

# THE CRITIC:

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

It has been computed that if the population of the globe be reckoned at fourteen hundred millions of human beings, there would be room for them all, allowing a space of four square feet for each person, on the frozen surface of Lake Constance (Switzerland.) If the ice were to break and the whole human race be thus precipitated into the water, the level of the lake would only be raised six inches.

Lieut. W. G. Stairs, R. E., of Halifax, who was Henry M. Stanley's right-hand man during his expedition into "Darkest Africa," arrived in this city on Sunday morning last on the I. C. R. train. His family was not aware of his intention to pay them a visit until he arrived at Rimouski, when he telegraphed the fact of his arrival to them. Lieut. Stairs is in excellent health, and appears to be thoroughly enjoying his visit. In accordance with a resolution passed by the City Council last December it is probable that a public reception or levee will shortly be tendered to Lieut. Stairs. This will be a fitting recognition by the citizens of Halifax of the pluck and energy displayed by our distinguished fellow townsman.

The recent severe edict against the Jews in Russia, not only native, but all Jews, "is strikingly brought home to Englishmen," says the *Jewish Chronicle*, "by the warning issued from the Foreign Office, at the instance of the British Consul at Warsaw. That official—evidently having knowledge of the annoyances experienced by English travellers in Russia suspected of being Jews—has issued a warning that an English passport, though it be visé by the Russian Consul, and otherwise in regular form, is not sufficient to secure immunities from vexatious annoyances. The traveller must also be prepared with a baptismal or other certificate to prove that he is not a Jew. It is well known that many Russian laws have the postscript appended 'except the Jews,' and at the instance of the Emperor Nicholas the legislative principle was enacted that wherever the Jews are not expressly mentioned they are presumed to be excluded. If any Englishman ventures to visit Russia he had better arm himself with sufficient evidence (besides the usual bribe) to prove that he is not an accused Jew. Truly, the degradation of the Jew could scarcely be carried further to prove that in Russia he is an outlaw, a civil leper, out of whom the Government is determined to crush every aspiration and feeling that ennobles a man and renders him a good citizen."

The Mormons, who certainly are people to avoid imitating in most of their ways, have one beautiful custom which is so praiseworthy that it has been adopted throughout Utah by the Gentiles as well as the Saints. They have an annual old folks' festival, at which the aged are made the guests of the younger generation. Everyone who is over seventy years old is remembered and made happy by the attention bestowed on them. Excursions and entertainments are arranged for those who are able to go, while the feeble are remembered in their homes. This is an institution just as praiseworthy as "Children's Day," which is kept in many places. We are only too ready to let the old people retire to their chimney corners, away from all the pleasures of life, when by a little thought we might brighten up their dull lives. Might we all not learn a lesson from the Mormon custom and try and make the dear old people happy at all times, even though we do not go so far as to appoint a yearly festival for their benefit.

Kemmler, the New York murderer, has suffered the death penalty by electricity. The experiment has been anything but satisfactory, and the published accounts of the execution have been horrible. The *New York Sun* says the first duty of the next Legislature will be to repeal the electrical execution law and to restore the old method of administering the death penalty by hanging. Scientific curiosity has been gratified by this one awful experiment. Edison, the electrician, now comes forward and states that the fault lies with the doctors in the method of applying the current. He would appear to be right in stating that the current should be passed from one hand to the other, and thus bring the heart into the circuit through the blood. But it is no use shutting the barn door after the horse is gone, or being wise after the event. He should have spoken before, when his advice would perhaps have prevented the bungling which it is now too late to remedy. It is to be hoped that some more humane method of administering the extreme penalty of the law may be substituted for electrocution, and that we may not again hear of such a horrid scene as that witnessed at the death of Kemmler.

According to advices from Rio de Janeiro, the draft of the projected Brazilian Constitution, which is to be submitted to Congress in November next, is copied in great part from that of the United States. In its main features it provides for a President and Vice-President elected indirectly through an electoral college for six years; two Legislative Chambers—viz. a Senate elected by the State Legislatures for nine years, and a Chamber of Deputies elected by popular vote for three years; a Supreme Federal Tribunal of fifteen judges appointed for life, and a Federal Judicial System; a Federal District for the national capital, like the District of Columbia, but with privileges of representation in the two chambers and in the presidential election like any state; the transformation of the old provinces into self-governing states; universal suffrage to all, except illiterates, mendicants, soldiers (rank and file,) members of religious orders and companies, congregations or communities who owe obedience to the same to the prejudice of their personal liberty; guarantees for life, property and political rights; responsibility of the President and his Cabinet before the law; religious freedom; separation of church and state and obligatory civil marriage.

The Canadian Military Rifle League, which fired the last of its series of seven matches on Saturday, Aug 9th, promised at its inception to arouse a great deal of interest in rifle shooting as at present practised by the Militia of Canada, and, however faulty that system may be, the League matches if honorably conducted by every team entered might have proved of great service in bringing out the younger men of the force, who possibly might not have learned to shoot at all, and familiarizing them with the use of the rifle. But before many of the matches had been shot off it was only too evident that some of the team were not acting in such a manner as to bring credit to themselves or the League, and were making use of dishonorable means to increase their scores. At the last match one team had the effrontery to return 946 points as the score made by them with a team of ten men using the Snider rifle. Now this score is actually better than the best possible score that can be made with a Martini Henry rifle, which is admitted to be at least 15 per cent. better than the Snider, and that discount is always allowed the Snider when fired against the Martini Henry. While we would like to see the League prosper and continue its matches year by year, the natural difficulties are so great that while one team may be enjoying splendid weather others may be firing in a gale or a downpour of rain; and when to these is added the dishonorable and disgraceful conduct of falsifying scores or pending an interested marker to the target, no riflemen shooting honestly will take part in such matches, and this, more than anything else, will cause the ignominious failure of the League; more to be regretted because it has brought discredit upon many regiments and men whose reputations have heretofore been untarnished.