

The Council of the Folk-lore Society are organizing a Folk-lore Congress in London, to meet in September of next year, under the presidency of Mr. Andrew Lang. The preliminary steps are now being completed, and the organizing committee will hold their first meeting next week. Mr. C. G. Leland is now in London, and is acting with the Society in this matter.

*Public Opinion* says that the library of the People's Palace, London, has been used by 204,647 people since January last, and the issue of books amounted to 35,558. On Sundays 27,228 persons have availed themselves of the library and reading room. Over 1,500 volumes have been presented by various donors, and the Wilkie Collins Memorial Fund has been expended in procuring a library of standard novels. The chief item of interest, however, lies in the statement that there is a marked improvement in the class of reading; and a steady growing demand for technical and scientific literature. This speaks well for the intellectual progress of the English people.

Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata," has been receiving a prodigious amount of free advertising in the United States, the effect of which has been to largely increase its sale. Postmaster-General Wannamaker has forbidden its transmission through the mails, and a lot of copies were seized in New York by direction of Anthony Comstock. As the Magistrate, after examination, pronounced that there was nothing in the book to hurt anyone's morals, the books were returned to the vendors, who promised to stop selling them in a sensational manner. If all this excitement over the book had not been aroused, probably very few people would have cared to read it, for it is said to be simply nasty, and not at all interesting.

We clip from *Imperial Federation* the following item:—"It is a wonderful work for a little country like Canada to build its Canadian Pacific Line. But in a thousand ways it has been a blessing not merely to Canada, but to the British community at large." "Little country," indeed! Does the *Record* know that according to the latest estimate, from data supplied by Government surveyors, the area of Canada is 3,519,000 square miles, the land surface being estimated at 3,379,000 square miles. Canada comprises one-fourteenth part of the land surface of the earth, the Dominion is nearly thirty times as large as the whole of the United Kingdom, and Canada is 500,000 square miles larger than the United States, without Alaska. Of course, the greatness of our country, in comparison with our population, makes the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway a much more "wonderful work" than if we were the "little country" the *Record* speaks of.

Those who reluctantly abstain from eating the proverbially "cool" cucumber because of its alleged indigestibility will be glad to hear what an medical English paper has to say on the subject. "Many people," it says, "are under the impression that cucumber is very indigestible, and when they eat it they do so under protest, and with apprehension of possibly dire consequences. How this delusion can have arisen it is difficult to say, unless it be that cucumber is often eaten with salmon and other indigestible table friends. It is not the cucumber, however, but the salmon that sits so heavily on our stomach's throne. Cucumber, in fact, is very digestible when eaten properly. It cannot indeed be otherwise when it is remembered that it consists mainly of water, and that those parts which are not water are almost exclusively cells of a very rapid growth. In eating cucumber it is well to cut it into thin slices and to masticate them thoroughly. Even the vinegar and the pepper that are so often added to it are of service to the digestion if not taken in excess." How pleasant it is to have the assurance of a medical journal that cucumber is wholesome. It should have added, however, that there are cucumbers and cucumbers. They must be gathered in the cool of the morning and eaten the same day to be either tasty or digestible. A cucumber kept longer than twenty-four hours after being picked from the vine loses its flavor and becomes tough and indigestible. It is probably the eating of stale cucumber more than the "table friends" it usually accompanies that has given it the bad name it possesses.

Some of our Provincial contemporaries are concerned over the way in which the St. John Press is speaking of Halifax harbor, and seem to think that the press of Halifax ought to reply to the slanders against our magnificent harbor. A Cape Breton paper says:—"We would suggest that the press of both Provincial cities acknowledge first that Sydney harbor is a better harbor than either St. John or Halifax, after which they should leave it to the editor of this paper to decide the disputed question between Halifax and St. John. Of course the friends of Louisburg would want to be heard from, but we would give the 'bun' to Louisburg over the others at the outstart, and therefore not allow it to come into competition." Our friends need not concern themselves so deeply. There is no competition, and when we hear our harbor maligned by envious tongues we can afford to smile. Truth is mighty, and may as well prevail now as at any other time. Our harbor stands unrivalled on the North Atlantic coast, if not in the world, and to those who dwell by its sparkling waters it is "a thing of beauty" and "a joy forever." While we claim pre-eminence for our own, we are not so mean as to belittle the many other fine harbors of our country, and especially of our own Province. This is a business too small for any respectable newspaper, and very nauseating to the unfortunate reader. Our country should be first, last, and always, with us, and it cannot do any good to try and run down any portion of it. By the way, our Cape Breton friend says "a portion of the St. John press is just now directing sledge-hammer blows at Halifax harbor." "Sledge-hammer blows" is good. What a great splash they would make; but that is about all the damage they could do. Water is not usually attacked in that way.

The following decision was lately arrived at in the West London (England) Police Court. Three men were summoned for travelling first-class on the Great Western Line with second-class tickets, and refusing to pay the difference in fare when requested to do so by a duly authorized servant of the railway company. The case against them having been fully proved they were absolved from the offence charged, on the ground that the ticket-collector, by asking them for the excess fare, had condoned the fraud for which they might otherwise have been held responsible. The decision of the Magistrate certainly seems to place the dishonest person who is travelling in a railway carriage superior to that for which he has taken a ticket in an exceptional position. If no demand is made upon him for the extra fare then the matter rests, but if an official of the company he is defrauding requires him to make his defalcation good by paying the difference between the fare which he has actually paid and the fare which he should have paid, the fraud is at once condoned, and he can snap his fingers at the corporation.

The game of lacrosse is coming in for condemnation on all sides on account of the terribly rough handling the players give and receive. The *Canadian Presbyterian* has the following to say about it:—"Young Canada should stop playing lacrosse or stop splitting one another's heads open. The downright brutality displayed in several recent matches was a disgrace to all parties concerned. If the sport is to be witnessed by any but the lowest rowdies of the country such exhibitions must stop. Athletic sport within reasonable limitations is a good thing. To be great a nation must have muscle as well as brains. That Canadians should have national sport is right enough, but Canadians do not want a national sport several degrees worse than a Spanish bull fight. Manly games are quite possible without violence or rowdyism. Who ever heard of rowdyism in connection with cricket or curling? It is bad enough to see a noble horse abused on the race course, but a human being is supposed to be worth more than a race horse. If it is impossible to play lacrosse without such scenes as those lately witnessed, then let all respectable people stop patronizing the game, and it will soon die out."

From the North China *Herald* it would appear that the Chinese farming classes are in perpetual difficulties, while the small traders work on such a narrow margin that frequent accommodation is essential. On the other hand, the balances in the hands of creditors are so small that no one can afford to leave his money out of call for more than a few months. Finally, the universal habit is to avoid discharging liabilities if possible. So at New Year's time, when all debts are supposed to be settled, there is a game of hide and seek. Creditors hunting reluctant debtors are themselves hunted by creditors of their own. The only period of brief respite is New Year's Day. The double anxiety of a Chinaman in the "12th moon" is to find some one else, and not to be found himself. It is to the interest of all parties that no claim for debt should get into the courts of law, for this would mean not only the loss of the debt but also of the rest of the property of the litigants. To avoid the creditor altogether is a prime object of many debtors at this period of the year, and many are the tricks resorted to. On New Year's Day, or one soon after, the Chinese debtor who succeeds in evading or parrying the claims of his creditor may possibly call upon him, or the creditor may possibly call upon the debtor. Each is arrayed in his best, and each is full of polite phrases. The creditor may be inwardly swelling with wrath and indignation at his debtor's escape, while the debtor for his part may be full of smiling self-complacency. But neither the one nor the other would ever dream of alluding to such affairs at this festive time. Business is interdicted by the law of the realm, and so the debtor walks the earth with a sense of freedom to which he has long been a stranger.

A writer in the *Canada Spectator* contends that beauty and brain seldom go together, and cites many instances to prove his contention. Of the beautiful faces, those most noted for their physical perfection, such as the Circassians, the Ancient Greeks, the African tribe of Nyassaland, who are as perfect as bronze statues, and others, he says, are generally stupid intellectually. The African tribe especially are as ignorant as fishes, and have never risen to the conception of clothes of any kind. On the other hand he states that the Chinese, the Germans, the Jews, and other nations not distinguished for good looks, carry off the palm for brains, knowledge and cleverness. That there is much truth in this statement can easily be proved by looking at the portraits of many of the men and women who have distinguished themselves intellectually. Beauty is rare among them. "In the last century," says our authority, "the ablest men in Europe were remarkable for a certain superfluity of flesh, of which Gibbons' face is the best known and most absurd example, and in our own time intellect, even hereditary intellect, is constantly found dissipated from good looks, even from distinction, some of the ablest men being externally heavy and gross, and some of the ablest women marked by an indefiniteness of cheek and chin, as if they had been moulded by the fingers in putty. Science can no more make a Circassian than a one-legged race, and the physical attributes, like the grace of God, are independent of thinking. If they were not, we should some day have a race of heroes indeed, stalking among lesser men, as Kingsley depicts his Goths stalking among the far more quick-witted and better-cultivated Alexandrians. An entire race like Alexander the Great, the man in whom, of all mankind, brain power and physique were united in their highest perfectness, would soon be more intolerable than the Venetian aristocracy whom Dr. Disraeli derided, denounced and worshipped." It would indeed be unfair if beauty and intellect were invariably united. All have not the same gifts, and for the general good it is well so. That there are some notable exceptions to the rule does not alter the conclusion that beauty and brains are seldom united.