



It is certainly a rather remarkable coincidence that, just as the Greenway Government should have determined to drive French out of official life in Manitoba, the press of that ambitious province should have been reinforced by the birth of a German contemporary. The *Commercial*, of Winnipeg, recently greeted the new comer's arrival in these friendly terms: "It is high time that a German weekly newspaper should be circulated in Manitoba, and the want is now filled by *Der Nordwesten*, which made its first appearance last week. The journal is a neatly got up five-column folio, and from the tone of the first number it is likely to prove valuable in the work of building up the Northwest. Mr. White, the gentleman who presides over its editorial affairs, is both a German and English scholar, and is possessed of the youth, energy and ambition to make the journal a success from a literary point of view, while there is, we understand, an ample capital and business experience behind it to make it a commercial success. We welcome it and hope it may grow in circulation, size and importance, and we have no doubt it will." *Der Nordwesten* is by no means the first representative of the Fatherland in Canadian journalism. There are counties in Ontario where Germans form the majority. In the Dominion there are more than a quarter million persons of German birth or descent.

The value of modern languages as a leading branch of study in schools and colleges formed the subject of a very interesting paper in late numbers of the *Canada Educational Monthly*. Mr. Squair, the author, who is not unknown to our readers, gives the preference to the Romance languages, as offering the most favourable opportunity to students taking up philological research. The grounds for this preference are thus stated: "In the latter we have a number of cognate dialects—French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Roumanian, and Rhaeto-Romanisch—living languages which can be thoroughly studied, descended from a common tongue—Latin—which has been preserved to us in a very complete form. We have thus both ends of the problem. We know definitely in a large number of cases the exact form and meaning of a large number of words in the original tongue; we know what forms and meanings these words have assumed in the various dialects of to-day, and we have a mass of constantly accumulating evidence with respect to a series of intermediate forms and meanings they have had at various periods from the days of classical Latin till the present. Hence, Romance philology has become almost an exact science. The changes which have taken place in pronunciation have received a large share of attention from scholars, and the laws governing these changes have in a great measure been established. Less has been done in the departments of syntax and semantics, but even here the work has been mapped out, and many important additions have been made to our knowledge of the science of language."

Any one who has a fair knowledge of Latin and has learned enough of any one of the Romance languages to enable him read it with comparative ease, will find little trouble in gaining a like knowledge of any other language of the group—such as Italian or Spanish. University College, Toronto, in which institution Mr. Squair is a lecturer, possesses excellent advantages for pursuing a course of simultaneous study in the modern languages, and has produced some fine scholars in this important branch of learning. This method of acquiring two or three allied forms of speech is a good way to lay a foundation for a more comprehensive study of comparative philology.

One who has read up the history of English from its earliest insular stages is not unprepared for the study of the Teutonic and Scandinavian tongues. A diligent student of English can hardly fail, indeed, to have gained sufficient acquaintance with languages in use in the western half of Europe

and in nearly all America, to make the mastery of any of them (for ordinary purposes) practicable, should he be so circumstanced as to require it.

There is a certain prestige in the fact that our Canadian literature (such as it is) represents two of the greatest nations of the world. To appreciate the best work of our poets or prose-writers, we must know something of the masterpieces that are not the least of the titles on which France and England claim precedence in civilization. Even the gentle force that obliges the Anglo-Canadian student to study French, and the Franco-Canadian student to study English literature, in order to judge fairly of what his own country has produced in both languages, is a boon for which we may be grateful.

It is sometimes complained that our French poets are Canadian in only a partial sense, that their patriotism is of the provincial order and that their fealty is not generous or comprehensive enough to comprise what is honourable in the British as well as the French dispensation. Our friend and contributor Mr. G. W. Wicksteed, Q.C., who has as much pride in assuming the rôle of the peace-maker as some others that we know glory in their power for creating or maintaining strife, has shown that loyalty to their own race, traditions and ancestral flag has not prevented our foremost French singers from doing homage to that other flag which Britons are taught to reverence. In testimony whereof he has translated into English Dr. Fréchet's spirited poem, "Le Drapeau Anglais." Mr. Wicksteed's version is a literal rendering of our Laureate's original, and our readers will, we are sure, thank us for laying it before them. Here it is:

THE BRITISH FLAG.

Behold, my son, my father said,
That gallant banner bravely borne;
It made thy country prosperous,
And hath respected liberty.

That banner is the British Flag;
Without a stain, beneath the sky,
O'er almost every coign of earth
It floats unfurled triumphantly.

Over an eighth part of the globe
It waves, the ensign of command;
Covering a little patch of blue,
But nowhere dimming heaven's light.

It waves o'er every sea and shore,
And carries progress where it flies;
Beyond the farthest ocean's verge,
And to remotest forest lands.

Leaving on all its proud impress,
To wildest tribes of savage men
It comes the harbinger of light
And civilizing arts of life.

And in the march of intellect,
How often hath it shown the way,
Like the dove loosed from out the ark,
Or Sinai's guiding column's glow!

Of old that glorious flag with ours
A jealous rivalry maintained:
Deeming itself the only peer
Of ours in the race for fame.

In many a famous battle then;
In every quarter of the world,
With ours it measured strength with strength,—
Victor and vanquished each in turn.

One day our *fleurs de lys* were doomed
Before that rival flag to bow;
But if it wrought us sorrow then,
It since has taught us to forget.

And if to-day it floats above
Those ramparts that were French of yore,
It waves above a people free,
And losing nothing of their rights.

Let us forget the stormy days;
And since, my son, we have to-day
That banner waving o'er our heads,
We must salute it reverently.

—But, father,—pardon if I dare;—
Is there not yet another—ours?
—Ah! that,—that's quite another thing;—
And we must kiss it on our knees.

In one of his later effusions, entitled "A Rhyme," the author of "Atalanta in Calydon" plays with the notion that there is no rhyme for "babe," save one, "astrolabe."

Babe, if rhyme be none,
For that sweet small word
Babe, the sweetest one
Ever heard,

Right it is and meet
Rhyme should keep not true
Time with such a sweet
Thing as you.

Meet it is that rhyme
Should not gain such grace:
What is April's prime
To your face?
What to yours is May's
Rosiest smile? What sound
Like your laughter sways
All hearts round?

None can tell in metre
Fit for ears on earth
What sweet star grew sweeter
At your birth.

Wisdom doubts what may be:
Hope, with smile sublime,
Trusts, but neither, baby,
Knows the rhyme.

Wisdom lies down lonely:
Hope keeps watch from far;
None but one seer only
Sees the star.

Love alone, with yearning
Heart for astrolabe,
Takes the star's height, burning
O'er the babe.

Is it possible that some kindred thought prompted Peter Abélard to give the name of "Astralabe" to his son? He begins the "Versus ad Astralabium Filium" in this way:

Astralabi fili, vitæ dulcedo paternæ
Doctrinæ studio pauca relinquo tuæ,
Major discendi tibi sit quam cura docendi,
Hinc aliis etenim proficis, inde tibi.

Then he goes on to give various counsel, dwelling much on the value of true friendship:

Omnia dona Dei transcendit verus amicus:
Divitiis cunctis antefereendus hic est.
Nullus pauper erit thesauro præditus isto,
Qui quo rarior est, hoc pretiosior est.

To pass from the astrolabe of metaphor and the rarer astrolabe of nomenclature, to the astrolabe of earlier astronomy, some of our readers may recall the curious find of such an instrument some years ago in the path of Champlain's journey, in 1613, between the Ottawa river and Muskrat Lake. An interesting paper on the subject, by Mr. A. J. Russell, with a beautiful photograph of the astrolabe and a map of the explorer's route, was published ten years ago by the Burland-Desbarats Co., and attracted considerable attention among students of history and science. Mr. Russell bases his claim that it once belonged to Champlain on an error in his latitude of the present town of Pembroke. This error, however, in Mr. Russell's opinion, is simply a continuation of a previous error made at a place now called Gould's Landing, which Champlain failed to correct, because, having lost his astrolabe, he had no trustworthy means for determining the latitude.

Mr. Russell, whose treatise, published in 1879, has already become scarce, makes the discovery of the astrolabe under such singular circumstances, the occasion for an instructive retrospect on the development and application of scientific knowledge to the art of navigation. He traces the use of the astrolabe back to the Chaldeans, whose instruments, as shown by the fragment of one found by the late George Smyth amid the ruins of Kouyunji, were superior to those of modern times. Champlain bore the date 1603 and was among the latest employed in navigation by the western nations.

Navigation has been so revolutionized even within the memory of the living that it is difficult to realize the unfavourable conditions under which sea-faring men in a comparatively recent past pursued their hazardous calling. In 1714 an act was passed by the British Parliament offering £10,000 to any one who should invent a method of determining the longitude to one degree of a great circle, or sixty geographical miles; £15,000, if it were determined to two-thirds, and £20,000, if to one-half, of that distance. The prize was awarded to John Harrison in the year 1773, forty-five years after he had begun his experiment, and nearly sixty years after the announcement of the offer had been first made. "The amount of these awards," writes Mr. Samuel Smiles, "is sufficient proof of the fearful necessity for improvement which then existed in the methods of navigation."