report turned out to be exaggerated. The Emperor has been ill, doubtless, but not to the extent supposed.

You will have heard by the time this reaches you, of the fearful accident which threw a shadow upon the glories of the Emperor's fête at Paris. Imagine what it must have been to take part in the terrible struggle for life on that fatal bridge; I doubt, though, if any one can imagine it who has not been unfortunate enough to get into somewhat similar circumstances. For my own part I have yet a most vivid recollection of my sensations on the night of the Prince of Wales' wedding, when all London turned out to see the illuminations, and no inconsiderable section, myself forming part, got hopelessly wedged in the chief thorough-fares. Shall I ever forget forcing my way through the narrow street connecting the Mansion House with Cheapside, where so awful was the pressure that I well nigh gave myself up for lost, a fate which did actually fall upon more than one or two. I can sympathise a little, therefore, with the poor creatures on the Pont de la Concorde, who came to so hapless an end.

While on French topics I may as well mention that a remarkable “exhibition of all nations,” or rather of as many as chose to avail themselves of it, is now open at Boulogne. It concerns itself entirely with fish and fisheries, everything shown having some relation to the finny tribe or