



Although Mr. Hart's work on "The Fall of New France" has been before the public a few months, the editor of the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED deems it a pleasant duty to say what he thinks of it in a brief space. The work is, first and foremost, the fruit of research, the author being a collector of old books, medals, prints and historical antiquities, and thus able to cite authorities accessible only to himself. This gives special worth to the *fac simile* letters, portraits, plans and notes, both biographical and strategical, published in the text. The next quality of the volume is its admirable spirit of fair play and disposition to do justice. He has glowing tributes to the great men of New France—prince, priest and peasant—and defends Montcalm from the charge of cruelty and treachery at the massacre of Fort George. But this does not prevent Mr. Hart from being outspoken, when he thinks that he is right, according to Cicero's teaching in the epigraph. He brings out quite a novel point in regard to the expulsion of the Acadians, by printing a medal struck by Louis XIV., on the driving out of the Island of St. Kitts, of 2,500 Englishmen, in 1666. On the culminating battle of the Plains, the historian is very full and properly brings out the accidents by which that whole campaign was marked on both sides. The work is of exceptional value, and every student of Canadian history, with every public institution, should be provided with it.

The "Water Lily"† is acknowledged by the author to be somewhat of an inspiration from "Lalla Rookh," and, as such, it may be set down at once as a remarkable piece of work. We have been surprised at the ease, grace and thorough taste with which the ballad metre is handled from start to finish, and the absolute absorption of the writer in the sweet unrealities of the fairy tale. But the work shows the failing of most fairy tales in that it has too much length and sameness. It was said of Moore that he palled from excess of sweets. We shall not go so far with Mr. Waters, but we do make bold to say that if he had condensed his poem into half the size he would have achieved a masterpiece. The author has several of the gifts of a poet—fancy, feeling, a musical ear, and a singularly happy knack of trochaic rhymes. The last fifteen or twenty pages, from the point of the breaking or broken heart, are so beautifully and naturally pathetic that one finishes the book with regretting this splendid pitch was not maintained throughout. The song of the blackbird lingers on the ear, and the reader, from these few lines, will see how it attuned the ear of the poet:

And when the mother, at her door,
Heard the first echoes of the song,
She waited not for palampore,
Nor threw the yashmak's veil along
Her sadly-brightening face: but turned
To see if yet her daughter slept.

Let the reader get the book and read this passage to the end.

"Henry's Journal,"‡ covering adventures and experiences in the fur trade on the Red River, 1799-1801, is the title of a pamphlet by Charles N. Bell. The author of the journal was Alexander Henry, one of those great travellers whose names are associated with the heroic days of the Northwest and the Hudson's Bay Company. The present narrative reads like a tale, while there are incidents of historical, geographical and scientific, to say nothing of commercial, importance. Mr. Bell used only a part of the valuable original papers which are in his possession, but we trust he may be able to keep his pledge and give us more shortly. This is the kind of literature we want, which makes us know, admire and even love the worthies who built up our common country.

* "The Fall of New France," 1755-1760. By Gerald E. Hart. With portraits and views. Montreal, Drysdale's; Toronto, Douglas's; New York, Putnam's Sons. 4to, 175 pp.

† "The 'Water Lily': An Oriental fairy tale. By Frank Waters. Ottawa, J. Durie & Son. 12mo, pp. 87.

‡ "Henry's Journal," &c. By Charles N. Bell, F.R.G.S. Winnipeg. 8vo, pp. 9.

Mr. Wilkie Collins is described as one of the most courteous of correspondents. He is always prompt with his reply, and his letters are as gracefully written as his books. His letters, which are headed "Gloucester Place, Portman Square," have a monogram, with a quill piercing the letters, which is quite a trademark in its way.

The Philological Society of London will refuse the invitation of the society in Philadelphia to join in a congress for perfecting a universal language. The reason is that it is not clear an Aryan basis for a language is desirable, and that Volapük, which is the only scheme having hundreds of thousands of followers, would have to be excluded.

The Concord School of Philosophy have a little Hillside chapel built on the grounds of the "Old Orchard" House, where the "Little Woman" lived and played, and learned unconsciously lessons of life—the house now occupied by Professor W. T. Harris. Next door is "The Wayside"—the Hawthorne House, now owned by D. Lathrop, the publisher. Mrs. Lathrop is the "Margaret Sidney" of literature.

THE GIFT OF LETTERS.

I.

According to Isaac Taylor, all the alphabets in use to-day (with the exception of the Chinese and Japanese, which are not alphabets in our sense of the word), are descended from the Semitic, through the Hieratic and, through the latter, from the immemorial Hieroglyphics of Egypt. His tabular affiliation enumerates seventy-six distinct alphabets, of which forty-one are still extant, extending from Morocco to Corea.

What a mass and variety of literature this enumeration comprehends! And yet even the vast sum total thus indicated would not include all that has been deemed worthy of the name. Without its pale would be the first fruits of literary aspiration in Egypt, Assyria and Babylon; the bulky libraries of China and Japan, and those traditional compositions, of which mere specimens have been collected, of our own continent. If, for convenience, we classify the whole literary output of mankind as Aryan, Semitic and Allophylian (the latter term including all that is not comprised under either of the preceding divisions), we shall, perhaps, be surprised to find that it was not to Greece or Rome or Judæa, but to the despised Gentiles, whom the sons both of Japheth and of Shem would doom to outer darkness, that we owe the earliest attempt to break the bonds of savagery and to emancipate by enlightening the human mind. The honour of instituting the earliest libraries is divided between three races or nations of antiquity—the Chinese, the Babylonians and the Egyptians. To which of them the priority is due cannot be asserted with confidence. The Chinese claim an antiquity which is no longer ridiculed because it anticipates certain arbitrary dates for the creation of the world. It is fairly established that they were settled in the Middle Kingdom some millenniums before the Christian era, and that they brought the seeds of civilization with them from their previous abode. Some of the Chinese records go so far back that their origin, authors, and even their meaning, were, till lately, wholly unknown. In the British Museum there is a copy of the largest encyclopædia the world has ever seen. It consists of no less than 5,020 volumes. The story of its preparation and publication illustrates, in a remarkable way, both the extent of Chinese literature and the enthusiasm for letters that has long characterized the rulers and people of China. This enthusiasm is, it is true, marked by a veneration for what is old which sometimes stands in the way of improvement. But it is also a spur to excellence. In the fourteenth century a work was published which has won high praise from European scholars as evidence of the many-sided erudition of its author. In the following century, the Emperor Yung-lo determined, if possible, to surpass it by a collection of all that was most valuable in the literature of his realm down to that date. To carry out his undertaking he appointed a commission of 2,000 literati, who, in due time, completed the task entrusted to them. Its dimensions, however, proved an obstacle to its publication, for it consisted of 2,937 volumes. The manuscript was, accordingly, stored away in the Palace library, where much of it mouldered into dust. Three centuries later, on the accession of the Ming dynasty, the Emperor K'ang Hi, fired by the ambition to do what Yung-lo had failed to do, appointed another commission, to which he assigned the labour of extracting from the varied literature of the empire a number of passages bearing on every branch of science, philosophy and letters, so as to form a vast treasure of knowledge. He did not live to see his wish fulfilled, but under his son and successor, Yung Ching, in the year 1725, the 5,020 volumes already referred to were given to the world.

It so happened that among the first fruits of Chinese letters, examples of which are given in this great encyclopædia, there is a work which all the commentators, not excepting Confucius himself, had failed to fully interpret. For more than three thousand years it had been the delight and the despair of all ambitious Chinese students;

and that its secret was ever surrendered at all is evidence most significant of the value of comparative literature. The credit of penetrating to the core of the mystery belongs to a French savant, M. Terrien de la Couperie, who, bringing his knowledge of the ancient speech of Babylonia to bear on the difficulty, solved a problem which had baffled all the obstinate questioning of thirty centuries. The discovery which he made is one of the most interesting in the province of archaeology, for it proved, we are told, almost beyond a doubt, that the Accadian syllabaries, found by the late George Smyth and his fellow-workers amid the ruins of Babylon, showed unmistakable affinity to the written characters of ancient China. Fragments of the writings of Turanian Babel corresponded, in a way that could not be set down to chance, with portions of the Chinese "Yeh-King." Thus was revealed, in a most unexpected manner, the origin of Chinese civilization. As the Accadians were the schoolmasters of the Semitic population which afterwards ruled the valley of the Euphrates, China is thus brought within the circle of those civilizations which, through the reflection of an adopted literature, have so strongly influenced the Aryans of the West, and most of all the English-speaking race. In this connection, it is not unworthy of mention, as a curious evidence of the vitality of language, and of the strong, but often unseen, links that bind together "all nations that on earth do dwell," and the past to the present, that a word which is familiar to every Christian child; a word which, in its Hellenistic form and meaning, may have been hallowed by the lips of the Redeemer himself; a word which Mohammed said he was taught to repeat by the Angel Gabriel; a word which, through successive ages, has been associated with all that is holiest, most hopeful and consoling, among Jews and Christians and Mohammedans—the word "Amen"—was, in its original form, employed millenniums ago by those ancient Acadian scribes—cousins of the distant Cathayans—the discovery of whose compositions was one of the proudest rewards of modern exploration. European missionaries have carried back that word, with its manifold significance and associations, but all unconscious of its kinship, to the land of its birth.

The libraries of Babylonia, like those of ancient China, were of considerable extent. About 2000 B.C. the Semites gained the upper hand and the Accadian language began to decline. Mixed texts fix the period of transition, at the close of which the Assyrians entered on a stage of great literary and scientific activity. Certain cities were almost entirely devoted to the composition and manufacture of books. The clay tablets, which we thus designate, were kept chiefly in temples and palaces and arranged according to a classification suggested by the subjects treated. Sargon is identified with the most fruitful period of literary organization; Assur-bani-pal, generally known, though with an undeserved false record, by the name of Sardanapalus, greatly enlarged and improved them. Astronomy, weather-lore, divination, legends, annals and poetry were the principal topics dealt with. From the records of these venerable monuments the history of the country has been almost entirely re-written by the late George Smith, Dr. Birch, Prof. Sayce, Prof. Geo. Rawlinson and other Accadian and Semitic scholars.

The books of the ancient Egyptians were written in abridged hieroglyphics, in black and red, on a substance formed out of slices of a reed, the name of which, *papyrus*, is perpetuated in our word, "paper." They were rolls, similar to the volumina (or volumes, fr. *volvo*) of parchment which afterwards came into use at Pergamus (whence the name), when the Egyptians, jealous of the rivalry of the Pergamene monarchs, refused to let *papyrus* be exported. The implement employed by the Egyptian scribes was a frayed reed. Their books were mostly on religious subjects, but were also devoted to ethics, rhetoric, geometry, statistics, medicine, astronomy, poetry, history and fiction.

Of the other ancient Allophylian races of which