

## A TIMELY SUGGESTION.

The *Herald* in a timely editorial calls attention to a letter written by Mr. David Armstrong, of Ottawa, to the *Toronto Empire*, over his own signature, urging that the Dominion Government should grant a bonus upon every ton of Nova Scotia Coal which may be sold in that province. The removal of the duty on anthracite coal, instead of lowering the price of that article in Ontario, has been taken advantage of by the Pennsylvania coal ring, and that item now goes to swell their profits. Ontario imported during the year 1887 five and a-half million dollars worth of coal from the United States, and, as recent developments have shown, the Ontario consumers paid a bonus ranging from fifty cents to one dollar per ton to the Pennsylvania coal ring for the privilege of purchasing United States coal. The ring discriminates in prices against Ontario, yet as there is no way of escape, Ontario continues to purchase their coal. "The question arises," says Mr. Armstrong, "would it not be better to pay a voluntary bonus to ourselves on Nova Scotia coal than to continue to pay a forced bonus to a foreign ring." The legislation of the Canadian Parliament is sufficient to restrict domestic coal combines; but he points out that the Ontario people are utterly powerless to emancipate themselves from the wholesale inflictions of the Pennsylvania ring, "unless parliament can see its way to give a mileage bonus on Nova Scotia coal to distances west of a fixed point in Ontario." In support of this contention Mr. Armstrong urges that "the gain to the country will be at least 500 per cent. above the bonus required to supply the Ontario home market from sources within the Dominion. The transfer of from a million to a million and a-half tons of coal from the Maritime Provinces to Ontario will become a powerful artery of inter-provincial trade, carrying out the true principal of confederation, giving employment to thousands of men in the mines, on the railways and vessels, and keeping our wealth within our own country. In concluding his suggestive letter, Mr. Armstrong, in referring to the spirit which actuates the Ontario people, says: "Residing in central Ontario, the writer has discussed this question with people of all shades of political opinion, and has not yet found one voice dissenting from the means proposed."

We give the *Herald's* presentation of Mr. Armstrong's case, which is a very strong one, and should receive the unqualified support of every man, woman and child in Nova Scotia. Mr. Longley and other writers on the coal question have frequently called attention to the injustice done Ontario by the imposition of a duty on coal. The people in Ontario were themselves strongly opposed to it, but experience, the best of all teachers, has proved to them that they were wrong, and now one of their own number comes out in a vigorous appeal for such a bonus on Nova Scotia coal as will make its introduction into Western Ontario a certainty. Not only this, but he most conclusively points out that "the gain to the country will be at least 500 per cent. above the bonus required." After this strong showing, we cannot follow the *Herald* in its suggestions of "a more excellent way." Its proposed scheme of agitating for the deepening of the canals of the St. Lawrence, brings in a side issue that may take years to accomplish. Mr. Armstrong's scheme, if urged upon parliament and carried, would go into operation at once, and its beneficial effects would be immediate. We should be the last people in the world to raise objections, as the movement is of vital importance to us. In a case like this, political issues sink into insignificance, and we should unite as one man to forward Mr. Armstrong's contention of the necessity of a bonus on our coal.

## ART MAGIC.

This was the term applied of old to things men could not understand, which as they understood nothing, amounted pretty nearly to everything.

Roger Bacon's science—wonderful for his time—procured him ten years imprisonment in his cell, and Joan of Arc's victories procured her the privilege of being burnt for a sorceress.

The inspiration, or at all events what she firmly believed to be inspiration, which prompted this heroic girl to a course of action which resulted in freeing her country from a very cruel invasion, was very closely akin to the kind of inspiration sought, and sometimes affirmed to be found by the modern spiritists.

Spiritism, or, as it is generally called Spiritualism, after having made much more noise and gained a much more extensive influence in the world than people imagine who are not conversant with it, literature shrunk quietly into the back ground for some years under the discredit brought upon it by a long continued series of exposures of fraud on the one hand, and gullibility on the other. The disapprobation of sensational methods felt by conscientious spiritualists contributed not a little to the rise of Theosophy, the quietism of which seemed of a higher nature than the commonplace cravings for materialisations, floatings through the air, and spirit photographs. This transcendental mysticism has, we believe, outlived its enthusiastic phase, and Spiritualism in some of the worst of its old forms seems to have cropped up anew. The exposure of one or two recent frauds which have amounted to swindling, has set the press and the pulpit rampant again, both the sensational journalist and the sensational parson being alike on the *qui vive* for an exciting topic.

Both approach it with the sort of convictional cant which the critical ear is quick to catch in the discussion of any thesis which it becomes the idle fashion of the moment to expatiate upon. The press, it is true, treats it in a dilettante manner, but the pulpit, especially where its occupant is gifted with a florid style and a copious flow of language, energetic and sensational, if she low, finds it irresistibly congenial to a frothy oratory, and to the display of what is authority to a good many very excellent people.

In the pursuit of this cheap reprobation long strings of Biblical texts are

drawn out which have, in reality, but little connection with each other, and in adducing which, it is forgotten that from scripture almost anything may be proved within the limits of submission to Providence, and that many texts on this particular subject do not now convey the single and literal meaning they did of old.

In sermons, the well-meaning, if weak and credulous, seekers for communion with the unseen, are told that they are dealing with the "Prince of the Powers of the Air," and the sulphurous locality he is supposed to preside over, with a solemnity which raises a smile; for those who have really studied the subject know that there is more to question in it than the mere scoffer thinks, while they also know that the generality of those who call themselves, or are called, spiritualists, are a moral and conscientious folk, sometimes betrayed by an excessive yearning after the spiritual, to devote their time and energies to a pursuit very unpromising of satisfactory results. The almost certainty that every one whose mind is nominally fairly balanced will, in the long run, find this out for him or her self, gives a slight touch of ludicrousness to the ponderous solemnity of warning and denunciation.

## SAPPHO.

A fortnight ago we briefly alluded to Mr. Nicholas Flood Davin's article in the *Week* on "Sappho." The subject is a captivating one, and we make no apology to our readers for going into it a little more *in extenso*, using in many places Mr. Davin's own words.

Sappho was in the height of her fame about 610 B.C. During her life the wealth and glory of Tyre inspired the denunciations of the Prophets; Jeremiah began to prophesy; Daniel was carried to Babylon; Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, Solon legislated at Athens, and Tarquinius Priscus probably reigned over Rome—the fifth of her early kings. There is ground for the belief that she belonged to the aristocratic and wealthy class. She was a native of Lesbos, and lived at Mitylene, the chief city of the Island. "Mitylene," says Strabo, "is well provided with everything." He adds that "it formerly produced celebrated men," among them Pittacus, one of the seven wise men of Greece, and Alcæus the poet. Strabo lived from about 54 B.C. to A.D. 24. The Lesbian wine was the most celebrated throughout Greece, and for a time the Æolians, whose temperament was passionate and intense, were in the forefront of Greek literature. The Æolian women were highly educated, and their intellectual and social status was superior to that of the Ionian women. Their land, prolific of the choicest luxuries of life, and of rare beauty and richness in flowers and fruit, olive groves, statues and temples, combined with the purple glories of the Ægean Sea to stimulate poetry, music and the love of the beautiful in art and nature. After a while, as was in the order of things, the Æolians degenerated, but in Sappho's time they were in their prime, and there is no doubt she was peerless among them.

The legend of her throwing herself from a rock into the sea for hopeless love of Phaon is undoubtedly a fable, though, as Mr. Davin says, "there are worse steps than Leucate from which the heart may fall." But she herself speaks in one place of being "somewhat old," a fact which in itself militates against the legend.

It has been popularly supposed that Sappho's life was not marked by what we should call morality and propriety, but, besides the difference of tone and sentiment of Greece, which looked up to Olympus, and of Christendom, which looks up to Christ, she was commented upon to a great extent by the licentious literati of Augustan Rome to whom purity and love presented no affinities.

Erinna of Telos, and Damophyla of Pamphylia, poetesses of celebrity in their time, were among her pupils, and she speaks of and to her numerous "girl friends," in terms which have the purity and grace of the letters of refined and warmhearted girls still at school. The Lesbians gloried in her, her image was engraved on the coins of Mitylene, and Plato ranked her as a tenth Muse.

So subtle and delicate were her effusions that so considerable a poet as Catullus tried to translate her "Ode to Anactoria," and utterly failed. Swinburne declares it beyond him and beyond all men to translate her odes.

The poet Alcæus, her contemporary, addresses her as "Violet-weaving, pure, soft-smiling Sappho," and Plutarch says "when he read her poems he set aside for very shame the drinking-cup, such was their exalted influence over him." Speaking of herself she says, "I am not one of a malignant nature, but have a quiet temper." Plato numbered her with the "wise."

Fame, no doubt, she longed for, but it cannot be believed that a woman loved of maidens and honored as Sappho was among her countrymen, could have been other than pure and good, especially when judged by the standards of her country and time. Ovid's "Sappho to Phaon" is valueless as to her character, but it proves the celebrity of her teaching. A Roman of the time of the Cæsars would think of Sappho as he would of the women of that most licentious court, and the author of the "Art of Love" was little likely to understand a pure, earnest and passionate nature.

It is said that the Duke of Edinburgh is to succeed Admiral Sir Geo. Willes as Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth. If this be true, it is a monstrous job. Of course the Duke was promoted to post rank at the earliest possible period, both of age and of service. Then he is made a Rear-Admiral over the heads of a number of senior captains, the navy rule being one of absolute seniority from that rank upwards. He is given the command (a full Admiral's) of the Mediterranean when a Vice-Admiral, with local rank as Admiral. He is now, it is true, a full Admiral, but if he goes straight to Portsmouth from the Mediterranean, it will be an utterly disgraceful exercise of court influence, and it will be surprising if it do not elicit a very strong feeling among naval officers.