

# THE CRITIC:

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## CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

EDITORIAL NOTES .....	1, 2
MISCELLANEOUS.	
Clit-Clit and Chuckles .....	3
News of the Week .....	4, 5
Poetry—At Last .....	6
A Nugget of History .....	6
Is Courage a Matter of Education? .....	6, 7
An Important Question of Principle .....	7
Industrial Notes .....	7, 8
City Chimes .....	8
Commercial .....	8, 9
Market Quotations .....	9
Serial—Maitland's Mystery .....	10, 11
Parliamentary Review .....	12
Mining .....	12-14
Home and Farm .....	15
Draughts—Checkers .....	16
Chess .....	16

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

The death of the Duchess of Cambridge marks an epoch in the history of the Royal House. This venerable lady was the last of the family of George 3rd—children or children-in-law—and she was 23 years, almost a generation, younger than her husband, the late Duke, who was himself the tenth child of the old King. The Duke was born in 1774, and died, at the age of 76, in 1850. The late Duchess was born in 1797, and was therefore in her 92nd year. The present Duke completed his 70th year on the 25th of last month, being two months older than the Queen, his cousin.

Last Saturday the House of Assembly, with only three dissentient voices, voted an increase of \$100 to their sessional allowance. On the same day the question of an addition of the same amount per annum to an official who has done much unremunerative work to the honor of the Province was mooted. Although endorsed by members on both sides of the House, this increase, which would only have raised the salary of the gentleman in question to the amount received by his predecessor in office, was not, it seems, agreed to. The only excuse for increasing the sessional allowance of members must be the protraction of the average sittings of the House, and as this also devolves additional work upon the official in question, it appears to us that it would have only been fair play to have made the slight increase to the salary that was suggested.

The strong expressions of public opinion elicited by the ill-judged clerical attempt to procure intolerant legislation on the Sunday question has evidently had the effect of producing what might be called a "draw." It is our decided opinion that the Bill ought to have been thrown out, and we cannot but regret that the House of Assembly was found lacking in the courage of what are no doubt its real convictions. It is yet (at the time of our writing,) possible that the Council may be resolute enough to discard the measure. At all events the sting has been extracted from it, and it is better that the public should be in the hands of the Supreme Court for a definition of "servile labor" than be handed over by the Legislature, bound hand and foot by an iron-bound act which is a retrogression in the direction of the narrow and tyrannical "blue laws" of the Puritans of New England. The clergy seem to be very slow to understand that the day for this sort of thing is past.

There are accounts, in the usual detail, of the administration of the cat to the Montreal ruffian who recently assaulted a little girl. The punishment seems to have had its effect on the brute to a certain extent, but it is evident that it was inartistically administered, and not nearly as effectively as it should have been. Fifteen lashes, once inflicted, is all too few for this kind of offence, and, owing to the unskillfulness of the operator, it seems doubtful whether the criminal got more than thirteen, the first having landed on the shoulder guard, while it is doubtful whether the count did not stop at fourteen. This is mere child's play.

In the *Dalhousie Gazette* for this month we find the following, which, we take it, can refer to no other than Professor Roberts:—"There has been much speculation in regard to the appointment of Dr. Alexander's successor to the Chair of English in this University. We would like through these columns to advocate the claims of one whose appointment we believe would be universally popular, but by doing so we might embarrass the Governors. We are only referring to the matter for the purpose of emphasizing to the authorities that this Chair has been perhaps the most distinguished in the College. Filled successively by DeMille, Schurman, and Alexander, the duty of the Governors to maintain its former and present prestige is clear. To now appoint an inferior man would be worse than a crime—it would be a blunder."

The recently published letter from Stanley shows conclusively that the time has come when the civilized world should so effectively police Africa as to break up the infamous slave traffic, carried on principally by miscreant Arabs whose greed and cruelty are almost beyond belief. The depopulation of whole sections of country, the destruction of villages, the sweeping away of crops—leaving only starvation for such of the natives as escape the bullet, the sword, or the coffee—these are not only outrages against God and man, but—in a lower view—they are clogs upon the wheels of progress. The time must come when Africa will be opened to the world and reduced to ordinary civilization. In this connection we note with much satisfaction that a scheme is being formulated for the organization of a company to build a railway through central Africa. When the "iron horse goes shrieking" across the plains, over the mountains and through the valleys of equatorial Africa, with its attendants, the telegraph, the telephone and the daily mail, slavery must flee before it as the shades of night do before the rising light of day.

The escape of the *Calliope* from the hurricane at Samoa which wrecked the German and American men-of-war has come to be looked upon as a sort of triumph, and it may perhaps be fairly so regarded. Unslumbering vigilance and precaution, and prompt resolution at the right moment, the essentials of fine seamanship, were undoubtedly there, but it is only fair to mention another probable advantage possessed by the *Calliope*. She is a far more powerful vessel than the rest of her class. The *Montreal Witness* is right in placing her in what is called the C. class. It consists of eleven vessels, the *Canada*, *Carysfort*, *Champion*, *Cleopatra*, *Cumus*, *Conquest*, *Constance*, *Cordeliu* and *Curacoa* of 2,380 tons and about 2,450 horse power. This is the rating given by the *Witness* to the *Calliope*. But that vessel and the *Calypso* are exceptions to the class, and stand at the head of it. The *Calypso* is 2,770 tons and 3,720 horse power, but the *Calliope* is more powerful still, her tonnage being the same as that of the *Calypso*, while her horse power is 4,020. This far higher power had no doubt a good deal to do with her escape.

Postmaster-General Haggart's new Postal Bill, which has passed its second reading, and will probably be law by the time this note appears in print, has many objectionable features. The rate on drop letters in cities and towns provided with letter carriers has been raised to two cents, a most obnoxious increase, which it was supposed the public clamor raised when the increase was first proposed would kill off. It appears, however, that obstinacy is a prominent characteristic of Mr. Haggart, and he has carried his point in entire disregard of the interests of the public. Compulsory registration is another objectionable feature, and is rendered the more so by the authority given postmasters to register all letters that they may suppose contain valuables, collecting the fee from the receiver of the letter. This is an invasion of the sanctity of the mail that should not be tolerated, and we must express our surprise that the measure was ever entertained by Parliament. Are postmasters and their clerks to fumble over letters passing through their hands so as to determine what their contents may be? How otherwise are they to arrive at the supposition that they contain valuables, and carry out their instructions to register such letters? Such vacillating and uncertain legislation is behind the spirit of the age, and can only bring discredit upon the Canadian postal system.