

# THE CRITIC:

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## EDITORIAL NOTES.

Mr. S. M. Brookfield has published in the daily papers of Halifax a letter setting forth some of the causes why diphtheria is so prevalent. Let every householder look at once to the drainage and see if it is in proper order. This scourge should be stamped out with as little delay as possible.

A broad blot on Russia's escutcheon is labelled, "Persecution of the Jews." This persecution is no more blindly brutal and inhuman than the treatment to which all other civilized people subjected the Jews during the middle ages; but it seems incredible in this age of tolerance and enlightenment, when the consciences of the nations are awake, and one mighty nation is even doubtful of its right to murder a few Indians whom it is troublesome and expensive to feed. With regard to Russia, however, we are glad to see signs of a more Christian policy. The Czar has ordered that the application of the Anti Semitic laws be suspended for three years. One would naturally ascribe this clemency to a softening of the Muscovitish heart. But no, it only means that the rich Jewish bankers are threatening to avenge their people's wrongs: and Russia will conciliate the bankers at all hazards.

However rash or extravagant may be its expression, it is a righteous anger which now flames forth in Newfoundland at the hint that Franco and England may settle the French shore question without consulting the wishes of the Colony. The principle at stake is one which involves the liberties of the so-called self-governing colonies. If, in its impatience at Newfoundland's intractability and self assertion, the Colonial Office should blunder into concluding with France an agreement in which the Colony had been allowed no voice, the blunder would be not without precedent in the annals of mismanagement. The proper precedent would be found in the reign of the third George, in those acts of incredible and irremediable folly which led to the great Schism in the Anglo-Saxon race. It would be indeed the irony of fate if in England's oldest colony should be dropped the little seed of distrust, whose germination should at length split asunder the splendid fabric of this Empire. Here in Canada we are disposed to feel that it serves the old Colony right for not securing herself by a union with the Confederation; and there is a suspicion, moreover, that party intrigues have been allowed to aggravate the troubles on the French coast, and enhance the difficulties of a settlement. Such considerations should not blind us to the real point at issue. If there be any danger of the rights of

the Colony suffering because the Colony happens to be small and vexatious, the great colonies of Canada and Australia should hasten to support their weaker sister. Assuredly such injustice as that with which Newfoundland is menaced would not be submitted to by Canada; and still less would the irreverent and self-confident Australians endure it. If Downing Street carries out its threat it will strike a blow at Imperial unity, the effects of which will be perhaps less swift than fatal. The destiny which shapes the ends of nations seems to pause, uncertain whether to weld into closer union the loose masses of the British Empire, or to shatter the structure and build new peoples out of the fragments. What may seem a small thing in the eyes of the Colonial Officer, whose vision is seldom accurate beyond the bounds of Europe, may yet prove large enough to shape the decree of fate.

While sympathizing with the natural indignation of Newfoundland over Lord Kuntford's late utterance, we cannot refrain from noting the absurdity of the threats which find voice in some of the island journals. The cry for annexation to the United States is but the vainest of vain words. If England were for her own part ready to consent—which is a thing unbelievable—there would yet be Canada to be reckoned with. England would have to retain the island by force, or relinquish all idea of a permanent hold on this Dominion. With the United States in both Alaska and Newfoundland we would be hopelessly outflanked. Our possible future as an independent nationality would be ruinously handicapped, and we should have little foundation for loyalty to a Mother Country that could permit such an outrage to be put upon us. The Mother Country, indeed, could never permit it, and it is certain that the United States could not effect the annexation by force, for England's unassailable sovereignty of the seas gives all islands into her hand. No doubt the United States would accept Newfoundland with happy alacrity, even though she did not accept, (when she might have done so,) the vastly richer prize of Cuba. Newfoundland would be so much in the line of what she amably considers her "manifest destiny." But she would be much too wise to undertake the task of picking out the island from under British guns.

A few years ago cremation as a means of disposing of the dead was looked upon with such aversion as to cause much comment when any person of prominence approved of it, or had the body of a friend or relative so treated. That the antipathy to cremation in the minds of educated men and women is dying out is evidenced by three recent cases. Mr. Kinglake, the historian, Emma Abbott, the prima donna, who died at Salt Lake City not many days ago, and the Duke of Bedford, whose death was reported last week; each directed that their bodies should be cremated instead of buried. We have no hesitation in saying that we think cremation is conducive to an improved sanitary condition, especially in large cities, and we are glad to observe the movement in favor of it growing even in a small degree. The question of disposing of the dead has become a serious one in many large cities where the cemeteries are filled almost to overflowing, but among the masses of the people the prejudice against cremation is still strong. Especially is this the case in the centres of population, where one would think the necessity of keeping up a healthy condition of affairs for the living would tend to introduce it to favor. Three weeks ago we published an article from the *Arena*, entitled "Thrown in with the City's Dead," written by a lady, who told in plain and forcible language what a state of affairs prevails near New York. This ought to prove a strong argument for cremation, which, together with the examples above cited, should have the effect of giving the movement a fresh impulse. In small towns the question is of little import, for there is ample space to dispose of "the loved and lost" in any way that most commends itself to the mourners; but in cities, and even in Halifax, we cannot but think that interment of the dead is a practice that cannot fail to be injurious to the living, and the time will come when the cemeteries will have to be situated a long way out of town, or else cremation must be substituted for burial. To us there is nothing more repugnant in quickly reducing the body to ashes than in leaving it in the earth to become food for worms and to show decay. The world moves slowly, and never more so than in changing burial customs. What is considered sacred by one race is looked upon with horror or contempt by another. For instance, take the Parsees, or fire worshippers of India, now but a small sect, who leave the bodies of their dead in the "Tower of Silence" to the mercy of the birds of the air, which are regarded as sacred for these offices. The Hindoos and Mohammedans, however, jeer at the Parsees, and, as Mrs. Leonowens tells us in her entertaining book, "Our Asiatic Cousins," call out at them: "Kaw, Kaw Kakhana! dinner for crows!" Yes, the world moves slowly in this respect, but unless some even more improved method is thought of, it looks as if cremation will in the future be the means most in vogue of disposing of the mortal remains of civilized human beings.