

lantrae," and "Catriona," originally published under the name of "David Balfour," as a continuation to "Kidnapped." More than one volume came from his hand, notably a charming volume entitled "Underwoods," the poetical dedication to which is one of the most graceful pieces of poetry of that kind that we can remember. Mr. Stevenson was not only an admirable writer, but he could do what many so-called novelists in these days seem to care very little about; he could tell a story and he could tell it well; moreover he had brilliant descriptive powers—as all readers of "Kidnapped" will find it impossible to forget. Lately he published several books in collaboration with others, a change which his admirers hardly thought an improvement. But we shall have no more; and we are much the poorer for the loss of him.

#### The Gothenburg System.

From a theoretical point of view it is not easy to conceive of anything much more irrational than the Gothenburg plan of regulating the sale of intoxicating liquors, and yet, from the point of view of practical politics, it bids fair to prove one of the most effective. The absurdity lies in the seeming assumption, in the same Act, of the two contradictory positions that the liquors in question are healthful beverages which every individual has a right to buy, and that they are so poisonous, or otherwise pernicious, that no ordinary citizen can be permitted to sell them. The practical utility of the system is that while, under it, any citizen can lawfully purchase at a reasonable price whatever liquor he may desire for private consumption, the saloon or bar-room, which almost everybody regards as an evil and a snare, is abolished, and the temptation to excess, in its most universal and dangerous form, done away with. The fact that a statesman so experienced and far-seeing as Mr. Gladstone seems disposed to favour the system by which the sale of intoxicants is confined to public dispensaries, is likely to direct to it more attention than it has hitherto received. The system is now on trial in South Carolina, and its working and results are, no doubt, being closely studied by many. Notwithstanding the conditional promise made by Premier Mowat, the prospects of Prohibition, even in Ontario, to say nothing of the Dominion at large, at any early day, are by no means bright. Mr. Marter's recantation is significant in this regard. Hence reasonable prohibitionists might do worse than to make a careful study of the Gothenburg plan, as a possible alternative, an attainable *tertium quid*. We do not wish, by any means, to be understood as advocating this method. We know far too little of it and its working to have the material for forming an opinion. We merely suggest that, as the question is sure to be before the people of Canada and to be the occasion of many a violent struggle for years to come, both Prohibitionists and Anti-Prohibitionists might do worse than to inquire into the possibility of finding a basis of compromise in this remarkable scheme, or some modification of it.

#### Consolidation vs. Competition.

There are few kinds of modern legislation more illogical in the abstract, or more necessary in the concrete, than that which aims to prevent consolidation of capital and co-operation in great industries. A bill has been introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives to repeal the clause of the Inter State Commerce Act which forbids "pooling" by railways. Mr. Reed, among others, strenuously advocated the change, attributing the number of railroad receiverships at the present time to the prohibition of pooling. The ready reply was, of course, that the railroad failures are so far removed in time from the passage of the Inter-State Commerce Act, that that cannot have been the cause, especially seeing that a period

of railroad prosperity has intervened. Be that as it may, one cannot but be struck with the seeming shortsightedness and impotency of present methods in regard to such matters. We are reminded of the statement made more than once by our own Minister of Public Works, during his recent tour in the West, to the effect that the Government meets any tendency to combination of manufacturers, likely to injure the consumer, by reducing the amount of protection. He instanced the lowering of the duty on agricultural implements as a case in point. This is seemingly right in practice, as the protective tariff is no doubt the foster-parent of such combines. And yet, from the point of view of science and common-sense, what is more obvious than that all great industries of whatever kind, should be able, by combination of capital, skill and energy, to give the public far better and cheaper service than is possible while working independently or competitively. The saving in the perfection of machinery and the prevention of costly duplication of agencies would be vast. Will legislators never become wise enough, or capitalists reasonable enough, to enable the public to have the benefit of such combinations without being made to pay the more than counterbalancing increase of prices which, under existing conditions, almost invariably follows the removal of competition? Here is surely one of the great economic problems of the age.

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#### Christmas.

BEFORE we shall again greet our readers, Christmas will have come and gone, Christmas Bells will have rung out the sorrow mixed with joy, which, above all other seasons, the Feast of the Nativity of the Saviour of the World brings with it. The memories of this blessed season crowd upon us in such number and variety that we can hardly disentangle them. Memories of home, memories of the ancient days of our race, who, long before the "glad tidings of great joy," kept the winter festival of Yule. Above all, memories of the night in the fields, when, to the humble, waiting shepherds, there came a light in the darkness, even the "glory of the Lord" which "shone round about them."

All these thoughts and many more blend together in our memory of Christmas. But it is always the thought of the manger throne which touches us most deeply, and which goes through all the associations of the season. We do not forget our "rude forefathers," who had their own rough joys and, in their way, made it possible for us to have our Christmas joys in another fashion. We do not forget the home scenes in which appear again dear and vanished forms which have passed from our gaze, nor the companions of childhood and of youth, who were drawn nearer and made dearer to us by the innocent revels of Christmas, nor the inspiring services of the sanctuary, nor the cordial, affectionate greetings of the street. Cold must be the heart which does not receive an access of warmth and of tenderness as these memories are awakened in it. But it is the one gracious thought of Christmas which underlies all these reflections and emotions. It is the gifts of Him who appeared among us not in the trappings of a conquering hero, nor in the splendour of a powerful monarch, but in the guise of a little child.

For a moment we almost forget the divine life, the death of agony, the sealed stone, the empty sepulchre, the exaltation in glory. He, whom we adore, is again the Babe of Bethlehem, and we linger at His cradle, that we may learn all the lesson of love which is taught by His nativity. Old things pass away. Anger and discord cannot remain in His presence. Love and peace and good will come in their place. The golden age, so long craved for, seems to have dawned