

system of public schools for all time to come, at the same time establishing the vicious principle of Church-and-State connection in the matter of Education. We feel sure, too, that nothing could be gained in the direction of peace by the establishment of the view for which Mr. Ewart contends, for no one who has watched the development and trend of public feeling in Manitoba can doubt that a decision of the Dominion Government and Parliament re-establishing Separate Schools in the Province would be the signal for a new agitation, in the shape either of resistance to the enforcement of such a decree or for a change in the Provincial Constitution, which would far exceed in the warmth of feeling aroused and in its injurious effects upon the peace and prosperity of the Province any such consequences which could possibly result from the recognition of the right of the Province to abrogate the Separate School law, a right which it not only claims, but has already acted upon. But while we thus frankly admit that our hopes are not upon Mr. Ewart's side, we are glad that he is willing to give us credit for desiring to find out the truth, irrespective of such hopes.

Mr. Ewart's courtesy entitles him to "the benefit of our next dream," for which he asks, however infinitesimal such benefit may seem to his professional acumen. Turning our layman's eye-glass, to change the figure, upon the brief paragraph which he has quoted as the basis upon which his contention mainly rests, our attention is arrested by the words "right or privilege in relation to education," and we begin at once to wonder whence such right or privilege is derived. That it is not bestowed by the Constitution is clearly affirmed, if we understand the matter, in the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Imperial Privy Council. That it is not given by the former Act of the Province by which Separate Schools were for a time established, seems equally evident from the fact that such Act has been repealed and no longer exists. Mr. Ewart has himself admitted, unless erroneously reported, that the right to enact carries with it the right to appeal, an admission so clearly in accord with common sense that it is hard to conceive how any reasonable person can believe the opposite, or maintain the absurd contention that the right to Separate schools having been once conferred by Provincial legislation, cannot be taken away by the power which gave it, but remains indefeasible and irrevocable. Unless, then, this guess is very wide of the mark, the situation is that the Roman Catholic minority of the Province of Manitoba having no right or privilege in relation to education other than those which belong to all other classes of citizens and which are fully conserved by the existing school law, no appeal against the provisions of that law can be maintained.

#### CANADIAN LITERATURE.

At a Literary Club in a city of the Western Peninsula of Ontario, two or three years ago, a gentleman occupied an evening by lecturing on and reading from, the Canadian poets. The members were all pleased and instructed, and at the close of the meeting there was a generally expressed desire that we should hear more on the same subject frequently. The gentleman declared he had at home a whole shelf of Canadian poetry and that he made it a point to buy every new book of the sort. The incident illustrates the ignorance that pre-

vails among well-read people concerning our own writers, but it shows also the interest and even enthusiasm which might easily be aroused for them if means were properly taken.

Of course Canadians assume a variety of attitudes toward their own authors; some patronize, some pity, some criticize, some advise, some praise unwisely, and the host are, as usual in all countries, ignorant and apathetic. But it need not be questioned that while the majority have either no opinion, or opinions that any one less sensitive than a poet would ignore with amusement, the saving minority regard them with grateful affection and enforced admiration; judge their work at its average or its best; criticize them with a due consideration of the abominable and desperate circumstances in which they find themselves; pity, not them, but the country which has so little to inspire them; and advise them to continue with what hope they can muster of brighter days and happier recognition.

The whole matter of Canadian Literature is little short of tragical: yet it can hardly be called mysterious. A few years ago a number of young writers of fine moral and intellectual strength and refinement, of artistic insight seemingly equal to that of the best in other countries, and moreover of poetic sensibility and even power, as fine and as strong as some who have attained the greatest fame have shown, in promise, at the same age, began to publish in books and in magazines, at home and in the United States, works which aroused among the thoughtful class a hope that, in spite of the apparent absence of literary conditions in this land, a miracle was about to be performed and we were to have a Canadian Literature equal to that which England had had when her population was what ours now is. But in this at least, it would seem, miracles do not happen. The note of hope became a note of depression, of despair, and if we hear aright it is to-day a note of irritation. Our authors asked for, not applause, but common gratitude, for common recognition, for fair criticism, and they got indifference varied occasionally by gibes and sneers. They wished to be able to say, "at home we are loved and praised; it is not a country whose historical associations, or moral and intellectual conditions fill the soul until it overflows with beauty, patriotism, heroism, and wisdom, but the people realize all this and thank us for doing what in the circumstances can be done; and we work somewhat sorrowfully within it may be, but joyfully withal, putting on a cheerful courage till better days crown us." And this was not too much to wish and to expect. Had better men offered, these men would have been the first to accept and to recognize them. None such offering, nor likely to, they had the claim to the love and praise that lyric poets need and flourish upon. What has been the result of neglect and indifference and worse? More than one of our most prominent writers have left Canada permanently: in more fortunate climates they may find the soil and the atmosphere more congenial and more supporting: with technical skill and finish a young writer may in this liberal age flourish almost anywhere in some departments of letters, but alas the lyric poet is in most instances as much a product of the soil of his native land as are wild flowers and forest trees. Imagine Herrick or Suckling transplanted, Burns without Scotland, or Moore without Ireland. Several, accordingly, while remaining with us have sought the fame

they deserve, in the American magazines, and with a success which may well remind us that our neglect of them is a sad reflection on our own tastes. These, our best poets, have effected an annexation of Canada and the Great Republic which may be regarded seriously by those who seriously regard the possibility of political union. But are they satisfied with foreign wreaths? They give evidence at times, pathetic evidence, that their hearts are ours, and that they court a foreign mistress rather to pique us than in the hope of satisfying themselves.

If one strong man would plant with resolute heroism the standard of Canadian Independence and swear to live and die a free citizen of an Independent nation, defending its unity with his heart's blood, living and dying if need were with his harness on his back, surely even this people would enter upon the path of heroism, the only path of national life which can make men fit to be called such and women who would be the mothers of men. But no, in an age when virtue and sordid commercial ambition agree to crush patriotism, when piety and cowardice make common cause against the only means possible of reaching or of preserving both virtue and manhood, it need not be supposed for a moment that the least patriotic of civilized peoples will take its life in its hand and struggle to greatness with a drawn sword to maintain an open way. Yet that is the only route to great literature. The world is too old to allow us to hope that we shall achieve great works of art without great national struggles and sacrifices, and our aged and palsied leaders will wisely persuade us that the end, even if it could be reached, does not warrant the means. No people outside the list of independent nations ever had a literature worthy of the name, and until the ideal day when patriotism, from being the first virtue of manhood, shall have become a crime against universal brotherhood, no nation will or can have great literature without independence.

It is true that if we were united to the adjacent Republic we should be part of an independent people but that gives us no hope, for in that great scattering democracy there could be neither the national sentiment nor the esprit de corps in localities, that literature needs: and at the best it would take a hundred years before the commercial bargain would be sufficiently remote for our posterity to claim a voice as Americans.

What then is the outlook? Our poets have done what they could in every way. They have endeavoured to cultivate colonial poetry; they have ignored our national life and endeavoured, with charming success, to make us love the trees, flowers, clouds, lakes, fields, and mountains, of our beautiful and imposing territory, they have even, as was said, in a sense, tried annexation; and in conclusion they seem to say "I have done, put by the lute," or "I listen to the wave's soft petition and rest me apart from the strife," or even they write for themselves, "for if my soul have no sweet song, it cannot live." And the Philistine says, "so be it: if these young persons don't find poetry very paying they'd better turn their fine talents to law or commerce where they really would get something worth while."

But after all the situation is tragic because it is sad and heroic to see a strong man whose lot is consistently adverse, "Play, in the many games of life, that one