

# THE CRITIC:

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

One of the most remarkable facts about that rather remarkable city, St. John's, Newfoundland, is that one, by taking a short walk, can pass from a crowded, brightly-lighted and hustling thoroughfare, to scenes of the wildest and most romantic grandeur. Leaving the main street of the town, in twenty minutes a desolate spot is reached among crags and moorland, and there in front, 300 feet below, is the Atlantic, stretching 1700 miles to the coast of Ireland. It is the most eastern point of the continent—the real "jumping-off place" of North America.

The seal has been taking up more than his share of public attention recently, and appears to be a very troublesome as well as valuable creature. Captain Winant, master of the American sealing schooner *Mischief*, presents a new view of the matter. "Why," he says, "is all his bad feeling engendered between the two Governments? The only answer you can have is—'The seals must be protected or they will be destroyed.' Well, would the destruction or extermination of the seals be such a great calamity as some would make it appear? They are nothing but a luxury at best. Then why should they be especially protected any more than the salmon that swim in our streams, or the whales in the ocean, or the buffaloes that once covered our plains? There are good reasons why they should be destroyed. They are not an article of food, and they are very destructive of fish, which are an article of food. The lowest estimate made by experts is that each seal consumes about ten pounds of fish daily, and, according to Professor Elliott, who claims to have counted them, there are about six millions that visit the 'Prilyoff Islands' every year. These would destroy sixty million pounds of fish daily, or ten times more than would be required to supply all the United States. The question might be asked, which is the more essential to human life, food or sealskins? But it appears that it is not the Canadian sealer that destroys the seals. The offender in the past has been the Alaska company, whose officers have killed the seals by the thousand." Captain Winant says:—"It is a fact well known to many that the Alaska Commercial Company have at certain times, when they did not want so many skins, sent men over to the Copper and Behring Islands and killed them by thousands, and let them lie where the stench from their dead carcasses would prevent other seals from landing, and the captains of some of the schooners landed men and cleared a lot of them off. But the British Government would probably agree to some plan of protection if it should be made to bear alike on all to prevent seals from being killed at certain

seasons, or in certain localities, but not to give a privilege to some wealthy corporation to kill and destroy by thousands, and to make millions of dollars profit, while the hardy and industrious hunter and sailor are not allowed to hunt them for a bare livelihood."

On the plea that the colored population of the South are intimidated from voting, and that in many districts the Democrats carry the congressional elections by force and fraud a "Federal Election Bill" has been introduced in Congress, which is evidently the work of unscrupulous politicians who have determined by any means, no matter how unconstitutional, to capture a large number of congressional seats in the South for the Republican party. The bill is a direct blow at State rights in favor of the centralization of power, as boards of supervisors of elections, composed of employes of the Federal Courts, are to be appointed, who are to have power to prevent registration and naturalization frauds, to scrutinize the casting of votes, and in co-operation with the State officials, to examine and count the ballots of representatives, and to report the result to the Chief Supervisor, while the State officials certify the result to their own authorities. In case of a conflict between the returns of the State officials and the supervisors, the returns of the latter to be taken as conclusive. The bill is a most unwarranted interference with State rights, and will lead to endless trouble should it unfortunately be passed by both houses of Congress, a result, however, that we do not anticipate, as a recent caucus of Republican Senators failed to agree in pushing the bill.

The French government will introduce in the Chamber of Deputies at the next session, a bill to authorize the construction of a trans-Saharan railway to connect with France's new territory. This is going ahead in earnest, and who can say that it may not be a wise move. We were always taught, in those days when our young ideas were beginning to shoot, that the Sahara was a great desert of shifting sands where nothing could live or grow. But old ideas are rapidly being exploded, and this one is among the number. M. J. Dybowski, in an article in the *Journal de l'Agriculture*, contends that this hot region might be colonized, and utilized for agricultural purposes. All that it needs is water, and the main drift of M. Dybowski's communication is to show how abundant this is at short depths below the surface. In many parts palms, when once planted, can reach it with their roots. In others very shallow artesian wells suffice, and the water flows continuously. He advocates a system of irrigation from artesian wells, and, as a proof of abundance of water, mentions one such well that yields over a thousand gallons per minute. When once palms are established, the whole aspect is changed by rich vegetation that grows around them. If all this can be arranged, and the desert made to blossom as the rose, the railway will be a great boon to the people who are to colonize the country; but in view of the fact that France itself is in a bad way about its population falling off, the scheme would be more likely to "go" if a more prolific nation took it in hand. A nation whose death rate exceeds its birth rate is not in a position to talk of colonizing a new country.

The death of John Henry Newman, the great Cardinal, has brought forth many loving tributes to his memory. Many people are familiar with the leading events of the life of this man, who more than any other was the great man in the history of two churches, and there are few who do not know and love the beautiful hymn

"Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom  
Lead thou me on."

which was written when the author was thirty-two years of age. Dr. Newman was born in 1801, in London, and was the son of a well-to-do banker. He was educated at Trinity College, Oxford, and having graduated from there with honors, he was elected a fellow of Oriel College, where he came in contact with men who have left their mark upon the thought of the time, including Whately and Hawkins, afterwards provost of Oriel. He subsequently became incumbent of St. Mary's, Oxford, which position he held for fourteen years. His preaching attracted the admiring attention of the country. In 1845, after much study, he definitely seceded to the Church of Rome, a course which his friends knew was taken only on principle and after profound thought. Never fanatical, never narrow, his pure life stands as an example of Christianity. As a literary man and a poet he would have made his mark in any country, and his blameless character, gentle disposition, and tender heart, made him beloved by all who knew him. His charge of faith, when a cause of grief to those who differed from him, was sincere and true. He gave up everything for the sake of principle, and entered the Church of Rome as a simple priest, a position from which he speedily arose to become a distinguished Prince of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. He was truly a good man.