

What part is Africa to play in the future history of the world? This is one of the most interesting questions of the day. Scientific explorations and military expeditions are co-operating to open up the heart of the great, dark continent. As was to be expected, resources of wealth, and capacities for settlement far in advance of ordinary expectation are being brought to light. It is well that it is so. The overflowing populations of Europe need all the new outlets the world can afford. If but favourable climatic conditions can be assured, and stable governments established, it may not be long until a great wave of emigration is seen setting towards the interior of Africa, and that continent may yet play an important part in mundane affairs in the twentieth century.

Competition is better than monopoly, just in proportion as activity is better than stagnation, or equal rights and fair play than oppression and the sacrifice of the interests of the many to those of the few or the one. But there is a still more excellent way, the way pointed out by Mr. Hughes, the author of "Tom Brown at Oxford," in a recent address on co-operation at Manchester. Mr. Hughes declared the co-operative movement to be "the recognition by the working classes that the principle of competition is not the right foundation of productive and commercial operations, but rather the principle of 'Bear ye one another's burdens.'" Of course this implies that co-operation is conducted on the basis of mutual help, not of hostility and intimidation to outsiders.

It is again rumoured that Mr. Gladstone will retire from public life at the close of the present session. The report is said to be based on intimations given by his son. There is little doubt that the veteran premier would gladly escape from the toils and cares of his singularly responsible position, but it may safely be predicted that actual relief will come to him only with physical disqualifications. There are too many clouds lowering in the horizon, and too many breakers on the offing, to admit of the pilot's quitting the ship so long as he can keep his post. His inevitable withdrawal must, however, in the course of nature, soon come. What great changes may follow it is impossible to say, but we suppose the Government and the nation will go on. No man is indispensable to the world's movement, but it is doubtful if any statesman, at any rate under constitutional Government, was ever more missed than William Gladstone will be when he leaves the stage on which he has so long been the prominent figure.

It is announced that Lieut Gordon has received orders to be ready to sail again in April on his second Hudson's Bay exploration trip. It is greatly to be hoped that the result of these investigations will demonstrate the feasibility of navigating the Bay and Straits during a sufficient number of months to make the opening up of this route feasible. The future of our great Northwest depends upon the finding of such an outlet to a greater extent than those who have not been in that country can readily conceive. For the sake of the thousands of our citizens who have taken up their abodes on the prairies,

as well as for the sake of the general prosperity of Canada, we may well desire to see those great grain fields brought within reach of European markets. The results of the observations made during the winter at the stations established at various points along the Bay and Straits, as well as those reached by those on board the vessels will be looked for with very great interest.

An exchange says:—

"The total length of the route of the proposed Nicaragua Canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific is 173.57 miles. This is composed of 17.27 miles of canal, from the Pacific at Brito Harbour to the Lake of Nicaragua, 56.50 miles of lake navigation, 69.90 miles of navigation of the River San Juan, and 35.90 miles of canal from this river to Greytown. The estimated cost of this work is \$41,193,839, or little more than one dollar of capital against one pound in the estimate of M. Voisin for the Panama Canal of 46½ miles in length."

Some of the English papers are writing bitter and even furious things in reference to the proposed action of the United States in the matter of this canal. But others equally influential are more reasonable, and there is little likelihood that the Great Britain of to-day will fall back upon any old treaty conditions or interpose any unnecessary obstacles to prevent the carrying out of this great undertaking, which would benefit the commerce of the world, as well as that of the United States.

A mania for colonization seems to have seized the great European nations simultaneously. Germany raises her flag in New Guinea. France is pushing her designs in Tonquin, and casting longing eyes on Madagascar and unappropriated South Sea Islands. Almost all the powers are watching England's proceedings in Egypt and at the Cape with, if not intense curiosity, ill-concealed jealousy. Hitherto Great Britain has been about the only successful colonizer, but it by no means follows that she shall have a monopoly of the business. Other nations have, undoubtedly, the same right as she to annex unattached and defenceless countries. At the same time we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the multiplication of colonies by rival nations, and the necessary contiguity of those of one nation to those of another, greatly increase the danger of international complications and wars. The outcome of Germany's movements in New Guinea, France's attack on China, or England's Egyptian expedition, no human prescience can divine. It can hardly, we think, be national partiality which leads us to believe England's motives, at the present time, much less questionable and more nearly disinterested than those of either of her great rivals. But whether this will continue after the righteous old man who now sways her counsels shall have passed away, it is impossible to predict.

"Slugging" matches are one of the foulest blots on our civilization. The character of any people or class of people determines to a great extent their amusements, and may also be determined by them. The two things are mutual cause and effect; they act and re-act upon each other. Did not considerable numbers have a taste for brutal amusements a crowd could not so readily be got together to witness two poor