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CURRENT TOPICS.

It is believed that the old question as to the sources of the Nile has at last been answered. Speke's discovery of the Victoria Nyanza, thirty years ago, which was for a time supposed to have solved the problem, was soon found to have been but a step in that direction, as the question of the sources of supply of that great inland sea immediately took the place of the former. Dr. Baumann now announces that he has really reached the sources of both lake and river, in the highlands lying to the east of Lake Tanganyika, between the third and fourth parallels of south latitude. At least he has traced what he believes to be the longest and largest of the tributary rivers up to this point. The Nile is thus proved to be one of the longest rivers in the world.

Another instance of the use of the short method by a professedly Christian nation in civilizing the heathen is re-

corded in a recent despatch from Berlin touching German operations in Africa. The despatch, giving further particulars of the capture of a native stronghold at Hornkranz, informs the Government that seventy native women, ten native men and boys and a few babies were killed. The killing of the women and babies is of course regretted, but then the place had to be taken, and in some way or other the men seem to have kept out of the way of the bullets. It was, therefore, evidently the fault of the latter, for no doubt the soldiers would sooner have killed seventy men than seventy women, other things being equal. It would have sounded better. At any rate the thing has, it seems, been done. What a noble object-lesson is thus set before the barbarous natives! What exalted ideas they must gain from it of the superiority of our Christian civilization! And yet, savage ingrates that they are, it is said that the Hottentot chief, whose people's mothers, and wives, and sisters, and daughters, and infants were thus slaughtered, actually resents the deed and is collecting his warriors and vowing vengeance.

The Democrats of the United States are likely to find the difficulties in the way of a thorough-going tariff reform greatly increased by the necessity for raising more revenue than can reasonably be expected under the present McKinley tariff. Senator Mills, than whom no other statesman in the Republic is more familiar with tariff questions, referred in a recent interview to what seems to be now an admitted fact, viz., that the estimated revenue from customs and internal taxes will be far from sufficient to meet the ordinary expenditures of the Government. The cause is that while the Pension Bill has enormously increased the expenditures of the Government, the McKinley Bill has so far realized the ideal of a protective tariff as to diminish largely the revenues from that source. The repeal of the sugar tax has in itself caused a very serious loss to the treasury. It is gratifying to find that Senator Mills, while frankly admitting the facts, is as far as possible from seeking to find in them any excuse for failure to carry out the reform policy on which the party won the November battle. On the contrary he seems prepared to recommend a bold step in the direction of return to the principle of a tariff for revenue only, by re-imposing slight duties on tea and coffee. It is estimated that a duty of a cent a pound on tea and three cents a pound

on coffee would produce all the revenue needed. "Sugar alone at that rate," says the Philadelphia Record, "would yield an annual fiscal revenue of \$40,000,000; and the repeal of the sugar bounty would save to the Treasury nearly ten millions more." "The American people," it adds, "have never yet murmured against taxes and duties levied for the maintenance of their Government. What they rose in revolt against in the election of last year was a system which takes five dollars out of their pockets for every dollar that it puts in the public treasury. Light duties on sugar and coffee, yielding not less than \$60,000,000 of public revenue, would enable Congress to adopt a complete and logical measure of Tariff Reform."

While there can, we think, be no reasonable doubt that in its main features the Act for the Protection of Children, now before the Ontario Legislature, is based on sound principles and adapted, if properly administered, to prove of great service in the prevention of the evils against which it is directed, some of its features are open to serious criticism and must be regarded as experimental. The authority conferred for the removal of children from the power of those who, be they their parents or otherwise, maltreat them, or suffer them to be maltreated in any way, or to be placed in circumstances in which they are unduly exposed to vicious surroundings and influences, must commend itself to everyone who believes in the power and necessity of right physical and moral training for the production of good citizens. The appointment of unpaid "children's visiting committees," may, perhaps, be defended as an appeal to the patriotism and philanthropy of those so appointed, but it would be hard to justify on political grounds the requirement of special duties from citizens without corresponding emolument. The clothing of officers of children's aid societies with police powers is a still more doubtful experiment. It is questionable whether the tendency of such a commingling of officialism with philanthropy will not tend to injure the quality of the latter, or at least to lessen the usefulness of these societies by compromising their freedom and weakening their hold on the benevolence of supporters. A good deal is to be said in favour of giving municipalities the power to compel the withdrawal of children from the public streets at unseasonable hours, but Mr. Whitney's criticism of the name "curfew" is forcible. The asso-