

A NIGHT SKY.

THE moon was in third quarter when I gazed,
That memorable evening, on the sky;
Lone, lazy lengths of cloud hung loose on high,
Unfolding from low lines, but lightly raised
From the horizon—all was hush'd and hazed.
Anon each bright battalion, wheeling by,
Sought to encompass her chaste majesty,
But each time she appear'd they fled amazed.
Through every rift that broke the moving mass
Peered forth a sentinel that did observe
And send swift messages on lucent curve
To her, the Queen, whose mandates back did pass.
So waged the war till all her foes had fled,
And Luna reigned triumphant overhead.

Paris, Ont.

E. G. GARTHWAITE.

SAUNTERINGS.

IN many respects we have, undoubtedly, to congratulate ourselves upon the character of Canadian journalism as it compares with that of the fourth estate among our connexions of the Republic. True, the contrast shows our virtues to be somewhat of the negative sort; but even abstention from certain of the newspaper vices that have attained so wide and profitable a popularity across our southern boundary is worthy to be chronicled in a spirit of profoundest appreciation. Even as a preventive measure, indeed, such a chronicle would seem the part of wisdom. Our journals naturally possess a consciousness of rectitude which must be very fortifying, but the staying qualities of even a consciousness of rectitude are well known to be subject to the forces of public opinion. Especially in journalism, by some subtly-operating law that works upon the conscience through financial or political agencies, are we aware that this is the case. The influence of silence is undermining in this regard; let us hasten therefore, to bulwark, so to speak, the editorial ethical sense as it is in Canada, by the expression of our deepest admiration and highest esteem.

And truly, when we look at the press-ridden United States and the evils that we have hitherto escaped, our cause for gratitude assumes proportions interesting, if a little appalling, to contemplate. Our journals are abusive enough in all conscience, but the abuse usually expends itself upon its victim in his public capacity; his private life is not denuded for purposes of anathema. A candidate's wife and mother-in-law do not usually share in the penalties of candidature. His domestic relations are not levied upon to contribute to his defeat. His hearthstone is comparatively sacred, and in the newspaper duels in which so much printer's ink and editorial gore is daily and needlessly spilled throughout our fair Dominion, the doughty combatants are still sufficiently mindful of their dignity to assail each other as "the scoundrelly Onondaga *Herald*," "the idiotic Cainsville *Express*," rather than, as it would be with our neighbours, "that scoundrel Jones, of the Onondaga *Herald*," "that idiot Smith, of the Cainsville *Express*." The ebullition of journalistic passion seethes day and night; but, like certain springs of boiling mud in Greenland, it is confined by a thin upper crust which prevents a personal application of viscid fluid. What would not the American public, pained and saddened by the perpetual fratricidal encounters of Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith, give for the recognition of such a code of decorum, the solidification of such a protective crust! As it is, they must regard that formation in Canadian journalism with envious curiosity, unless, indeed, Mr. Warner has found room in *Harper's* to ascribe it to the climate!

Then we are happily free from a characteristic that is rapidly proving at once the bane and the prosperity of American newspapers—the lurid reporting which is becoming indispensable to the success of all metropolitan journals of the United States. This kind of work is done by lightning artists of the pen, of incredible imagination and vocabulary, to whom no episode is too unimportant, no incident too revolting, to be clothed in the most elaborate rhetoric for the delectation of the masses. This person's services are in great demand; and column after column is placed at his disposal, to be filled with anything that strikes his facile fancy, from a life-like description of a washerwoman's clothes-line to a thrilling account of a prize-fight. His versatile genius usually culminates in the prize-fight, which reads like a dime novel, with vivid side-lights, breathless periods, and blood-curdling climaxes. It is easy to see the demoralising effect of this sort of thing upon the real mission and true dignity of the press, as well as upon the literary tastes of the people. The latter crave the unhealthy stimulus it affords, and the astonishing volume of what they read impresses them very falsely in regard to their literary capacity. Values in journalism become subverted. The graphic presentation of local incidents,

quite a subordinate feature, is made preëminent. Manner is of much more consequence than matter. Cablegrams announcing crises in the destinies of foreign humanity, and editorials commenting upon the same, are indifferently skipped, while three columns of cheap Coney Island realism are devoured with avidity. The degeneration of editorial writing is the natural consequence of this. The "leader" will soon be an anachronism in American journalism. Instead of acting as indispensable ballast, it will swamp the flimsy craft that attempts the impossible cargo. The functions of the general press in that country are thus vastly belittled and degraded. From its once exalted position as the people's instructor and guide, it is rapidly reaching the level of a mere public caterer, attired in the harlequin dress which shall best advertise it. While it must be admitted that we have one flagrant example of this tendency in Toronto, the general tone of the Canadian press is very slightly affected by it; and it is the belief of most people that the success of that one exception is due quite as much to the sprightly independence of its articles as to any characteristic of the paper less to be admired.

Further, to indulge ourselves in the gratulatory amusement of the Pharisee of old, we have not yet descended in Canada to that spirit of enterprise that has produced the back-door reporter. The back-door reporter is that self-respecting agent of the press who, being denied the privilege of access and information at the portal usually open to gentlemen, obtains it at the area entrance by artful beguilement of the coachman or the cook. In the event of John's or Bridget's unapproachableness, he takes up a point of vantage among the chimneys of a neighbouring roof, and obtains "facts of interest" for the next issue of the *Interloper* just the same. This person is the peculiar evolution of American journalism of the nineteenth century. He is known to no other cycle, no other land, no other profession. His chief characteristics are his absolute lack of moral sense, his forehead of brass, and his indomitable "enterprise." The modern necessity of sensations at any cost has effectually destroyed the first; a natural incapacity to perceive the nature of a snub has induced the second; and the prize of the appreciation of the great unwashed has implanted the third. His origin and development are found contemporary and related to that of the millionaire. He may be said to thrive upon the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. The dearth of capitalists in Canada may be in some degree accountable for his non-appearance among us. And if this be the case, our optimists may count one more amelioration of our comparative poverty.

So prominent a member of the profession has the back-door reporter become, and so pronounced in his influence upon social life in American cities, that his satirised figure appears in almost every recent American novel of note. Bartley Hubbard in "A Modern Instance," the white-haired youth in "The Bostonians;" and later, a faithful photograph in Mr. Wharton's grimly sarcastic "Hannibal of New York," are types that will, it is to be hoped, survive their prototypes.

The Canadian press, moreover, is held vastly more accountable by the people than that of the United States. We demand consistency of action and stability of opinion from our leading journals. To fail in either is to suffer serious loss of influence, and to invite much contemptuous criticism. Even a change in their party tactics is not made without grave deliberation as to the probability of popular approval, the fullest explanation, and the most satisfactory reasons possible. Not only the great organs, but every village sheet, finds this course indispensable to success. In the States the adoption and consistent pursuit of any one course by a newspaper is so rare as to elicit admiring comment when it occurs. The policy of leading journals veers with every whiff of public opinion; changes outright at no visible dictation but that of expediency. Responsibility for the opinions of yesterday seems to be a troublesome requirement that the public is willing to dispense with. And the journal that was yesterday of Paul is to-day of Apollos, and will to-morrow be of Cephas, unchallenged and uncriticised, save by the mocking gibes of its contemporaries, the insincere note of which shows them under the same condemnation. And, whatever a disclosure of the secrets of darkness might reveal, the light of common day does not show press influence so openly and unblushingly bought and sold for individual benefit in this country as it is in the United States.

THE imputation of any national shortcoming necessarily has an element of injustice in it, from which the saving minority that exists everywhere must suffer. And while our opinion of American journalism is naturally dictated by our observation of the majority of American newspapers, it would be absurd to deny that there are in the United States journals whose conduct is governed by principles of integrity as unyielding as any that prevail either in England or with us. And while we decry much of