

Writers are predicting the marvels of an "Aluminum Age." Divested of florid fancy it is claimed for Aluminum that its weight is only a third that of iron, with equal, or greater, tensile strength, that it is even more fire-proof, that it does not rust, and is more ductile. If these conditions exist to the extent assumed, and if the metal be producible in sufficient quantity—which, as it is said to be extractable from clay, is probable—and at a workable cost, no doubt its future possibilities are immense.

There has of course been considerable discussion of the trenchant attack on Prince Bismarck published in the *Contemporary Review*. The German press was prompt to saddle it on Sir Morell McKenzie, who, however, emphatically denies all knowledge of it. A London correspondent of the *Nottingham Daily Express*, who appears to have given it a careful and intelligent study, finds in it strong and consistent characteristics of Mr. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a theory by no means improbable. Whosoever was the author he could have had but little thought of the delicate position of the Emperess Frederick, whose "consternation and annoyance" are said to be great. No one in England imagines for an instant that that Lady either wrote or inspired it, but in Germany, where she has many malignant enemies, it is likely enough to be extensively ascribed to her.

When in December, 1887, we noticed the theory of Mr. Norman Lockyer, that the immediate antecedent condition of the sun and planets was not a gas, but swarms of meteorites, we ventured the opinion that this hypothesis only set back the primeval condition another step, considering it probable that the meteorites were themselves the product of gaseous nebulae, whether directly or in a more or less removed degree. As we partly anticipated, a tendency is now manifested to bring together LaPlace's hypothesis of a rotary mass of gaseous matter throwing off rings which became planets, and Mr. Lockyer's theory of meteorites, which, it is said, his researches have now rendered almost a certainty. Professor G. H. Darwin now suggests that the collisions of meteoric stones may play the same part as the collisions of gaseous molecules in ordinary air, and that in this manner a gaseous character may be imparted to a celestial nebula. There is much apparent probability in this conjecture, and it seems to mark a decided step of thought on this grand subject.

The most plausible, and indeed the only, justification of the Upper Houses is their supposed utility as checks on hasty legislation. Ontario gets on tolerably well without one, and, if we consider the nature of a good deal of the legislation of Nova Scotia, it would appear that we might get on just as well here under the like conditions. Any one who should turn over the Acts of the Nova Scotia legislature for the last few years might be surprised at the large proportion of them that are mere amendments of previously existing statutes. That is strong *prima facie* evidence of crude and ill-considered legislation in the beginning, the amount of which ought to be, at least to some extent, kept down by the legitimate action of the Council. As a matter of fact there are irrepressible members who bring down to the assembly new bills almost literally by scores during the session, most probably in order that, on their return to admiring and discriminating constituencies, there may be a due ephiphany of their preternatural mental and moral activity, and of the zeal for their country's good with which they are consumed.

The *Charlottetown Patriot* of the 18th ult., quotes the *Halifax Chronicle* as follows:—"It has been one of the most extraordinary incidents of our protection craze that the farmers of the country could never be made to comprehend how they were systematically robbed to suit the selfish purposes of a small manufacturing community." If the description of our Manufacturing Industries as "a small community" were not too palpably absurd to have the slightest weight, it might be stigmatized as false and unjust. The "Industrial" columns of the *CRITIC* alone furnish a sufficient refutation of a clap-trap generality assumed to attract the farming vote. It would appear, however, from the failure to make the farmers "comprehend," that they are not to be caught by so shallow a measure of chaff. The broad fact is, as intelligent farmers well know, a country is imperfect in development which does not embrace all interests. Far from clashing, these interests are mutually profitable, and the Liberal press will never command the confidence of the country until it ceases to belittle any of its constituent parts and to endeavor to raise class antagonism.

"It is refreshing," says that well-known, sound and graceful writer Fidelis (Miss Machar), in the *Canadian Educational Monthly*, (Toronto), "to turn from the curiously artificial book of Dr. Alex. Bain, of Aberdeen University, on the teaching of English Literature, to an admirable presentation of the true principles of 'The Teaching of English,' given by Prof. Roberts in the *New York Christian Union*." Professor Roberts, with characteristic grasp and breadth, starts with the common sense principle that "all vital teaching of English, with culture and enlightened citizenship for its object, must be conveyed through the literature of the language." The purposes to be secured he classes under three unexceptionable heads. "First, the discipline of the faculties, or mental calisthenics . . . second, the power of effective expression in written or spoken words, and third, culture, intellectual and moral." We are compelled to confine our remarks to the merest headings of the quotations given by Fidelis, and have only space for the sound remark that "Intimacy with the most perfect models of literary excellence is the best literary master." Fidelis adds to the debt owed her by Canadian Literature and Education in giving additional prominence to Professor Roberts' brief but suggestive treatise, and it may be borne in mind that no Canadian writer is better fitted to form a sound judgement.

The Postal Department should assume the express business of the country, as has Germany, and as the United States propose shortly doing. The German plan is as follows:—Packages are taken charge of by the Post Office and forwarded with the greatest possible dispatch to their destination. For a small premium their value is insured by the government, so that the sender is protected in case of the goods being lost in any way. If they are such goods as would with us be sent c. o. d., the sender, on making out duplicate itemized bills, with a statement of their correctness on a prescribed form, will be immediately paid 90 per cent of the face of the bills. On the delivery of the goods they are properly checked by the bills in the presence of the postal agent who collects payment for them. If all is right the sender receives the 10 per cent. that had been retained. If the addressee refuses to accept the goods before the package is opened it is returned to the sender who, however, forfeits the 10 per cent. There is no difficulty in the management of this system, the revenue is increased, and the public is greatly accommodated at very fair rates.

The Italian Government is wise in placing the excavations required in the improvements in Rome under the strict supervision of one of the first archaeologists of Europe. "Since," says Rodolfo Lanciani, "it is impossible to turn up a handful of earth without coming upon some unexpected find, it is easy to understand what an amount of discoveries must be made by turning up 270,000,000 cubic feet." The relics of the great past are, in fact, almost countless, consisting of marble columns, statues, sarcophagi, works in bronze, gold, ivory, enamel, glass, copper, etc., and over 36,000 coins. A necropolis older than the walls of Servius Tullius has been discovered, the pavement of the Sacra Via laid bare, the great baths of Caracalla, the palace of the Cæsars, and, most interesting of all, the beautiful temple and home of the Vestal Virgins, have been exposed to view, and Signor Lanciani has made the world his debtor by publishing an intensely interesting record of his work—Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries. At present it seems to be a high priced volume—\$6—(Houton, Mifflin & Co., Boston and New York) but it is to be hoped that a cheaper edition may be forthcoming at no very distant date.

Professor Huxley has contributed to the *Nineteenth Century*, a remarkable article on "Agnosticism," partly controversial but largely autobiographical, in which he draws up his creed and explains how he came by it. It does not concern us to analyze Professor Huxley's opinions, but every one knows the formidable weight and temper of the blade wielded by probably the keenest and clearest intellect in England, if not in Europe, gifted as it is with a phenomenal lucidity and calmness of expression. It is not, however we believe, very generally known that Huxley is himself the creator of the comprehensive and appropriate term "Agnostic." This is what he says about it. Speaking of his joining the Metaphysical Society at a time when he had come to the conclusion that the only position in which he could claim a stand was freedom of thought, he continues: "Most of my colleagues were -ists of one sort or another. I, who was a man without a rag of a label to cover myself with, felt like the fox who had lost his tail. So I took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of 'agnostic.' It came into my head as suggestively antithetic to the 'gnostic' of Church history, who professed to know so much about the very things of which I was ignorant, and I took the earliest opportunity of parading it at our society, to show that I, too, had a tail like the other foxes. To my great satisfaction the term took." It may be added that the great professor utterly scorns Positivism as a substitute for Christianity, and remarks that "it is the glory of Judaism and of Christianity to have proclaimed, through all their aberrations certain "eternal verities," if one may still use so hackneyed, yet still expressive, term.

The dies from which the postage stamps of Canada are struck are the same that were introduced shortly after these provinces were confederated in 1867. We do not know of a single instance where a civilized country has so long retained the same style of stamps. There are many reasons for which the current issue of Canadian stamps is objectionable. The principal are that the design is antiquated. The central figure is a medallion of Her Majesty as she appeared as a young woman, some fifty years ago. It does not at all resemble her as she now is—a person who has far passed the meridian of her life. The English people have long given practical recognition of this fact in that their coins and stamps bear the portrait of Queen Victoria as she now is, and it is incomprehensible that one of the most progressive of Britain's colonies does not advance with the times and present on its stamps a truer portrait of the Queen and Empress. Aside from this there is no reason that the portrait of the Sovereign should adorn all our stamps. There are abundant precedents for the adoption of original and local designs. All the modern stamps of the various Australian colonies show views of their principal cities, bays, etc. Even the latest issue of Newfoundland half-cent stamps gives a good engraving of the head of a fine Newfoundland dog. The Cape Colony stamps show local views. Hawaiian stamps show the city and harbor of Honolulu, and their famous volcano. Numerous other instances might be deduced of the trend of modern thought or taste in this direction. Canada naturally desires to be distinctive, and to attract immigrants. No better means could be devised for advertising this country as it is than to issue stamps illustrative of its localities. The half cent, 1 cent, 2 cent and three cent stamps should show views, of say, Winnipeg, Hamilton and London, or Niagara, respectively. The 5 cent stamp might show Halifax city and harbor. The view of Quebec would look well on the 10 cent, and that of Montreal on the 15 cent stamps. If stamps of larger values should be decided upon other local scenes would show to advantage—as St. John, Charlottetown, etc.