

## ONE VIEW OF THE FISHERY DISPUTE.

IN an article upon the subject "Newspapers," prepared for the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* two years ago, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, manager of the *New York Tribune*, predicted a great change in the character of the metropolitan press as the result of the reductions in price, that had then lately been forced upon the great dailies by competition among themselves and the increasing number and circulation of diurnal penny-dreadfuls. The Cleveland-Folsom wedding and the Fisheries controversy are the latest, but far from the only, proofs of the anticipated decline in character. College and banquet lecturers on journalism are indeed correct in saying that the metropolitan press has passed out of the stage of development typified by the *Easton Gazette*; but substituted for it, we have that "mephitic personal gossip," which Mr. Matthew Arnold, speaking as the guardian of sweetness and light, has denounced as the bane of the American press, and, still later, that toadying to class interests and feelings which is at present the greatest obstacle to journalistic righteousness. Under the former head, nothing preceding it has been quite so shameless as the situations, actions, and speeches, invented outright for the President and his bride; and the consequences to the subjects of such gossip may be realized by considering how two apparently sensible and modest persons have been driven to attempt to cover their simplest acts and purposes with secrecy in order to keep down, so far as might be, the floods of lying nonsense and calumny written about them as facts of their daily existence. Under the head of class toadying, the treatment of the Fishery Question is a grave example. Simply stated, the facts appear to be these: Canada has valuable fisheries, to which she is willing to admit the United States, on the basis of a *quid pro quo*. The United States concede that they have not a right of free admission to those fisheries. On each side, the Government naturally takes its cues from that fraction of its subject population more immediately concerned in the fishery interest. Canadian fishermen, reasonably enough, want the highest price that can be got for the privileges that American fishermen desire, and the latter, as reasonably, seek to get the lowest possible quotation before closing the bargain. So far, this is but the haggling of the market, accompanied by the usual number of shop lies, on the part of both seller and buyer; as for example:—on the part of the seller, that American fishermen must fish within Canadian limits, if they are to make any profit, and, on the part of the buyer, that the best fishing lies outside those limits, and that admission to the limits is more a matter of convenience than necessity. Collaterally with this main question of the value to Americans of the Canadian Fishery privileges, runs another—namely, of the extent and character of those privileges. Canadians, relying on the treaty of 1818, say that American fishing vessels have no right, without Canadian consent, to buy ice and bait in Canadian ports, to aid their fishing operations on the common grounds. Americans say that the treaty has been superseded by universal usages of commerce that have attained the force of public law since that treaty was enacted, and this position they seek to strengthen by reference to a commercial treaty, antedating that of 1818, but which they contend, is in *pari materia* with the latter. This, with the addition of the question of headlands, as affecting the three-mile limit, is the controversy, compounded of questions both of law and fact; and if we mention that, pending the closing of the bargain, impatient or unscrupulous buyers are disposed to snatch at what they can within the limits; and that the sellers are alert and desirous to prevent such shoplifting, under the cover of legitimate shopping, we have fairly stated the situation of the parties as well as the issue. In this issue, or this situation, there is nothing to occasion a bad quarter of an hour to any diplomat or international jurist who may be called upon to deal officially with it. What malign or distorting influences may be operating upon Canadian functionaries, to give false colour or direction to the course of affairs, the writer does not know, or pretend to know; if there be any. THE WEEK, as an independent, critical journal, may doubtless be trusted to expose and denounce them, conformably to its obvious duty and responsibility. It is with such influences upon this side of the boundary that this letter is meant to deal. In the first place, the politicians in and out of Congress whose lines are cast among the towns and communities that constitute what has been herein called the buyer, are "working the thing for all it is worth" (to use a current vulgarism), with an eye to their personal interest in connection with the approaching autumn elections; in the second place, the whole body of Republican leaders in the country, intent upon reversing the Democratic majority in the House of Representatives at those elections, are "working the thing" to discredit the administration, which is also Democratic; in the third place, the now unprosperous "blanket sheets" of the great cities of the East, hungering for the united pat-

ronage of the populations of Massachusetts and Maine interested in the fishery occupations, are scrambling over each other in truckling to sordid opinion born of selfishness; and, in the fourth place, according to the current canons of journalism, the incidents of the fishery dispute, viewed simply as topics of news, are entitled to be "boomed." Assuming this to be a fair statement of the American side of the situation, it is an affair of stumblers, reporters, and an almost infinitesimal proportion of the population and capital of the United States, which in a natural order of events would, as a subject of agitation, die of inanition in a few months, producing nothing but harmless noise while it lived, and would shortly afterwards be entombed in a reasonable settlement by the constituted authorities. If the affair should now exhibit unusual life and vigour, and intensify and prolong itself, it will be because of the literal and rigid enforcement of the doubtful provisions of the treaty of 1818, without a prior effort to obtain a mutual interpretation thereof. Even now, if the Canadian authorities would confine their cruisings and capturings to protection of the inshore fishery, including land-locked waters if they choose; protesting against the right of American fishermen to obtain bait and ice in Canadian ports, and keeping an account of all ice and bait so obtained as the foundation of a claim to compensation for the privilege if the treaty of 1818 should be diplomatically sustained, they would cease from aiming blows in aid of the opponents of President Cleveland's Administration, and from fostering that ferocious appetite for State protection of purely personal interests, as against the public good, that is so manifest in the doctrines and doings of the Knights of Labour, and the principle of the Oleomargarine Bill that has just passed the House of Representatives. Except as evincing an alarmist spirit not justified by the calmness of all but a trifling number of our people, it might be added that a moderate course on the part of the Canadian Government would make it sure that present empty mouthings grew to nothing more substantial. It is a high price to pay for a spirited foreign policy on the part of Canada, that the hand of so just and conscientious a publicist as Secretary Bayard should be forced, and mischievous importance conferred upon so shallow and unprincipled a demagogue as Senator Frye.

Washington, June 5, 1886.

## NOTES FROM QUEBEC.

IN the month of July, 1884, we took occasion to point out, through the columns of THE WEEK, the utter inefficiency of our quarantine regulations, and from personal observation we were enabled to give the following description of the examination to which an ocean steamer is liable on her arrival in the port of Quebec: "When the steamer has moored alongside her wharf the quarantine doctor goes on board for the purpose of examining into the health of the passengers. The examination in the main consists of the interchange of civilities between the quarantine doctor and the ship's doctor. Esculapius of the sea assures Esculapius of the land that 'everything is all right'; a hasty glance into the rigging, around the smoke-stack, and over the bulwarks, confirms the statement, and the medical examination is over." The article from which we have quoted was a very serious indictment against the whole system of Dominion Quarantine, and ought to have produced an immediate remedy, and possibly would have done so if it had not been for the curse of our political system, which assumes that every evil pointed out is the work of a political adversary and intended primarily to damage the Government as a whole, or some individual member of it in particular. Indeed, the moment the indictment appeared the *Sanitary Journal* rushed to the defence of the Hon. Mr. Pope and characterized our remarks as "very erroneous and misleading." We happened to know the facts better than the *Sanitary Journal*, and we hinted that if our object had been political the case would have been presented in a far more aggravated form. Almost two whole years have passed since then and matters continue pretty much as they were. The port physician draws his salary and passing them quite irrespective of their sanitary condition. But if the port physician should at any time become conscious that he owed a duty to the public and place an embargo upon a steamship, the company to which it belongs is sure to have sufficiently strong influence at Ottawa to have it removed. Quarantine only exists in name at the port of Quebec and it is not unreasonable to suppose that a similar state of things exists at our other ports of entry, and therefore a large sum of money must be spent annually for purposes that can hardly be described as other than fraudulent. The Allan Company has repeatedly offended against the sanitary interests of the country, and impunity appears to have emboldened it to the verge of utter indifference to public opinion. There is at this moment