

The proposition for simultaneous telegraphic matches under the auspices of a Canadian Military Rifle League seems to present desirable features, and the *Volunteer Service Gazette*, G.B., remarks on it that though simultaneous matches have not been on the whole successful in England, they may, and the *Gazette* hopes will, become popular in Canada.

One of the main points involved in spelling reforms has always appeared to us to be the reduction of the number of letters in writing. Long before it became a general custom we dropped the superfluous *u* in nouns of Latin derivation such as honor. A correspondent of *Public Opinion* advocates the omission of the second *L* in such past participles as "travelled" which we think sound. In the same spirit we would drop the totally unnecessary second *R* and *S* in "embarrassment." But there is a constant tendency in some quarters to revert to the crude and ignorant doubling of letters in an altogether aimless and superfluous manner. Within the space of eight lines in a Nova Scotia contemporary of last week, the word "rig" is spelt "rigg," and the word "set," "sett." The Spanish is the only tongue which has had the sense to bring such matters within the control of a regularly constituted college having authority to regulate the language.

It is an old saying that it never rains but it pours. The Brazilian revolution not only stirred up an unsuspected spirit of republicanism in quiet Portugal, but it extended its excitement to the republicans of Spain. On the top of this disturbing element came the doings of Major Serpa Pinto, with whom, it now appears, his country has not yet quite reckoned. This daring officer is now reported to be disposed to resign his position in Africa and return to Lisbon, where, under the existing circumstances of excitement, it is even hinted that a part may lie open to him somewhat similar to that played by Marshal Prim in Spain. Major Pinto is 44 years of age, a man of high courage, great resolution, and, it is said, strong ambitions. He has been for twenty years a distinguished figure in the Portuguese army, has an European reputation and wears the decorations of half a dozen or more of continental powers. The surmises and predictions of republican idealists are numerous, some tending to a federated Iberian republic in which thirteen Spanish and six Portuguese Provinces should be represented after the pattern of the United States. This is, of course, but an idea, and there is not only no hint that Portugal is disposed to surrender her identity, but the new King is understood to be not at all a lay figure, but a power likely to require to be reckoned with.

There is apparently good astronomical authority for the expectation that we shall witness a most interesting phenomenon in the course of 1890. A sixth star will be added to the five fixed stars forming the constellation of Cassiopeia. If this star appears in 1890 it will have been seen seven times since the beginning of the Christian era. It was discovered last time by Tycho de Brahe in 1572, who described it as a star of extraordinary brightness, which outshone the stars of first magnitude, and could be seen in the light of day. But after three weeks the brightness faded, and after having been visible for seventeen months it disappeared as suddenly as it had come. The star is on record in the annals of 1264. A. D., and of 945 A. D., during the Emperor Otho's reign. It has been supposed that this heavenly body is the identical Star of Bethlehem, and it seems to appear once in about 315 years. Now, if it be calculated backwards from 945, that would make its appearance coincident with the date of the birth of Christ, and, when the calculation was made from 945 forward, the star was due in 1260, 1575, and 1890. Dr. Palisa, of the Vienna Observatory, who has been questioned on the subject, says that there are no proofs that the Tychocian Star and the Star of 945 are identical. There are many stars which return after a lapse of several years, but there is no authority for the return of a star not seen since 1572. This does not, however, invalidate the probability.

The French papers have been indulging in some of their choicest "billingsgate" against England in the matter of the Portuguese affair. The following is a specimen from *Le National* which also reveals the sore point:—We will not inquire whether England had any just reason to complain of the doings of Major Serpa Pinto; we will only note that it is impossible to be more brutal than the British Government, always true to its own ferocious egotism, ever the true representative of these brave islanders, who would burn a town to cook a chop. * * * True to the system of *faits accomplis*, she occupies Egypt, let us say; and when we respectfully ask her when she will evacuate, she replies, with her smile disclosing her long yellow fangs, "Ah, yes! I will evacuate later on." As the *Times* observes, "it is impossible to be as angry with the French as we should be with other people when they show this sort of temper." The insatiable vanity of the French masses must always be fed by the masters of France, whether Imperial or Republican, with abuse of some neighboring nation. Yesterday it was Italy; to-day it is England; to-morrow it may be Germany again, while there is a kind of good faith in their utter ignorance of other countries, of human nature in general, and even of their own history. Twenty years ago they plunged headlong into the most appalling disasters that have befallen any civilized nation since the downfall of the Roman Empire, because they persuaded themselves that Germany was no match for France in arms, that the Germans were divided, and that many of them were in their hearts hungering to come under the beneficent protecting care of the generous conquerors of Jena. It is probably no use to suggest that they may be making the same sort of mistake over again. At all events it is to be hoped that England will not be weak enough to allow any amount of bluster to disturb her in her protectorate over Egypt, all claim to share in which France forfeited in 1882, by her refusal to co-operate with Great Britain.

The idea is being advocated in England of running the elections for the new County Councils on political party lines. It has been taken up by Sir George Trevelyan, and Mr. Gladstone endorses the action of his lieutenant. In Scotland the proposition does not find favor, on the very just ground that the introduction of party politics into municipal affairs is often productive of much mischief, and this position is illustrated by the example of Edinburgh where, last year, the Home Rule question being introduced into the city council, civic business was neglected, with the result of an increase of taxation for 1890. We have little doubt that the experience of Edinburgh will be the experience of any place where the same influences are allowed to intrude, and we cannot but think Mr. Gladstone is lending the great weight of his name and position to a most mischievous principle. The management of roads, of sanitary and of other municipal affairs not only do not require political considerations to be applied to them, but are almost certain to suffer from their introduction.

The recent Atlantic gales remind us of the "great gale" of 1703, which raged over England and other portions of Europe for an entire week, reaching its greatest height on the 27th November; the greatest gale ever recorded, and as disastrous as any of the hurricanes, cyclones or blizzards of America or the tropics. The loss sustained in London alone was calculated at £2,000,000, and the streets were strewn with the ruins of fallen houses; the number of persons drowned in the floods of the Severn and Thames, and lost on the coast of Holland, or in ships blown from their moorings and never afterwards heard of, was estimated at 8,000. This was exclusive of the men on board the twelve men-of-war which, with 1,800 men and 524 guns, were lost within sight of shore. Seventeen thousand trees in Kent were torn up by the roots, and on an estate in Gloucestershire 600 trees, all about eighty feet in height, were thrown down within a compass of five acres. The Eddystone Lighthouse was destroyed, multitudes of cattle were lost, and in one level 15,000 sheep were drowned. This was the cataclysm referred to by Addison in a line in his famous eulogy of Marlborough—"Such as of late o'er pale Britannia passed." (We only quote from memory, and may not be absolutely correct.) In after years, when the remembrance of the devastation had passed away, many well-informed persons were puzzled as to the meaning of the line until Macaulay explained it in his splendid essay on Addison.

The continuous rumors of the spread of leprosy have received authoritative recognition by the formation of a "National Leprosy Fund"—at a dinner, in aid of which the Prince of Wales recently presided—and by the testimony of no less an authority than Sir Andrew Clark, who stated that "the evidence is conclusive that not only does leprosy now exist in larger measure than in recent years, but that new germinal centres of it are springing up in various quarters; that the old centres are widening; and there is looming before England and the world a condition of affairs which may grow and attain such proportions as to threaten not only our civilization but all that is dearest in the fruits of civilization." As to the possibility of checking the disease when once it has laid hold of its victim but little seems to be known, it is therefore satisfactory to learn that it is in contemplation to found two scholarships for the promotion of medical research both in Europe and Asia. It is to be hoped the attention now attracted to the subject may result in the dread disease being found to be amenable to intelligent medical treatment, the result of a larger knowledge. Should it, however, unhappily not turn out so, it would be difficult to resist the impression that, under incurable conditions, death may be preferable to life, and that the offspring of incurable parents, at all events, should not be allowed to perpetuate so fearful a malady. Even the proper and natural regard for the sanctity of human life may be overstrained in the presence of conditions worse than death, which involve a positive sin against the community at large.

Tippoo Tib, whose name has been prominent for some time in connection with Central African affairs, and who has lately been charged with having told his Manyemas to kill Major Bartelotte if they disliked his treatment of them, is a somewhat remarkable person, and might be a valuable friend if it were not for the slave-raiding with which he is unfortunately, through his extensive operations in ivory, inextricably mixed up. He is described as about 50 years of age, of medium height, and somewhat corpulent. His short beard and close-cropped hair are grizzled. It is a mistake to regard Tippoo as a pure Arab; he is really a half-breed, the son of a Zanzibar Arab and a woman of Bugamoyo; the Zanzibar type comes out in the flattened nose, salient lips, dark bronze skin and superb teeth. His physiognomy is described as intelligent, his bearing full of dignity, his manners distinguished. Some years ago, on Christmas morning, he rowed a boat-race with Frank Pocock, and beat the Englishman by several lengths. He speaks with vivacity, his words being few, energetic and decisive. He usually wears the white robe of the Zanzibaris, with a long grey over-garment with spacious sleeves brodered with silver lace; on his head an embroidered white cap. He understands the distinction between English, French, Germans, Belgians and Portuguese, and is keenly interested in their doings in Africa. Some time ago he expressed a desire to visit Europe; but it is now doubtful if he will care to carry out his intention. In the Manyema country, between Tanganyika and the Lualaba, he is immensely popular. In the neighborhood of Nyangivé he has immense plantations to which thousands of slaves are said to be attached. He is said to affect a somewhat Spartan mode of life, and his character is not altogether ignoble. But he cannot but dread the approach of European influence in Africa. Probably in order to further the Emin Pasha Expedition, Mr. Stanley could see no other course than to disarm the hostility of Tippoo, as far as possible, by professing to take him into confidence.