

# THE CRITIC:

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## THE CRITIC,

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The editor of THE CRITIC is responsible for the views expressed in Editorial Notes and Articles, and for such only; but the editor is not to be understood as endorsing the sentiments expressed in the articles contributed to this journal. Our readers are capable of approving or disapproving of any part of an article or contents of the paper, and after exercising due care as to what is to appear in our columns, we shall leave the rest to their intelligent judgment.

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

Our issue of to-day happens to fall on the winter solstice, generally, though not with absolute accuracy, considered the shortest day of the year. It is well known to students that early Christianity adapted its seasons and festivals to the Solar Myth, which then so largely dominated the existing religions. This allegory postulated the death of the Sun at his lowest attitude and weakest state, and the doubt of his devotees as to his resurrection. On account of this doubt, the 21st was assigned to St. Thomas, whose incredulity impressed itself strongly on the primitive Christian Church.

The New York Tribune has a great deal of nonsense written to it by its English correspondent. It may indeed be assumed that sober fact would but ill-suit the jaded sensational taste of the American tail-twister. The Tribune correspondent presumes (either stupidly or deliberately—probably the latter) that Home Rule for Scotland or Ireland implies the complete separation of those kingdoms from the rest of Great Britain, and is delighted to write, "influences at work to break up the British Empire multiply rapidly." The idea of Federation does not seem to have occurred to this wisacre!

There was a meeting of the City Council on Friday, distinguished by the usual disreputable bandying of personalities. Members of the council seem not to know their own powers, or to have any definite rules of procedure, and they certainly do not know how to behave with the ordinary courtesies of debate, or even with common decency towards each other. Why do not municipal councils adopt the indirect mode of personal allusion ("the member for so and so," or, in their case, "the alderman for such a ward,") in vogue in Legislative assemblies. The adoption of such a rule of procedure would in some degree tend to mitigate the vulgarity of direct personal implication.

It is not generally known that *Undine*, *The Magic Ring*, *Aslauga's Knight*, and *Sintram*, were looked upon by Fouqué as a series representing the four seasons in the order named, *Undine* being Spring, the richness and warmth of *The Magic Ring* suggesting Summer, while the appropriateness of *Sintram* to Winter strikes every reader of its weird and ice-bound pages. *Aslauga's Knight* is a wilder stretch of chivalrous transcendentalism, appropriate enough to Autumn, but of less clear and definite appeal to the heart than the others, and it will never be so great a favorite. There is another beautiful knightly story of Fouqué's, as little generally known as *The Magic Ring*, called *Minstrel Love*, which has great beauties for those who are not too stolid and matter-of-fact to appreciate a tale of wild romance into which is infused the very spirit of piety, delicacy and purity.

Dr. Nansen, who has recently performed the unprecedented feat of crossing Greenland on snow shoes, has, it appears, the christian name of Frithiof. Now Frithiof is the hero of a Norse Saga, of gigantic power and noble character, something like the famous Siegfried of the Niebelungen Lied, and the name would seem to be particularly well suited to Dr. Nansen, who is a champion snow shoe and skater, and a man of great physical powers and personal attractions. But what we wish to point out is that "Frithiof's Saga" is one of the most captivating of heroic poems, and ought to be got up in the "Christmas present" style. Stevens' translation from the Swedish of Bislup Tegnier, though very charming, is, here and there, decidedly faulty, but Professor Roberts speaks highly of a newer one, (Molcomb's) which when we have seen we shall take occasion to notice. We fancy this exquisite epic is not half so well known as it should be.

Archbishop O'Brien, during a recent visit to Baltimore, New York, Boston and other points, found himself astonished at the ignorance prevailing with regard to things Canadian. They had no intelligent idea of our mode of government, and seemed to imagine that we were governed direct from London. Some imagined that English goods were imported free, some that Halifax harbor was blocked with ice in winter, and looked incredulous when His Grace told them that he had seen more ice in New York harbor than he had ever seen in Halifax. It was with difficulty that the patriotic Prelate could make them comprehend that the C. P. R. spanned the continent without connection with American lines, or that Canadians could desire anything but annexation. The thanks of every loyal Canadian are due to the public-spirited Archbishop, whose position gives weight to his refutation of the misapprehensions our disaffected press has done so much to foster.

The Missing-Link in the chain of railway communication between Halifax and Yarmouth neutralizes the advantages which ought to be derived to the Province at large, and to its metropolis in particular, from the Western Railroad system, and throws the trade of the western counties into St. John. The Dominion and Local Governments have been both to blame in the matter, the question having been more than once made the bone of political contention. It is now fully time for the people to take up the matter, and by vigorous agitation to enforce their rights. The trade advantage that would accrue to the whole of the Annapolis Valley, and to Digby and Yarmouth as well as to Halifax, are so great and so apparent that further delay in the construction of this much-needed work should not be tolerated. Let the people make a decided move and the politicians will soon fall into line. If we are to reap the full benefits of direct trade with Yarmouth and intermediate points we must have an unbroken rail line under one management from Halifax to Yarmouth.

Speaking of "Frithiof's Saga," reminds us of a recent mention of the publication by G. P. Putnam's Sons of New York, of Fouqué's sufficiently well known tales, *Undine* and *Sintram*, which, as is remarked in Washington *Public Opinion*, "stand for what is best among all the folk—lore and heart—stories of the Fatherland." But when these exquisite stories are mentioned we always wonder that, while they are so familiar, the gorgeous "*Magic Ring*" is scarcely known. Permeated like the others, with the true old German sweetness of simplicity and piety, not *Ivanhoe*, the *Talisman*, the *Betrothed*, *Philip Augustus*, *Harold* and *Rienzi* all rolled into one, would present so rich a pageant of chivalry, and a combination of adventures so brilliant, so weird, and at the same time, from the simplicity of narration, so seemingly natural. We recommend this beautiful story to enterprising and tasteful publishers, with the warning that some later translations (like the revised version of the Testament) lack the quaint beauty of the original one of about fifty years ago, which stuck very close to the German.

The 25th Dec., the day on which the Sun was supposed to show the first signs of renewed vitality, i. e., that on which the first slight elongation of the day becomes apparent, coincides with the day fixed for the Nativity, the day which all Christendom honors, and on which it rejoices, above all others. Our issue of to-day will be our nearest to Yule-tide, and while heartily wishing happiness at this sacred as well as festive time not only to our numerous friends, but to all the world, we desire to record, for devout thankfulness, the singular exemption of our happy country from the terrible elementary disturbances with which, throughout the year, less favored lands have been visited and scourged. Visitations of storm and flood have not indeed been entirely unknown, but they have been of so comparatively mild a nature, that when we also take into consideration the fair abundance, in spite of threatening appearances at different seasons of the year, of our crops and harvests, we cannot but feel that special gratitude is due from a people perhaps more happily situated and circumstanced than any other country on the face of the earth.