

# THE CRITIC.

The Welfare of the People is the Highest Law.

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Next Easter will be on the 25th of April. It will not again fall on that date until 1949, and has not so fallen since 1736.

The rapidity with which messages are transmitted by telegraph and cable can be understood, when it is known that a signal passes from end to end of the Atlantic Cable in less than one-third of a second, that is, at the rate of 6,020 miles per second.

The timber trade of Canada has fallen behind during the current year. The early shipments of squared timber found a ready sale, with good prices, in the British markets, but owing to a decline in values, the lumber-kings of the Dominion discontinued shipments, preferring to hold over the winter with the hope of better prices.

The scholars who are now at work endeavouring to boil down the 8,000 characters used to represent the Japanese language, have found it somewhat difficult to represent Japanese-English with the ordinary Roman alphabet. If they accomplish the task, future generations in Japan will place their names above Kai Sanyo and the Lord of Mito.

The stories which are told about the Phantom Ship, seen on the Bay Chaleur, are most curious, but the fact remains, that at intervals, the inhabitants along the shores of the Bay see what appears to be a burning ship under full sail. No one has yet accounted for this extraordinary phenomenon, although some believe it to be a mirage.

In England and France, the editorial "we" is gradually being supplanted by the more definite "I" in newspaper leaders. "We," may sound more mysterious and important, but where several writers are employed upon the same journal, it frequently saves a clash of opinion to use in the editorials the first person, singular instead of the third person plural signifying the same with the initials of the writer.

An anecdote is now going the rounds of the French press, the true inwardness of which can be readily understood. An officious individual approaching the French Minister of the Interior complained that he had not removed from office the Maire of X, whom every one knew to be but a man of straw. The Minister replied that he must certainly be mistaken, otherwise his council would have long since devoured him.

We have received a copy of the circular issued by the Amalgamated Trades' Union, which has already appeared in the columns of the daily newspapers. Owing to the unprecedented amount of matter awaiting publication, and the press upon our columns this issue, we shall be unable to publish it.

It is said that the food given to the dogs kept in Great Britain is sufficient to feed the poorer classes of people. Perhaps the present panic respecting hydrophobia will prove a blessing in disguise, and have the effect of removing from the country those surplus stomachs which Malthus, in theorising about the press of population, neglected to take into account.

Gladstone is evidently determined to grant a certain measure of home rule to Ireland. As yet it is impossible to say much respecting the proposed reform, but it is feared that the "grand old man" has resolved to make a strong bid for the Parnell vote, by granting the Irish a measure of home rule, which must ultimately be disastrous to the Empire.

The matter of \$2,500 is sufficient to deter the citizens of Halifax from taking active measures in securing the shortest Railway communication between Montreal and this port. The expenditure would be warrantable if it served no other purpose than that of showing the people of the Upper Provinces that Halifaxians were alive to their own interests. They credit us with being an old-fashioned, sleepy lot, and no wonder.

The Dominion License Act has been declared *ultra vires* by the Privy Council. The decision is certainly a remarkable one. As the law now stands, the Federal Parliament can legislate to prohibit the sale of intoxicating liquors in any Counties, Provinces, or in the whole Dominion, while to the Provincial Legislatures is reserved the right to license the sale of intoxicating liquors within their respective jurisdictions. The interpretation of the B. N. A. Act upon this liquor question is somewhat out of joint.

The new Mahdi, who rejoices in the euphonious name of Khalifa Abdulla El Taashi, appears to have caught the cloak as it dropped from the shoulders of his predecessor. At any rate, he is regarded as the legitimate successor to the late prophet, El Mahdi, and round his standard the Arabs are flocking in ever-increasing numbers. The dervishes and tribes, who, twelve months ago, were friendly to England, have acknowledged the new Mahdi as sovereign of the Upper Nile. Grave fears are now expressed as to the power of withstanding the hordes who, under the leadership of El Madhi's successor, are now advancing upon Northern Egypt.

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

Civilization is making rapid strides in the Congo country. A few years ago the inhabitants ate white persons raw. They now prefer them roasted.

The fair sex have special privileges in Norway, which are not extended to them in Canada and elsewhere. One of these is their right to travel by rail at half-fare.

The Maories and Laplanders will, ere long, be extinct races. There are now in New Zealand but 45,000 Maories. When Capt. Cook first visited the Islands, their number was estimated at 100,000.

The caprices of fashion have been frequently commented upon, but now that this tyrannical goddess has ordained that fashionable marriages in France shall take place at midnight, her devotees are beginning to look askance, and some of them refuse to bow beneath her new and untimely yoke.

It is reported that the British authorities contemplate increasing the number of regiments in Halifax, so as to make this city a large and important depot. The completion of the C. P. Railway, and the readiness with which troops could be sent to India via this route, have, it is said, prompted the new departure.

Joaquin Miller continues his fearless onslaughts upon "the Northern heroes," in his poem *The Sword of the South*. Having run a tilt against General Sherman and Sheridan, he couches his lance in the December number of *Literary Life* against Butler. To the Knight of the Spoons he administers the following, with many other sharp thrusts:—

"Yet he was honored past belief!  
Ah, men of old knew gold from dross,  
They hung the thief upon the cross;  
But now the cross hangs on the thief."

This remarkable poem is, naturally enough, much better received in the Southern than in the Northern States. Paul-Hamilton Hayne writes thus impulsively to "the poet of the Sierras": "The Southern man who does not love you as I do, is a traitor to his land and his people"; while a Northern poet "of equal renown and strength" assures him that his attacks on Northern heroes will prove his ruin.

In the same number of *Literary Life*, the promised series of articles on International Copyright is opened by Mr. F. Blake Crofton in a short paper, which treats the subject in an ironical vein. The editor endorses Mr. Crofton's views in a leading article, and declares that he will endeavour "to awaken a public conscience on this question."