

If an anecdote which has recently appeared be correct it is evident that our present minister at Washington is not to be played upon with the unhappy facility which proved so disastrous to his predecessor. It is said that Sir Julian Pauncefote, being solicited recently for his signature to a collection of autographs to be presented as a testimonial to Mr. Gladstone, eyed his visitor critically and replied. "My predecessor signed a paper interfering with American politics, and was summarily recalled; and I think it unwise to attach my autograph to such a volume."

The interment of the remains of Browning in Westminster Abbey has not only called forth expressions of opinion from medical authorities that that national Cemetery of the Great is already overcrowded and dangerous to health, but has again brought into prominence the subject of cremation. It has been pointed out that if this mode of treatment of the dead were adopted, Westminster Abbey might, with safety and ease, contain an indefinite number of remains of distinguished mortality, but allusion is made to the prejudice in favor of the conventional mode of interment. Man, in his thoughts as well as in his actions, is essentially a creature of habit, and it will probably be a long time yet before the idea of cremation obtains the preference over interment. To our mind there is no comparison between the conceptions of purification by fire, and of the corruption of the grave.

We have heard lately of the prevalence of diphtheria in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia has in the past suffered so severely from this scourge that we are induced to give the publicity of our circulation to the following remedy which is reported to have been discovered in Germany and to be the best known. In the hope that it may be effective we give it an Editorial Note in order to afford it prominence.

"At the first indication of diphtheria in the throat of a child make the room close; then take a tin cup and pour into it a quantity of tar and turpentine, equal parts of tar and turpentine. Then hold the cup over the fire so as to fill the room with fumes. The little patient, on inhaling the fumes, will cough up and spit out all the membranous matter and the diphtheria will pass off. The fumes of the tar and turpentine loosen the matter in the throat and thus afford the relief that has baffled the skill of physicians."

The cold snap of last Thursday, Friday and Saturday will have disabused the minds of those who had, from the extreme mildness of December, begun to think we were to have no winter at all. Nevertheless we fancy it will be on the whole a mild one. As, however, much speculation has been aroused on the subject—so many people thinking, naturally enough, that an exceptionally mild winter is apt to be succeeded by a very severe one, we publish in our contribution column a slightly abbreviated rescript of an article which recently appeared in the *Halifax Chronicle*, which seems to us to have a good deal of force and probability. If, however, we are inclined to think the present winter may on the average be a mild one, we sincerely hope in the general interests of the country, and of the lumbering business in particular, that there may be enough snow, and enough cold to keep it on the ground, to afford the facilities which are of such vital importance to trade.

The date of our issue of to-day marks, as we think, the preceptible turn of the year towards longer days, if colder weather. In the latitude of London the latest sunrise is 8 h. 9 m. on the 29th Dec. at which time it remains stationary for three days, and only gains one minute thence to the 5th January, while it is not 'till the 17th that the sun rises again at 8 h. After this date daylight becomes rapidly earlier. Daylight in the afternoons increases faster. The earliest sunset takes place at 3 h. 49 m. for nine days from the 8th December, but it advances ten minutes by the 1st Jan. and 21 m. more by the 17th. Comparative length of day and night is altogether a question of latitude. In British Columbia, therefore, the days and nights are about as long and as short as in the latitude of London, but our more southerly position gives us sunrise at the shortest days not later than about five minutes before eight, and sunset not earlier than about ten minutes to five. By this date the day is lengthened in the afternoon by about twenty minutes. It is perhaps a small matter, yet it is certainly more pleasant to have a somewhat longer day than in more northerly latitudes and may be reckoned with our equable climate and exemption from great atmospheric convulsions as one, if a small one, of our many natural advantages.

While there is a constantly increasing demand for female help the disinclination of girls for domestic service increases with it. Nothing is more to be regretted than the fact that what should be considered a respectable occupation is looked at askance, and the question arises whether a partial remedy might not be found in the relaxation by employers of some of the out-of-date theories of extreme subservience which are still thought to be due from maid to mistress. For good or for evil democracy is upon us, and the last vestiges of relations based on feudal ideas are disappearing with ever increasing rapidity. It is, we think, quite possible that relations quite as pleasant and more satisfactory in working might be established on a footing of greater friendliness and a fuller recognition of the value of the services rendered. Some additional relief might also, we imagine, be accomplished by the institution in towns and cities of ladies' societies to take up young, ill-tended, and poverty-afflicted female children, and afford them a course of training which should not only turn them out valuable aids to the household, but impress upon them the fact that domestic service involves no compromise of self-respect. As a means of livelihood it is in fact as abso-

lutely respectable as any other employment, and in many ways much safer than many apparently more attractive ones.

Whether or not the recently reported massacre of exiles to Siberia has startled the Russian Government into compunction or flashed upon them some light as to the truculence of their methods, it is now said that it has been decided to abolish the exile system, under which such terrible cruelties have been so long practised. Even Russia, it would seem, is unable to resist the impressions of advancing civilization and humanity, or possibly it may have occurred to the Czar that this may be the best hope of immunity from the perpetual fear of assassination which renders his life a burden to him. If this be the case he has probably taken a step in the right direction, and the only wonder is that it has not presented itself to his mind—or that of his father, whose life it might have saved—until thus late. However, better late than never, and as it is the first step which costs (to literalize the French proverb) the present measure, if the report be true, may be only the precursor of others which will bring Russia up to something like a level with freer and more civilized countries, and free her from the festering spirit of rebellion which does so much to impede her progress.

The adoption of an international postage stamp has lately been advocated, and it would no doubt be of considerable use, as in cases where people are frequently perplexed by being unable, when writing to a foreign country, to enclose a stamp for reply. Such a stamp would also be useful in remitting small sums of money for which it is not worth while to procure a draft or money order. Judging by the enormous strides made in postal arrangements from time to time such an additional facility would no doubt soon obtain an extension of utility which would justify its introduction. Last Friday was the fiftieth anniversary of Sir Roland Hill's great postal reform, and very few Englishmen who were, in 1840, competent to give the subject capable consideration would at that date, when letters outside mural boundaries cost sums which now appear fabulous, have dreamed that the ocean postage—say from Great Britain to America—would be only a half-penny in excess of the amount charged by the "twopenny post," which then only delivered its letters at that cost within the limits of towns and cities. Still less could they have foreseen the cheap transmission of newspapers, periodicals and books which go to swell the weighty mail-bags of 1890.

South Australia has not been the most progressive of the Australian colonies. Her population was estimated at the end of 1888 at 318,000, but her territory extends across the Island continent to the extreme north. Nor does it appear that she regards this extent of domain as merely nominal. Whether the example of Canada in bridging the continent with a vast railway, with the success which has attended that bold measure in settling up the prairie Provinces of the Dominion, has influenced our southern sister we are not in a position to know, but she has also been bold enough to initiate a trans-continental line to open up her northern territory, which is said to be very rich. Is it to be regretted that the enterprise has come to a temporary standstill for lack of funds. The railway has, however, been constructed to a point well up towards the north, but presumably in the central desert part, and the question was whether to abide there for a time or to raise money to continue the work. It is earnestly to be hoped that any temporary difficulties will soon be overcome, as there is now no doubt that, where a country is at all fit for settlement, it is sound policy to induce it by the early construction of railroads.

The report that the Canada Pacific is about buying or leasing the Windsor & Annapolis Railway, with the intention of putting on two fast steamers between Annapolis and St. John, and using the route to the abandonment of the Intercolonial, if it really emanated from the officials of the road, has evidently been spread with the intention of forcing the Intercolonial into granting them the running powers desired. We are, however, of opinion that the report is a pure fabrication, as the run across the bay by steamer is an insuperable obstacle to the success of the scheme. Fog and storms would always be liable to stand in the way of close connection, and nine out of ten passengers would prefer even six hours longer time by rail to the discomfort of a two hours passage across the boisterous Bay of Fundy. Setting aside this objection the breaking of bulk, if the line were to be used to transport merchandize, would unfit it for through freight business, and what profit would there be in the passenger business alone? Great ability has been displayed in the management of the Canada Pacific, and it is not likely that such a blunder as the reported utilization of the Windsor & Annapolis line will be made by the shrewd business men who control that corporation.

There has long been a prevalent idea that leprosy, at least in civilized and Christian lands, was a disease which if not well nigh extinct had so died out, or had at least become so rare, as to call for little attention save where some supposed exceptional case occasionally made its appearance. A great body of recent information, however, warns us that this is not by any means the case, and even in our own favored Province it is known to exist. That it is highly contagious does not admit of a doubt. The author of *Leviticus* was firmly convinced of this, and consequently laid down elaborate rules for the complete isolation of victims even in the early and uncertain stages of the disease, and for burning their garments and other belongings. Considering the virulent, loathsome and incurable nature of the plague it surely behooves every government to legislate strongly, sternly and promptly in the matter. Unbounded compassion is felt by all men for the unhappy victims, but the disorder is one which imperatively demands that all sympathy for individual isolation be set aside in view of the public safety. A strong spirit of humanity pervades the Mosaic Law, and Hebrew sympathies were keen, but the kindest feelings of the Israelites did not prevent their enacting regulations looking uncompromisingly to the larger good.