

In 1880 there was but one city in the United States, New York, which had a population in excess of a million. In 1890 there were three, New York, Chicago and Philadelphia.

The dyke-lands in the vicinity of the Basin of Minas have long been remarkable for their heavy crops of hay and oats, more particularly the latter, it having been stated by an eminent New York agriculturist that oats produced upon our marshes have more well developed oats in each head than can be found in any other country. A new departure in the draining of the marshes has recently been made by Mr. George Thompson, of Wolfville, who for many years was so well and favorably known in Halifax. Mr. Thompson has had his marshlands tile drained, and claims that although the initial cost is somewhat large it will in the end prove more economical than ditching; first, because a valuable area of land now covered by ditches will be available for cultivation; and second, because tile draining is a permanency, while it costs much labor to keep the ditches free for drainage purposes.

The risks of a pilgrimage to Mecca may well make the most earnest Mussulman hesitate to undertake that pious duty. Of the sixty-six thousand pilgrims who have sailed from various oriental ports for this sacred spot during the last six years some twenty-two thousand have never returned. A few, it is thought, may possibly find their way back by other routes. Many, it is feared, are murdered by gangs of bidmashes, who are believed to travel regularly by the Jeddah steamers, marking down pilgrims who are possessed of valuables, and attacking them when favorable opportunity occurs. It is said, however, that by far the greater number fall by the wayside on the long tramp from Jeddah to Mecca or Medina. So far as the sea voyage is concerned, the return journey is for obvious reasons the more dangerous. The overland tramp to and from the sacred cities has the effect of lowering the vitality of the traveller, and he arrives at Jeddah in a state which predisposes him to the attacks of epidemic diseases engendered by the overcrowding and unspeakable filth of the pilgrim vessels.

Sidewalks are a sore subject in Halifax, for whenever, after long putting up with disgraceful pavements, any improvement is made, some one is sure to complain of extravagance or find fault with the way in which the work is done. We do not wish to see the public funds wasted, but we take an undisguised pleasure in walking on a good even sidewalk, and even if the expense is considerable, it is credit to the city's name to make it look as well as possible in this respect. The post office has a good granolithic sidewalk which promises to wear well, but the ancient pavement in front of the old city building on George street presents an appearance that is nothing short of disgraceful, and which is accentuated by contrast with the post office sidewalk. George street is very much travelled, and we would suggest to the city fathers that this particular part should, in the interest of our Dartmouth friends who pass over it so frequently, receive their distinguished consideration without delay. In the winter this is a particularly dangerous place in icy weather, and the three steps leading from the Water street sidewalk to this might well be done away with.

At the annual meeting of the British Association at Cardiff last month, Dr. William Huggins, the eminent astronomer, President for the year, read a paper on Spectroscopic Astronomy, with special reference to the achievements of the last two years. It has shown what marvellous progress has been made in recent years in the domain of Spectroscopic Astronomy. The spectrum analysis and photography together have made astronomical investigation a new thing. But for the former we should not be able to measure the motion of stars directly in the line of sight, either coming towards or receding from us. It is thirty-one years since the Royal Association did honor to the science of astronomy in the selection of its President, and consequently the comparing of the periods made the progress of the science more noticeable. Dr. Huggins' address is spoken of as exceedingly interesting, not oratorically brilliant, but delivered as if he relied upon his facts speaking for themselves with an eloquence needing no rhetorical adornment. The following passage from the address is a fine piece of word painting:—"The heavens are richly but very irregularly inwrought with stars. The brighter stars cluster into well-known groups upon a background formed of an enlacement of streams and convoluted windings and intertwined spirals of fainter stars, which becomes richer and more intricate in the irregularly rifted zone of the milky way. We see a system of systems, for the broad features of clusters and streams and spiral windings which mark the general design are reproduced in every part. The whole is in motion, each point shifting its position by miles every second, though from the august magnitude of their distances from us and from each other, it is only by the accumulated movements of years or of generations that some small changes of relative positions reveal themselves." This recalls Shelley's lines—

"Worlds on worlds are rolling ever,
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on the river
Floating, bursting, borne away."

The wonders of the heavens are fascinating to contemplate, perhaps all the more so because of the apparent impossibility of ever knowing all there is to know. Continual advances are being made in the science of astronomy, but the unknown is still illimitable. This year will be memorable for the commencement of a photographic chart of the heavens, in the preparation of which astronomers in all parts of the world are taking part.

Colonel Sir Edward Bradford, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police of London, G. B., has reported the number and character of street casualties in that city, as far as they have come to the notice of the department. His figures show that the number of persons killed and injured is very large. The van is the most fatal cause of accidents, and next to it, at a long interval, comes the car. Altogether the vehicular traffic kills about 140, and maims from 3,000 to 6,000 persons in a year.

Among the many cases of wedded unhappiness of famous writers, the Carlyles present one of the saddest on record. Mr. Froude's life of Thomas Carlyle revealed much of their domestic misery, and the author was denounced without measure for showing to the world things that detracted from the admiration in which Carlyle and his wife were held. The latest addition to Carlyle literature is "The Life of Jane Welsh Carlyle," by Mrs. Ireland, who appears to have secured the services of nearly everybody who is in a position to add anything to information already published. People are apt to look upon Carlyle's life as a tragedy, and so in a manner it was. Of an unfortunate disposition, the disappointments of his life contrived to make him, as he said, "the miserablest creature on earth," but when we look upon his treatment of his wife, and think of how different he might have made her life, we lose our sympathy for him. When we contemplate Jane Welsh, disappointed in her love for Irving, married to a crabbed man, her social inferior, and not in sympathy with her in any way, added to which was poverty and hard work which the fragile woman was unable to cope with, we have indeed a sad picture. She is, however, a character of deep interest on many accounts, and Mrs. Ireland's book will be sure to find a welcome in the literary world.

A writer in the *Fortnightly Review* takes the ground that the vexed marriage and divorce question would be settled satisfactorily by the dissolution of marriage being made difficult, so far as the process is concerned; but easy so far as the grounds are concerned. This writer holds that the grounds of a divorce or a dissolution should be simply the will of the parties interested, and gives an example of how easy the matter becomes. "Suppose, then," he says, "a man and wife who have twenty thousand a year find themselves ill-mated, and desire their marriage to be dissolved. Let the law require that, as the price of its dissolution, they surrender for life, say three-fourths of their income. Let them divide between them an annual £5,000, forfeiting the enjoyment of the remainder. In such an arrangement there would be nothing penal. They would both be still rich enough to remain in their natural society, but at the same time they would be making a serious sacrifice; and their willingness to make this, in order that their marriage might be dissolved, would be a sufficient guarantee that its dissolution was not demanded lightly, but that it was, on the contrary, morally necessary to their welfare. The portion of the income surrendered might be held in trust for the children or the next heirs." This is a novel view to take, but however well it might work in the case of moneyed people, it must be acknowledged that couples who have income only enough to support existence could not purchase separation in this way, and the present difficulty would continue.

Among the streets of Halifax noticeable for improvements of late years Barrington street shows a great deal of progress. The Church of England Institute, St. Mary's Y. M. T. A. & B. Society's building and the City Club (when the latter is completed) will form a handsome trio of buildings, and add much to the appearance of the street. There are a few stores on Barrington street that are a credit to the city, among which are the furniture warerooms of A. Stephen & Son and Messrs. Gordon & Keith. Going south and entering Pleasant street we find a fine brick building rapidly going up where St. Mary's Glebe House used to stand, and which promises to be an ornament to the spot. The frontal aspect of Government House has indeed been altered by the removal of the old stone wall which shut off the view of the lawn and flower beds, and gave altogether a disagreeable impression of the gubernatorial mansion. The new low wall is to our mind in keeping with the building, and presents no incongruity, as new things are sometimes, after the example of new patches on old garments, apt to do. The pleasure of walking over the new sidewalk is one of which we propose soon to avail ourselves. The old flag stone pavement that once lay there in picturesque unevenness might be blamed for the bad walking that Halifaxians are charged with. We wish it could be our privilege to record some improvement in the old cemetery of St. Paul's Church, where so many of the ancestors of our best people are taking their long sleep. This "city of the dead" deserves to be taken care of; if the walks were kept in order, and the grass on the graves clipped, it would not look as if those who rest there were altogether forgotten, and no doubt if a change were made in this respect many people would find much of interest to visit in this old grave yard. However, the dead are of secondary importance, and if we see the living being properly cared for we cannot complain. If the people of Halifax would take cognizance of the criticisms of visitors, not to speak of the admonitions of the press, and show a practical belief in the virtue of paint, things would look much more cheerful. The improvements along Barrington and Pleasant streets only serve to accentuate the need of paint on the older buildings, and we would advise the owners of such to mix their colors "with brains" as soon as possible. We are going to have an exhibition this month, and we do not want visitors to go home and make the usual remarks about Halifax being mean with its paint. There is but a short time, but still something could be done during the next two weeks to make things look better.

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