

CURRENT EVENTS.

At least ninety per cent. of the French-speaking Canadians it is said, can write and speak English. Those whose mother tongue is English, as a general rule, know no language but their own.

The Imperial penny postage system now embraces the whole British Empire with the exception of Pitcairn Island.

Most hydro-planes hitherto made can run only in smooth water; but it is announced that a new boat or hydro-plane invented in Cape Breton can travel in heavy winds and rough seas, and under favorable conditions can make a speed of fifty miles an hour. The inventors are Professor Graham-Bell and his assistant, Frederick Baldwin.

The customs figures for the year just closed, so far as they are available, show a very large increase over those of last year. The prospects for the coming year are bright, especially in the Atlantic Provinces.

It is proposed that a new Atlantic port shall be established at Gaspé Bay, which is described as the finest natural harbour on the Atlantic coast. The new port would be connected with the Intercolonial and the National Transcontinental railways by a line now partly built, running along the north shore of Bay Chaleur.

The first wheat train from Winnipeg over the Transcontinental was on its way on New Year's Day, thus providing a second rail outlet for wheat just at a time when the closing of lake navigation renders it important. There are renewed rumors that the Canadian Pacific will shorten its route to the sea by building a line from Mattawamkeag to Princeton, in Maine, thus enabling it to reach an excellent natural harbour on the St. Croix.

The British Government has presented to the Secretary of State at Washington a formal protest against that section of the Panama Canal Act exempting United States coastwise shipping from the payment of tolls for passing through the canal. Canada is especially interested; for as the provisions stand, Canadian coastwise trade using the canal would have to pay the tolls, while that of the United States would be exempt. Under the old Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850, Great Britain had equal rights with the United States in the proposed isthmian canal, which was to be under the joint protection and control of the two governments; but these rights were yielded by a new treaty eleven years ago, allowing the United States Government alone to build and control the canal on condition that there should be no discrimination against any nation in the use of the canal. Hence the protest.

Hon. Whitelaw Reid, the United States Ambassador to Great Britain, died in London on the fifteenth of last month. A British cruiser has brought his remains to America.

A new president will be elected in France on the seventeenth of this month. A presidential election there does not make such a disturbance as it does in the United States, where electors are chosen to vote for a president, but, as it is known in advance just how they will vote, it is equivalent to a direct popular vote. In France the members of the two chambers of parliament quietly meet at the appointed time, every seven years, and choose a man to fill the office. In France, the president has no more personal power than the King of Great Britain and Ireland has with us, which means that he has far less than has the President of the United States.

Mention has been made of the departure of a British expedition to Easter Island, in the middle of the Pacific Ocean; where, though there are but two hundred living inhabitants, there are six hundred gigantic images of the human figure carved in stone, of the origin of which nothing definite is known. Now another wonderful region is to be explored by Englishmen. It lies beneath the sea, along the coast of Yucatan, and southward towards the shores of South America. Here, it is believed, lie sunken cities with a wealth of gold and gems and art treasures worth countless millions. Divers and submarines will be employed to recover these treasures, and to explore the lost continent, not far below the level of the sea, where a wonderful civilization existed, it is thought, long before the days of Egypt and Babylon. These expectations are based upon what is known of the ruined cities of Yucatan and Guatemala, and upon careful explorations along the coast which seem to show that a rich and populous country was long ago swallowed up by the sea, but is still accessible. Such an expedition as this would have been quite impossible before the days of submarines.

The airship has been the means of discovering the ruins of an ancient Roman town in the Lybian desert.

The Himalayan Alps is the name which the great Italian explorer, the Duke of the Abruzzi, has given to some lofty peaks which he has found in an utterly unknown region in the central Himalayas. In one range he discovered thirty-three peaks each more than twenty-four thousand feet high.

The Christmas season has not brought peace in the Balkans, though there had been some hope of an agreement being reached before the end of the year by the peace conference session in London. A basis of agreement is hard to find. The Turks, having ruled Macedonia for five hundred years, are unwilling to admit that their rule is at an end. The Balkan allies are unwilling to give up for the sake of peace what they have won by the sword. Meanwhile there is grave danger that the Balkan States may be invaded from the north, by Austria and Roumania, a movement which could hardly take place without leading to a general war; yet, as latest despatches show that the Turkish delegates may yield the principal points in debate, there is still hope of a settlement. Whatever that settlement may be, the political boundaries in the map of the Balkan Peninsula will have to be drawn anew.

At a recent conference in Peking, the government was asked to take steps to supply China with a phonetic alphabet, to take the place of the word signs now in use.

The government of the Chinese Republic has adopted our calendar; and this year, for the first time, the Chinese new year agrees with ours.

The liberty of the press is evidently not one of the liberties enjoyed in China under the new form of government. There was published in Peking, until recently, the oldest newspaper in the world. It had been issued regularly for fifteen hundred years; but it has now been suppressed by order of President Yuan Shih Kai.

A treaty between Russia and China acknowledges Chinese suzerainty in Mongolia, and recognizes certain trading rights that Russia claims.

The civil war in Mexico still continues. The rebels are not very numerous, but they are so widely scattered that they cannot be easily subdued.