

# The Presbyterian Review.

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## OVER LAND AND SEA.

The main doctrines of the Westminster Shorter Catechism will be the subject of a series of articles to appear shortly in the *Christian Observer*, by Rev. Dr. Beattie, whose old connection with the Canadian Church has not been forgotten and whose good work in the South is followed with interest by his many friends and former co-workers in this country.

From time to time interesting notes on Iceland find their way to the Press. A recent traveller believes that the Icelanders have a better average culture than any European people. About 72,000 of the inhabitants profess the Lutheran form of faith. The Bible is well-studied by the people young and old and almost every Icelander can read and write although the children are taught at home. There are 287 churches, 12 of stone, 246 of wood, and 29 of turf. 51 churches possess each a harmonium. The clergy are highly respected and church attendance is good.

An interesting item of news comes from Britain to the effect that the Hebrew language is being revived in Palestine and other Oriental countries. The fact is noteworthy as showing the vitality of the old Semitic tongue, and as indicating the undying love which the Hebrew still cherishes for the land given his fathers by the God of Israel. The Jews are moving toward Palestine, and the spread of their language there will do much to attract them in still greater numbers.

That Prince and Pioneer of Missionaries, Rev. Dr. Duff, founded a Lectureship to provide a quadrennial course of lectures on some department of Foreign Missions. Admirable results have been obtained from the lectures of Revs. Dr. Thomas Smith, Dr. Fleming Stevenson, Prof. Monier Williams, and Dr. Arthur Pierson. As successor to the last named, Rev. Dr. Marshall Lang, of Glasgow, has been appointed and doubtless his prelections will equal in interest those of his predecessors.

In the afternoon of Sabbath, Jan'y 19th, one of our ministers who lives near Toronto, conducted a service in the French language, in the Evangelical Mission Room on Queen St., opposite Knox Chnrch. He preached from 2 Corinthians v. 21, after which he administered the rite of baptism to Fritz Arnold, infant son of M. and Mme. Voegeli, a young couple from Neuchatel, Switzerland, communicants in the Presbyterian Church. This, we believe, is the first instance in the history of the capital of Ontario, of a Protestant baptism administered in it, in the French language.

The Greeks were more fastidious and exacting in their verse and tune adaptations than we are; hence their division of music into the grave Doric, soberly glad Lydian, madrigalic Æolic, martial Phrygian, and sentimental Ionic. Every Grecian profession, even, had its special songs. If modern discrimination in word and tune setting approx-

imated theirs, that feeling in the singer's, or listener's, mind which the words should cause, might more certainly follow the singing of a hymn than—in some cases of unhappy mis-mating—it does now; cases in which Ionic music is set to Doric thought, or Phrygian to Lydian. Good old Ravenscroft recognizes, in his book of Psalm tunes, the importance of proper settings, when referring to the wise and pleasing songs of Amphion and Orpheus and their influences on animate and inanimate nature.—“Hymn and Tune Unions,” in *The Homiletic Review* for February.

Perhaps the highest price asked for a single book is the sum which appears against a volume in the Liturgical catalogue which has been issued by Mr. Quaritch—£5,250. It is printed on vellum, and is the Psalter for the use of the Benedictine Monastery of St. James at Mentz. This volume is the third that came from the Press, and the second printed book with a date—1459. It is far rarer and more precious than the Mazarine Bible, which came out in 1455-56. The Psalter is also the costliest book that has ever been sold, the present copy having fetched £9,950 at the Syston Park sale in 1884. No other copy has appeared in the market for almost a hundred years.

Leap years will soon be scarce. This 1896 is a leap year, but there will not be another for eight years, for 1900 will not be a leap year, owing to chronological necessities. At certain long intervals a day has to be missed to prevent the seasons from going astray, otherwise our posterity would be keeping Christmas in hot weather, and would be shivering in midsummer. The Russians are getting troubled at last about the “old style” calendar. Everybody who knows anything about Russia is aware that she has never adopted the Gregorian “new style” of reckoning, and that Russians adhere to the day which we call “Twelfth Day” as Christmas Day. The Old Julian Calendar rules in Russia, and the Gregorian in the rest of the civilized world. But the Russian Government has decided to introduce “new style” at the end of this century. It is not certain whether this will be done suddenly or gradually. In the latter case the first twelve leap years after 1900 must be omitted. Were the “old style” continued, there would be thirteen days' difference in the twentieth century. It is this unlucky number of thirteen which the superstitious Slavs dread.

According to expert calculations, the Coliseum of Rome seated eighty-seven thousand spectators, while sixty thousand more could have found standing-room. The external circumference of the Coliseum as it stands to-day is one thousand seven hundred and twenty-eight feet, its long diameter six hundred and fifteen feet, its short diameter five hundred and ten feet. The arena is two hundred and seventy-nine by two hundred and ninety-six feet, and the height of the building is one hundred and fifty-six feet. There are still standing four stones of the original structure. It was in all probability the largest building of auditorium arrangement ever known.

There are 48,000 artists in Paris, more than half of them painters. The number of paintings sent in to the exhibition last year was about 40,000.