

CURRENT EVENTS.

An earthquake and tidal wave visited southern Italy, December 28th, attended with appalling loss of life and suffering, and the destruction of an enormous amount of property. Over 100,000 people are reported dead, and great numbers are wounded and missing. Three provinces of the department of Calabria, which forms the "toe of the boot" in south-western Italy, were devastated; the important city of Messina, in north-eastern Sicily, and the village of Reggio, on the opposite side of the straits of Messina, are destroyed, and the port of Catania, in Eastern Sicily, inundated by a tidal wave.

A compass for use in airships is needed, the ordinary mariner's compass being rendered useless by the motor.

German warships are to be equipped with acetylene shells to take the place of search lights. On being fired, the shell goes under water, and the action of the water produces the acetylene light. This plan has the great advantage of lighting up a given space where the light is needed, while the ship that fires the shell is left in darkness.

The three-hundredth anniversary of Milton, and the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Charles Wesley, author of well known hymns, were celebrated last month; and this month brings the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Edgar Allen Poe.

The new parliament of the Turkish Empire is in session. It was opened by the Sultan in person; and three hundred and fifty members of the British parliament sent a congratulatory address, expressing their confidence that the establishment of the Turkish legislative body will lead to the welfare and contentment of all races in the Ottoman dominions. The first Turkish parliament assembled over thirty years ago, but was dissolved before any definite results were effected.

An international conference on the opium traffic is to be held next month, at Shanghai, China. Mr. W. L. MacKenzie King, M. P., will represent Canada. He has expressed the opinion that the only way to check the traffic is to prohibit the raising of poppies to so great an extent as at present.

The agitation against the government in India is so serious that the King made reference to it in his speech at the close of parliament; adding, however, an expression of his hope that the measures proposed to give the Indians a greater share in the central government would satisfy all reasonable demands. Several prominent natives have been arrested on the charge of sedition.

In Caracas, the capital of Venezuela, the people have risen against President Castro, who is now in Europe; and the vice-president has formed a new government. It is expected that this new government will settle

the existing disputes between Venezuela and foreign powers, including Holland. The deposed president had ruled the country since 1899, when he came into power at the head of a successful revolution.

Continued peace in the Balkans is by no means assured. Servia and Montenegro are preparing for war with Austria, and expect help from the dissatisfied inhabitants of the annexed provinces. The conference of the powers which it was thought might bring about a peaceful settlement, has not yet assembled.

A conference of the powers called by Great Britain to frame a code of laws for naval warfare is opened in London. The United States, France, Germany, Italy, Austria-Hungary, Russia, Spain, Holland and Japan are represented.

The convention for the purpose of considering the closer union of the South African colonies has recommended that the present intercolonial boundaries be abolished, and the country now comprising Cape Colony, Natal, Transvaal and Orange River Colony be divided into six equal parts, each with a local legislature of its own, and all represented in a central parliament. It seems probable that this scheme will be carried out.

The Russian government is making surveys for the proposed canal to connect the Baltic with the Black Sea. One end of this canal will be on the navigable waters of the Riga, the other on the Dnieper.

The government's experiment in introducing American cotton into India has met with success. The product brings a higher price than the Indian cotton.

Father Joseph Murgas, the inventor of the underground wireless telegraph, is shortly to bring his system into actual use. He claims that he will be able to send an underground message from New York to San Francisco with only three stations. The message is sent from tubes, thirty feet deep. One tube is of aluminum coated with silver, and this is enclosed in another tube containing oil. The signals are given by musical tones, through finely adjusted sending and receiving instruments.

Aluminum is now rolled thinner than tinfoil, and is likely to replace tinfoil for many uses. It is proposed in France that copper coins shall be replaced by coins made of aluminum.

The great oil well in Mexico, which was burning for two months before the fire could be extinguished, is now said to be throwing out noxious gases, from the effects of which men and animals are dying. The fumes are said to have blackened metals and killed birds in a town sixty-five miles from the well.

Nord Alexis, President of Hayti, has been deposed and has fled from the country. This, however, has not ended the civil war. There are several rival claimants with some following, and the struggle between them may be prolonged, if the United States government does not interfere to restore order.