

stiletto and a Pittsburg millionaire's pearl-handled revolver. But money has its limitations, after all, and it can hardly prevent the wreckage of brain storm from leaving ominous traces.



FREAK SPORTS

IT was the late lamented P. T. Barnum who first discovered that the public liked to be fooled and he was frank enough to tell them so. And the public laughed and kept right on being fooled at their own expense. That's why any freak sport that can make printers' ink flow can for a brief space hold public attention and gather the loose dollars out of the public's pockets. That is why the Marathon race continues in our midst. Even Marathon race promoters admit that it is the dreariest form of amusement that money-making genius ever discovered. But the newspapers chatter about it, the public takes its chatter from the newspapers and the desire to see what it is chattering about leads the public to pay large prices at the door and sit for hours practising patience and watching and waiting for one or other of the runners to drop from exhaustion.

The Marathon in the winter time is excusable. In fact it may be commendable. It only affects the professional runner and his usefulness as a member of the community is open to question. Furthermore, it is calculated to make the public so weary of its latest fad that with the return of the summer said public will turn with a sigh of relief to legitimate sport. For the columns of press-agents' prattle that have filled the sporting columns of the dailies for weeks past is well calculated to give the fad those frazzled edges that address it to the scrap heap.

For Marathon racing is not a sport. It is a test of endurance. It is no more sport than Dr. Tanner's attempt to live so many days without eating. Neither has it any scientific or moral value. It teaches nothing; brings no good results. Its tendencies are bad and once its gate-drawing powers wane it will go out with a suddenness that will be surprising.

The one surprising thing about it is the number of prominent people who have been carried away by the craze; the number of parents and educators who have allowed and even encouraged their sons and those under their charge to endanger their health for all time by undergoing strains that are too heavy for even the most robust constitutions. But as experienced financiers were carried away by the South Sea bubble, so those who should know better have been borne along on the tide of the Marathon craze. The signs are not wanting that this tide has almost spent its force and there is reason to hope that it will be supplanted by something much better ere the spring days tempt the boys of Canada into paddling over the hills in search of a fame that is bound to prove more injurious than lasting.



THE INVASION OF AMERICA

THAT long-promised invasion of America has begun. For a long time it looked as if America would do the invading, but it has happened otherwise. Canada is invading the United States and United States railways are being purchased by British capital, through Canadian railway presidents. Some of these fine days we will wake up to find that the Canadian Pacific has bought the New York Central, that the Grand Trunk has bought the Lehigh and the Pennsylvania, and that the Bank of England has opened an office in Montreal.

That old fear about the United States absorbing Canada still lives in some breasts—some aged breasts such as those of Lieut.-Col. Denison and Lieut.-Col. Hughes—but it is gone from all us younger people. Canada will yet own the United States, for was it not our own Khan who wrote:

"Since when did a conqueror come from the South?"

Let us hope that it will be a peaceful conquest, and that no blood will be shed. Those bloody conquests are out of date, so far as this continent is concerned.

THE INTERCOLONIAL'S FUTURE

A CURIOUS uncertainty has come over the attitude of some of the newspapers that were disposing of the Intercolonial Railway two or three weeks ago. It was generally agreed that politics ought to be eliminated from the railway. Some proposed a Commission; some were for an autocratic manager appointed for five years.

The more either suggestion is examined, the less feasible does it seem. For politics cannot be eliminated without eliminating Parliament. You cannot eliminate Parliament from the management of public moneys. Financial arrangements must be sanctioned by Parliament. An account for axle grease may open up the whole question of the purchase of supplies. The salary of a book-keeper may provoke controversy as to the method of official appointments. A charge to capital account opens the door to endless recrimination about the Government being in the railway business, anyway.

And when these possibilities are always at hand to make trouble, and most of the constituencies from Montreal to Halifax and Sydney are concerned in getting as much as they can out of the Intercolonial revenue by all sorts of pressure upon the ultimate disposers of it, there is little hope of the latter end of the Intercolonial being any better than the present.

The appointment of a general manager, answerable for five years to nobody but his own conscience, is impossible. He must be responsible to some authority at least once a year. Railway managers are a noble class of men; but they cannot be placed on a level with judges—not because they are inferior in ability, but because His Majesty's judges do their work in open court, and are not engaged in buying and selling goods, and promoting and degrading officials, at their good pleasure.

The only adequate guarantee that a general manager-autocrat could give, would be that he would make good financial detriments that might follow his administration. No available man could do that, even if the Intercolonial were in such shape that, without western traffic, but with the competition of western-operating roads, it could immediately wipe out deficits, and pay interest on the appalling amount of capital sunk in the road, which now has to be paid in increasing amounts by the public of Canada. Any man who could give the financial guarantees would not think of tying himself up to the Intercolonial Railway.

A Commission would not be freer of political control than the present general manager is. Abolish the patronage system; put the purchase of supplies on a basis of open tendering, and you have not eradicated the major disadvantages that have beset the Intercolonial. So long as there is party government, which, like the poor, will be always with us; and so long as Parliament reviews the accounts, which must always be; political influence will hang around the Intercolonial. The leopard cannot change his spots. The Intercolonial, with political control, has become an institution in the Maritime Provinces, with a strength as tenacious, though it is totally different in substance, as the strength of the liquor trade in Toronto or Montreal. The record of the License Commission in Toronto is littered with the resignations of strong, well-meaning men, who have found the Commissioner's life not worth living.

The Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway Commission is sometimes regarded as a model. It does as well as can be expected. Happily, enough was known about the Intercolonial management, to induce it to avoid many of the evils that afflict that railway. Happily, too, the Ontario Government road discovered Cobalt, and precipitated the development of Northern Ontario. The road has paid from the beginning. Surpluses are fine fenders against hostility, and the Ontario Government railway has an excellent record. But the personnel of the Commission has had a sufficiency of changes, despite the enormous advantages of the railway being in only a small portion of one province, instead of being affected by inter-provincial "pulls," and of the knowledge that any deficit would be unfelt on account of its being spread over the population from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

We have the instructive example of a Commission to carry out a work of multitudinous ramifications, "for the general advantage of Canada," in the National Transcontinental Railway Commission. It is subject to all the criticisms which any ordinary railway administration has to meet—and more. The construction of the road between Quebec and Winnipeg is costing a fabulous sum. It is already known that fixed charges on it will be so large that a revision of the terms with the Grand Trunk Pacific is widely discussed. The accountability of the Commissioners is to a political body, the members whereof are as free from personal risk and obligation, as the handlers of privately conducted enterprises are close to that most blessed incentive to economy, efficiency and despatch. It is pretty safe to conjecture that, if the Government could go back to 1903, very different arrangements would be made. Indeed, the leasing of the line to the Grand Trunk Pacific is itself the strongest declaration against the Government operation of railways. Every reason against a Transcontinental Commission applies to an Intercolonial Commission.

The truth is that, to stop the everlasting pouring of capital into the Intercolonial, without recovery from the certainty of deficits; and to avoid the calamity of disastrous competition, the Government must put the road under a management which will be able to carry the financial responsibilities that attach to any ordinary railway, and which can assure to the road and the territory it serves, the amount of traffic and of local development, that under existing conditions are impossible. That can only be done by joining the fortunes of the Intercolonial with some other system, with the public interest as to capital locked up, and results of traffic earnings amply safeguarded.

NEMO.