

# THE CRITIC:

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The editor of THE CRITIC is responsible for the views expressed in Editorial Notes and Articles, and for such only; but the editor is not to be understood as endorsing the sentiments expressed in the articles contributed to this journal. Our readers are capable of approving or disapproving of any part of an article or contents of the paper; and after exercising due care as to what is to appear in our columns, we shall leave the rest to their intelligent judgment.

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

The occupation of Deer Island on the coast of Corea by Russia is said to give that country a great advantage over England. This, of course, may or may not be. The first meagre news of such occurrences is seldom reliable. It would be natural to suppose that England would look out for her security as to coaling stations in these parts, and that if Deer Island be a point of vantage she might have secured its occupancy as well as Russia, if it were not that more than any other nation she has on numberless occasions shown a supineness in such matters which has naturally bred distrust. We shall await further and fuller information with some interest.

Nothing is more indicative of the continual striving of the Press for sensationalism than the constant use of the word "excitement." We are not attributing blame to the Press. The public seems to call for sensation, "excitement" seems to be the grand end and aim of the average of it, and the most trivial, common-place and vulgar occurrences are eagerly seized upon to gratify the insatiable greed. This wretched craving displays poor human nature in anything but an ennobling aspect. As an instance, a country contemporary describes a particularly vulgar case of elopement, and speaking of the development at a railway station, says, "by this time the crowd was considerably augmented in numbers, and excitement ran high." One would rather suppose that silent disgust would have been the prevailing feeling.

Referring to the recent communications of an esteemed contributor and subscriber on the subject of the life-destroying heating and lighting arrangements in trains, we quote the following paragraph from the (English) *Electric Review*:—"The numerous disasters which take place in America owing to trains catching fire, in the event of there being a derailment or similar accident, has caused Sir Frederick Bramwell to publish a letter in which he points out that the cause in America and Canada of the fires is to be found in the petroleum lamp usually employed in the States and in Canada for railway carriage lighting, and the subsequent ignition of the contents; and, secondly, to the scattering of the fires for the heating apparatus. The latter can be avoided by the adoption of steam heating, and the former, as Sir Frederick says, by the introduction of the incandescent electric light. The writer states that, though his suggestions are obvious, he draws attention to the matter as the remedies are not applied."

It would now appear that the wails raised by a portion of the Press about the employment of Italian Navvies, in a forlorn hope of making political capital, faint and transient as they were, were superfluous. It is now stated that, in entering into an agreement with the foreman of the Italians, the Government Engineer stipulated that if at the end of the first month he should see fit, he should discharge them. In accordance with this provision, we understand that as soon as the season set free a proportion of home labor, the Italians were discharged as opportunity occurred. The whole proceeding seems rather peculiar, but we suppose it is as has been reported.

Sir Charles Tupper's proposition of an Imperial and Colonial Conference to consider the question of drawing closer the bonds of union between Great Britain and her Colonies is deserving of serious and favorable attention. Not among the least of the considerations which would necessarily come to the front in such a discussion would be the question how any measures tending to closer union could be adopted in the face of protective tariffs operating against England?—a most difficult question. But all these difficulties have to be faced if anything is to be done, and a Conference of Delegates for their discussion cannot but clear the ground. We hope the proposition will be entertained.

The wayward and eccentric Toronto *Globe* waxes pathetic after the following fashion anent some (we suppose) Ontario carping about the celebration of St. John the Baptist's Day:—"How are English-speaking men of Canada fallen below the great spirit of their world-subduing race if they can, without loathing, observe the efforts made during the last few days to excite them against their French Canadian fellow-citizens, because these have celebrated their national festival of St. Jean Baptiste in a spirited and becoming manner." There is a good deal more about Jacques Cartier and Father Brebeuf, and in the loftiest spirit of toleration, yet this is the same sheet that has done its best (or rather worst) to excite race and religious animosities over the Jesuit Bill. It is ludicrous enough.

The recent speech of the Austrian Emperor has had a marked effect on the European Bourses. The European situation, he observed, was still unsafe, but he hoped that peace would be maintained notwithstanding that armaments were being increased. Austria was therefore compelled to keep pace with the aggressive attitude of other powers. He hoped the wisdom and patriotism of Serbia would protect her from serious dangers, rejoiced that peace and order reigned in Bulgaria, and expressed his pleasure at continued progress in that country in spite of the difficult situation. These utterances are, no doubt correctly, taken to indicate that all hope of conciliation between Austria and Russia had been practically abandoned by the ruler of the former power. So great has been the sensation caused by the Emperor's remarks, that Count Kalnoky has been constrained to say, in the course of a very long and labored speech, that peace in Europe was not at present endangered.

In the line of wholesome, and at the same time cheap, food, mackerel have long been a leading staple. There is something in the peculiar oily composition of this fish that pleases the popular appetite. The great scarcity of mackerel this season and last may, therefore, be justly regarded as a public misfortune. It of course bears chiefly on the fishermen whose fortunes are curtailed, but it is also a privation to thousands of poor people. The supply has been diminishing steadily for several years. Those directly interested have exhausted every possible theory to account for it, but there is nothing settled but the hard and costly fact. In a similar way porgies, which were taken in seines by tons every spring in Narragansett Bay, and were highly prized as a food-fish, have almost wholly disappeared. After successive years of wholesale depletion, they were almost exterminated or forced to seek far-off breeding places. So it seems likely to be with mackerel. It is a serious question whether the whole seining method does not have the ultimate effect of worrying and depleting fish that move in shoals, and that, like land animals that are constantly hunted, they finally retreat to isolated places for safety, and, if followed there, leave the region altogether. Some of the most experienced fishermen who have studied the movements of these hotly-pursued fish for years have become convinced that this is the case, and freely affirm it. It is uphill work for a man to reason against his immediate interests, and it is difficult to see how hand-lining could supply the present demand for fish. But if fishermen must continue to scour the whole coast every year for mackerel as they are now doing without discovering more than a few straggling shoals, they might as well face the whole situation first as last before they are ruined. It may be necessary to pass laws absolutely prohibiting seining for a period of several years or until the fish have a chance to recuperate themselves.