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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CURRENT TOPICS	987
CHARACTER-TRAINING IN THE SCHOOLS	989
CHRISTIANITY AND GERMAN CRITICISM	990
NOTES ON BURNS	992
Prof. William Clark, M.A., LL.D.	992
MONTREAL LETTER	993
A. J. F.	993
CANADA YET (Poem)	994
Robert Elliott.	994
A TRIP TO A TERMINUS	994
Blanche Ayler.	994
THE ETHICAL ELEMENT IN LITERATURE.—I.	997
J. A. McLellan, M.A. LL.D.	997
THE MORNING SPREAD UPON THE MOUNTAINS (Poem)	999
Kate Seymour MacLean.	999
GLIMPSES AT THINGS	999
F. Blake Crofton.	999
PARIS LETTER	999
Z.	999
AUTUMN (Poem)	1000
H. Heloise Dupuis.	1000
ART NOTES	1001
MUSIC AND THE DRAMA	1002
LIBRARY TABLE	1002
PERIODICALS	1002
LITERARY AND PERSONAL	1003
READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE	1003
PUBLIC OPINION	1004
SCIENTIFIC AND SANITARY	1005
MISCELLANEOUS	1006
QUIPS AND CRANKS	1007

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CURRENT TOPICS.

In reply to an inquiry, Mr. Laurier, at Winnipeg, expressed himself in favour of the voting of an appropriation by Parliament for a thorough investigation of the question whether Hudson's Bay is navigable for a sufficient length of time during the season to justify the building of a Hudson's Bay railroad and an earnest attempt to open up a great northern route for the carrying of the grain of the North-West to Great Britain. In view of existing circumstances, it is not easy to see how the Canadian Government and Parliament can much longer postpone the settlement of this question by satisfactory observations made on the spot. If the reports circulated from time to time concerning the alleged poaching on the sealing preserves of that northern coast have any truth in them, the Gov-

ernment will be compelled to take some measures for the protection of this fishery. Why cannot the two birds be killed with the same stone? In other words, why cannot one or more suitable vessels be equipped and sent to cruise in those northern waters for one or more seasons, with instructions to examine and report on both questions?

If anyone had supposed that the doctrine of the divine right of kings was obsolete in European nations, save possibly Russia, he has only to read the cabled abstract of Emperor William's last speech, in the Saturday morning papers, to realize his mistake. The Emperor of Germany is nothing if not sensational. Some time had passed since he had made any startling public utterance, and it was time to expect something fresh from his restless brain. That expectation has been realized. In his speech at the State banquet which formed the sequel to the military manoeuvres, he proclaimed the doctrine of the first King of Prussia in the plainest terms, even adopting his motto: *Ex me mea nata corona*. He warned the members of the nobility who had incurred his displeasure by opposing his agrarian policy, that "opposition of Prussian nobles to their king is a monstrosity," and that "they are justified in forming an opposition only when they know the King to be at their head," whatever that may mean. Those who had an impression that the Germans have a limited monarchy and a constitutional government will find it hard to reconcile that notion with the quiet acquiescence of any class or body of the people in such pretensions as these, especially when such pretensions are accompanied with the scarcely veiled threat conveyed in the reminder: "How often have my ancestors set themselves against misguided members of that class, for the welfare of the whole community." Perhaps, however, it is only the nobles, whose privileges depend upon the influence and grace of the Crown, over whose judgments and consciences such absolute power is claimed. The sequel to this strong speech will be watched with interest, at least by outside observers.

Ignorance, like misery, loves company. It is comforting to believe that there are many who, like ourselves, having not hitherto felt it necessary to read Mrs. Besant's autobiography, will be astonished to learn that it has won the distinction of a lengthy review by Mr. Gladstone, in the *Nineteenth Century*. Not a few of us will, we dare

say, now find ourselves in a quandary. Shall we accept Mr. Gladstone's "pulverization" of the book as having made it certain that we have suffered no irreparable loss in not having acquainted ourselves with the work, though the author is worth being denounced by the greatest man of the age as inconsistent, vain, presumptuous, immodest, self-sufficient, ignorant, and otherwise deficient in the qualities which are necessary in an author to make his or her books worth reading? Or shall we rather feel it incumbent on us to satisfy, at whatever cost, our curiosity to know at first hand what is thought and said by a writer whose work merits so formidable an array of depreciatory adjectives. Different minds will no doubt reach different conclusions, according to idiosyncrasy and opportunity. Meanwhile it is satisfactory to know that so sound a theologian as Mr. Gladstone has ventured to put into words the question which many less orthodox thinkers have long been asking in vain: "Why should imperfections in belief be less compatible with the human conditions of the Christian dispensation, than imperfections in practice, providing, etc.?" Curiously enough, this is almost precisely the same question which was asked by a writer of more questionable theological standing, the author of "Ecce Homo," a quarter of a century or more ago, when he was unable to see why the churches should always be so much less tolerant of an imperfect creed than of an imperfect practice. Mr. Gladstone is addressing a much more tolerant age and audience, but it appears that even he cannot ask such questions with impunity, as he is already being met with the charge of heresy.

Time was, within the recollection of many, when the death of the head of the royal house of France would have been an event of importance in the history, not only of that country but of Europe. When, after a lingering illness, the Count of Paris breathed his last a few days since on British soil, the news produced scarcely a ripple in diplomatic circles, however sincere the regret which may have been felt by many personal friends and admirers in different lands, and the less disinterested grief of a small band of ever faithful loyalists in France. The personal history of the deceased Count was a somewhat chequered one. The first ten years of his life were passed in the Tuileries, where his grandfather reigned as monarch of France. Having been exiled by the Revolution of 1848, he passed the next thirteen years of