

In the event of a European outbreak Great Britain would be able to send to sea at a month's notice forty-four modern battle-ships and belted cruisers to cope, in case of necessity, with France's twenty-three, Russia's fifteen, Germany's twelve, or Italy's ten; so that no possible combination of any two of the great Powers would place England at a disadvantage.

The coal supply of the world is likely to last for a long time yet before it becomes exhausted. The *English Mechanic* says that the coal-fields of Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, and Bohemia, are estimated to cover an area of 60,000 square miles; those of Austria, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, 30,000 to 40,000 square miles; those of Russia are unexplored, but she has already surveyed 2,000 square miles. In 1858, the collieries of Kursk-Kharkow, the Sea of Azov, and Donetz produced 1,500,000 tons of coal, and in 1889 the output had risen to about 2,250,000 tons. Japan is also well supplied with coal fields in process of development.

A strange story is circulated in India about a gold plate which is said to have fallen from Heaven, having on it inscriptions in the Tamil and Telegu languages. The *Hindoo Patriot* gives the following version of it:—"A plate made of the finest gold, containing the following inscription, fell from Heaven and was found in the temple ground at Benares by the person who saw it fall. The inscription was:—"From the month of June, 1890, God Himself will rule as Emperor of Hindoostan, incarnating Himself in human form. From that time forward there will be justice all over the world, and the munis (sages) will be worshipped by the people. All the diseases of men will be cured, dogs will walk and talk as human beings do, and man, whose life is now established at 70 years, will in the future have it extended to 125 years."

The prohibitionists of the United States have been injuring their cause by the intemperance of their language at the recent National Temperance Congress in New York city. One champion of the cause remarked that if the Federal Constitution does not permit Congress to pass a prohibitory liquor law it is "time to get rid of" the Constitution, and that he is ready to shoulder his musket for that purpose. A number of other speakers were equally valiant, and Joseph Cook, of Boston, expressed the opinion that Prohibitionists "may ultimately need the musket," and that "we may have barricade-riots yet." These fire-eaters would do well to remember that the laws of a country are made by the majority, and also that such advocacy of a cause will do little to stamp out an acknowledged evil. The spectacle of an angry Prohibitionist going for the Constitution of the United States with the "short end" of his musket would be almost amusing. Intemperate speaking will never do the cause of temperance any good.

The projected Railway entirely across the Russian Empire from west to east is an undertaking of great importance. A road already runs from St. Petersburg, by way of Moscow, to Samara on the eastern bank of the Volga River. At the latter city, or town, is the only iron bridge across this great waterway, and from there to Ufa, a distance of 302 miles east, the road has been built. It is now proposed to continue the line across Siberia to Vladivostok, on the Japan Sea, a distance of 6,660 miles from St. Petersburg. When it is recollected that this is more than twice the length of a line from New York city to San Francisco some conception of its magnitude may be formed. The carrying out of this vast undertaking will do more in the way of carrying the enlightening, humanizing influences of modern civilization into that land of horrors, Siberia, than anything else possibly could do. The doing away with the terrible overland journey, to which exiled prisoners were condemned, would be a matter for rejoicing to all who have the good of their fellow-men at heart.

The question of precedence, recently brought up at the Methodist Conference, is discussed in a semi comic vein by "Knoxonian" in the *Canadian Presbyterian*. He thinks, and rightly, that viewed from a practical standpoint, the whole thing is a screaming farce, and asks "how much would Methodism gain if Superintendent Carman walked side by side with the Archbishop of Quebec?" He suggests several methods of arranging the right of precedence, any one of which appears quite as sensible as the present arrangement, which gives the first place to the Roman Catholic prelates simply because they are Catholics. "Somebody," he says, "must go first, and somebody must come last. There must be a front and a rear in every procession. How would it do to arrange the representatives of the different churches in a line and march them up abreast. General Middleton might take command. How would this plan work: Bring the Archbishops, General Superintendents, Moderators, Presidents, and all the other clerical dignitaries to a starting point, give them a fair send off, and let the dignitary who could make the best time get there first. Perhaps these methods are not sufficiently intellectual. Supposing the official dignitaries be arranged in the order of their preaching power. Let the man who can preach the best sermon head the procession, and the poorest preacher bring up the rear. How would it do to give first place to the best speaker? A competition in Homiletics might do very well. Let the man who can make the best sermon plan in ten minutes take the lead. How would an examination in Hebrew do?" One can smile at these suggestions, but seriously, from the standpoint of those who now bring up the rear on ceremonial occasions, something should be done to adjust the matter with fairness. The *Canadian Presbyterian*, in its editorial remarks, says it was unfortunate that such a contemptible thing should have been put side by side with grave and important matters in the Supreme Court of the Church. "Silent and freezing contempt" is what it recommends as proper treatment for the Table of Precedence.

The proposition to shorten the course at Harvard College to three years instead of four is awakening much discussion in educational circles. The benefit accruing to bright and clever students from this shortening of the course would be marked. The fact is that the clever students are kept back by those who are not so gifted, and if by cutting off a year from the college course and giving it to business or professional life, the young men who possess a fair share of brains can be benefited, then the change is one to be welcomed as an assistance on the road to success in life, where an early start must be an advantage. Much opposition to the change is manifested in certain quarters, but it is tolerably clear to a majority of those interested that a year of practical experience is worth more than the same time spent at college, when the object to be achieved can as easily be accomplished in three years as in four. Columbia College, under the progressive Presidency of Seth Low, has, it is stated, already provided for the shortened course, and it is probable that other colleges will follow the lead of Harvard and Columbia before long. It may be hard on the "dunder head"—if we may be allowed to suppose that there are any such in institutions of learning—but the benefit will be to those who are the brightest, and therefore the most valuable men to be in active work early in life.

It doubtless is a great step forward that crime is beginning to be considered a moral disease, for which treatment is necessary, but it is just as certainly a dangerous doctrine to spread among criminals. If that class are given to understand that all the wrongs they commit will be condoned on account of their incapacity to resist evil impulses, it is probable that an alarming increase in crime will be the result. When once a boy or girl finds out that the plea of sickness will give them a holiday from school they become frequent subjects of "school sickness," and it would be the same with criminals. Let them understand that wrong-doing deserves punishment and will receive it. This will have more effect than telling them that they must be "treated" for their ill doings. Every effort that can be made to prevent the first false step being taken will prove of benefit, and following this the proper training of those who have committed their first offence against the laws of the land will spare us the man who

"Ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,
Or seeming genial venial fault;
Recurring and suggesting still."

Men of science, when they find a radical cure for the mental sickness which causes so much trouble, can then take upon themselves the task of eradicating evil and sin from the human heart.

The passage of the United States pension bill means the swelling of the pension roll for the fiscal year of 1891 to an aggregate of nearly \$175,000,000, possibly even more. Thus the surplus of \$43,000,000 handed over to President Harrison by Grover Cleveland will soon be dissipated, with the prospect of as great a deficiency for the next fiscal year. The people of the United States have been clamoring for the distribution of this surplus, so now they ought to be satisfied. The *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* says that there need be no trouble about what the soldiers receive, and no patriot will begrudge the money that is being paid to the boys who wore the blue. "As for a deficit," it says:—"Let it come. The sooner it is fairly threatened the better. Its first effect would be to put the brakes upon the waste of public money. There is now an epidemic of extravagance. If the pensions paid to soldiers will stop this it will prove beneficial to the country in general. At any rate we will always feel like taking off our hat to a soldier, and certainly the Government would be ungrateful if it withheld the legitimate means to prevent a soldier or his widow or his orphan children from begging bread. The money paid in pensions is not lost. It is distributed, and the people who pay are those who have a country because the soldier fought for it. In the matter of pensions it is far better, under the circumstances, to be generous than unjust." This is the opinion of a Republican paper, the Democratic papers naturally do not approve so highly of the bill.

Many serious questions of national and international interest are claiming attention at the present time. The African territory matter seems to be coming out of the tangle all right by the cession of Heligoland to Germany in return for a large extent of territory in the Dark Continent. The parting with Heligoland is a blow to the pride of many Britishers, it being the first distinct concession in many years made by Britain of territory over which she had undisputed control. Another subject of greater interest to Canadians is the French shore dispute in Newfoundland. This as yet is in abeyance, and we will have to exercise patience until it is settled. One of the most interesting of all the affairs so prominent at present is the crisis in the British Ministry. The task of trying to pass three great and important bills—the Land Purchase bill, the Tithes Bill, and the Licensing bill, has been almost too much for it. Things are better now than they were a fortnight ago, but the weakness shown once may recur again. Lord Salisbury, in taking the bold step of proposing the continuance of legislation from one session to another, has startled conservative old England. The British Parliament is elected for seven years. It sits from year to year, beginning in the winter. Each sitting is a session, and all business begun in the session must be finished before adjournment. The change proposed will save much useless labor and rob obstruction of its powers. It means too an added power to a Ministry. Almost any measure could be passed with a majority and seven years of Parliament to do it in. Conservative members are aghast at the change. It is difficult to see why so much opposition should be made to what seems a common-sense move, and saves the waste of time in going over the same ground with legislation dropped at the end of a session.