CANADIAN ITEMS.

Sir A. J. Smith has offered the Baptists of Dorchester, N.B., a site for a church edifice in the Shiretown of Westmoreland.

The St. Croix *Courier* says practical steps have been taken in St. Stephen, N. B., towards the erection of a cotton factory.

Mr. George Durdle, Mapleton's missing plasterer and school trustee, has been heard from. He is at present residing in Nebraska.

The *Moniteur Acadian* learns that Louis Gosselin, of St. Marie, Kent county, has discovered a coal-mine which promises to be rich and of good quality.

Tomatoe boxes, 40,000, and onion boxes, 25,000, are among the items of a contract being filled by a Nova Scotia firm, J. Ford & Sons, of Milton, for the West Indies.

A precocious St. Thomas youngster last week beheaded all his father's fowls, excepting one, in the hope of getting a living headless rooster. The experiment failed.

Thomas Jones, an old resident of Camborne, was found leaning against a fence about a mile north of Cobourg, and was so badly frozen that he died a few days afterwards.

The Presbyterian congregations of Percy and Campbellford have appropriated as follows for mission purposes:—Home Mission, $89 84; Foreign Mission, $41.95; Colleges, $19.56.

Mr. Kenneth McKenzie, one of the most extensive farmers of Manitoba, and formerly of Puslinch, Wellington County, this year realized 75,000 bushels of wheat from his crops.

One car load of concentrated gold ore was shipped from this city to Detroit yesterday. Twelve cars of iron ore were at the same time sent to Buffalo, N.Y.—*Belleville Intelligencer.*

Miss A. Cuthbertson, daughter of the Rev. Geo. Cuthbertson, of Wyoming, who has been organist of the Presbyterian Church in that town, was recently presented with a gold watch and a chain and purse of money by friends.

Guelph *Herald*:—Galt, the truly good village, was horrified last Sunday when a train or two of Sabbath breaking cars ran through the town. Then, there was the Grand River, too—it was running through the good town all Sunday long.

Says the Halifax *Herald*:—The Starr Manufacturing Company have made and sold this year about 18,000 pairs of skates, more than their average sales for the last five years; and have also received orders, which they are unable to fill, for 14,000 pair more.

It was stated in the Carleton Place *Herald* that the town hall there was unsafe. The *Central Canadian*, on the contrary, says it has been informed by the builder of the hall that the floor is capable of sustaining safely any number of people that could possibly be put upon it.

A new and very valuable iron magnetic mine, judging from the specimen shown, is now being opened up in lot 2, in the 2nd concession of Madoc. A gang of men have been at work for some time getting out ore, and preparations are being made to ship 2,000 tons this winter. It not only promises to be rich, but of vast extent.

One of the instruments of the Bell Telephone Company was placed in Sheriff Harding's office, St. John, recently, and several legal offices are about to be connected with it. This Company is making rapid progress, having twenty-five instruments in connection with the main office, and new places are being opened daily. The wires are about to be extended out of town.

The officers of the Grimsby Agricultural Society for the present year are:—M. J. Dalton, President; J. H. Buckbee, Vice-President; R. W. Cobb, Secretary-Treasurer, Directors, David Jackson, Cyrus Press, Dr. McMurchie, Murray McCollum, J. S. Bates, Bruce Muir, R. M. Griffith, M. O. Merritt, Oliver Tallman. Auditors, Jeremiah Collins and D. W. Eastman.

At a regular communication of Brougham Union Masonic Lodge, held at Brougham, the following officers were duly installed by R. W. Bro. Judge Dartnell, D.D.G.M.:—I. P. M., Wm. H. Smith; W. M., R. Stokes; S. W., J. Palmer, jr.; J. W., J. D. McAvoy; S. D., Ira Palmer; J. D., James Waddingham; I. D., S. G. Picket; D. of C., T. C. McAvoy; Stewards, P. M. D. W. Ferrier, M. C. Linton.

At the annual meeting of the Aldborough Branch Agricultural Society, held at the Town Hall, Rodney, January 8th, the following officers were elected:—Neil Currie, President; J. N. Ford, Vice-President; E. D. Humphrey, Secretary-Treasurer; Directors, Duncan McArthur, Jas. Jamison, John B. Campbell, J. E. McBride, A. Humphrey, John McGregor, Thomas Kerr, John J. Stalker, and A. Pool.

Mr. E. P. Leonard, the popular and efficient engineer of the Portland N.B., fire department, was presented with a live monkey the other day. The little fellow came all the way from the Island of Mauritius, and was brought out specially by Mr. William Paterson for Mr. Leonard. The animal forms an endless source of amusement to visitors and others in the engine-house at Indiantown.

A summary of immigration statistics has been prepared by Mr. Wm. Hespeler, Government Immigration Agent for Manitoba and the North-West Territories. It deals only with those persons who have been accommodated at the Government sheds, Winnipeg, during the nine months which mark the immigration epoch in 1879. This gives a total of 2,084 persons accommodated at the sheds; but the number is very small when compared with the great influx of workingmen during the last year.

The typhus or typhoid fever in Dartmouth, N.S., is still occasioning much concern. It seems that, though the fever was known to be contagious, one of the coloured people who died of it was "waked" in the manner usual with negroes, and many persons, not only from Dartmouth, but the city, crowded into a small room, and remained there singing hymns all night. The result was the spreading of the disease in Dartmouth and its importation into Halifax. Several cases have broken out among coloured families, caught from those who attended the "wake."

We also hope to see provision made for a division of Algoma into three electoral counties at the approaching session of the Legislature. Manitoulin and the adjacent islands, with the portions of the North Shore adjacent thereto, to form one division; the North Shore from the dividing line eastward to Michipicoten, together with St. Joseph's Island, embraces sufficient territory to make a very large county as the central one; and from Michipicoten to Pigeon River would be a county abundantly large enough for any representative to attend to.—*Pioneer.*

A carpenter named Henry Isaac, who lived in St. Catharines for some time, and resided on Vine street, emigrated to Manitoba last summer and took up his residence at Emerson. He was accompanied by his wife and child. A letter was received in St. Catharines, stating that Mr. Isaac had the misfortune to have both of his feet frozen, and that the injury was so severe as to necessitate amputation of both feet to prevent blood poisoning. From Emerson he was conveyed to Fort Pembina, where he now lies under the care of Dr. Smith.

Mr. J. O. Cote, for some years Assistant Clerk of the Privy Council, has been appointed to succeed the late Mr. Himsworth. Mr. Cote was admitted a Notary Public of Lower Canada in 1841, was was Deputy Registrar of Berthier 1842-3, and was appointed Assistant Clerk to the Privy Council on 1st July, 1872. He is the author of Political Appointments and Elections in Canada, a second edition of which was published in Ottawa in 1866. His successor will probably be a brother of the late Mr. Himsworth, who has been employed in the office for many years.

OUR CABLE LETTER.

Topics that are Attracting Attention in London.

ENGLAND'S RELATIONS WITH FRANCE.

Manitoba as the Wheat Market of the World.

PROSPECTS OF CANADIAN ANNEXATION.

The Unkind Things British Statesmen are Saying of Each Other.

SPLIT IN THE LIBERAL RANKS.

People Dying of Starvation in Ireland.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RELIEF PLAN.

Reported Tattooing of the Noses of the Sailor Princes.

[BY CABLE TO THE MAIL.]

LONDON, Jan. 17.

The week has been dull and the weather dreary. The uneasy situation of affairs on the Continent has served to rouse the newspapers to a show of activity. France has for the moment absorbed public attention. It is not so much that little confidence is placed in the Ministry, or that Germany views it with distrust. It is not that the popular Count de St. Vallier's resignation of the embassy at Berlin is believed to endanger the cause of peace. It is mainly that M. de Freycinet has no stable majority on which he may count, and that Gambetta, who made the Cabinet, is unable to support it. Moreover, there is unquestionably a disposition on the part of France to occupy Tonquin, and assure the execution of the Treaty concluded in 1874 with the Empire of Anam, by which this important artery of commerce was to be opened to European trade. France has come to believe that this occupation is essential to the development of her influence in the China seas. Preoccupied with the difficulties of her home politic, she has hitherto given little attention to the grave colonial problems which have arisen in the extreme east, and she has begun to feel that while England fills these lands with her name, her commerce, and her language, her own power has weakened as her neighbour's power was consolidated; hence there is a slightly embittered feeling between the two nations, which the late domestic changes were not calculated to engender. Then there is the report of the Russo-German affray which excites universal interest.

POLITICS IN ENGLAND.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* taunts the Opposition with mysterious reserve in refusing to discuss national affairs. The people believe that the prospect of Germany attacking Russia is daily increasing. Sir Stafford Northcote, at the Conservative banquet at Leeds, after comparing Mr. Gladstone to Zadkiel, of Almanac fame, and declaring that his prophecies are ridiculous, and always disproved by the event, reminded his hearers that Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet turned Russia in the hour of her triumph from the gates of Constantinople, and said that there was a good time coming, and that it would be folly to bewail the misfortunes of the past. He added that the fears of distress in Ireland were increasing, and that the Government was rapidly maturing measures of relief. The Right Hon. W. H. Smith, First Lord of the Admiralty, claimed at the same meeting that Lord Beaconsfield's policy was peace, and that no annexation of territory has ever been contemplated unless Imperial interests compelled it. The independence of Afghanistan had been respected as long as was possible. Sir William Vernon Harcourt, in a ringing speech at Oxford, declared the burden of all the criminal blunders that had been committed lay on the Tories, and prophesied that the first day of the new Parliament would be the last day of Tory rule. Sir Charles Dilke writes a letter proposing to call the attention of Parliament to the executions at Cabul. Mr. Gladstone attacked Sir Stafford Northcote's "Blundering misinterpretation of the finances" on Friday. Mr. Forster wrote to approve the annexation of the Transvaal, on the ground that the Boers protect slavery, and the English will destroy it. This declaration of Mr. Forster has much annoyed the Liberals. Indeed, Mr. Leonard Courtney, M.P., formerly one of the editors of the *Times*, writes to that journal to say the same line of argument would justify an iniquitous annexation of Afghanistan. There are everywhere indications of a break in the Liberal councils on the question of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy.

THE PROSPECTS OF ANNEXATION.

The newspapers, in discussing the probability that Canada will join the Union, say that Manitoba develops a capacity to supply the civilized world with wheat, and therein lies a source of renewed strength to the Empire. The Conservatives attack Mr. Gladstone for lending his support to the Southern Confederacy, and Mr. Gladstone replies that his sentiments were always friendly to the North, even Hamilton Fish acquitting him of conscious hostility. In a word, the two Cabinet Councils which met on Thursday and Friday had an extraordinary number of momentous subjects to consider, but as there is no immediate necessity to calm the public mind on any topic, or to lead to any particular direction, none of the business there transacted has been published, either officially or unofficially.

DEATHS FROM STARVATION IN IRELAND.

Irish questions also absorb deep attention, and that of the famine more than all else. Cases of actual starvation are reported in the papers day after day, proving that the distress threatens to become equally fatal as the famine in Silesia. A few days ago a woman was admitted to the Killarney workhouse bringing one of her children dead in her arms. Another case is reported this morning of a woman having died of starvation in Kilkenny. This county is now invaded by great numbers of tramps, who have left the distressed districts. They roam about at large, and in consequence of the inefficiency of the police, burglaries and robberies are committed every day. In Dublin, Sligo and Mayo large crowds of people are seen daily marching through the streets carrying black flags and poles surmounted by loaves of bread. Canon MacDermott says that in Mayo, there are seven or eight thousand people actually without wood or fuel. In Galway the labourers refuse to work at the rate of two shillings or eighteen pence a day.

THOSE OBNOXIOUS PROCESS-SERVERS.

Another serious disturbance is reported as having taken place between the policemen and the people at Kelving, Mayo. The cause was the obnoxious process-server, who had to be escorted in his duty by the police. The process-server was wounded and the eviction processes were seized by the people and destroyed. The *Daily News* has a striking leader on this case, and the many cases of resistance to the police and process-servers that have occurred in the West, commenting on the inoffensive character of the Irish outbreaks compared with those of past generations, the absence of extreme cruelties, the *Daily News* thinks, is an indication of the progress of Irish civilization, as marked as the progress in the highlands of Scotland. Davitt and others appeared for trial during the week, but the examination was postponed because of technical defects in the indictment.

DEVELOPMENT OF IRELAND'S RESOURCES.

Attention is seriously directed to the necessity of developing the industrial and mineral resources of Ireland. The action of the Duchess of Marlborough in furthering the use of Irish poplins in the decoration of Dublin Castle meets with warm approval and steady imitation. Letters have been published in the London journals urging capitalists to look into the question of developing the iron ore in Sligo county, and recommending the better working of the peat deposits which should be good sources of wealth and provide abundant occupation for the peasantry.

PRACTICAL AND BENEFICIAL RELIEF.

The Viceroy, the Duke of Marlborough, announces a plan of giving relief to the distressed districts by means of loans to the landlords on liberal terms through the Board of Works, the money is to be spent in the carrying out of works of public utility, and which shall be completed in six months' time. A quarter of a million dollars have already been loaned on this plan. It is hoped by carrying out the Viceroy's scheme, the people will be able to earn enough money to carry them and their families through the winter, and the public works, such as railroads, embankments and drainage, will eventually prove of immense benefit in enabling the industrial and agricultural interests to be developed in future. If the present distress should result in English capital being directed to opening direct and complete railroad communication with the West of Ireland, it is believed that in future the Irish farmers will find it possible to compete with the French and Belgian peasants, who are now enabled to pour vast quantities of articles for daily consumption into England.

DESECRATION OF THE ALTAR.

The sensation of the week in Catholic circles has been the discussions about the attempt made by a crazy Italian this day week in the Italian Catholic church of St. Peter's in Hatton Garden to murder one of the fathers while officiating at the altar. The priest, frightened, ran away, whereupon the miscreant fired, apparently at the altar, for he succeeded in setting fire to the drapery about the altar. Cardinal Manning calls upon the faithful to do some of their religious offices as reparation for the desecration that occurred. In the first place, he wishes them to make confession, in the second to attend the general Communion, urging also that men, women and children should five times daily repeat the "Glory be to the Father," and should honour the five sacred wounds of Jesus and the Sacred Heart wounded in the house of its friends. Good Catholics should testify their sorrow and humiliation by these acts. There is a rumour that Cardinal Manning censures the priest for leaving the altar. The *Tablet* says that the shots were fired before mass had proceeded so far as to forbid the abandonment of the altar. The priest had said the *Credo in Unum*, and the shots were fired before he could say the *Deum*. A triduum of reparation is being kept in the Italian Church.

SOCIETY'S CROWNING SIN.

The Bishop of Peterborough has caused a little stir by declaring that the crowning sin of social life is not intemperance but impurity. Moreover, the controversy concerning improper use of narcotics continues unabated. The charge is now made that chloral, morphia, synip and hydrate of chloral, are ruining thousands of homes, and that the habit of opium eating has a hold among London ladies that has never been suspected beyond the pale of the medical profession. Meanwhile, the belles are rejoicing that Mr. MacTear's experiments have come to nought, and that the gems which glisten in pretty ears at the opera or gleam on snowy necks at the Queen's drawing-rooms are as priceless as ever.

TATTOOED PRINCES.

There is another event social that has caused Mayfair to totter on its base. The announcement has been made, no one known where, to the effect that the Prince of Wales' two sons, who are serving on board the Bacchante, have been tattooed on the nose with India ink. The society journals are hysterical on the subject. It appears that the symbol of the broad arrow has been artistically imprinted on either of the princely nostrils. The thought of bowing the knee to a tattooed king is altogether too much for Mrs. Grundy. The sacrilege wrought upon the countenances of the Lord's anointed has provoked a torrent of indignation. *Vanity Fair* comes forward to stem the tide. It has learned on excellent authority, from a source which it believes to be peculiarly reliable, hinting indeed that it is officially charged to make the announcement, that the mark on the side of the nose is only an eighth of an inch long. This has far allayed the excitement.

GOSSIP IN CLUBLAND.

In Clubland great interest is taken in the wordy duels between Sir Garnet Wolseley and the bold Doctor Russell, arising from the charges made by the latter that the British showed great inhumanity in the Transvaal. Journalistic sympathy is naturally with Dr. Russell, who is regarded as an honorable and prudent *litérateur*, who is not in any way disposed to libel his countrymen. The clubs are also applauding the action of the Duke of Cambridge in reducing his rents 15 per cent., and there was some little satisfaction expressed this morning when the *Gazette* was brought to the breakfast tables and found to contain the appointment of Mr. Robert Hart, Inspector of Chinese Customs, to be Companion of the Bath.

INCREASE OF PAUPERS.

Both scientists, literary men and the public at large are interested in an official report of the poor laws, which has just been issued, and which shows that there are 92,482 paupers in London, being an increase of 8,338 over the showing of last year.

ARREST OF A CONFIDENCEMAN.

A Man Bound for Toronto Swindled out of Five Dollars.

LONDON, Jan. 18.—A confidence man, giving his name as Michael Quinlan, was arrested here this evening by Detective Murphy and G. W. R. constable Logan. It seems that as the 8.40 express train was passing up he accosted a man named Graham, *en route* from Manitoba to Toronto, and asked him to change a $20 bill, Graham could not do so, when Quinlan said: "Well, lend me $5 till I pay a friend, and when the conductor comes around I'll pay you." Graham did so, but when the conductor came around, he found that Quinlan was not on board. The victim rode as far as London East, when he walked back to the city, and to-night the confidence man walked right into the hotel where Graham is stopping, and was at once arrested.

Citizens' Law in Virginia.

WINCHESTER, Va., Jan 17.—Seven mounted men, citizens of Fanquier Co., were passing through here yesterday with a negro, Arthur Gordon, in custody, when the negro refused to proceed. The whole party were arrested. Gordon had eloped with a handsome young white girl of one of the first families of Fanquier Co. The citizens had followed and captured both. A justice here swore in one of the men as a special constable, and the party proceeded with the prisoner.

A Valuable Barque Sunk.

NEW YORK, Jan. 18.—The barque Gerard Tobey was sunk in the harbour yesterday by the steamer City of Savannah. She was laden with petroleum, and said to be worth $150,000. The crew of twenty escaped.

A Victim to Hydrophobia.

WILMINGTON, Del., Jan. 17.—Richard G. Alexander, of Delaware City, bitten by a dog six weeks ago, died of hydrophobia, in great agony, last night, after an illness of five days.

THE ENGLISH MAIL.

Interesting Summary of News.

THE FIGHTING WITH THE NAGAS.

Details have reached the *Times of India* of the gallant capture of Konoma. The accounts vary as to the number of Nagas who took part in the defence of the stronghold—one representing it at from 3,000 to 4,000, and another at from 900 to 1,200. The latter estimate is made by our own correspondent, who took part in the attack, and sends us an interesting account of the fighting. He says the Nagas "fought like demons," and it is his belief that if they had stood their ground we should not have taken the place except with a fearful loss. The 44th Ghoorkas behaved splendidly throughout. The capture of the strongest village in the Naga Hills has been followed by the desertion by the enemy of Jotsoma, and the place has been burnt by our troops. News has been received in Calcutta to the effect that most of our wounded are dying for want of proper food. Native prejudices forbid the use of soups, and as fresh milk is impossible to be procured there, Deputy-Surgeon General A. C. C. De Renzy, of the Assam Circle, has instructed the Commissariat Department to supply preserved milk from the local market at his personal risk. It is stated that for fourteen days the bulk of the Kohima garrison subsisted on a daily ration of a quarter of a seer of *atta* and a little muddy water. The ladies are said to have behaved nobly, tending the sick and wounded, looking after the women and children, doing their utmost to promote the comfort of all; they set an example in pluck and cheerfulness that is beyond praise. The statement that an English lady had been carried off by the enemy happily turns out to be untrue.

SIR THOMAS BOUCH'S VIEW OF THE TAY BRIDGE DISASTER.

While not venturing in the present incomplete state of the enquiry to form a definite opinion as to the cause of the accident, Sir Thomas Bouch, at the same time, thinks that facts have already been disclosed sufficient to warrant his entertaining at least a probable hypothesis on the subject. His view, in which several other engineers are understood to concur, is not that the fall of the bridge was the direct result of the force of the storm exerted with overpowering violence upon bridge and train together, but that it was the indirect result of that force exerted, in the first instance at least, upon the travelling train. As the first carriage found has, it seems, been discovered about sixty feet north-east of the fourth pier from the south end of the gap, the train had evidently travelled for some distance between the high girders in perfect safety. The hypothesis is that about this spot the carriages were by a sudden gust of wind tilted over against the east girders, without at the same time leaving the rails, for which, indeed, there was no room. The carriages, still impelled by the advancing engine, as well as by their own momentum, would tear their way against the east girders with a force which, Sir Thomas says, no girders are calculated to withstand. It would seem to be the Engineer's present opinion that the girders gave way under this strain, combined with the tremendous force of the storm; and that, under this combined impact of train and storm, the whole structure almost immediately afterwards broke down. In accordance with this view, Sir Thomas anticipates that the rest of the carriages will be found further and further to the north, where he supposes them to have fallen, as they successively broke loose from the train, until bridge and train had together succumbed. Sir Thomas is also of opinion that this theory of the accident is supported in the first place, by the story of the surfaceman Watt, who says that he saw what looked like showers of sparks proceeding from the wheels of the carriages, after the train had advanced some distance along the bridge. These sparks, Sir Thomas believes, were caused, and could alone have been caused, by the continued dragging of the carriages against the lattice work of the east girders. A second point on which he relies as supporting his theory is that some of the girders have fallen westward, and not eastward, as might have been expected if the unaided force of the wind had simply carried the bridge away. This circumstance, he thinks, shows that the destructive force in operation worked, in the first instance, from within, and not from without the girders. Investigations are being made in accordance with this view; and Sir Thomas Bouch anticipates that the fallen girders and carriages will, when raised, bear unmistakable indications of such forcible dragging of the one against the other as he conceives to have taken place.

MR. GLADSTONE AS "DICTATOR."

In a review of Mr. Gladstone's pilgrimage through Scotland, *Blackwood's Magazine* says:—"Tried by results, the policy of Lord Beaconsfield will advantageously compare with that of the coalition of 1853, in which Mr. Gladstone bore so conspicuous a part, both as regards English security and the welfare of the Eastern races. Tried by conduct, the whole accusation of Mr. Gladstone rests upon the admitted predominance of British influence in the counsels of Europe; while at the earlier epoch we were to a large extent overborne by Napoleon, and deserted by Prussia and Austria, and careless of the fate of the subject races. Mr. Gladstone, however, considers that, notwithstanding his antecedents in reference to the Eastern Question—in spite of his having been first a warm supporter of the Crimean expedition, and then the advocate of its withdrawal in the midst of ignominious failure—he is nevertheless entitled, as a private member of Parliament, to dictate the whole policy of the country. In 1876 he came forward to demand that 'her Majesty's Ministers, who had been steadily working in one direction, should now turn round and work in another.' In 1879, after every effort to increase their difficulties and thwart their policy, he now demands a dissolution, so that the constituencies may censure their conduct, displace them from office, and install other Ministers in whom he has confidence, and over whom he will exercise control. He puts forward this claim, not as the leader of a party or as a candidate for office, but as a private member of Parliament, upon his own personal authority and influence with his countrymen. Of course he is fully entitled to do so; but the claim is, we think, extravagant and unusual. It is urged in the most determined manner. It cannot be denied that it is responded to with enthusiasm by a large portion of the Liberal party. But it seems to us that, apart from its merits or demerits, it is a novelty in politics, and, whatever its results, is calculated to throw the affairs alike of his party and the country into confusion. The claim is distinctly that of a dictator. No one can pretend to suppose that Mr. Gladstone has conducted this agitation as a simple candidate for the representation of Midlothian, or as either the leader or follower of the Liberal party. He has ostentatiously refused the leadership of the Opposition. No one can say that he has expressed the smallest allegiance to either Lord Granville or Lord Hartington, or evinced any desire save to censure them for the past and to dictate to them for the future. He appeals to the country upon his own personal policy and his own personal merits; and he denounces both Houses of Parliament, both political parties, and the treaty-making prerogative of the sovereign, which, he says, has been grossly abused. In doing so, he has silenced and eclipsed all the recognized leaders of the Opposition, and substituted for their farthing rushlights what the *Spectator* calls the full light of the sun.... If Mr. Gladstone dominates the Liberal party—as in the event of its success he must—either the agitations of the last three years will be proved to be utterly hollow, mere profligate manœuvres of party policy and passion, or, if the policy of the country is to be shaped in accordance with them, there is no prospect before us but one of humiliation and shame."

THE COSSACKS.

In a St. Petersburg letter to the *Times* we read:—"The question of the reorganization of the Cossacks is now occupying the attention of many people in Russia. At the present moment a commission is sitting at Novotcherkask to enquire into the possibility of establishing the institution of the Zemstvo, or provincial land assembly. The Don Cossacks, although obliged of late years by the force of circumstances to change many of the peculiarities of their original rude and semi-barbarous organization, persistently refuse to be re-organized by order of the Government to any further extent, and are particularly opposed to the Zemstvo, that being a new institution. A Zemstvo was a short time ago ordered by the authorities to assemble, but the Cossacks would not elect their members and made a considerable commotion about the matter. Now the Commission referred to has sent out a call to Cossack deputies to attend from each district, and to give their opinions on the subject, but not one Cossack has shown any inclination to put in an appearance at Novotcherkask in answer to this call, notwithstanding that the expenses of travelling and the cost of maintenance while in the town are to be defrayed by the military exchequer."

A SCANDALOUS TRAFFIC.

The *Daily News* publishes "a letter on a subject which most persons would gladly avoid. The writer of the letter signs it with his name, and declares himself ready with evidence as to the accuracy of his statements. 'Belgian traffic in English girls' is the subject with which he has to deal. He tells a story of the manner in which a young Englishwoman was enticed away to Brussels under promise of marriage, and then literally handed over to the most abominable sort of captivity. The most repelling scenes of that least attractive of all the plays that bear in any way the name of Shakespeare, the play of 'Pericles, Prince of Tyre,' will tell part of the story that the letter we publish has to reveal. The heroine of the drama, however, was more fortunate than the poor girl who is described as having been made the victim of the hideous plot which Mr. Alfred S. Dyer professes to disclose. Another case of the same kind has also, he states, come, although less directly, within his knowledge, and he is convinced 'that a system of decoying young women to Continental cities, under all sorts of plausible pretences, has been carried on with this most heartrending results.' This, of course, is not the first time reports of the existence of such a traffic have reached the public ear. We hear unfortunately of such things being done in all great cities. It has long been affirmed that infamous agencies exist in London, and in some of our larger provincial towns, for the purpose of enticing foreign girls over here under pretence of finding them respectable employment. We have not often heard, however, of such gross and monstrous cases of heartless deception carried to success by actual exercise of force and restraint as that one of which our correspondent tells us. It is of the utmost importance that the existence of such a system should be made public, if it does exist, and there surely could be no difficulty in showing that the writer of the letter has been deceived or has exaggerated, if any part of his story will not bear investigation."

MR. GLADSTONE'S BIRTHDAY.

The *Times* says:—"Englishmen have always a ready sympathy for manly qualities, and this admiration Mr. Gladstone has fairly extorted from them. In short, at such a grave moment in the life of so great a public man as his 70th birthday, the people at large could not but desire to forget for the moment all the differences which have separated them, and to join in cordial congratulations and in the best wishes for the happiness of what must needs be Mr. Gladstone's declining years. It is the more to be regretted that Mr. Gladstone would not have it so. Once more we listen to unqualified denunciation of almost everything the Government and the House of Commons have done during the last three years; and the good-natured Tories of Liverpool, who would fain believe that there is after all some point of sympathy between them and their great townsman, are told, with many formal professions of respect, that they are the victims of a complete and inexplicable moral perversion. The controversies at issue between Mr. Gladstone and his opponents 'go to the root of every question of public law and of public honour,' and those who take the wrong side in the contest are consequently regarded by him as false to the very principles of honour and law. The perversion is so great as to add in his mind a new problem to the mysteries of the universe. He must own 'that there are many men of great intelligence, of great ability, and of the highest public and private qualities' who are opposed to him in these matters; and if he is asked 'how that comes about' he is unable to answer, 'but it is one of the most intricate and perplexing of the moral problems which life continually presents to us.' Apparently, in Mr. Gladstone's view, it is a branch of the abysmal question of the origin of evil. Why in the world, when all the truth, all the law, all the honour, and all the spirit of freedom are on Mr. Gladstone's side, there should be respectable people who range themselves in opposition, is a question which he finds it as hard to answer as that which Friday propounded to Robinson Crusoe. We fear he must be tempted sometimes to solve the problem by a kind of political Manicheism, and, notwithstanding the efforts of which he speaks to retain charitable feelings towards all his opponents, without exception, he must suspect that one of them, at all events, is a kind of incarnation of the principle of evil. But such is Mr. Gladstone's view of the political world in which he finds himself on his seventieth birthday. After all his experience of life, after passing from one party to the other and adopting at one time with ardour views which at another he not less ardently opposed, he can persuade himself that the whole explanation of the present state of affairs in this country is that he is himself the centre of a region of moral and political light, and his opponents are all inhabiting a realm of darkness. No wonder, from this point of view, the controversy seems to him of such almost unprecedented magnitude, and that he is unable to keep his mind from it, even on so grave and genial an occasion."

ITEMS.

Francis II., the ex-King of the Two Sicilies, has arrived in Paris with a numerous retinue.

The St. Gothard Tunnel is rapidly approaching completion. The workmen in the northern gallery can now hear the detonations in the southern galleries.

The Home Secretary has declined to interfere in the case of Charles Shurety, lying in Newgate for the murder of a child two years old by a systematic course of brutality in St. Pancras. He will, therefore, be executed on Monday next.

Calcraft, the hangman, left his autobiography in manuscript, and it is to be published forthwith. It purports to give an account of all the executions at which the great man assisted during his fifty years of office—a cupful of horrors which ought surely to satisfy the most morbid readers of the Newgate calendar class of literature.

Mrs. Bellew, the second wife and widow of the late Rev. J. H. M. Bellew, formerly chaplain on the Bengal establishment, and afterwards a preacher in London, and more recently a public reader and lecturer, is dead. She leaves a family behind her, one of her sons being Mr. Kyrle Bellew, who has made some mark as a tenor singer and actor.

The value of foreign-grown wheat to England is shown in a remarkable manner by the estimates of the sale of home-grown wheat since the harvest. It is computed that the sales of British wheat in the 150 principal markets have been 544,364 qrs., against 1,005,391 qrs. in 1878; while in the whole kingdom the sales have been 2,177,500 qrs., against 4,022,000 qrs. in the previous year.

The Pope has conferred the Golden Rose on the new Queen of Spain, to the great delight of her husband and the Court of Vienna. This token is sent annually by his Holiness to the lady whom he considers the most exalted and exemplary member of his church. Among others, the ex-Empress Eugenie and the former Queen of Spain, Isabella the luckless, have been recipients of the flattering honour.

Her Majesty has, according to the *Standard*, given her assent by order-in-Council to an increase in the number of lieutenants of the Royal Navy, which will be gradually raised to one thousand, being four hundred more than provided for by the retirement scheme of 1870. This step has become necessary on account of the serious stagnation in promotion which has for a long time existed on the Sub-Lieutenants' List.

A shocking murder was committed on the 28th December at Calton, near Glasgow. A woman named Green took home a female acquaintance, whom her husband turned out of the house, as he objected to her presence. Mrs. Green then armed herself with a chopper and carving knife, and while her husband was defending himself from the former with a tea-tray, she plunged the latter into his heart, causing immediate death. Mrs. Green has been arrested.

The *Mark Lane Express* says that autumn sown grain has scarcely made its appearance above the soil, and roots have in many places been seriously damaged, as the snow has disappeared and exposed them to the rigour of the temperature. The past disastrous seasons have been absolutely ruinous to the agricultural interest. Indeed, it is hard to find a parallel to 1879, a year which, having produced neither wheat, hops, nor fruit, leaves the country nearly drained of money, and farmers a prey to most dismal forebodings.

Mr. Darwin is lucky. By some happy "process of evolution" he has succeeded in inducing the Turin Academy of Science to put a grant of twelve thousand lire, or about four hundred and eighty pounds sterling English, into his pocket in recognition of his services to philosophy. Some people are illnatured enough to hint that the money would be more usefully and patriotically expended if it were applied to the repatriation of those needy nuisances the organ grinders.

Gen. Younghusband, Superintendent of the Royal Gun Factories, has gone to Italy to witness a gunnery trial of a novel and interesting kind, the gun being one of 100 tons weight, but made of cast iron instead of the wrought iron or steel which modern artillerists regard as indispensable for heavy weapons if they are to fire large charges. The strain to which this cast iron monster will be subjected is not stated, but the gun is described as strengthened with hoops of steel, and theoretically capable of great endurance.

The Lord Mayor of London has remitted a first instalment of £2,000 to the Duchess of Marlborough for distribution among the distressed sufferers in the west of Ireland. On Christmas day his Lordship gave the usual Christmas dinner to the inmates of Newgate and Holloway gaols; and to celebrate his accession to the chief magistracy the inmates of the city of London workhouses were regaled; 536 people in Bow Workhouse, 423 aged and infirm people in Holloway, and 377 people in Homerton Workhouse being thus regaled to a good dinner.

THE FIRST SIN.

Some Curious Speculations About the Apple and the Serpent.

It occurred to me lately, while reading in the September number of the *Contemporary Review* an article by Lenormand, called "The First Sin," that it may be possible to turn another page of that very interesting history of ideas, the reading of which appears to be one of the great tasks allotted to this century. Although it seems unlikely that the idea suggested to me by the article has not also occurred to others, I can not discover that anything has been said about it, for the author seems strangely enough to lead one to the door, as it were, and leave one there without opening it; I should therefore like, if you will permit me, to lay it before your readers, and hear what they have to say about it. My idea is this:—That the tradition of a tree of life, and also of a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, both connected with sin and a catastrophe, probably originated in man's first acquaintance with the effects of intoxication. Lenormand himself connects that tradition with the worship of Bacchus (and also with the theft of fire in a piece of a tree by Prometheus, and with that of the apples of the Garden of the Hesperides.) It seems strange, therefore, that he goes no further, more especially as he himself points out that the representations of the tree on the monuments of different nations are always referable to those from the fruit or foliage or crushed branches of which an intoxicating liquor is derived; from the Soma tree that is, and the palm and the vine. There is no need to burden your pages with proofs and quotations, as any one interested in the subject can procure the magazine now at half-price; I will merely add to my suggestion that, as the primitive notion of life must have been characterized by warmth and motion, and the first effects of the tree would also be, probably, warmth and excitement, exhilaration and the temporary exaltation of some of the faculties, it would easily come to be looked upon as a "tree of life;" and that, the after effects being bad and degrading, it would thereby become a tree of knowledge of evil as well as good, and also the cause of a fall into a lower state of being.

May I add a suggestion concerning the serpent always connected with the tree, as on the early Babylonian cylinder figured on page 91 of George Smith's "Chaldean Account of Genesis?" It appears to have represented the principle of evil very early, probably long before it was connected with the tree, and to have been at first the sea, which in a storm was the chaos out of which everything was formed, and which, as it seemed to swallow up sun, moon and stars, and to bring forth the storm-clouds—those monsters with which the sun god fought with his arrows, the lightnings—came also, not unnaturally, to represent the destructive principle. But how did it become a serpent? May it not have been the singular resemblance that the edge of of the sea—as seen from a moderate height in a calm—bears to a huge serpent—now blue, now white, according to the amount of foam—winding and writing about the earth, and eating out its rocks and shores, that caused its destructive attributes to be transferred to the serpent? A common name may have been the means. The resemblance is especially striking when the eye looks along the shore, as in the bend of a bay.

Another suggestion. Some years ago, when reading the description of the locality of the Battle of Beth Horon in Dean Stanley's work on Palestine, it seemed to me to point to the origin of the tradition of the sun and moon standing still at the command of Joshua, and I do not think it has been noticed. In any valley lying north and south, if one goes up the western hills as the sun sets to the valley, when one reaches the summit the effect of a new day and a fresh supply of sunlight is very striking. This sensation must have been strongly felt by the warriors of Israel when, after pursuing their enemies up the pass, the still sunlighted valley beyond broke upon their sight; and I cannot but think that, figuratively expressed, as it would be, and with much exaggeration, in the triumphal song sure to have been made and sung after the victory, it may well have originated the tradition of a standing still of the sun; the moon would follow suit. The songs are said to be the oldest parts of the Bible, and "Jasher" or "The Upright" may have been the singer or recorder of the lost song of triumph.—*Nation.*

THE INDEPENDENCE "BOOM."

First Meeting of the Council of Five.

THE COUNTRY STILL SAFE

Adoption of a Provisional Constitution, and Selection of Provisional Officers—Another Meeting to be Held.

The fact that a club favouring Canadian Independence was to be organized in this city on Saturday night was no secret. Telegraphic despatches to outside papers made known the fact to all who wished to read. The names of several prominent persons were mentioned in connection with the principal offices in the club, and from hints thrown out, it was fully anticipated that the affair would be launched with a membership of at least fifty or sixty persons. On enquiry it was learned that the first meeting of the club was to be held in one of the anterooms of Albert Hall, at eight o'clock. Thither a *Mail* reporter bent his steps, and was shown the room where "the advanced thinkers" were about to discuss the question so important to the future of the Dominion. On entering the place no excited gathering met his gaze. There were simply

FIVE ORDINARY LOOKING INDIVIDUALS

seated on benches, engaged in conversation. A friendly nod from the club—for such it proved to be—was given to the newcomer, and conversation was resumed. A feeling of uneasiness, however, appeared to come over one of the listeners—a man of stout proportions—and making some paltry excuse to gain the door, he fled down the stairs and into the street. At half-past eight the number was increased by the arrival of another newspaper representative, who was also received with kindly nods of welcome. An eccentric looking person, whose hair was thrown back, *a la* Tennyson, from a classic cut forehead, made frequent visits to the doorway as if in search of members who might, by mistake, find their way to the main hall, where a temperance concert was in progress. His search, however, bore no fruit in the way of adding to the number of republicans already congregated. At nine o'clock another member entered the room, looked considerably dejected, and took his seat after returning the usual sign of recognition. The question of adjournment till a more opportune season was advanced.

HE OF THE TENNYSONIAN HAIR