

# 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.

The first month of the year had not passed over when the deadly catastrophe got in an instalment of its work. One of the usual terrible accidents occurred in Indiana, and a number of passengers were burned to death in full view of their fellows but with no chance of rescue. How long are the Railway Companies to be allowed to risk human life with "a light heart" and perfect callousness to their responsibilities?

Our Halifax business men are to be no longer divided, and in their combination there will indeed be strength. The first and most important question that is to engage their attention is the providing of facilities for handling the ever increasing quantity of freight which is seeking an inlet or outlet to this port. In this work our city fathers should lend their aid and prove that Halifax has faith in itself, and that its future does not entirely depend upon the Federal government. Dartmouth should also be on the alert, as her possibilities are great, and the inducements to make the eastern side of the harbor a railway terminus are too obvious to need mention, but Dartmouth will never be a pushing place until she rouses herself and appreciates what united action can accomplish.

Some doubt appears to have found its way into the minds of authorities on military education as to the efficacy of competitive examinations for commissions. Lord Wolseley, we know, as well as many other competent judges, does not esteem them very highly, and his remark, in his "Soldier's Pocket Book," that the worst staff officer he ever knew was one who had passed the most brilliant and successful examinations, will be remembered by many. Of course no such rule or observation holds good in all cases, yet there is no doubt something in the idea. At all events some people have begun to think that the better system would be first to get a man with the heart and stomach of a soldier, and then graft as much of the student on him as is necessary. Certain it is that British officers rarely failed in the old days when there was no cramming, while at the same time the advance of science has rendered absolutely necessary a higher standard of information. The probability is that the cramming system is not only overdone, but made to include much unnecessary and pedantic matter.

In the death of Father Perry, the distinguished Jesuit astronomer, from dysentery off the coast of Cayenne, both the world of science and the Catholic Church lose a conspicuous ornament to each. The late Father was certainly the greatest astronomer of the Jesuit order since Father Secchi, whose name stood in the very first rank. That he was sent out by the English government to South America to observe the recent lunar eclipse was sufficient evidence of his standing in science. Like Father Secchi in astronomy, and the late lamented Francois Lenormant in biblical criticism, he challenged the praise due to the combination of high scientific attainment with piety and devotion to his Church. The Rev. Father was only in his 57th year at his untimely decease in the prosecution of his mission.

An unexpected and far from weak opposition has, it seems, developed itself in the United States Senate against the renewal of the sealing monopoly of the Alaska Company. It has apparently been initiated by Senator Plumb, who has introduced a bill providing that after the termination of the present contract the sealing shall be carried on under the direct supervision of government officers, and that all the seals taken shall be sent to San Francisco, and there sold in open market to the highest bidder. Mr. Plumb would devote the revenue so raised to the education of the Alaska natives. It is satisfactory to learn that the proposal has secured a much more extended support than was at first anticipated by its friends. If the Alaska Company could be ousted there is no doubt that the Bering Sea question would lose much of the acerbity imparted to it by the intrigues of an irresponsible, grasping and unscrupulous syndicate.

The new departure of the Bank of England in consenting to the manufacture and circulation of one pound notes is an event worthy of comment. Notes of this denomination have always been current in Scotland, but the Bank of England has been conservative on this point 'till now. The measure is a very desirable one, not only as an addition to convenient forms of currency, but as some saving of the loss—much greater than would be thought—to gold coin by abrasion, the recoupage of half sovereigns, almost entirely from this cause, costing the country some £21 000 annually. It is thought that the new £1 notes will lead to the issue at no distant date of ten shilling notes, or even of notes of lesser denominations. It has been supposed by some that the new notes had some relation to the partial adoption of a silver basis, but it does not appear to be really anything but a measure of promoting public convenience with an incidental advantage of economy.

It is now proposed to change the boundaries of the city wards, increasing the size of wards two and three and decreasing the size of ward five. Ward five is altogether too large and populous and should be decreased in size, but we think that this would be better accomplished by increasing the number of wards in the city to eight or nine, than by adding portions of ward five to other wards. A better plan would be to make the Western boundaries of the wards as now constituted at or on a line with Robie St., dividing the portions of the city west of that street into two or three wards. The Western portion of the city is now simply the tail end of the six wards and as a consequence the residents of that section have to put up with such small favors as may be granted them after the claims of the wealthy and most populous heads of the ward have been attended to. The tail can't wag the head and therefore the roads and sidewalks of the western portions of the city are always in a disgraceful condition, and will remain so until the wards of the city are so divided as to give it representation in the Council.

The last annual report of the New York Board of Charities gives the number of insane in that state as 20,000, or one in every 300 of the population. The increase in nine years is appalling, being no less than 62 per cent. The state is said to have been more prosperous during this than during the previous nine years and has been very active in sanitary reform. The conditions of life for the masses are, except in some quarters of great cities, comparatively easy. It might therefore appear that the tendency of population to congest in towns and cities has been an operative cause of the alarming increase of lunacy. But it appears that the condition of the two Dakotas in this respect is no better, and the number of lunatics is so large that the great amount of destitution in those States, and the disappointment of home-sickness incidental to new settlements, have been adduced to account for it. It is further suggested that the wear of modern life on this continent, and the anxious pursuit of less simple ends than sufficed for a past generation, may also have borne a part in the increase of insanity. It is very probable that this last factor is to a considerable extent answerable, yet all these causes combined seem to fall short of accounting for so alarming an increase of mental disease.