

demanding Protection in their labour, Mr. Gladstone will promise to give it to them, to a moral certainty. We English are a strangely illogical and stupid people. We are exhausting our soil, our coals and our minerals; living recklessly on our capital; admitting corn free and ruining our farmers; admitting flour free and ruining our millers; admitting sugar free and ruining our teeth; reducing the tax on tea, and ruining our nerves. And then we wonder that bread is as dear as it was forty years ago, that every other necessary of life is steadily increasing in price, and that lunacy and pauperism are increasing with gigantic strides. State emigration and Federation—surplus population transported to vacant land, Free Trade between England and her Colonies, and Protection against all alien countries, may solve the problem, but it is one which will have to be faced and settled before this century is out.

You will be interested to hear that Mrs. Spencer-Bell, of Fawe Park, Keswick, has bequeathed £10,000 to found a Spencer-Bell Ward in the Carlisle Infirmary, and a like sum for a Ward in the London Temperance Hospital. We don't often have such windfalls in the North. You know the keen interest we have always taken in the work of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, especially Kate, who says "grown-ups can generally take excellent care of number one, but the suffering of the children is a *national crime*." I know no society for which I have such a hearty admiration, or that is doing greater work. An organisation which throws light on such dark places as the Carogh Orphanage performs no less valuable service to the State than to our common humanity. The evidence at the inquest in connection with this Institution in County Kildare disclosed a truly shocking state of things in the treatment of the children under its care. Leaving tiny waifs of humanity lying on beds of hay, wrapped in dirty calico wrappers, with their bodies excoriated and reduced to skeletons, is hardly the sort of conduct that finds favour with a coroner's jury, and in returning a verdict of manslaughter they cannot be said to have exceeded their duty. A jury of Matrons would have brought it in *murder*.

I hear that an account of Prince Albert Victor's tour in Southern India the winter before last will shortly be published. It is from the pen of Mr. Rees, who accompanied the Prince, and who has already given to the world a record of the tours of the late Governor of Madras.

The weekly batches from Mudie's are immensely interesting just now. I have been reading "The Bard of the Dinibovitz, the Roumanian Folk songs, collected from the peasants by Hélène Vacaresco, and translated by Carmen Sylva."

The book charmed me greatly with its genuineness. The Queen of Roumania writes a preface, in which she tells us how the "young poetess, to whom we owe the discovery of these songs, spent four years in collecting them among the peasants on her father's estate." To surmount the reluctance of the country maidens to sing before her, she was obliged to affect a desire to learn spinning, so that she could join the girls at their spinning parties, and over-hear their songs more easily. "She hid in the tall maize to hear the reapers crooning them; she caught them from lips of the lute-players, of gipsies and fortune-tellers; she listened for them by death-beds, by cradles, at the dance, and in the tavern, with inexhaustible patience." For the songs thus discovered, Carmen Sylva claims that they are a "real treasure trove," as undoubtedly they are, and that they constitute "a valuable addition to the literature of the world." The characteristic which will strike most critics is the great simplicity of the form, and the high imaginative feeling displayed.

I sat up half the night reading Mrs. Grimwood's fascinating "Three Years in Manipur," although, to tell you the truth, I cannot imagine how she could sit down and make public the details of her husband's murder seven months after her loss. But I suppose old maids are unduly sentimental concerning such matters. "My Canadian Journal," by Lady Dufferin is, of course, full of anecdote and pleasant descriptive narrative, touching lightly on an infinite variety of subjects, and impressing one with the fact that, pleasant as the duties may be, there are few posts where they are more onerous than those occupied by the rulers of the different parts of Her Majesty's great Empire. "We gave a sigh of relief when we got home," writes Lady Dufferin, after her grand tour, "the quiet is so charming, the idea of not having to catch a train in the morning, of not having to reply to an address, of not having to visit three or four towns before we go to bed again, and of having got through with flying colours—delightful!" All the same, the reason of Lord and Lady Dufferin's success in Canada is not far to seek, even among those who go no farther than the pages of the Vicereine's own journal. From the moment they land in the Dominion they adopt it as their own country; the idea of exile is never implied, and no word of regret for all they have left behind is ever uttered. Lady Dufferin's description of American children is very sad. She writes: "They were dressed out with the shortest of petticoats, the most magnificent silk and muslin and lace dresses, the best of coloured silk stockings, and boots with large bows to match, such curls, and fans, and bracelets, and, above all, such airs and such con-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)