

HERE AND THERE.

ONE of the correctives for the desultory reading of our times consists in the direction given by literary and debating clubs. Perhaps nothing better of the kind exists in Canada than a club established in Montreal eight years ago. Its membership is but twenty-five, so that each member in turn can entertain the club at his house. The meetings are fortnightly, except during the summer months. Men of letters, of science and of business, with teachers, lawyers, doctors, and clergymen make up this delightful club. A paper is contributed once a year by each member, according to a calendar arranged at the beginning of a session. This paper is discussed, and the variety in the membership affords a diversity of topic and comment which grows in interest from year to year. Clubs such as this would be a most desirable means of culture throughout our country, not only in giving reading and thought an aim and purpose, but in cultivating the amenities between men of diverse standpoints in political and theological conviction. Much is done when an artist leads men of business out of the stock exchange and away from the protracted perusal of bulky ledgers. Not less is secured for the broadening of the mind when a chemist or botanist recounts to educators and pleaders the last triumphs of experimental or inductive science. Men grow in mutual respect when they pass out of class into a courteous social circle where differences of sect and party are ignored in common intellectual aims.

THE large and distinguished attendance at the funeral of Mr. James Bethune, Q.C., was not merely a formal recognition of professional eminence, but a heartfelt tribute to the rare worth of the man. Mr. Bethune was not only a very successful lawyer, he adorned the profession by singular integrity, conscientiousness, and liberality of mind. He showed the same qualities in politics, from which, however, he soon retired. The social loss caused by his death will also be widely and deeply felt. It is supposed that the disease which cut short his bright career was contracted by stopping, when on circuit, in an ill-drained house, though the immediate cause of death was connected with the heart.

Is interest in Canadian politics and literature awakening in the States? It would appear so. More than one journal is to-day bidding for the work of Canadian pens, and now we have a paper on Sir John Macdonald in *Lippincott's Magazine*. The writer is Mr. James Macdonald Oxley, of Ottawa, and the political complexion of his biography of the Canadian Premier will scarcely need to be suggested when it is added that he is in the Government Service. Everything is roseate, and the unpleasant episodes in Sir John's career which the historian cannot get away from are here glossed over with consummate skill. As a literary production the paper is charming; as an estimate of the character and work of Sir John it is worthless. One thing, however, Mr. Oxley must be complimented upon: Though writing as a partisan, he does not descend to the too common practice of bespattering his political opponents with Billingsgate in order to make his portrait of Sir John the fairer. He writes as a gentleman for gentlemen.

A LETTER has recently been forwarded from Canada to Lord Carlingford calling attention to the feasibility of introducing into Ireland prepared flax from the Canadian North-West, where the growth of flax is found profitable and is being largely adopted by farmers. Most of the supply for the factories of Ulster and Dundee is now received from Russia, and as the fibre flourishes in the Canadian North-West, the question of supply is thought in Canada to be merely one of competition. Lord Carlingford takes a deep interest in the linen trade, and it is thus sought to enlist his co-operation on behalf of that Canadian product.

THE Christmas Double Number of the *Chicago Current* is a remarkable evidence of the journalistic enterprise of our neighbours. Such an array of well-known names is rarely seen in one issue of a journal as contributors. It is just a trifle amusing, however, and is one more proof of the little that is known of Canadian matters in America, to note that one or two "representative" names put forth with a fanfaronade are utterly unknown in the Canada they are said to "represent." Moreover, though Mr. Edwin Arnold, for example, is as likely as another to make due allowance for the amenities of Christmas advertising, his poetic equanimity must be rudely shocked to see how his elaborate poem is sandwiched in between the holiday announcements of a riding-school and a nail factory! One claim which the *Current* makes for itself, however, will probably pass unchallenged: that estimated by a yard measure it is far ahead of most contemporaries: "The typographical measurement of the *Current* for six months of publication, and of other periodicals for the same six months, shows the *Current's* remarkable pre-eminence:—The *Current*, about 1,484,000 words; the *Century*, 950,400 words; *Harper's Monthly*, about 650,400 words; the *Atlantic*, about 578,400 words. Thus it is seen that the *Current* published more matter than *Harper's Monthly* and the *Atlantic* combined, and nearly as much as the *Century* and the *Atlantic* combined.

THERE were twenty-six failures in Canada reported to *Bradstreet's* during the past week, as compared with twenty-two in the preceding week, and with thirty-two, twenty-six and seven, respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882 and 1881. In the United States there were 305 failures in the past week as compared with 316 in the preceding week, and with 280, 236 and 145, respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882 and 1881. About eighty-seven per cent. were those of small traders whose capital was less than \$5,000.

It is not so very long since the very mention of cremation was sufficient to raise a cry of horror among refined and religious people. But time change, and this method of disposing of the earthly frames of our departed ones is slowly but surely gaining ground, even in this country, and many people are beginning to think if it may not be after all the best, as it certainly is for the survivors the healthiest, method of disposing of the dead. Abroad, and especially in Germany, it continues to win favour. The two hundredth case has just been registered at Coburg, where fifty-four people have been cremated this year alone. These two hundred cremations have occurred since 1878, when the furnace was erected in Coburg, and the cases included sixty-two inhabitants of the duchy, and one hundred and thirty-eight foreigners—one hundred and twenty-six men, sixty-nine women, and five children.

IN his advent sermon preached at the Pro-Cathedral, Kensington, Cardinal Manning made a vigorous onslaught on "Society" journalism. "The plague of tongues" in the spirit of detraction which is abroad, the tendency to scandal-mongering, and the encouragement given to it in society, he described as almost universal, and deplored it as one of the most distressing signs of the times, only equalled, if equalled, in its mischievousness by the spirit of rationalism which he finds supreme in the higher forms of modern journalism and literature. The Cardinal had a fling in passing at the carelessness of English parents in sending their sons to "godless" universities.

If there was needed any other proof that Ireland, notwithstanding the Crimes and Coercion Acts, is in anything but a peaceful state of bliss, it would not have to be sought for long or far. This is a boycotting notice that was liberally posted throughout Bray, the most fashionable seaside resort near Dublin, recently:—"Down with the land-grabbers. The farmers and traders of Wicklow, Wexford, and Dublin are cautioned to beware of Anthony Ivory, of Bray, that cowardly traitor who has betrayed and scandalized the holy cause of the Irish people. Have no dealings with him. Do not speak to him or to anyone who does so. He has been false to his country and his God. The man, woman, or child who is seen to enter his house, or to have intercourse with him, or any member of his family, will be ever branded as a renegade to the sacred cause of Ireland, and our succeeding generations will curse them for that reason. The tortures of hell would be but light punishment for an accursed land-grabber." This precious document was signed "Murty Hynes," and was levelled against an inoffensive greengrocer who was courageous enough to rent a few acres which were given up to the landlord by the last tenant. And yet the Irish raise their voices against Lord Spencer and his coercive measures! Was there ever such a coercionist as this never-visible, ever-dastardly Murty Hynes?

A "MOTHER OF MEN" and a "mother of Generals" has recently died at Benares, whose life has set at defiance all orthodox medical theories, for, having been born in 1787, she has never left the plains of India, the only occasion on which she went up to the hills being that on which she had any serious illness. Anna, the widow of General James Kennedy, of the Bengal Cavalry, who died in her ninety-seventh year, lived to see no fewer than one hundred and seventy-six lineal descendants, of whom one hundred and twenty-eight survive her. She had eighteen children, eighty grandchildren, seventy-three great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren. Besides military officers of inferior rank, her father, husband, two sons, one son-in-law and four grandsons were generals in the army.

"MUNDUS," the facetious literary free-lance of *The Rambler*, tells the following anecdote:—At a recent reception in New York a distinguished member of the bar told a story at the expense of a fellow advocate, who was invited to some entertainment, his invitation being accompanied with the usual request, "r. s. v. p." Never having before met the cabalistic initials, he inquired what they signified. "Why, don't you know?" was the reply. "It is a direction as to dress: roundabout shirt, vest and pants." "That's lucky," said he, "for I have everything except the roundabout." A distinguished railroad man, who stood by, capped this with another. On one occasion he invited all the employes of the road to his house to listen to a little talk by Peter Cooper and others. Just at that time there had been some discussion as to a reduction of salaries, and the invited were suspicious, especially as they could not make out what the "r. s. v. p." in the corner of the invitation meant. So they held a meeting, and after much cogitating one man said: "Here, boys, I know what that means: reduction of salaries very profitable. They will get us there, give us something to eat and drink, and we will be roped in before we know it; don't let us go," and go they would not until the superintendent had been seen, and the matter explained.

FROM the remarks of a contemporary it appears to be thought that the custom of burning the Yule-log is extinct in England. This is not so, however. In several of the northern counties, after the usual Christmas Eve devotions, candles are lit, and the Yule-log thrown on the open hearth. In some wealthy houses a "Lord of Misrule" is appointed to superintend the revels. The reign of this personage in former days began upon All-Hallow Eve and lasted to Candlemas Day. The favourite pastimes over which he presides are generally music, conjuring, "dipping" for nuts and apples, dancing, blind-man's buff, and the like.

A JUVENILE query has suggested the idea that perhaps the knowledge possessed by most parents of "Santa Claus" is limited to the fact that the name is a corruption of St. Nicholas, and in view of possible question-