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THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN,

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Notes of the Week.

JAPAN has set an illustrious example for the Oriental nations in the matter of popular education. She has just passed a law compelling all children between the ages of six and fourteen to attend school from three to six hours a day for thirty-two weeks in the year, all expenses to be paid out of the public treasury.

AFTER a keenly-contested election the Scott Act has been maintained in Fredericton, N. B. For some time a repeal agitation was conducted and feeling became very excited as the decisive day approached. Both parties worked hard and put their ablest orators on the platform. The discussion was keen and it might have been supposed from the appearance of things on the evening preceding the voting day that grave trouble might arise. However, matters quieted down and the Act is reported to have been sustained by a majority of thirteen. Interest now centres in St. Catharines where voting on the Scott Act takes place on the 19th inst.

THE last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway has been driven with the accustomed ceremonies. This gigantic undertaking is now almost completed, and next spring the traveller can pass along this transcontinental highway from ocean to ocean. All Canadians will sincerely hope that it will help to bind more closely the far-separated members of our young nationality before which there are great possibilities. It will be a highway to China and Japan and the East and West will be nearer neighbours. For generations to come the people will not forget that the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway from its inception to its completion was a very costly undertaking.

OUR Scotch friends are not above taking an educational hint from Canada. The *Christian Leader* says: The Minister of Education in the Province of Ontario seems to be impressed with the notion that modern methods, ruled by payment by results, have driven from the schoolroom half its pleasures and killed the innocent joys of the children. He has therefore resolved to make each Friday afternoon a time for literary recreation and social school enjoyment. There is to be singing and recitations, spelling-bees, debates, and so on—all of which may have as much educational value as the more formal work for which they are to be substituted on at least one after noon in the week.

WITH almost general approval Great Britain has entered on a war with Burmah. Great jealousy was apparent when France and Germany sought distant conquests, but the cry for the annexation of King Thebaw's territory in no respect differs from recent attempts of these powers to annex distant dependencies. Thebaw may be as black as he is painted, still that is not a satisfactory reason for making war upon him. He no doubt acted in a very arbitrary manner toward a certain trading company; but it has not yet been conclusively shown that all reasonable means were used to secure a redress of the grievances com-

plained of. There seems to be a too great readiness to drift into little wars.

THE disestablishment question has burst into fierce blaze during the election campaign in Scotland. At the present moment it is, indeed, a burning question and however anxious the politicians may be to have it extinguished all attempts in that direction only add fuel to the flame. From his campaign manifesto it was obviously Mr. Gladstone's intention to leave disestablishment in abeyance, and his Edinburgh speech was in harmony with that intention. But judging from the tone of feeling represented by the leading Scottish journals it would appear that even Mr. Gladstone's persuasive eloquence is powerless to keep the disestablishment of the Scottish Church out of the range of practical politics.

ONCE more a tale of disaster comes from the upper lakes. The splendidly-equipped steamer *Algoma* was totally wrecked near Isle Royal on Lake Superior. Between thirty and forty of the passengers and crew perished. A severe gale prevailed on the lake and the difficulty of navigating the vessel was increased by a blinding snow-storm. In trying to gain the shelter of the island the *Algoma* struck a reef from which it was impossible to dislodge her. The captain says it was his intention to make for open water but it was too late. Had he been sure of his reckoning and waited for daylight it is possible that the calamity would have been averted, as the C. P. R. steamers are model craft and can cope with the heaviest sea.

"CALVIN," a regular and racy contributor to the *Philadelphia Presbyterian*, concludes his last paper thus: "The religious and non-religious who have proclaimed the death of Calvinism so loudly, and just as their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers did before them, would be discouraged if facts could possibly discourage them. To-day I read that, at a Huguenot festival held in Berlin, on the 30th ult., in observance of the two hundredth anniversary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, in the presence of the Crown Prince, Frederick William, a bust of Calvin was unveiled, with imposing ceremonies, at the French Orphan Asylum. Is there never to come an end to these tributes to John Calvin? Just now it doesn't seem likely. Is Calvinism dead?"

THE Roman Catholic Mission at Annam, which it had taken years to build up, has been utterly wrecked rather than strengthened, as was hoped would be the case, by the war of the French upon that country. Whether rightly so or otherwise, the natives held to an intimate relation between Catholic propagandism in Annam and the operations of the French forces against them, and they hence have done their best, rather their worst, against churches, schools, convents, asylums—in short, whatever seemed to them to represent the enemy. And it is now said that the first reports of the destruction of the Roman Catholic population were not at all exaggerated. The total number of victims is now given at 35,000, and it is added that of the whole native Christian population of the district where the massacre occurred, only some four thousand escaped.

WHILE the *Pall Mall Gazette* was bringing into the light of day the immoralities that disgrace England its contemporaries were ominously reticent. Now that Mr. Stead has been convicted they gloat over his misfortune. What does it mean? Why not a word in condemnation of the disgraceful doings which the *Gazette* disclosed, and why the savage invective with which its editor is now assailed? In his crusade Mr. Stead has made serious mistakes. One was in seeking principally to brand a class with infamy while, unhappily, the evil he attacked is only too general. Another serious mistake was the abduction of Eliza Armstrong. This experiment, made to show the facility with which the crime he denounced could be perpetrated, was a serious and unjustifiable blunder. The exultation over Mr. Stead's discomfiture will be short-lived. The work he has done will lead to sys-

tematic effort for the suppression of a species of crime that is a burning disgrace to civilization.

EXEMPTION from taxation, whether enjoyed by clergymen or civil servants, is doomed and properly so. Class distinctions are now generally recognized as at variance with the spirit of the age. The sooner this tax exemption question is settled the better for all concerned. The way, however, in which the civic authorities of Toronto have attempted to cut the Gordian knot is not calculated to impress their constituents with an exalted idea of their wisdom. They have indicated their intention of invoking a solution of the difficulty from the Ontario Legislature. That is all right; but where is the fairness of making invidious distinctions in the meantime? The well-salaried incumbents of wealthy congregations continue to receive the advantage of exemption while those who are discharging ministerial functions in other capacities are taxed to the full amount the law permits. But the worst feature of this crusade against exemption is the attempt to compel ministers without charge who have only a slender and precarious income to bear a burden from which their more fortunate brethren are exempt. There ought to be no invidious distinction; either tax all, or exempt all, while the anomalous custom of exemption lasts.

THE descendants of the Huguenots have, says *The Week*, been celebrating the bi-centenary of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. It is an old story, but it was a terrible one in its day, and even the annals of the Church of Rome contain few worse. By the monarch whom Rome delighted to honour, under the instigation of his devout wife and his Jesuit confessor, thousands of the best and most industrious citizens of France, guilty of nothing but of not being of the same religion as the King and Pope, were slaughtered, tortured, sent to the galleys, pillaged of all they possessed; and hundreds of thousands were driven into exile. "Forbidden," says the writer of a good paper in an English journal, "to assemble in public worship under the penalty of torture or death for the men and imprisonment for women; or to worship privately under the penalty of being sent to the galleys for life; precluded from singing their psalms or hymns by the threat of fine, imprisonment or the galleys; forbidden to instruct their children in the faith; commanded to send their boys to Jesuit schools, their daughters to nunneries at their own expense; their churches demolished; their pastors ordered to leave the country within fifteen days on pain of death; themselves forbidden to pass the frontier or to attempt to escape from France; their marriages by their own ministers declared to be illegal; refused burial for their dead; their Bibles and books of devotion burned; forbidden to exercise any profession, to fill any public office or even to work as servants or artisans without a certificate that they had become Catholics;—the Huguenots who determined to be faithful to their convictions were hunted like wild beasts." This persecution was nearly contemporary with, but prior to, the enactment of the Penal Laws against Catholics in Ireland, and Irish Catholic troopers served in the persecuting armies of Louis XIV. as they had served in the persecuting armies of the House of Austria. If anybody is to be held responsible for the past, all must be held responsible alike. The present rulers of France would be surprised if they were called to account for the Revocation of the Edict and the Dragonnades. Is it less unjust to call the British Government or the British people of the present day to account for the intolerant severities of the Penal Code? The Penal Code was after all only a ruthless act of self-defence on the part of those whom the Irish Parliament of James had doomed to confiscation and death by a sweeping Act of Attainder, whereas the French persecution, which exceeded it a hundred-fold in cruelty, was totally unprovoked; had the Protestants dealt with the Catholics as the Catholics dealt with the Protestants there would now be no Irish Catholics to complain of the Penal Code.