

THE CRITIC.

The Welfare of the People is the Highest Law.

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The demarkation of the Afghan boundary is now nearly complete, and it is expected that it will be brought to a satisfactory close before the British Parliament meets. This will remove one of the sources of danger which threaten an Anglo-Russian war.

The political geography of South America has recently been changed, and Patagonia will not henceforth appear on maps of the continent. Chili has appropriated all the lands west of the Cordilleras, and the Argentine Republic has absorbed that lying to the east of this range, Terra del Fuego being divided between the two Republics.

Our impressions of Siberia are generally associated with Russian convict life, hard unceasing toil, exposure to a semi-arctic climate and dreary barren steppes. It is therefore a satisfaction to read of a progressive movement in this land of frost and snow. A University is to be established at Tomsk; already a library of 50,000 books has been provided, and a valuable paleontological collection secured.

Proselytizing from one faith to another is under the ban of the law in Russia. A Baptist minister named Conradi, who recently went over from the United States, succeeded in converting to his faith two Lutherans. The Governor of Simferopol, upon hearing of it, at once imprisoned the parson, and the American Minister at St. Petersburg only succeeded in obtaining his release upon condition that M. Conradi leave the country. The spectacle of a Russian official interfering in the proselytizing of persons from the Lutheran to the Baptist church is certainly remarkable, especially when we consider that, in his eyes, the beliefs of these denominations are looked upon as heretical.

We have never heard any person satisfactorily explain the reason why the patriarchs lived to such advanced ages, as compared with the man of the present day. It is, however, gratifying to learn that the average life of human beings is steadily increasing. The English Government, being largely interested in annuities, had occasion recently to make some new tables of life expectancy, and, after securing very full vital statistics, found out that in one generation the average expectancy of life had been lengthened from 44 to 51 years. This fact is said to be due to the improved way of living, a better knowledge of hygiene, and the new discoveries in the medical science of these times.

The following extract from the Canadian American should be studied by New England journalists who at present view the fishery question through a glass darkly:—

"When an American official comes down heavily upon a foreign vessel for some infraction of our customs or navigation laws, the people here exclaim, 'Ah, that's thoroughly American, that's a patriotic, self-protecting step, that's quite in accordance with our sense of right and justice in these matters.' And when the Secretary of the Treasury prohibits Canadian boats from participating in traffic between two American ports, or between an American port and some point in Canada on the line of international transportation, there is heard a shout of exultation in this country. 'Good' capital! they all cry. When the Government puts a tariff on such imports from the Dominion as barley and cattle, it is applauded all along the line for protecting home interests. When our northern neighbors do any of these things, we call them impudent, selfish, small-souled people who do not know how mean, small, despicable and piggish they appear in the eyes of the world. Uncle Sam very much dislikes to take a dose of his own medicine."

The Mayor of Charleston has received a letter from an English architect, who says:—

"Some new facts have been discovered here lately regarding mortars that may be of great importance to you in erecting future buildings at Charleston. The addition of saccharine matter (sugar treacle, infusion of malt, etc.) increases the strength of mortar in an extraordinary degree, making common lime mortar, with sugar added to it, as strong as our famous Portland cement. If you refer to any good treatise on chemistry you will find that water to which sugar has been added dissolves 14½ times more lime than does water without sugar. Reflecting on this fact I mentioned it some years ago to my friend, E. W. Binney, F.R.S., who said that that was no doubt the explanation of a circumstance that occurred where he was born, Vorksof. An Italian architect came down to erect a building in Mr. Binney's grandfather's time, for a nobleman in that neighborhood. This architect refused to use plain water for slacking his lime, and demanded and was supplied with malt for the purpose. Many years afterward, the building had to be taken down, but they could not pull it to pieces, and had to blow it up with gunpowder. Mr. Binney and I both agreed that it was the sugar in the infusion of malt which produced this extraordinary hardness and tenacity of the mortar. I have no doubt now that that old wonderful Roman mortar, which is the admiration of builders, after 2,000 years, owes its hardness and excellence to the addition of saccharine matter. Another fact that I have to tell you is, that powdered brick is probably a better thing than sand to mix with your mortar."

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EDITORIAL NOTES.

Max O'Rell, the well known author of "John Bull and his Island," has placed in the hands of his publishers, Messrs. Field & Tuer, his new book, entitled "Drat the Boys, or Recollections of an ex-French Master in England." Max will probably clothe his ideas of English boy life with the same originality of expression and carelessness of effect that characterized his former work.

Some time ago, we noted the death of Mrs. Girling, the leader of the New Forest Shakers. Seventeen years since, Mrs. Girling gathered about her 130 followers, upon the assurance that she had received a direct inspiration to the effect that she would not die until the second coming of Christ. Throughout years of poverty, her disciples have gradually dwindled away, having gone back to the world of wheat, wages, and weddings, so that at her death only twenty were found faithful. To these, after their long years of privation, her demise must have proved a rude awakening to the hard realities of life.

The wonderful progress which Italy has made during the past ten years is in stirring contrast to her development before the State was unified. Italian bonds now sell above par in the home market, and the increase to her revenue from all sources makes her financial position most satisfactory. Ten years ago the tax on buildings yielded but \$600,000, while that for the current year will, it is expected, foot up \$6,600,000. From the taxes on business, the Italian Government derived \$27,000,000 in 1876, while for this year, partially estimated, they will yield \$33,600,000. The increase runs all through the list of the government's receipts.

States that need to borrow a second time should not repudiate their honest debts. Some years ago, the State of Georgia issued, and sold largely to Northern capitalists, about \$8,000,000 of bonds, which it afterwards repudiated. Several Wall street brokers were badly bitten in the transaction. A few months ago, the State of Georgia, through an agent, went to the Wall Street Stock Exchange, and asked to have listed \$3,300,000 of new State bonds. The request went before the proper committee, then came up for discussion, and was so violently opposed by Henry Clews and others, that the matter ended by passing the following resolution: "No bonds of the State of Georgia shall be admitted to dealings on the New York Stock Exchange so long as that State continues to repudiate its former issues of bonds." So Miss Georgiana, of the "Southern sisterhood," is compelled to remain in the ante-room until she repents of her former wickedness, and begins to pay up old scores. Serves her right.