The Toronto World.

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FRIDAY MORNING, JANUARY 20, 1882.

A RAILWAY ENQUIRY.

In a recent article we pointed out that the province of Ontario had spent a very large portion of its surplus in subsidies to railways. These subsidies were given on two main grounds: first that new country would be opened up for settlement; and second that portions of the province already enjoying railway facilities would have the benefit of competition owing to the new lines.

We showed that the first of these objects had been very fairly attained, and that the people were quite satisfied in that respect.

But we also showed that as regards the second desideratum—the creation of competing lines—there had been a complete failure. What the people now want to know is how this failure occurred; and to find this out it is the duty of the legislature to name a committee of members of the house for the purpose. Let them send for papers and persons, and let the true facts of all the recent consolidations be got at.

There are men in Ontario who within a few years have developed into railway magnates. They know something about these consolidations. Some of them were very energetic in getting subsidies from the government and bonuses from municipalities, on the pretext of creating competing routes. Let these gentlemen be called before the committee and give the opportunity to explain these consolidations in which they have so prominently figured.

Further, the people want to know what portion of the money that has changed hands in these recent consolidations stuck to the fingers of those who took an active part in affecting them.

Will the government move in creating such a committee or will they leave the honor for some private member?

TOO HASTY.

The Chatham Planet is a genuine tory paper and it consequently conceives it to be its duty to lose no opportunity to make a point against Mr. Mowat and his government. This is perhaps what may naturally be expected under our system of government by recrimination, but it sometimes leads very zealous partizans like the Planet into very foolish positions. Our contemporary, assuming that the relief granted the Muskoka sufferers by the local government, because the government had not seen fit to proclaim its good deed from the house-tops, had not been given until the press of the country had frightened Mr. Mowat into doing right, berates Mr. Mowat for his want of feeling for the sufferers. The Planet will probably recognize the wisdom of hastening slowly in the matter of making charges, when it learns, as is the fact, that the grant was given promptly and ungrudgingly. The government no doubt treated the house with scant courtesy in giving the information to the Globe and witholding it from the house till Mr. Meredith forced it out of the leader of the government, but, be this as it may, the ministry are not chargable with neglect of the sufferers.

MANHOOD SUFFRAGE.

Speaking of manhood suffrage, the Kingston News has this to say: "The scheme looks plausible from a distance, but wise and observant men, who have had a practical acquaintance with it in the neighboring republic, deplore it as the cause of innumerable evils. Under the auspices of this pleasant system the public places have been filled with the canaille, the scum, the bold and unscrupulous rascality of the community; while virtue and respectability have only had the courage to fight their way to the front under the pressure of some great occasion, such as the election of a president. We have no need to introduce such a system here." Our contemporary falls into a not uncommon error. Manhood suffrage is by no means universal in the United States. The general government there has not the power which our Dominion government has of fixing the qualification for voters at national elections. This is settled by each state in its own way, and there is an infinite variety of qualification in consequence. In some states only those who have paid a certain poll tax can vote. In others, such as Rhode Island, there is a property qualification. In only one territory, Wyoming, is there absolute citizen suffrage, for there sex is no bar.

The News might get rid of some of its absurd plutocratic prejudices against manhood suffrage if it would study the records of the elections in the various states. It would find that purity of elections and choice of excellent representatives is not by any means promoted by restricting the franchise, indeed the very contrary appears to be the case. It might even draw a not wholly valueless lesson from the fact that where women are allowed to exercise the right of voting for the laws which they must obey and to have a voice in the disposal of the taxes they pay, the elections are conducted with a decency and decorum, and with an absence of bribery, which to say the least is not conspicuously common in other states.

We would like to ask our contemporary where he gets the information that appears to lead him to the conclusion that the men who are now denied the right of franchise have not got among them as much virtue and respectability as have those whose names appear on the voters' lists?

We would also like to ask the News whether it thinks that government should be conducted in strict justice to all classes of the community? And, presuming that it would answer this question in the affirmative, we would like to ask whether it thinks it just that any member of society should be denied the right to have a voice in the enactment of laws which he must obey, or in the distribution of taxes which he is forced to pay?

Perhaps by striving for an answer to this query our contemporary may imbibe more advanced ideas on the suffrage question: If a young man just one remove from idiocy is left heir to ten thousand dollars worth of property, and another of brilliant intellect is left without property and with responsibilities to mother, sisters, and younger brothers, which will for many years prevent his acquiring any; is it in the interest of good government that the first shall have the franchise and the latter not?

There are quite a number of similar conundrums we might ask, but these are perhaps enough for the present.

AN ESTABLISHED EVIL.

A spasm of virtuous indignation appears to be coming over the people of Montreal just now in consequence of cruelties alleged to have been practised in the Hervey institute for friendless children. It is charged that the application of mustard blisters has been freely used as a punishment for children of tender years, with the view of frightening them into being "good," we believe. It is said that the matron has been known to apply a raw mustard blister to the tender back of an infant three years old. On others the instrument of torture has been kept on for over an hour, the little sufferer in each case pleading piteously for its removal. Sixteen little victims are reported to have been punished in this way, but there are more to be heard from, it is said. One boy, age not stated, had the blister put upon him four times. He appears to be rather a dangerous customer, withal, for it is mentioned that he had attempted to set fire to the building, giving as a reason that he was so harshly treated, and found his life there so hard, that in desperation he resolved to get out, and this was the way he tried for it. The institution was founded by Miss Hervey, an aged maiden lady, who has devoted her whole life to alleviating the sufferings of children, and especially of the young waifs of Montrtal. This home is the latest effort of a noble career, and it has been receiving the most ample voluntary support from the public. From age and infirmity Miss Hervey is no longer able to give her personal attention to the good work, as she so long continued to do, and the management is now in the hands of a committee of ladies belonging to the upper circles of Montreal society, and most of them mothers of families. For the cruelties alleged to have been practised Mrs. Greig, the matron of the institution, is directly responsible, but responsibility is now practically assumed by the committee, who by a three-fourths majority have justified her course and censured the complainants in the case. A nurse and a serving woman, who gave testimony as to the punishing of the children by the blister torture, were summarily dismissed, we suppose as a warning to the rest that the executive is not to be trifled with. In vindication of this particular mode of punishment it has been stated that "much more" has been done by Miss Macpherson to keep down the unruliness of the London gutter children that she took charge of; a piece of information which will probably be new to most of that lady's Canadian friends. One newspaper reporter says that at a recent meeting the foundress herself, who, aged and ill, had left her sick room to attend, was so rudely spoken to by some of the ladies present that his informant felt it her duty to interfere. Should it be confirmed that Miss Hervey, her age and her lifetime of good works combined, was thus disrespectfully treated the incident would go far to deepen the prevailing unfavorable impression.

The defence in this case has not yet come before the public, and even were the charges fully proven, no general conclusion could safely be drawn from a single instance. It so happens, however, that instances of this very character—cases of cruelty to the helpless and the unfortunate on the part of managers, superintendents and keepers of what we are accustomed to call "institutions," are both numerous and well authenticated. Should the Montreal institution for friendless children prove to be another of the same, it will be but one more added to a very long list. Dickens' picture of Dotheboys hall was no mere fancy sketch, but was really founded on facts, as the public judgment soon decided upon evidence. And, by the way another such "hall," but apparently much worse than what Dickens described, has just recently been discovered in London, and is now engaging the attention of the British public. The case of the New York "Shepherd," who, a year or two ago was discovered in the practice of starving and torturing boys almost to death, is not yet forgotten. The long record of lunatic asylum barbarities has been a terrible one, and in Europe, at all events, the old barbarous system is not yet wholly abolished. Two factors mainly contribute to the iniquitous result. First, there are the victims, who must be of certain unfortunate or helpless classes — say young children, lunatics, hospital patients, paupers, or criminals imprisoned under sentence of law. The pupils at a Dotheboys hall belong to none of these, unless very young, for their board and tuition are paid for by their parents or guardians. But they do resemble the other classes named in the particular matter of helplessness, they are victims who lack the power to do anything to save themselves. They may complain, but who will believe them? If the complaints of boys treated as Dickens has described could reach the ears and touch the feelings of those who have power to right the wrong, no Dotheboys hall could possibly spin out twelve months' existence. Second, there are the tyrants—superintendents, keepers, matrons, or whoever they may be—whose positions give them the power of ill-treating the unfortunates in their charge. Power on one side, helplessness on the other, such is of the essence of the situation; these two factors given, most iniquitous results frequently follow. As Shakespeare says, it happens oft that "the power to do ill deeds makes ill deeds done." And perhaps in no kind of "institutions" are ill deeds more apt to be done than in those supported by charity, either public or private, or both. The keepers, unless they have good hearts and strong moral convictions to keep them right, too often slide into the habit of looking upon those under their charge as having no rights which they are bound to respect. What right have the recipients of charity to grumble anyway; should they not be glad to take what they get and be thankful? Moreover, the evil may be done with impunity, for who will believe the unfortunates if they dare to complain? Further, the keepers of charitable institutions and also of many other institutions which do not come under that description, are apt to slide into the habit of looking upon their precious selves as the owners of the institutions, in a manner, and as having practical rights of ownership accordingly. "Institutions," so called, have no visible, tangible, individual owner, and the keepers naturally fall into the habit of regarding themselves as being at least the acting, visible embodiment of ownership and control. Although properly the servants of the public or of the corporation which employs them, they easily take on the way of thinking themselves masters instead, and of acting accordingly. With regard to charitable institutions generally this has become an established evil, both in Europe and America; and it is one that urgently requires to be suppressed. Keepers generally have good "soft" places, and get fat in them. They should at least be taught that they are the servants and not masters of the public. There is room for much of this kind of reform. Why, even your supposed humble caretaker of a building sometimes puts on airs of ownership and authority, as if he were himself the city corporation or the owner of the property he has charge of. Regarding the Montreal case, it is said that the stoppage of supplies from the charitable public will soon bring matters to a crisis. It may fairly be said that wherever such abuses of charity are, and continue, the people who contribute the money must hold themselves largely to blame for the results.

NOT CREDITABLE.

England does not gain fame by her dealing with weak powers. The readiness with which she interferes with the affairs of weak or half civilized countries while carefully avoiding similar quarrels with more powerful countries is far from being to her credit. Her latest adventure in this direction is the sending of a note to the Khedive of Egypt, offering in conjunction with France to come to his assistance in case he is unable to cope with the national party—for that is the real meaning of the Anglo-French note. Under the extravagant and unpatriotic rule of her present ruler Egypt finds that the labor of her people is handed over to foreign capitalists and that foreigners dominate in the councils of the country, and a national party has sprung up which is trying to assert the right of Egyptians to rule Egypt. In the interest of the foreign Shylocks who are draining the life blood of the Egyptian people, the English and French governments stand ready to send their armies to prevent the success of the national cause. As an eminent Englishman said some years ago: "More generally than is supposed the rulers of the synagogue are the rulers of the world." England and France at least announce their readiness to act the contemptible part of bailiffs for a ot of grasping usurers.

SMALLPOX is spreading in the United States, and in many cities active measures are being taken to have the people vaccinated and all possible sanitary precautions taken. It is time that the health committee of our city moved in the matter, and that consultations of doctors be held to consider the question of vaccination, the sanitary condition of the city, and the preparation of a smallpox hospital. The last words may have a grimly ominous sound; but prevention is better than cure.

IT WOULD BE a nice thing if we were to heve an ice famine next summer. No ice has yet been secured from our own bay, and we will probably have to rely for our supply on the northern lakes. Even there the reports are not very encouraging, and the present indications are that the commodity so necessary to our modern civilization will be dear and scarce. It is to be hoped at all events that the price of ice cream will not be raised. Another five cents added to the price of a plate will cause a rebellion among our long-suffering youth, and the girls will have to content themselves with sarsaparilla and root beer.

DR. LYON PLAYFAIR, speaking at Edinburgh recently kindly advised the United States to abandon protection, and assured them that with free trade they would become the greatest manufacturing country in the world. The disinterested way in which the friends of the British manufacturer tell his rivals how to more successfully compete with him is edifying in the extreme. It reminds us forcibly of the disinterested way in which the wolves once on a time advised the sheep to get rid of certain pestilent watch dogs, who prevented the consummation of that cosmopolitan harmony which ought to exist between such natural friends as wolves and sheep. The free trade that followed was principally in mutton, we believe.

WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER the honorable member for North Brant likes compliments or not, but we fear that even if he does he will hardly thank the Globe for the following: "The debate on the address dragged along somewhat tediously yesterday afternoon, though it became rather more lively as the hour for adjournment approached. The first speaker was Mr. Young."

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