

We were astonished some days ago to read in a country contemporary a virulent attack on Halifax Society. It seemed to us at the time of so low and scandalous a nature that we thought it scarcely worth while to give it any attention, and we now refrain from reproducing it for the same reason. It appears, however, that it has found its way into several other papers, and has naturally caused no little indignation and annoyance. It is difficult to imagine what can have prompted such a wholesale slander. Emanating from a distance it would seem that the writer can scarcely be in a position to know whereof he writes, and under any circumstances a libel which from the generality of its nature cannot be met does not redound to the credit or reputation of the journal which so rashly published it.

In the United States there have passed away during 1889, Miss Maria Mitchell, an astronomer of eminent standing, who some 40 years ago wrote a charming manual called, "The Orbs of Heaven;" John Ericson, the eminent physicist and engineer; Mrs. Hayes, wife of ex-President Hayes, a lady much lamented; and Jefferson Davis, ex-President of the Confederate States. France has lost General Faidherbe, one of the ablest commanders of the Franco-German war, and M. Chevreulle, her most distinguished chemist, at the great age of 103; while Russia loses the former energetic Minister of the Interior, Count Tolstoi. To these may be added Charlotta Patti, sister of the better known Adelina; Father Gavazzi, the well-known Italian agitator and preacher against the Papacy; the Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria, whose mysterious and melancholy end is still fresh in the remembrance of all; and the devoted Father Damien, who gave his life to minister to lepers, and obtained a fitting crown of martyrdom.

The birth of a New Year should be an era of renewed good resolutions. These with many do not always blossom towards fruition without encouragement. If it were not for the gradually strengthening genial influences of Spring the blossom would wither and fall, and the rich fruition of golden autumn would be missing. Nationally and Provincially the past year has given us all the encouragement that a courageous people should demand to start them in the race for prosperity. The man is but the type of the nation. Without some measure of success, or at least without the consciousness that he has managed to hold his own, the individual man, unless he be of exceptional fortitude to bear up against adversity, is apt—it is the weakness of human nature—to lapse into despondency. Let us hope there are but few who have been so dealt by the fates or by the untoward accidents of life that they are altogether flattened, beaten and discouraged for future and more sound and vigorous effort for all good, material prosperity included. With these few, perhaps somewhat true and hackneyed, reflections, we wish, with all heartiness, to all our friends—and we are thankful to be able to say that their name is legion—a happy and prosperous New Year.

Sir Julius Vogel, formerly Premier of New Zealand, a gentleman whose opinions on Colonial matters have generally commanded attention and respect, has recently contributed an article to the *Nineteenth Century* which is scarcely calculated to add to the prestige of his discernment. Sir Julius considers that the proposed conference in the interests of Imperial Federation may help that cause by declaring with "all possible authority"—whatever such a phrase may mean—that no Colony has, or can have, any right to declare its independence. We do not hesitate to declare our attachment to British rule as it exists, on the broadest grounds of consideration of what is best for Canada under present conditions, and we have always strongly deprecated the premature and mischievous agitations of unsettling questions, but it is far from difficult to imagine circumstances under which it might be not only just and expedient, but absolutely necessary, to a great Colony to take the step which the obstinate shortsightedness of George the Third forced on the Colonies which are now part of the United States. Sir Julius Vogel has on many occasions proved himself to be a statesman of no mean calibre, but in advocating such a theory as that to which we have alluded he certainly seems to have evinced a retrogression from nineteenth century ideas which is not a little surprising. His selection of the *Nineteenth Century* for the promulgation of an exploded political dogma seems to us particularly unhappy.

The English list of the more or less illustrious dead during 1889, comprises John Bright, whose well-known character and career require no comment; the venerable Duchess of Cambridge, mother of the present Duke, at the advanced age of 91; Lord Blachford, for many years Under Secretary for the Colonies, in whose term of office the British North America Act was passed; the Rt. Revd. J. H. Mackarness, formerly Bishop of Oxford. Lord Malmesbury, a veteran minister and diplomatist, who has published an interesting book of his long reminiscences. Richd. Pigott, the forger of the *Times-Parnell* letters, who committed suicide at Madrid, and, singularly enough, Mr. Macdonald, mang. of the *Times*, who was so unpleasantly compromised by Pigott's unscrupulousness. Sir Samuel Morton Peto, Bart., the eminent engineer who constructed the Balaclava Railway at the time of the Crimean War; Sir Arthur Gore Ouseley, Mus. Doc., an eminent musician and composer; and the pious, if eccentric, Lord Adalbert Cecil, who met his death by drowning in the Bay of Quinte, swell out the list, but perhaps the chief ravages of the great consoler have been among the *literati*. From their ranks will be missed the popular novelist Wilkie Collins; Eliza Cook, poetess, essayist, and magazine writer and proprietor; Ed. Bradley, better known as "Cuthbert Bede;" Martin Farquhar Tupper, the author of "Proverbial Philosophy;" Dr. Chas. MacKay, poet, author and journalist; and last but not least the poet Robt. Browning. To these must be added the name of Sir Daniel Gooch, another eminent English engineer.

The epidemic of influenza which has spread over almost every portion of Europe is still extending its ravages, and it is now reported to have reached New York. If it continues to hold its course it may possibly overrun the whole American Continent, or at least North America. In such an event, favored as Nova Scotia is with exemption from so many natural inflictions, we can scarcely hope to escape this visitation. An attack of influenza is not generally a very serious affair, and perhaps if the epidemic is in the air, it is next to impossible to say how an attack may be averted. All that can be recommended is as much care as can be taken to guard against catching cold.

At the close of an old and the opening of a new year it is natural to think of those more or less known to the world, who have passed to their rest in the interval between one milestone and another of the journey of life. Canada will miss this year the Hon. Alex. Morris, one of the most upright of her statesmen; Chief Justice Palmer of P. E. I.; the Hon. John Pope, late Minister of Railways; Judge Gray of British Columbia; Lieut.-Col. Lamontagne, D. A. G. of No. 4 Military District; Lt.-Col. De Bellefeuille, District Paymaster of No. 5, and the gallant Major Short, who lost his valuable life in the performance of duty; the Hon. T. B. Pardee, late Crown Lands Commissioner of Ontario, Archbishop Lynch of Toronto, and the Hon. Sydney Smith, a former cabinet minister. Nova Scotia has lost the venerable Dr. Rand; and her eminent geologist, Dr. Honeyman; and Halifax still remembers with regret the philanthropic J. S. Maclean. The late Lt.-Col. Mackinlay completes the list.

We have recorded before in general terms the great material progress which our Dominion has made in the last year or two—especially in that which has just now gone down the stream of time. Among these may be reckoned a considerable increase of the facilities for inter-communication between the provinces, largely due to the energy and enterprise of the C. P. R., one good result of which is the competition which has been provoked by it of the G. T. R. Even as things stand the shortening of the journey to Montreal and the West is no inconsiderable advance, while other lines which have been surveyed promise yet further facilities. In every branch of manufacture the Dominion is advancing "by leaps and bounds," and as our population increases, home markets will of course assume larger proportions. The pessimists have made a gallant, or at least an obstinate stand, but pessimism is—let us be thankful—well nigh dead, and there are but few to-day of the journals, which a few months ago openly hankered after closer connection with our southern neighbours, that have not "struck their topsails," as Southey says in a fine passage of "Madoc," to the strong breeze of awakening Canadian patriotism. One source of wealth to which it strikes us Canadian and especially Nova Scotian capitalists should now give their serious attention is iron ship-building. It is not creditable to us that our splendid iron resources should be neglected as they are. It is acknowledged that our iron is not inferior to that of Sweden—why then, except for lack of spirit and energy, should we not take our place as one of the first iron countries of the world? Let our citizens of this Province ponder this and many other commercial problems which lie open to them, and see if the year 1890 cannot be marked by an advance which will outstrip that accomplished in 1889. These are the ideas with which the new year should be inaugurated.

Mr. Austin Corbin and others have been credited with the idea of establishing a line of trans-atlantic steamships built expressly for first-class passengers and mails, and therefore more expressly adapted for high speed and quick passages than even the *City of Paris* and similar vessels. The idea has gone further, and plans and carefully calculated working drawings of an express Atlantic Steamship, which exceeds in theoretical performance even that hinted at by Mr. Corbin have been seen by the editor of the *Engineering and Mining Journal*, and by him endorsed as quite practical. "The argument of the naval constructor is that it is as essential to obtain appropriate and economic service by sea, to divide steamships into classes, as it has long been found necessary to do on land in train service. That even in the case of the *City of Paris* and similar vessels the efforts have all been in the wrong direction, and that it would be equally sensible to attach a few Pullman and ordinary coaches to every freight train, and by enormously increasing the locomotive power of a few of them run these at express speed, and look upon the result as a wonderful achievement and the perfection of railroading. In regard to the proposed vessel, no matter what size she is, the displacement is reduced to a minimum in proportion to her size by the abandonment of freight: 400 passengers and their effects, and everything connected with provisioning them for five days, together with the weight of mails carried would not exceed 150 tons, so that in the case of a steamship 400 feet long, as called for by the plans above referred to, the carrying capacity demanded is a mere trifle in comparison to the total, and in effect the proportions of weight and speed resolve themselves into those governing the construction of a torpedo boat." A steamship constructed on this principle would make the run with ease between Sandy Hook and Queenstown in four days and twelve hours, and having only passengers and mails to land, and consequently short detention in port, should be able to make five trips a month. This scheme for an ocean express is now well advanced, and the movers in it would do well to consider the advisability of making the run between Halifax and Milford Haven. By adopting this route the time of the ocean passage would be reduced to a minimum, and a fast express over the Intercolonial in connection with the Flying Yankee at St. John would land the passengers and mails in Boston and New York in twenty-four and thirty hours respectively after their arrival here.