

From the correspondence published in American papers it appears that the settlement of the Behring Sea dispute is very far off. Mr. Blaine and Sir Julian Pauncefote have been unable to arrive at terms of arbitration, and the British Minister refuses to propose any more schemes for settlement. It is not likely that war will result from it, and it would indeed be a sorry spectacle to see two great nations at daggers' points over the right to take seals. Arbitration will probably be arrived at before all the resources of diplomacy are exhausted.

The election campaign in Kilkenny has been unique in many respects. On this historic battle field, where the famous Kilkenny cats fought to the death and utter annihilation of each other all but the tails, a more serious contest has just taken place. Not content with calling names, in which delightful pastime we must say Irish wit has not distinguished itself, the factions resorted to brute force. Mr. Parnell's eyes were filled with lime by a cowardly opponent, and Michael Davitt got his head broken, so honors are easy as far as that goes. It would not be astonishing if, like the cats, the two sections of the Nationalist Party would destroy each other.

The month of December has been prolific of horrors. The begin with, a few murderers have gone the way of transgressors and suffered death for their crimes in Upper Provinces. A suicide in Digby; an attempted double suicide at Hubbard's Cove, one of which was successful, and a young girl's suicide at Middleton, make a chapter of horrors in themselves. Two aged people were frozen so badly that one of them died, near Charlottetown, P. E. I., and a sapper of the Royal Engineers died at MacNab's Island from the effects of excessive drinking last week. As to accidents, there has been no lack of them. The powder magazine of the Government steamer *Newfield* exploded and killed several men. The accident on the I. C. R. at St. Joseph, Quebec, on the 18th sent ten people to their long home, and here in Halifax the wharf disaster at Cunard's on Friday night last caused the death of six men. These are just a few of the more prominent disasters that have occurred, but they make a formidable list for a quiet country like ours. There will be sad hearts in many homes this new year. The sorrowful side of life has been very forcibly brought before us by these things, and it is to be hoped that for a time at least we shall be spared any more appalling accidents.

Recent events in East Africa have led to a threatening state of affairs between Portugal and Britain. The hot-headed Portuguese, like the giant in "Jack the Giant Killer," smell the blood of an Englishman, and are thirsting for British gore. This is on account of a Portuguese flag being hauled down in disputed territory, and unless Lord Salisbury can induce the British South African Company to withdraw its forces, an African war with Portugal will probably result. The Company has great resources, and may decide to continue to hold the fort. The South African colonies are full of adventurers who would be only too glad to join the forces and have a crack at the Portuguese, while advices from Lisbon state that popular excitement is increasing there, and that the ministry is rapidly losing control of affairs, the Government's only course being to drift with the tide or resign. Volunteers are offering by the hundred to fight the British, and the later negotiations between the Governments, which have been diplomatically satisfactory, have not in the least availed to allay the frenzy of excitement. This lively state of affairs has somewhat drawn off public attention from the Irish quarrel. We have no desire to see war over this thing, and it appears from all that can be learnt of it at present to be a matter for arbitration.

What can there be about conditions of life during recent years that drives young people and mere children to commit suicide? It has unfortunately become a not infrequent occurrence, and the callousness with which such news is received is noticeable. Very little is said except "poor thing, how dreadful," or some other conventional expression of regret that a young life should be thus thrown away. Some inquiry ought to be made into these affairs to try and ascertain the causes which lead to them, so that they may to some extent be avoided in future. On Thursday of last week a young girl drowned herself in the Annapolis River at Middleton. She had been corrected by her adopted mother for some fault and also threatened that her father would be told of it. The result was that the poor child—she was only about thirteen or fourteen years of age—went down to the river, took off her shoes and stockings and threw herself into the icy stream, where she soon was beyond earthly troubles. Such things are too sad for words, and it is to be hoped that those who have children with sensitive and excitable natures under their protection will learn a lesson and not be overbearing or severe to them. The milk of human kindness distributed a little more liberally to these unfortunates might do something to avert the evil.

The manner of the "taking off" of Sitting Bull, the famous Indian chief, has something suspicious about it. He had been arrested by the Indian police against, it is reported, the orders of the Militia department. During an attempted rescue by his own people he was killed, and the probability is that he was slain to prevent his escape. The Americans have regarded Sitting Bull as a very bad Indian ever since the Custer massacre, and it is not unlikely that those who had him in their power a few days ago took advantage of it to put him beyond giving further trouble. The treatment of the Indians in the United States has been such as to excite the indignation of a large section of the American people. The trouble appears to be in the Indian Department rather than in the Executive and Legislature. The money for Indian purposes is granted all right, but it seems to dwindle away to very small proportions before the wards of the nation, for whom it is intended, get any of it. Two days' rations out of seven is pretty small pickings during the cold season, and this is what some of the Indians have

been subsisting upon, according to reports. The remedy proposed by those who understand how things are being worked at present, is to transfer the care of the Indians to the War Department, as they hold that the officers and men of the army, who are familiar with Indian disturbances, have always been aware of and condemned the methods of the Indian agents, which lead to trouble. This might prove to be a good plan, for although officers and men of the army have had to fight the Indians in obedience to orders, they are more inclined to humane treatment and fair dealing with them than the civil agents, who provoke the troubles which the army has to settle. Sitting Bull, while in Canada, kept his promises and gave no trouble to the Government. He has now gone "to the land of the hereafter" where the Great Spirit will judge whether righteousness has been done.

We have all heard of the enterprising Yankee's invention of a self-adjusting, back-acting hen persuader, the peculiar property of which was to let the egg down through a trap door in the nest, so that when the hen looked around to admire her production she would see nothing, and would continue to lay eggs indefinitely. This ingenious plan must have failed to work for some reason or other, but the idea has not been lost sight of. Another ingenious man, Mr. William K. Kidder, of Corry, Pa., sends to *The Farm and Fireside* some designs for a nest for egg eating hens and hens that disturb others. Without the drawings we can scarcely give a fair description of this nest, but some of our clever farmers may be able to construct one from the following instructions:—Take a board 12 x 14 inches, nail a cleat 4 inches wide across at each end to keep the board from splitting and also to serve as legs for support in a nest-box. The board is to be sloped in the centre clear through to the other side, making a hole about four inches in diameter. This should be cushioned a little making a recess for the hen's body. Under the board, where the hole is, a balance board is placed, so constructed that it lets the egg through a dump into the box below. A China nest egg may be fastened to the balance board, so that it will not slip, and the hen that has a fancy for raw egg will be badly fooled when she tackles it instead of the genuine article. In poultry yards where the egg-eating habit prevails it could do no harm to test the efficacy of this new trick of the trade.

We take from a contemporary the following table, compiled by a French Geographer, showing the African possessions of European powers:—

	Square Miles.
France.....	2,300,248
Great Britain.....	1,909,445
Germany.....	1,035,720
Congo Free State.....	1,000,000
Portugal.....	774,993
Italy.....	360,000
Spain.....	210,000

This is a total of 7,590,406 square miles in the hands of European powers. Africa contains 11,900,000 square miles in all, and of this about 1,900,000 is occupied by Egypt, Morocco, and other independent or semi-independent states. There remains an area of about two and a half million square miles to be seized, and for this there will doubtless be some scrambling. The Congo Free State may at any time slip into the possession of Belgium, and then arises the question, into whose possession will Belgium slip? At present France has the greatest mileage, but a vast proportion of that is sand. The sovereignty of the Sahara is not likely to be the subject of much heart burning, and France will be left in unenvied possession. Undoubtedly the lion's share, if quality be regarded, has fallen where the lion's share should rightly fall. The rule of France has proved very beneficial in Africa, perhaps as much so as that of England. Germany and Italy are yet, as it were, on probation. Portugal might well be improved out of the country, as her rule only deepens the darkness of the Dark Continent; and as for Spain, she uses her African possessions mainly as convict stations.

The Government of Canada is bound to fulfil its pledges to the Province of Prince Edward Island, to make good the conditions on which the Island Province joined the Confederation. It is a question of national honor. Assuredly Canada has not been remiss in the matter of good intention. We are spending \$200,000 annually in the effort to fulfil our promise to "place the Island in continuous communication with the Intercolonial Railway and the railway system of the Dominion." Nevertheless, this expenditure, heavy as it is, must be confessed to fail of its object, and at times communication is cut off by ice which the Government mail steamer, though built expressly for this traffic, cannot overcome. If we cannot make good our word by one means we must try another. In a late issue of the *Week* appears a letter from the Hon. G. W. Howlan, one of the Island delegates who, in 1873, arranged the "Terms of Confederation" with the Canadian Government. Mr. Howlan shows that the loss to the Province, through imperfect winter communications, is \$800,000 a year in the potato trade alone. That is to say, in this one item of her commerce, Prince Edward Island loses that immense sum annually because we have not yet succeeded in keeping our agreements. This consideration should open our eyes to the necessity for some other scheme. It should make us think long before we protest, on the ground of expense, against the proposal for a subway beneath the waters of Northumberland Strait. It is often expensive to keep one's word; but to break it is liable to cost more in the long run. Mr. Howlan advocates a subway from Carleton Head, P. E. I., to Money Point, N. B., a distance of only six and a half miles, through a formation that offers no serious engineering difficulties. Mr. Howlan promises to show, in a future letter, that the present yearly expenditure, capitalized, would build the subway and redeem Canada's pledge.