

CURRENT EVENTS.

The horrors of the great earthquake in Italy were not exaggerated by the first reports. On the contrary, the magnitude of the calamity grows more appalling as we learn more about it. It will be known to succeeding generations as one of the great events of history; and many years must pass before the beautiful provinces of southern Italy recover from its effects. The number of dead is now estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand; the distress and misery cannot be estimated. The Canadian government very promptly sent a contribution of \$100,000 in aid of the relief work, and other countries sent large sums. British and other foreign war ships hurried to the scene, to offer help, and the soldiers of the Italian army took charge of the work of rescue. The survivors from the stricken cities, towns and villages, and many from the surrounding country districts, were taken away as quickly as possible to other parts. The beautiful city of Messina may rise again from its ruins, but its loss as a commercial centre means the loss of the means of livelihood to most of those who were engaged in the fruit trade, which was the principal business of the people of Sicily and Calabria, and which will not quickly find new channels.

Sinister rumours are current in regard to the death of the late Emperor Kuang Hsu. It is said that the Chinese statesman, Yuan Shih Kai, and others, when they saw that the death of the Empress Dowager was near, feared the Emperor's vengeance if he should resume the throne, and caused his death. Yuan Shih Kai has been dismissed from office, but not publicly accused of the murder, excepting by the Chinese reformers, who looked upon the late Emperor as a prisoner in his palace. They loudly demand that his supposed murderer be brought to trial.

The third of February is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mendelssohn, and the twelfth of the month is the hundredth anniversary of Darwin's birth.

A conference to deal with questions relating to the natural resources of North America will meet at Washington on the 18th, at which the Canadian and Mexican governments will be represented.

Astronomers are watching for the re-appearance of Halley's comet, which is due some time this year. They are also searching for a planet which is believed to lie beyond the orbit of Neptune.

There are nine million acres of land in Great Britain and Ireland in need of re-forestation; and the royal commission inquiring into the problem of the unemployed recommends that men now out of work be set to planting trees. Forty years hence the new forests would be self-supporting.

All danger of war in the Balkans is thought to be averted. The Turkish government has accepted the Austro-Hungarian offer of an indemnity for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and these two provinces will no longer be claimed as Turkish territory.

Should the plan of Sir William Willcocks materialize, to irrigate the fertile plains of the Tigris and Euphrates and make them as productive as they were when Nineveh

and Babylon were at the height of their power, Turkey in Asia might become one of the great cotton producing countries of the world. In ancient times Mesopotamia had a population of six million; to-day it has only one-fourth of that number.

Lovers of the picturesque will be sorry to learn that gas engines are soon to take the place of windmills in Holland, where power is required in lifting the water out of ditches to keep the fields from being overflowed.

The value of the wireless telegraph was seen in a recent occurrence at sea, when two great ocean steamships came into collision in a fog near Long Island. Five other passenger ships and two government vessels caught the message calling for help, and hurried to the place, and hundreds of lives were saved.

A French chemist claims to have accidentally discovered how to make diamonds; but the method is a costly one, and it is doubtful whether it would pay.

The authorities in India are seriously considering the erection of the proposed bridge to connect Ceylon with the mainland. This bridge, which would be nearly forty miles in length, following the line of a coral reef, would be no more difficult to build than the line of railway that is built along the Florida keys. One of its principal uses would be to carry Indian labourers to work in the tea gardens of Ceylon, as men are carried by our harvest excursions to work in the wheat fields of western Canada.

The international commission appointed to settle disputes arising from lumber operations on the St. John river has a difficult work before it. The matter is one of considerable importance in international relations, involving rights under the Ashburton treaty in respect to the diversion of water and the use of the river where it forms a part of the boundary line.

The new rulers of Venezuela and Haiti are quietly established as the heads of their respective governments, and just at present there is no civil war going on in all the three Americas.

A valuable discovery of asbestos is reported in the Province of Quebec, at some distance from the workings that have heretofore been yielding most of the asbestos found on this continent.

In picture study have a definite number of good pictures to be studied during the year, and see that every child is provided with one. Help them to see wherein its beauty lies. Let them write about the picture and mount it. Give a little study to the artist, his biography, history of his time, conditions which led him to the painting of certain pictures, to distinguish certain artists' pictures by their style. Tell them where the original pictures are to be found in the great galleries—in fact, study pictures just as we do literature, getting all the fine thought possible out of them.—*School Report.*