

The Afghan question is still undecided. Peace and war are trembling in the scales of the diplomatic balance and the world is waiting with bated breath for the result. Though we are assured on every hand that war is inevitable there still seems some room for hope. It may be that the question is even now virtually settled, and that all further interchange of despatches is but a series of manœuvres on the part of each to gain time for preparation. But as no one doubts that the desire of Gladstone and his advisers for peace is both strong and honest, there may still be found a basis of honorable compromise. The peace proclivities of the British administration are a source of weakness in negotiation, but in the event of war, they will become a tower of strength in action. The nation will feel that the war in which such a ministry engages must be a righteous one, and will be a unit in pledging all the resources of the nation to carry it through to the bitter end. The contest will be terrible if it comes, but the boundless resources, bull-dog tenacity and indomitable pluck of the British race, make the ultimate issue scarcely a matter of doubt. The suspicious haste with which the French seem to be forcing a quarrel upon Egypt on a paltry pretext, gives rise to some uncomfortable fears that France and Russia may be acting in concert. France will hardly be rash enough to involve herself in such a struggle without asking herself how Germany would regard her alliance with Russia.

The School.

Prof. Fay, of Tuft's College, recently sent out a circular asking three hundred and fifty College Professors their opinions as to the best modern language equivalent for the Greek required for matriculation in Colleges. As between German and French sixty-seven per cent. of the replies were in favor of German. Regarding the question from the single point of view of the educational value of the study, the only wonder is that the percentage in favor of German was not much larger.

We noticed with approval last week the circular of the Minister of Education setting apart the 8th day of May as a School Arbor Day, and constituting it a holiday for that purpose. We have received a copy of a circular issued by Mr. J. H. Smith, Public School Inspector for the county of Wentworth, to the trustees, teachers and pupils of that county. We note with pleasure that the good work was commenced a year ago in that county, at Inspector Smith's suggestion and with very encouraging results. As we like to give honour to whom honour is due, and as Inspector Smith's circular contains some excellent suggestions we reprint it in full in another column.

How many of the pupils on leaving the public Schools know how to indite, fold and address a letter? It is, we fear, too often the case that the crowded programme leaves no time for instruction in such useful matters. An hour or two of every week could not be more profitably spent than in instructing and exercising the pupils in this very necessary art. Each pupil should be supplied with good letter or note paper, envelopes,

etc. The teacher should indicate the nature of the letter he requires to be written, stating in general terms the contents. Letters to friends and relatives, at home and abroad, letters of travel, description, business, may be required. The variety is inexhaustible. Models might occasionally be given. By way of aid and encouragement the teacher might select a few of those best expressed and read them before the class. He should also approve and exhibit those most neatly written, folded and addressed. The accomplishment thus gained would be of very great value to every pupil in after life.

The *School Guardian* (English), commenting on the report of the Secretary at the recent Conference of the National Union of Elementary Teachers, says that there seems to be a general tendency to supplant the pupil-teacher by the adult assistant. This is a movement in the right direction. There can be no greater mistake in education than to set an immature pupil-teacher, or monitor, to instruct classes of young children. It may be good for the instructor, but it is bad for the children. It is the worst possible economy. The time of the pupils is often doubly wasted, inasmuch as not only is the opportunity for developing their thinking faculties lost, but listless, mechanical habits of mind are formed which hinder all subsequent progress. None but the mature, trained teacher, who understands the working of the child's mind, and the science of education, is fit to teach even the youngest pupils.

Queen's College Journal referring to our remark that if we believed the federation of the Colleges in Toronto would tend to dry up the streams of private benevolence upon which the voluntary institutions depend for support we should not be in favor of federation, alleges that there can be no doubt whatever, that the result indicated would follow federation. We are far from being convinced that this is so. No doubt some few benefactors whose gifts have been largely influenced by local considerations might withhold further contributions. But we see no reason to doubt that, if the federation were rightly managed, a much larger number would become interested in the work, and come forward with liberal gifts. The spirit of emulation aroused between the colleges—not the worthiest motive we admit—would in itself give a powerful stimulus to private benevolence. But these results could be hoped for only as the union became a genuine federation, not a consolidation. Any amalgamation which had a tendency to destroy the individuality of the denominational colleges, and to merge them as literary institutions in University College, we should most strongly deprecate. As we have said before, if federation means simply the forming of a congeries of theological halls around the nucleus of the State College, it would be simply an educational calamity. Whether in Toronto or out of it we want to see the voluntary colleges grow and become strong and great. As there seems some reason to believe that they would do this working side by side in friendly competition better than when measuring themselves by themselves in local isolation, we are in favor of the change.