

ing machine, the lamp may be extinguished and rekindled at any intervals, and so made to convey the words or signs of any desired code.

The year just closed will be badly famous in history for the development of the wicked and cowardly attempts at wholesale assassination and destruction of property by the use of dynamite. Happily in almost every instance the results have been far less horrible than the dastardly perpetrators evidently expected. There seems now reason to hope that the United States will take some action to put a stop to the open plotting and raising of funds for the avowed purpose of slaughtering innocent men, women and children in a friendly country.

One cannot but sympathize with China in its difficulty with France. Mr. Chester Holcombe, Secretary of the United States Legation at Peking, says that there is no such thing as a war party in China. The Empress, the Government, the Mandarins and the people, all want peace with France. They would give up Tonquin, but the French want money, an "indemnity" of some \$20,000,000 or thereabouts. China would give this too if she had it, but she has not the money, and has not credit to enable her to raise it on her bonds.

The newspapers are divided in opinion as to the merits of the Grand Winter Carnivals, which are now a Montreal institution. Exception is taken by some patriotic journals on the ground that these exhibitions are likely to injure the country abroad by advertising its Arctic characteristics, and stamping it as a second Siberia or Greenland. But any effects of this kind will probably be more than counteracted by the practical illustration of the extent to which a Canadian winter may be rendered enjoyable, and even ice and snow made to minister alike to the lovers of sport and of art. It would be a pity to spoil a really beautiful and enjoyable celebration, lest some foreigner should draw a wrong conclusion in regard to our climate.

The civil war for the Presidency of the United States is over. But the tug of war with the new President has not yet commenced. He is understood to be in favour of civil service reform. His honesty and courage will be put to a terrible test when he assumes the chair and finds himself assailed by the thousands of expectant and hungry Democratic office-seekers, who believe that "to the victors belong the spoils." The struggle will be rendered fiercer by the fact that the Democrats have been so long in the cold shade, while their political opponents have been in sunshine, and enjoying a feast of fat things. Cleveland's New York record is a good one, and gives much promise of greater things. If he withstands and survives the storm and bases the tenure of public office on the new foundation of merit he will deserve immortal honours.

There is some danger of an international question being raised between the United States and Great Britain by the Nicaraguan Treaty, under which the American Government undertakes to build a canal across Nicaragua. By the

terms of the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, the United States is precluded from building a canal across the Isthmus. But it seems improbable that the British Government will interpose any serious obstacle to this great project, though she may require better securities for its free use in commerce than appear in the new treaty. But after all, it is not easy to see what is to be gained by such treaties. They are likely to be observed only in times of peace. In case of war each nation would be pretty sure to resort to the right of the stronger, and either could probably render the canal useless to the other. Such a canal would be of vast service to the Americans, if they but had a commercial fleet to use it.

A Washington despatch a week or two since represented the "learned scientists of the Smithsonian Institution" as puzzled by the colossal statues "discovered" by the officers of the German gunboat *Hyena*. The New York *Herald* says "if the officers of the German gunboat *Hyena* are under the delusion that they have made a 'find' they should be taken away from sea and sent to school." We suppose it would give the same advice in regard to the learned scientists of the Smithsonian Institute. The prehistoric stone structures and colossal statuary of Easter Island were written about more than a century ago. But they are very remarkable and mysterious nevertheless. The size of the statues may be conceived from the fact that some of them wear crowns sixty-six inches in diameter and fifty-two feet in height. How these crowns, made of single blocks of red lava, were put upon the heads of statues from eighteen to thirty-seven feet in height is one of the mysteries.

Few modern cases have elicited greater contrarieties of opinion, or rather of sentiment, than that of the Cannibals of the *Mignonette*. It is reassuring to find that British justice proves staunch, and that the higher view of the sacredness of human life has prevailed. Murder has been declared murder still, even when done to save the perpetrators from starvation. Their temptation was, no doubt, horrible almost beyond the powers of conception of those who have not undergone it. Possibly not many could have withstood it under the pressure of a torture so awful. But it will be an evil day for humanity when either the judges or the people degrade the standard of justice and right to the low level of average achievement, and adopt, as a principle of law and of morals that excessive temptation justifies or excuses crime. Human nature needs all the strength which dread of reprobation and punishment can superadd to the restraints of conscience to help it in such a case. And, after all, every great crime is the outcome of horrible temptation of some kind. The difference is but one of degree.

Under the caption "A Faithless World" Frances Power Cobbe contributes a suggestive paper to the last contemporary Review. Referring to the speculations of Mathew Arnold and many other modern seepies, she attempts to picture some of the changes that would result in Christendom from the abrogation of the Christian religion. The suppression of public and private worship and of preaching; the secularization or destruc-