

THE sensation of the week in British and European political circles has been the announcement of the agreement entered into between Great Britain and Germany for partitioning large portions of Africa between the two nations. It is curious to observe the widely divergent opinions expressed in regard to the arrangement. Leaving out of view the moral right, which no one seems seriously to question, of civilized nations to take possession thus unceremoniously of the territories occupied by savage tribes, it is probable that the division is as fair a one as could well have been made. No one, save those who think that Great Britain should grasp everything and yield nothing, can deny that her claims in Africa have been pretty liberally conceded. It is difficult, without access to more recent and accurate maps than are yet available, to trace the boundaries as described in the cablegrams, but England's protectorate of Zanzibar, and the inclusion in her sphere of the greater portion of the lakes, and the regions embraced in Stanley's treaties with the chiefs, must secure to her every reasonable facility for opening up the country to trade and civilization. If Germany has also received large portions of territory, what Englishman can object? Why should not her right to them be considered as good as that of Great Britain? At any rate, it is pretty clear that England's share will afford abundant scope even for all her energies for many years to come, and that, whatever Germany may do in the way of civilizing and colonizing her part of the dark continent will be so much clear gain. If the civilization of Africa is to be considered as in any measure the end in view, that work must be carried on much more rapidly by the two great nations than it could have been by England alone. As to the cession of Heligoland, which seems to be the sorest point with many of Lord Salisbury's critics, one can hardly glance at its position on the map without feeling that it would have been but a gracious and friendly act to hand it over in any event. Its value to England even from a strategical point of view, is not apparent, and it is probable that with Germany its acquisition is as much a matter of sentiment as of utility. The only point that seems really worthy of consideration is that of the inhabitants. The fact that they are few in numbers does not diminish their rights as British subjects, and if they have really been transformed against their will to another nation, the transaction will leave an ineradicable stain on the British escutcheon. If, however, their interests have been secured in the matters of taxation and conscription in such a manner as to reconcile them to the change, as we understand Lord Salisbury affirms, the commotion in other respects dwindles to the dimensions of a tea-pot tempest.

### THE MUSES OF NEW FRANCE.

THE year that Marc Lescarbot passed in Acadia was an active year in his life. Having taken but one day to come to a decision, he probably never regretted that he had availed himself of his friend Pourtrincourt's invitation to "flee from a corrupt world" and join in an expedition beyond the sea. Every educated Canadian is familiar with Lescarbot's share in what, notwithstanding later reverses, must be called the success of the infant colony that built a fort, erected "a splendid trading post," made friends with the aborigines, mainly by his aid, and began to teach them at once farming and Christianity. The bare facts are modestly set forth in his "Histoire" and "Relations," and are within the reach of readers, but less common is his volume of verses, all having reference to Acadia, and printed at Paris, in 1609, under the title of "Les Muses de la Nouvelle-France." A perusal of this metrical and dramatic work forces the conclusion that an advocate of the parliament of Paris, a fair historian and worthy man of good administrative abilities, yet not averse to the genialities of a *tabagie*, is not necessarily a good poet. He had previously impeded his wing by composing and publishing at Rochelle, in 1606, an adieu to France, which effusion, he says, was received with plaudits of the people.

The writer of this article thinks "Les Muses" has not been reprinted in Canada, although, no doubt, copies are to be found in private hands. *Apropos* of which a Toronto comic contemporary recently offered the excellent suggestion that now is an appropriate time to overhaul old lumber rooms, dusty shelves and unlikely places generally, and if old French volumes or early books printed in Canada be found, as many would probably be, to send them bound in library calf to the new library of the university. The cost to the donor would be trifling, while the value to history and bibliography might be great.

Lescarbot's volume, in accordance with the custom of the time, opens with a dedicatory ode, but not quite so fulsome as taste then sanctioned, to the king, Henry IV. This is followed by a metrical "send off" to a party returning to Old France. The adieu conveys an appreciative and kindly feeling expressed in passably good couplets. Our worthy *avocat* had a high admiration for the new country, and makes his ode a vehicle for praising land and

sea, fish, flesh and fowl, the harbour, rivers and woods, the rich pastures, everything in short excepting that the land was wanting in the vine. Nevertheless after comparing the attractions of Old and New France, to the advantage of the former, he sums up:—

No, I am wrong. Here in this solitude  
The man of mind serenely balanced would,  
In scanning all its lovely features o'er  
Heaven's majesty, from nature's charms, adore.

Amusement, as is usual on ships of exploration, was not wanting to sailors of the fleet, for Lescarbot wrote a nautical drama that was represented on board the flagship *Jonas* in the harbour of Port Royale. One regrets to have to say it was sorry stuff. Neptune of course is the leading character, attended by six Tritons, one of which is a Gascon. Savages offer various tributes to Pourtrincourt, and the whole concludes with a general fanfare and salute of cannon, repeated by the glen of thirty echoes.

When the dispirited colonists ill-advisedly deemed the time had come to abandon Port Royale on the lapse of the Fur Company, Lescarbot's muse was ready with an adieu to New France, in tolerable verse and really showing a good deal of feeling. The beauties and resources of the country they were leaving, and to which they seem to have formed an attachment, were fondly gone over, although somewhat in the manner of a catalogue. The beautiful coast and hills that shut in the port with a double rampart, the fertile valleys where the deer graze, the founts and brooks are all remembered. Descending to minuteness of detail the poet makes manifest a close observance equally of animate and inanimate nature. His list of birds might have been compiled by a professor. Of the birds of the noblesse, *oiseaux chasseurs de haute volerie*, the eagle, falcon, vulture, by which he probably means the great fish-hawk, the merlin, tassel-gentil, goshawk and sparrow-hawk, to which he adds the large horned owl. Of water-fowl the heron, crane and bustard, goose, six kinds of duck, also woodcock. Of song and other birds the lark, nightingale, merle, song thrush, greenfinch, with the jay, the smaller owls, swallow, wood pigeon, turtle dove, and crested wood-pecker, besides the crow, and seabirds, as gulls and cormorants. On land the industrious beaver, the royal moose, the swift-footed deer, cariboo, hare, fox, bear, squirrel, otter with its velvet coat, porcupine, wild cat (so called) but more like a leopard, the martin whose pelt of sable is a vestment for kings, likewise the muskrat and the fat little animal called *nibaché* that hides in trees. Adieu all! Nor is this paradise of *venerie* the only attraction of Acadia. The waters—or "the humid element," as he prefers to call them—abound with all the game fish of the north. Briefly dismissing clams, mussels and razorfish, he speaks respectfully of lobsters and becomes pathetic in taking leave of the cod, herring, dolphin, sturgeon and a variety of others, not forgetting an occasional whale. Farewell, too, to the fire-flies; to the climate; to the raspberries, strawberries, mouse peas and red gooseberries that grow spontaneously. To the "babillard voice of echo," and to the mines that hold in their veins seams of brass and iron, steel and silver—to each and all adieu! Finally he prays God to guard the good ship *Jonas* while the returning colonists are on board, for he himself, Lescarbot, is constantly astonished that the humid element does not come up and overwhelm it because of the sea-faring language used by those whom Thackeray calls the too-often blasphemous mariners. However, he hopes it may be all right, and concludes with an apology common to beginners—that he wrote his ode in a hurry,

Cherchant dessus Neptune un repos sans repos  
J'ay façonné ces vers au branle de ses flots.

The poem of most pretension, and of which the author himself is evidently proud, is a regularly constructed epic, in rhyming couplets, intended to immortalize an Indian war between the Souriquois under their chief Memberton and their aggressive foes the Armouchiquois. The minuteness of detail—*arma virumque cano*—of the hero, his warriors and arms, the wives of Indian fighting,

Il convoque ce peuple embouchant une trompe  
Et trompant, les trompeurs trompeusement il trompe :

the treatment of captives and the spoil, and the *fêtes* consequent on the defeat of the Armouchiquois adhere so closely to the *rotund diction* of the blind bard and the Mantuan, that in the reader it unintentionally provokes a sense of burlesque. The mutual rhodomontade of the opposing chieftains is quite Homeric. Altogether the epic is useful as a contribution to Indian history.

Society verses were not above the flight of the "Muses of New France." In a "tabagie marine" Lescarbot as the poet of the Colony lets fly a sportive wing:—

By my soul I wish the king  
Would do me this pleasant thing,  
To endow me with good rents  
And by way of contingents.  
Say 10,000 crowns a year,  
If 30,000 none too dear,  
Here to plant a stalwart race  
Worthy of his good grace.

Il ne reste que trouver  
Bon nombre de jeunes filles  
A porter enfans habiles  
Pour bien-tot nous rendre forts  
En ces mers, rives et ports,  
Et passer melancholie,  
Chacun avec s'amie  
Pres les murmurantes eaux  
Qui gazouillent par les vauz,  
Ou à l'ombre des feuillages,  
Des endormons verd-bocages.

Two sonnets, addressed to friends, whose names are as well known as his own, may be given here:—

#### TO THE SIEUR CHAMPLAIN,

Geographer of the King.

Once a Numidian king, in purpose grand,  
Made seek the sources of that mighty stream  
Of which all Egypt and all Lydia deem  
The flow is pleasant running through the sand.  
So, Champlain, long I've noted thou thy stand  
Hast taken to trace out the unknown source  
Of that great tide that in resistless force  
To strike the shore flows from the new west land.  
Accomplish, then, the scheme thou dost devise  
And who can tell what glory will be thine  
To gild thy name,—which all already prize.  
If thou succeedest, as thou brave hast planned,  
A new and undiscovered route thou'lt line  
By which to reach far distant China's strand.

#### TO MESSIEURS DE MONTS

And his Lieutenant and Associates.

If in the ages old they hymned the name  
Of him who carried off the Colchian fleece,  
And if, even to this day, they do not cease  
To magnify the son of Aeson's fame,  
Much more should we too celebrate the aim,  
Not now of Jason, but brave French of you,  
To whose praiseworthy enterprise is due  
A worthier object and more noble game.  
The Greek acquired a territory then,  
For he was well equipped with means and men,  
Backed up by Princes' gift of stores immense,  
But you, with nought but goodwill of the king,  
Courageous men, devoid of everything,  
Have won a province at your own expense.

Throughout these verses, of little merit in themselves, there runs a pleasant significance showing that amid all the hardships of colonial settlement there still remained a surplus of energy for the composing and appreciation of rhyme. Characteristic French buoyancy and gaiety may be read between the lines. In other respects Lescarbot's realistic narrative verse is as instructive as his history. The rhymes thrown off by men who have otherwise achieved more or less of celebrity are not without use, as sometimes turning a hidden leaf in character, and hence we read with an interest beyond their poetical merit. They indicate, too, the literary taste of the era. Those gay and sentimental lyrics, for instance, were they extant, that Cesar Borgia in his youth acquired some fame in composing, might help towards an analysis of the laudatory picture given of him even by Machiavel.

HUNTER DUVAR.

### PARIS LETTER.

THE Grand Opera, following M. Delpit, is in full decadence, and the building itself is the most perfectly organized crematory in case of a panic. The Government endows the opera, as it does the cod and lobster fisheries, with 800,000 frs. a year. The institution is farmed for five years; the present tenants being Messrs. Ritt and Gailhard. These gentlemen are freely denounced from all quarters for not having executed their contract, namely, the bringing out of two brand new operas annually, and giving a monthly representation, a popular night, at a reduced tariff. They have thus incurred fines amounting to 275,000 frs., which it is urged should be deducted from their accumulated profits of 1,500,000 frs. during their tenancy. Every act in a new opera costs 40,000 frs. to stage; the managers have provided no new scenery or costumes, but have unduly worn those in store.

In addition to original operas not having been brought out, talented artistes find it difficult to get on with the managers, being underpaid. Jean de Reszke, M. Lassalle and Madame Melba have left, and they had annual salaries of 120,000, 90,000 and 60,000 frs., respectively. The two exit corridors of the opera house have been so narrowed by new *loges* or boxes, that in case of fire, a lady tripping in her dress and falling would suffice to block the passage and so lead to the burning of all the spectators. The architect protested against this narrowing in of the exit alleys; the Prefect of Police ordered the removal of the obstruction, and yet both remonstrances remain a dead letter. Visitors henceforth going to the opera ought to make their wills.

A horrible case of miscarriage of justice. At the close of May, 1887, three Spaniards, Guillaumet, Rossel and Villaroubia, labourers, united to kill and rob Pradies, a farmer, at Petit-Condoin, two miles from Narbonne. It was six o'clock in the evening when they repaired, singly, to the house. Villaroubia watched while his accomplices entered the house. The wife of Pradies ran to the aid of her husband, and with a cane sword attacked Rossel. But he killed her, and fled. Pradies, terribly mutilated, resisted Guillaumet, who decamped. The police arrested Guillaumet and Villaroubia. Unable to find Rossel, they laid hands on Borrás, a married man and father of three children, six days later, apparently because gossip accused him. Pradies described the second assailant as a "blonde man and pock-marked." Just before expiring, and when unconscious, Borrás was brought into his presence, and he identified him, because rumour said so. No doctor was present, and it was not pointed out to the deceased that Borrás was black-haired and pock-marked.

The trial took place, the jury, the prosecutor and the judges being under the influence of the public rumours. Borrás, though four respectable persons established a clear *alibi* for him, was found guilty, and all three were condemned to be guillotined. While the judges were deliberating in their room on the sentence, Villaroubia whispered to a lawyer that Borrás had nothing to do with the crime. His declaration was unheeded by the judges and prosecutor. Borrás appealed; the court rejected it; then he petitioned