

# THE CRITIC.

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## THE CRITIC,

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

Ruskin recently said in a lecture that Cardinal Mezzofanti, an Italian, and Elihu Burritt, an American, are the linguistic prodigies of the century. The former, tho' he began life as a carpenter, made himself acquainted with one hundred and twenty languages, and acquired a thorough knowledge of upwards of fifty. Burritt, while working and earning his living as a blacksmith, mastered eighteen ancient and modern tongues, and twenty two European dialects.

It has generally been supposed that the red men of North America died out as civilization advanced, and that their utter destruction and annihilation was merely a matter of time. Several eminent scholars in the United States have of late turned their attention to this question, and their conclusions, put in a nutshell, are to the effect that the disappearance of the aborigines is due almost entirely to their absorption by surrounding peoples, and it is claimed that this peculiar race element, as also that of the negro, will in time stamp the inhabitants of this continent with their distinctive characteristics, so as to make the Anglo-Saxons of Britain and those of America distinctive peoples.

Lord Salisbury has no faith whatever in Egyptian financiers. He realizes that the millions loaned to the government of Egypt would, if left under the control of these gentlemen, speedily slip through their fingers, without the country having gained any direct advantage thereby. Under these circumstances, the new Premier recognises the necessity of Egyptian finances being managed by British officials directly responsible to the British Cabinet. In thus holding the purse strings, England maintains with ease her supremacy in Egypt, and despite the rumors of the intended withdrawal of troops, the region of the lower Nile is, and must continue to be for many years, a protectorate of Great Britain.

The Library of the University of Parma, says the *Illustrated London News*, is well known to be one of the largest and richest in the world, especially in rare and antique books. No less than 80,000 volumes are catalogued, and on the strength of this catalogue an English *savant* arrived one day in last June in order to consult a manuscript which could not be seen elsewhere. It was nowhere to be found and the librarian, confident that only some one connected with the place could have removed it, had every member of his staff placed under police surveillance. In the course of a very few hours, the secretary, a certain Cavaliere Passini, was seen walking away with a good sized parcel under his arm and was at once arrested. The packet consisted of books, and in his possession there were duplicate keys to all the book-cases. Five thousand volumes are said to be missing, and several hundreds have been found at Passini's lodgings. The rest he has probably sold at high prices on account of their rarity and intrinsic value. The *Illustrated News* does not inform us that any blame has been attached to the librarian.

The commendable action of President Cleveland in retaining in office, irrespective of party, all persons qualified to fill the positions they hold, is causing much annoyance to the straight Democrats, who, having been in the cold shades of opposition for the past twenty-five years, are naturally desirous of ousting from office their political opponents. An old Democrat recently made the statement that, if an important election were to take place in Connecticut, fifty per cent. of the Democrats would refrain from voting; whereupon a life-long Republican replied that fifty per cent. of the Republican party would do likewise. Before the close of Cleveland's first term of office he may expect to read of Republican Democrats and Democratic Republicans. Disintegration of parties is evident.

Fifteen years since, the British Parliament, in order to encourage the ownership of land by small proprietors, agreed to loan to the purchaser two-thirds of the purchase money. Four years since, they improved the Irish Land Act by increasing the amount of the loan to three-fourths of the value of the property to be bought. The new Tory Government, desiring to outdo the Liberals in Liberalism, proposed to advance a sum sufficient to purchase the land. Under the two former Acts only 1500 Irish peasants became proprietors of small holdings; under the proposed Act, the proprietors will probably be counted by hundreds of thousands. Henry George has been accused of holding very absurd theories, but if we mistake not, this nationalization of the land is after all the practical result at which he aimed.

Prof. Proctor, of Michigan University, who has been visiting Cape Breton, says in a letter to the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*:—"There is enough of coal, iron, and copper in the Island to make a nation wealthy." Our American cousins frequently learn more of Cape Breton in two weeks than some of our own people do in a life time. An eloquently silent M. P. P., from one of our western counties, who never visited the Island at all, undertook last April to inform some of his friends that it was a useless barren. The *CRITIC* gave him some wholesome information at the time, and we have not heard of him since. If he has digested it, we beg to direct his attention to what Prof. Proctor says. We propose in due time to give him "some more information." Our M.'s P. P. at least should know a little of the geography of the Province.

We would direct the attention of our thoughtful readers to the discussions which are being carried on relative to over-production, stagnation of trade and excessive hours of labor. Upon the first of May, 1886, an organized movement is to be made by the mechanics and laborers of Canada and the United States to reduce the daily hours of labor from ten to eight. It is stated that Secretary Whitney, of the United States, will soon issue an order making eight hours a legal day's work in all the navy yards, with ten hours' pay for the same. We pointed out in a previous issue that the moral and intellectual standing of the people would undoubtedly be raised were the hours of labor shortened, and if this will have the effect of preventing over-production, and the consequent stagnation of business, the movement deserves the hearty support of employers of labor as well as of the community in general.

The efforts which are now being made in Montreal to stamp out small-pox remind one of the precautions which are taken to lock the stable door after the horse has been stolen. The natural aversion of the French habitant to undergo vaccination, and the disinclination of public officials to insist upon its being done, are alone responsible for the terrible havoc which the fell disease is now making in the great commercial metropolis of the Dominion. Had the health officers carried out the law in its entirety, not a child in Montreal upwards of three months old would now be unvaccinated, but health officers are for the most part like fair weather sailors, never prepared for disaster. But how is it with ourselves? Are we prepared to withstand the scourge of small-pox should it visit Halifax? Have the children throughout the city been successfully vaccinated, and are the trains and steamers which daily arrive subjected to rigorous inspection?

The seizure by Germany of several of the outlying groups of the Caroline Archipelago over which Spain holds a nominal control, is regarded by the Spanish ministry as a flagrant breach of international law, and one which necessitates strong and vigorous measures being taken to preserve the honor of the Spanish flag. As a matter of fact, the Spanish control of the principal Caroline groups is recognized by Germany, but Bismarck, who has developed of late an abnormal ground hunger, by no means grants the Spanish claim over the forty-eight groups which form the Caroline Archipelago. In themselves the islands are comparatively unimportant, and were it not for the complications which may follow the action of Germany, they would be of but little interest to the reader. The islands are inhabited by black, red, and mixed races, and the German Government are fully alive to the fact that from them laborers may be obtained to work upon the plantations in Northern Guinea, and it is for this purpose that Germany has set up its claim to several of the outlying groups.