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General News.

OUR RURAL POPULATION AND THE WAR.—"A great revolution is taking place in the character of our population. For fifty years it has been going on rapidly, changing alike the physical and moral constitution of the British race. The old preponderance of the rural element in our population has vanished, and every year the nation is becoming more purely urban. What such a revolution portends, we shall see in the sequel; in the mean time, let us express our satisfaction that the phenomenon has at length, in some measure, attracted public attention. The rough-and-ready processes of a season of war doubtless engender abuses of a certain kind; but peace is quite as good a shelterer of error. Peace and war come by turns upon the world, that each may make manifest the errors and abuses that have grown up under the other. No kind of suffering is all loss,—in fact, suffering never fails to be its own recompense if we do but learn the lesson it is fitted to teach. This is true even in the case of individuals, who live but their short three-score years and ten; how much more true is it of nations, to whose existence as free and happy agents nature has fixed no term save that imposed by their own foolishness. Zealander, as it has been fancied, may yet stand upon London Bridge, and, gazing upon a stagnant stream beneath him and a mouldering city around, be lost in awe at the wreck of the mightiest civilisation that ever dominated the world. Yes, a foreign foe may yet set his heel upon England's neck, and annex her as a tributary isle to his far-spread Continental realms. But never will that hour come—never will the Queen of the Seas, the parent of half a world's civilisation, thus totter to her fall, until her own children have betrayed her,—until the British race have lost its manliness—have sunk its physical and moral vigour in the heated atmosphere of an over-civilisation and all-prevailing town-life, and have abandoned the free generous spirit of its prime and absorbing desire for the mere creature comforts of existence.

After forty years of peace, we are again at war; we want an army, and recruits come in slowly.—We cannot even keep our handful of militia regiments at half their complement: and for service abroad, we have been hunting for the last twelve-month for foreigners—Germans, Italians, Poles, Turks, Americans—and have got into all manner of political *desagremens* by our desperate efforts to procure their services. We do not wonder that France should have begun to mutter discontentment at our efforts, and doubts as to whether we do not design to shirk our part in the war alliance. During the present year, our army, in the Crimea has not averaged above half the strength of the native British troops which Wellington led into France in 1814; and yet the number of males at the military age in this country has nearly doubled since then. The number of men who ought to be capable of bearing arms is in round numbers 3,200,000; and yet, after two years' recruiting for as arduous a contest as ever Great Britain engaged in, our army in the Crimea does not exceed 50,000 men! This is a curious and certainly startling phenomenon, and sundry minor circumstances of a similar complexion intensify the unpleasant aspect of affairs. No one who has read the Biography of Sir John Sinclair by his accomplished son, can have forgotten the conduct of that patriotic Scotchman in 1794, when the national defences were the subject of an anxious thought to the Government as they are at present,—how he offered Mr. Pitt to set the example of raising a regiment on his own estate, and to command it himself—and how, in seven months' time from the accept-

ance of his offer, the "Caithness Regiment" passed a favourable inspection at Inverness before General Munro. "The battalion," we are told, "was at first 600 strong, but Sir John subsequently increased the number of his men to 1000. They were dressed in a handsome Highland uniform; and it was noted that nineteen of the officers averaged about six feet high." A thousand stalwart men in a few months from estates in barren Caithness! How are we fallen! Several Scottish counties united fail to produce half as many militia-men now. What is the cause of this? Is it the people, or the people's leaders that are failing? Is it the gentry, or their tenantry? Alas! where are their tenantry? A few big names scattered at long distances—that is all we find.—

The catters and yeomen—the free tillers of the soil, the essence of our rural population—are gone; and a thin race of hirelings and vagrant workers is what we now find in their room."—From *Blackwood's Magazine*.

CAUSE OF THE STRAHAN BANK FAILURE.—It appears that so late as 1852 the firm was perfectly solvent. The balance sheet for December, 1851, indeed, showed a deficiency of £65,543, or rather of £110,000, if we take into account the doubtfulness of certain assets; but against this deficiency were property valued at more than £1,000,000, and Paul had £30,000, and Bates about £3000—in all £133,000. At that date, therefore, they had a surplus of £23,000. At present the balance-sheet of the bank is as follows:—Liabilities, £652,593; estimated assets, £127,070; deficiency, £524,923. Here is the bank ruined and more than half a million squandered in three years and a half. In examining the balance sheet still further it will be found that the sums involved in the transactions with Messrs. Gandell & Co., and Lord Mostyn, amount to upwards of £483,000; so that the liabilities incurred through two customers of the bank almost cover the whole amount of the deficiency. The connexion with the Messrs. Gandell commenced in 1852 when Messrs. Strahan & Co. were induced to advance them large sums of money to enable them to carry out certain contracts for the construction of French and Italian railways, and for the drainage of Lake Capestang, the profit to the bank being 5 per cent. interest on all moneys advanced, 1-2 per cent. commission on all payments made by them and the payment of a bad debt of £1800.

The advances, for which no tangible security was held, soon assumed gigantic dimensions, and Messrs. Gandell's affairs were found to be in such a condition that there seemed to the Bankers no hope for them but in continuing and increasing their advances, so as to maintain the Gandells in a position to carry on the contracts which were to bring in, when completed, the golden harvest. Every nerve was strained, all the resources of the bank were tried, acceptances were given, and other heavy periodical liabilities incurred. Drained to the utmost their resources failed. The whole property of the Bank had been pledged; the private estate of Strahan was likewise pledged; but all in vain—the money had disappeared. At last, to avoid or delay bankruptcy, their credit being taxed to the full, and loans raised at all hazards, the bankers plundered their customers, and sold or pledged their securities, till at length it appeared that their liabilities amounted to more than half a million, of which sum £393,000 was involved in transactions with the Messrs. Gandell alone. Besides this, the capital withdrawn from the Bank in favor of Lord Mostyn amounted to £90,000, making in all £483,000.

The B. N. A. Telegraph has communicated to us the following paragraph from the *Montreal Pilot* of yesterday:—"We regret to announce the death of the Rev. Dr. Magill, at twelve o'clock to-day, from concussion of the brain.

IMPORTANT, IF TRUE.—An American resident in France, writing to his friends in Washington, says: "I have obtained an extraordinary piece of intelligence, which, I think, indicates a much closer and better understanding between Napoleon and England on the United States and the Central American question, than is generally thought in the United States. Mr. Percire, the Napoleon of Railroads and new operations in France, a man of immense fortune, has with the credit Mobilier, made a contract to build a railroad in Honduras to the Pacific, twenty or more of the best engines have been made, the Emperor has said the Government will guaranty an interest of four per cent. on the investment, which would very promptly secure any amount of capital that might be required for the purpose."—*State of Maine*.

Admiral Dundas, it seems, has for some time back virtually anticipated his own deprivation of the Baltic command, for he said he would not actively resume it. He considered the operations proposed by the Admiralty for the next Baltic expedition to be perfectly futile; regarded Cronstadt as quite impregnable, and that it would be the sheerest waste of time, men, and material to attack it; Helsingfors is in precisely the same category; and, moreover, it is said, that he disapproves of the *Wons* and *Wons* policy, and deems all operations, and preposterous. Not only this, but, it is now added that he acted against his better judgement when he assailed Sweaborg; that he knew and said the assault would prove the partial, resultless and abortive thing it has turned out; that the fortresses, the real strength of the place, would be easily made stronger than ever, as they have been; and, lastly, he is reputed to have made as little secret of his opinions on all these points as did his predecessor, Sir Charles Napier on certain other points the year before.—*Liverpool Albion*.

THE MASSACRE AT SINOPÉ.—If a man, who saw that fleet floating in its barbarous triumph over these waters loaded with corpses, and cried out in the spirit of indignant humanity, "That fleet is doomed! it shall never wave a flag again; it shall perish by a fate unknown before—passively, ignominiously, in the face of its enemies—its leaders shall perish, its crews shall perish; the whole Euxine fleet of Russia shall perish without a struggle, without a shot being fired, and perish by Russian hands; and the whole destruction shall come within the year;" who but would have conceived him a fanatic, a man of inflamed imagination, an utterer of presumptuous prophecy? And yet, the doom was fulfilled. We may idly attribute such things to chance—we may scoffingly speak of the accidents of war. But in the waters of its own harbour lie the wrecks of that whole fleet; in the graves of that city lie its three admirals; in the trenches of that fortress lie its twelve thousand seamen! And, as if to point the eye of Europe to the source of that high vindication of justice—the master of them all—the lord of the Empire—the great incendiary of the war—in the midst of his dreams of conquest, was hurried to the tomb. If the scene of this transaction had been in Israel of old, who could have doubted the hand of Providence?—*Sermon on the Past Year, by the Rev. Dr. Croly*.

NEW YORK, 10th.—The steamer *Alabama* sailed this morning in search of the Pacific. Provisions, clothing, extra spars, boats, water, &c. were taken to relieve any vessel in distress that may be fallen in with. Permission has been asked of government to send out steam brig *Artic*, in search of the Pacific, and to relieve any other vessels presumed to be locked in the ice near Newfoundland.

SARDINIAN NAVAL PREPARATIONS.—The Sardinian Government is displaying great activity in its naval department. It is intended to launch, as soon as possible, the screw frigate *Victorio Emmanuele*, of 50 guns. The sailing frigates which are disarmed will be prepared for active service; and a levy of 1000 seamen is going on at this moment. But this flotilla is not meant to join the allied forces in the Baltic. It will be directed to the mouths of the Danube, if the efforts made by Austria for peace are not successful.

ADULTERATION OF FLOUR.—A few weeks ago, a baker in Montreal, Canada, returned twelve barrels of flour out of twenty he had purchased, because there was so much Plaster of Paris in it that he could not use it.

A Toronto miller, in speaking of this, says there are numerous dealers in flour and mill-offal in Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Coburg, Toronto and Hamilton, whose business is to buy up the empty barrels of such mills as are considered the manufacturers of the best quality of flour, into which, with the original mill-brand upon them, they pack the most inferior quality of flour they can purchase, and now they have even descended to adulterate that by admixture of plaster.

He says he knows men in Toronto who are making testines by mixing the best quality of flour from inspection and branding, and replacing it with an article that is little if any better than shorts.—*Newburyport Herald*.

PROGRESS OF NORTHERN INSTITUTIONS.—A HAPPY OMEN.—By a singular coincidence it happened that the same day that we received the intelligence of the success of Banks in Congress, we learned that the Mississippi was frozen over down to its mouth, for the first time within the memory of living men.

Both events furnish gratifying evidence that the power of the North is beginning to be felt where it has hitherto been defied. We hail the omen.

And as the unusual cold, which has locked up the commerce of the Mississippi, is recognized as the safest guaranty against a coming summer of epidemics and affliction, so the triumph of the North in Congress furnishes a corresponding security against far greater calamities to the whole country, which seemed to be impending.—*Ecc. Post*.

COMMERCIAL VALUE OF THE HOG.—The *Working Farmer* states that the value of the hog crop, this year in the United States will fall a little short of two hundred millions of dollars, or 50,000,000 more than the cotton crop. Mr. P. L. Simmonds, in the transactions of the Highland Society, gives some interesting statistics of the number of swine raised in the various countries, as near as can be ascertained. In the United States there are believed to be 50,000,000, or more than in all the States of Europe combined. In Great Britain the number is estimated at 2,000,000, of which Ireland has a large proportion, and Scotland scarcely 200,000. Austria has about 5,500,000 swine, and Austria Italy 250,000. France has from 5,000,000 to 6,000,000. Russia has an immense number of wild hogs, but they are merely skin and bone, valuable principally for their bristles. It is estimated that 96,000,000 lbs. of lard are made in the United States—of which 20,000,000 are made in Cincinnati. England and Cuba take each annually 9,000,000 or 10,000,000 lbs. of American lard.

A BACHELOR LEGITIMATELY FROZEN IN BED.—A corpulent bachelor friend of ours had both his ears frozen last night, while in bed—snoozing away in his selfish loneliness. If such a warning does not terrify him into matrimonial speculations, we hope he may never thaw out when he freezes again.—*Mt. Wisconsin*.

LIGHT HOUSE DESTROYED.—*Norfolk*, Feb. 11.—The Pungateague Light House was swept away on Saturday night the 2nd inst., with three men who were stationed there. Nothing has been since heard of it.