

THE CRITIC.

The Welfare of the People is the Highest Law.

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There was a time when the inducements to enlist as a British soldier were comparatively small, but now when a man can join the army with twenty pounds sterling in his pocket, it is not surprising to find a better class of recruits coming forward.

Some curious statistics have recently been compiled, showing the extent of the linguistic area occupied by the principal languages. From these we gather that Chinese is spoken by 400 millions of people, the Hindoo languages by 200 millions, English by 100 millions, Russian by 100 millions, German by 60 millions, Spanish by 48 millions, and French by 46 millions.

The citizens of Chicago were treated to a novel sight, on New Year's Eve. A constellation of twenty electric lamps, each of 2000-candle power, was kept shining from the tower of the Chamber of Commerce Hall, 300 feet from the ground. The glare was seen distinctly from Michigan City, about 60 miles distant, on the opposite shore of Lake Michigan. Such a display must have suggested to the spectators the advisability of changing the American emblem of "Liberty enlightening the world" into "Electricity enlightening the world."

At a meeting of the Modern Languages Association of America, held in Boston, on Dec. 29th and 30th, the excellent work done in our Canadian colleges was commended. Toronto University was especially mentioned, being ranked with Harvard, Cornell, and Michigan, among the larger colleges. Some of the weaknesses of American colleges were pointed out; and the frank, impartial statements made at the meeting might well lead those students whose aspirations are America-ward, to consider well, whether they are not going to an expensive foreign market to buy what can be obtained more easily and more cheaply at home.

Had Cape Breton, like China, shut herself out from the rest of the world, she might have been like China, without railways, and even without an Insane Asylum. But since that Island has, since its first discovery, been in every other respect fully abreast of the times, it puzzles us to understand why it should now lack Railway facilities; and still more, why ample provision has not been made for the care and treatment of those among her inhabitants who are bereft of reason. The fault lies somewhere. Perhaps some of the long-headed Scotchmen of Cape Breton can tell us just where.

Jumbo was a king among elephants, but as compared with the royal white elephant of Burmah, his kingliness sinks into nothingness. An elephant, for whose habitation a magnificent palace is built, and who is attended by a Royal Minister of State and a retinue of invited attendants, should be considered quite a fortunate beast. The Burmese regarded their white elephant as sacred, and his sudden death, occurring as it did, within a few days of King Theebaw's overthrow, formed a coincidence which, in the minds of these superstitious people, indicated the extinction of Alopra.

As we predicted a short time ago, the Salisbury administration has been compelled to surrender the sweets of power to Gladstone and the Liberal-Parnellite majority. It was clear, from the time that the Irish question became the pivot upon which parties were to turn, that Salisbury and his followers would not pass any measure that would threaten the privileges and immunities of the great landed interests in Ireland. As might have been naturally expected, the Home Rulers aimed themselves with the Liberals. Whether this will eliminate the Wing element from the Liberal ranks, remains to be seen. Lord Granville has already pronounced strongly in favor of concessions to Ireland.

The recent massacre of the unoffending Chinese, by their co-workers, in the mines of Wyoming, called forth, both from the American and Canadian press, many sympathetic paragraphs, in which the vials of commiseration were liberally poured out, but we have not yet observed any reference to the similar treatment of the Russian gold miners by their co-labourers in Manchuria. John Chinaman may object to the intolerance of the American working classes, but he is none the less intolerant when the Muscovite attempts to share with him the profits of the gold mine situated in his own country. We can cry, "room for all," so long as we ourselves have elbow room.

From an excellent paper on Writing, in the *Educational Weekly*, we clip the following passage.—"The system of writing used in England is the old round hand, the principles of which are the old 'pot hooks and hangers,' which loom up before the memory from the days of yore like a forgotten relic, over which many a helpless juvenile has received an old-fashioned caning, as was the custom in those days of unphilosophic pedagogy. This system has in America been consigned to the tomb. Another style that should have its funeral rites performed is (with all deference to our fair scribes) the pointed or angular hand, whose only good quality is its regular, ruler-like, picket-fence appearance. It is devoid of the graceful beauty and flow that is so much admired in fine writing."

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

Eddison, who has been occupied during late years in perfecting his electric light, now proposes to devote his attention to the improvement of his phonograph.

Oscar Wilde now has his hair cut like a Christian, and dresses in the habiliments of an ordinary man of the world. His aesthetic disciples may mourn over the perfidy of their apostle, but Oscar Wilde, now dubbed "Oscar Tame," quietly leaves them to their fate, after having successfully played upon the credulity of mankind, and pocketed the ducats which the display of his folly earned for him.

We are pleased to note that the Rev. John Storrs is winning over golden opinions among all classes, in London. He is said to be one of the most effective pulpit orators in the great metropolis, and to be as active in carrying forward the work of the Church as he is thoughtful and considerate of the needs of the poor. The *London Figaro*, in a leading article, ranks him as one of the coming men. Mr. Storrs was born and brought up in Cornwallis, N. S., his father for many years having had charge of that parish.

The annexation of Burmah by the British will, no doubt, be advantageous to the people of that mis-governed land; but the political and commercial possibilities, aye, probabilities, which may result from its becoming a portion of the British Empire are almost beyond calculation. How, think you, would the Czar of all the Russias fancy an Anglo-Chinese alliance? And the French appreciate railway communication with the rich Southern Provinces of China via the valley of the Irrawaddy? John Bull may be asleep, but he always sleeps with one eye open.

Some of our contemporaries in the United States continue to assert, or imply, that the execution of Riel has divided the Dominion into two parties.—Ontario on the one hand, and Quebec and the remaining Provinces on the other. The *Chicago Times* has it that "large and enthusiastic indignation meetings have been held in Quebec, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia." As a matter of fact, no "indignation" at Riel's fate ever existed in Nova Scotia, and, of course, no indignation meetings were held. Nova Scotians are cool-headed, and rational lovers of law and order. They, therefore, approve of the sentence of Riel; and if an appeal were made to them to decide the issue at the polls, not one "Riel" sympathiser would be returned from this Province. Many people in this part of the Dominion are opposed to Sir John A. MacDonald, but not because he allowed the law to take its course in the case of Riel. If Riel had been again let loose by the pusillanimity of the Government, then there would have been indignation meetings in this Province.