

ciated, after the rigorous winter. Few readers of Parkman's graphic pages can have failed to note his sympathetic picture of the first welcome sign of returning spring to the first French colonists after the dreary winter which had held the land in icy chains and themselves in misery: of the clamour of the wild-goose, the song of the blue-bird, the ruddy bloom of the swamp maple, the snowy wreaths of the shad bush, the white stars of the blood root among the dark fallen leaves, and the marsh marigolds gleaming in the wet meadows like spots of gold.

Scarcely less delightful are all these to the eye and ear of the lover of Nature in each returning spring. We are, in Canada, so shut out during nearly half the year from anything like out-door life, so shut in with our base-burners or furnaces and the inevitably vitiated air of houses hermetically sealed by double windows, that the freedom of the first few days of spring is like the opening of prison doors, through which we may go forth, as did "the world's grey fathers" from the ark, to feast our eyes on the glories of a "new heaven and a new earth." Happily, even in our towns and cities, people are not, in general, too far removed from bits of unspoiled woodland to enjoy this annual pleasure, if they will—even our largest city, Montreal, being most abundantly privileged, both in its noble Mount Royal, and its charming sylvan isle of St. Helens, at its very doors. We might, in Canada, adopt the pretty Japanese custom of making a little *fête* of going out to "view" the blossoms at their several seasons. And as they have "plum" and "cherry viewing," so might we have our "shadbush" and our "hawthorn viewing," if our Canadian life were not too practical and utilitarian for any such sylvan pleasures, and fireworks and sham reviews were but more to the taste of the people as a class. Let us be thankful that some of the *children*, at least, still live "in Arcadia!"

Perhaps the most fascinating time at which to seize our budding Nature is that moment in May when the delicate tracery of the forest boughs is not yet hidden by the abundance of foliage, but is still dimly traceable through the faint, misty veil of that most exquisite ethereal green of opening leaves, when the white feathery sprays of the shad flower rise like snowy plumes against the still grey background of budding boughs, when the moss on the lichened rocks wears its most velvety green, and the slender young ferns in their infantine freshness, are uncurling themselves from their long winter's sleep. There, among the already luxuriant green undergrowth of wild raspberry and gooseberry, and dogwood and viburnum, the dainty white trillium nods her trio of snowy petals; the feathery mitella raises its delicate racines; blue and yellow wood violets with a few late hepaticas cluster in the sheltering glades, and the blossom of the wild strawberry smiles everywhere from the sward. Here and there, in shady places, the odd-striped arum rears its dark spaltic and handsome leaves, and the graceful "dog-tooth violet" waves its golden petals from its delicate stem. The vivid green of the young bushes would be almost dazzling to the eye, if it were not so refreshing in tone. The young leaves of the maples have still a slight russet tinge. The arching boughs of the elms are as yet just studded with tufts of palest green, and the graceful, white stems of the birch are not yet concealed by the unbinding of its leafy tresses. The wild plum and cherry are gay in their wedding finery of snowy bloom, which appears just as the pioneer "shad flower" fades and falls under the warmer sun, and make a charming contrast to the dusky background of veteran pines, which have stood the winter's storms unchanged. The just bursting leaves of the oaks gleam with almost a ruby tinge in the sunshine, and the butter-nut and the hickory have their summer robes just a little farther advanced. The dark hemlocks have not yet donned the bright green tufts which brighten them up so much a little later. Besides the wild flowers so delicate and shyly charming, in their present bloom, there is an indefinite variety of leaf and bud promising future blossom. The large, luxuriant green leaf of the podophyllum or May apple, like an ample umbrella shelters the incipient flowers underneath its wing. The still green clusters of the alder are just beginning to grow white, and the dogwood, and viburnum and hawthorn are preparing to blossom out in their June beauty. The graceful wild columbine is already hanging out its scarlet bells in sunny spots, or from grey mossy rocks, and countless little shrubs make an exquisite variety of tint with their newly opened leaves.

Overhead, the birds are darting in and out on domestic cares intent, conducting their own affairs with the vociferous accompaniment which seems indispensable to their transaction of business. The brisk treble of the smaller birds, the little wild canary or yellow-hammer, and the blue birds, alternates with the liquid, pathetic alto of the robin, and the hoarse bass of the grave old crows, or the brisk tap of the wood-pecker, while the rapid whirr-whirr of the tiny humming-bird, gathering the honey "from every opening flower," tells us that these exquisite little creatures too, have returned from their winter quarters. Now and then the flash of a golden oriole glances from tree to

tree, busy like the rest in making its nest, and preparing for family life, or a sprightly brown "chipmunk" glides up and down some hollow trunk, arranging, doubtless, for his summer house-keeping in the old homestead which has served him so well as a refuge through the winter storms. The woodland picture is completed by the picturesque tracery of wild vine and Virginia creeper just opening their leaf-buds, while the partridge-berry and the sweet pink *Linnaea* are spreading their delicate stems under the trees; the winter-green festoons the more open and higher ground, and the low whortle-berry is already thickly covered with the promise of coming fruit.

Such are some of the spring charms of Canadian woods, for all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. And let us not bring this sketch to a close without a plea for our Canadian birds. We have a barbarous, youthful population of boys about all our towns and villages, who seem to think that the birds exist chiefly to supply them with "sport" in firing at them with any convenient missile, or robbing their nests in spring. It is hard to say whether this is worse for the poor birds, in loss of eggs or life, or for the boys in the hardening and coarsening influence it exerts on their moral nature, the nature which should be trained to love and sympathise with all God's creatures. But one thing is certain, that if rigid restrictions are not soon put on this ruthless exercise of boyish destructiveness, our woods will, ere long, be left pretty well stripped of the happy, *innocent* creatures which constitute one of their chief attractions. FIDELIS.

### THE CHURCHES.

A BISHOP recently went to Del Rio, Texas, to dedicate a new church but found that a cyclone had blown it away.

PROFESSOR ROBERTSON SMITH, now Arabic professor at Oxford, continues to write articles for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

THE Methodist Episcopal Conference at Philadelphia, and General Presbyterian Assemblies in the United States, have condemned the publication of Sunday newspapers.

DR. WILD, the prophetic seer of Bond street, preached last Sunday on Sir Richard Cartwright's political vision of an Anglo-Saxon Confederation. The seat of the coming Parliament is to be Jerusalem.

THE General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church, which met at Vicksburg, favours the omission from the Confession of Faith of the passage that forbids marriage with a deceased wife's sister.

BISHOP HENRY C. POTTER, of New York, proposes that every clergyman whose salary is \$3,000 or over shall contribute an annual percentage to increase the income of clergymen who receive less than \$1,000.

CANON ANSON, late of Woolwich, who recently visited the North-West, has been asked to accept the bishopric of Assiniboia. At the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury he has consented and is to be consecrated on the 24th inst.

THE recent dynamite explosions in London have called forth a strong denunciation from the Pope. Last Sunday a letter was read in the churches condemning the parties implicated in these inhuman plots, and threatening with excommunication the members of secret societies.

THE fiftieth birthday of Rev. C. H. Spurgeon is to be made the occasion of a handsome presentation to the well known Baptist preacher. Many of his admirers in America and England are subscribing liberally to the testimonial fund. Mr. Spurgeon's birthday is on the 19th inst.

IN the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, held at Baltimore, two bishops were accused of having ritualistic proclivities and holding the doctrine of apostolic succession. Such things, however, do not find favour with the Africans. A resolution condemning these tendencies was sustained by a vote of 127 to 11.

THERE is beginning to be less tolerance for the obtrusive parades of the Salvation Army. In several Canadian cities and towns there are complaints that in addition to their extravagant and objectionable methods, they are in the habit of disregarding the rights of others, and acting in some cases as if they wished to invite collision. The City Council of London, Ont., have passed a by-law prohibiting street parades.

THE venerable and worthy Bishop of the Diocese of Niagara has intimated that from his advanced age he is unable adequately to fulfil the duties of his office. He is prepared to accept a co-adjutor bishop, or to retire altogether, as may best suit the interests of the Church. The names of various probable successors have been mentioned, among them that of Canon Dumoulin, rector of St. James' Cathedral, Toronto.

THIS is the season when the churches hold their respective conferences. The various District Conferences of the Methodists have already been held. Last week the Western Baptist Union met at Brantford, and this week the Presbyterian General Assembly is sitting in Toronto. No question of general interest has come up for discussion in these annual gatherings. Most of the denominations report progress in the Christian efforts in which they are engaged.

THE various branches of Methodism in Canada have now been consolidated. In accordance with the spirit of the time they have realized the absurdity of keeping apart, and the importance of attaining organic unity. When the question of union was discussed, though strong feeling existed,