

THE CRITIC.

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

The cab drivers of London go *en masse* for marrying their deceased wives' sisters, at least nine thousand of them have signed a memorial requesting the British government to enact a law abolishing the restrictions which now prevent them from doing so. The British advocates of the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill are wealthy and well organized, it was through their money and their influence that the measure became law in Canada and in the Australian colonies, and the persistency with which they have urged their cause in Great Britain augurs well for their ultimate success.

The attempts made in Sweden and Norway to breed codfish by semi-artificial means are proving successful. Last year five million young cubs were put into Norwegian bogs and harbors. This year the fishermen there say that never before have they noticed young cod fish (eight or ten inches long) so plentiful. Twenty million of the newly hatched eggs will next year be distributed along the coast. If these were allowed to be hatched in the sea in the natural way, it is believed that only one out of every four millions would live to be a fish—owing chiefly of course, to destruction by other denizens of the deep.

We publish to-day one of the most remarkable speeches upon Labor Union that has ever yet appeared in the public press, and as it voices the sentiments of those who, while endorsing legitimate agitation, oppose extreme and violent measures, we recommend our readers to give the speech in question a careful perusal. The principle of laborers uniting together for the purpose of mutual protection is rational and sound, and so long as this principle is not violated by harsh and arbitrary measures, such unions should have the sympathy and hearty support of all true lovers of mankind. In this work-a-day world it is frequently claimed that laborers have no time to devote to mental and spiritual culture; yet while this may in the main be true, it must be quite evident to thoughtful men that in the present day the periods of excessive labor alternate with those in which no work can be obtained,—in other words, we have periods of over production, followed by times of depression. Now as this over production is the direct outcome of the wonderful improvement of mechanical appliances, and as it must continue unless the hours of labor be reduced, it appears to us that intelligent men should give this matter the careful consideration, and ascertain what the effects of such a reduction would be. Our own opinion is—1. The current of trade would run more smoothly, and the freshets of inflated business and the droughts of dull times would be avoided. 2. The artizan, being relieved from the ceaseless toil in days of prosperous times, and from the enforced idleness in times of depression, would find the burden of life more easily borne, and find leisure for the cultivation of those mental and moral faculties which the din of the workshop or the factory shut down never stimulates.

No less than one thousand seven hundred and nine invoices of foreign goods were illegally recalled and altered by the customs authorities of New York during the year 1884, in all of which the goods were in the second instance entered below their valuation. Such a system of appraising is a direct blow against honesty in business transactions, and we are glad to learn that the Cleveland administration have decided to put a stop to all such illegal entries. Cleveland may have been a weak man in some respects, but his bump of honesty appears to be well developed.

It is somewhat amusing to read in the American papers that the Mexican Government is willing to sell the northern portion of Mexico to the United States for a money consideration. The financial condition of Mexico may be somewhat straitened, but as the territory to be ceded includes about forty-five per cent of the entire area of the country, we may reasonably question the truthfulness of the report. As a matter of fact, the rumor has been set afloat by a few disappointed railway speculators who, finding it impossible to make their millions in the country under existing circumstances, hope by misrepresentation and seditious acts to force the hand of the Mexican authorities.

The onward march of civilization of which we in the nineteenth century are wont to boast has recently been suddenly checked throughout Germany, and that country has been thrown behind the age to the extent of half a century. Hitherto the German government have set a noble example to the world in its manner of dealing with women, to whom it opened the clerkships in the civil service without let or hindrance, but recently they have evinced a determination to change their liberal policy, and have during the past six months dismissed from the postal telegraph and railway services upwards of twenty thousand women. This would appear to be a retrograde movement.

Mr. Wilfred Blunt has gone to Constantinople to obtain the sanction of the Sultan to his projected expedition to Khartoum, and if successful, he proposes to push forward at once to his destination. Mr. Blunt, relying on his personal friendship with Arabi Pasha, and his intimate knowledge of the Arabian language, confidently expects to be able to arrange a treaty of peace between the Mahdi and Khedive; and at the same time obtain reliable information respecting the fate of General Gordon. There may be an apparent excuse for the religious fanaticism of the Mahdi, but there can be none for the misguided enthusiasm of a man who would thus wantonly take his life in his hand, for what must at the best prove a doubtful advantage.

Twenty thousand Hungarians now residing in the United States propose settling in the Canadian North West, provided that a grant of land can be obtained in one solid block. Count Esterhazy is endeavoring to obtain the permission of the Canadian government to allow the C. P. R. Co. to exchange the alternate sections which that company now holds in the Qu'Appelle Valley, for land in other parts of the North West Territory. At present the North West lands are laid out in a chess board pattern, each alternate block being held by the government. Should the polished and truly liberal Count succeed in this enterprise we may expect to have twenty thousand Hungarians settled in the Dominion within a year, and as they are experienced agriculturists they cannot fail to be of service to the country.

The Civil Service reform of the United States which has been utterly disregarded by previous administrations, appears to be faithfully carried out by Mr. Cleveland and his Cabinet. The desirability of reforming the Civil Service has always been acknowledged by both Republican and Democratic parties, but it has been left to the Democrats to see that the provisions of the bill were carried out in their entirety. The U. S. Postmaster-General is in full sympathy with the merit system, and he now proposes to introduce competitive examinations for all those applying for offices under this department; he further warns applicants that letters recommending them to favour will weaken, rather than strengthen their chances of obtaining positions.

Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught, has just returned from India, where he has been engaged for many months in obtaining for himself an accurate knowledge of the Indian army, he has carefully studied its present condition, its needs, and the prospects of its permanent improvement. Prince Arthur, who is the third son of Queen Victoria, is now thirty-five years of age, and in view of the probability of his becoming the successor of the Duke of Cambridge as Field Marshal commanding the British army, the knowledge that he has thus obtained may some day be of great service to him. The Duke of Cambridge now lacks but four years of reaching the allotted life's span of three-score years and ten, and although he still enjoys a full measure of health and vigor, he cannot long be expected to continue to discharge his arduous duties. The Duke of Connaught is most popular in the service, both with officers and men, and has already displayed ability and industry in his chosen profession. As Commander-in-Chief of the army, he will occupy a position second to none in the British service.