

to the United States. For what sins is Canada thus losing her life blood save that she weakly refuses to take the step that would place her proudly upon her feet?

Another result of indifference to the native literary calling is the growing hopelessness of inducing Canadian publishers to take up literary enterprises which might bring honour as well as profit to the country. Canada is old enough, and now sufficiently well-to-do, to call forth many literary undertakings, which, if our national life were more robust, would find in the country an adequate field for their support. There are few of us, we venture to say, who have not approached a publisher with some literary project or other, at which, however promising its results, he has shaken his head, confessing ruefully that there was no market to be depended on in Canada to warrant him in assuming the risk of publication. Thus is the native literature restricted, and talent and industry are dormant for want of the publishing facilities and other incentives of literary work. Possessed of these, many useful compilations and much original work might be undertaken, local histories written, the growth of towns and districts illustrated and described, industries and public works treated of, with much else brought out, in the field of native literary effort, of high and abiding value.

It is we fear futile, however, and perhaps ungracious, to arraign the public for the want of interest it has hitherto manifested in the native literature. In the early colonial stage, when its quality as well as its quantity were poor, there was some excuse for public indifference. This cannot be pleaded to-day, for it now finds a ready market, and meets with cordial acceptance in other lands. If at home its acceptance is slow and begrudging we must remember that it has to contend, not against just appraisal, but against inherited disesteem and indifference. These must at last go, however. Or if we cannot eradicate them, we can at least prevent their being reinforced. Nor is there an excuse for the undue and, as we deem it, unpatriotic preference of our people for the foreign product. It would be rash to vaunt the work of native writers, and rasher still to contrast Canadian with foreign literary achievement. But how much of the latter that finds ready sale in Canada is better than could be produced in the country, were the conditions favourable to its production? Any one who has currently to appraise the imported literature of the time, or glances at it in its loud disarray in the news-stores, will be aware of a great deterioration in the mass. In the literary centres abroad, the increased facilities of production have by no means raised the standard of excellence. This is so apparent that in the native markets its claims are weakened, and the demand for it discredits both taste and judgment. Were this more generally admitted, Canadian disesteem of home talent might be less rare, and we should see more honest appreciation of its aims and worth.

There are many good reasons, we know, for the once backwardness of the native literature, and the same reasons, it is true, may be advanced to excuse public indifference in regard to it. But these reasons, if Canada is making progress, cannot longer remain valid. If we are making progress, and we are proudly pointed to statistics in attestation of the fact, what are the proofs of our advancement? First of all, are we, in any real sense, a nation, and if so, what are the evidences of the country's having attained to that honourable status? To narrow the issue, which is a wide one, let us seek replies to these questions in the field of authorship, and in view of the circumstances that favour or retard the native literature. We are no advocate of Protection, but if the principle is to be applied to other industries, why is book-publishing in Canada exempt from its operation? Twice has the Dominion Legislature passed a Copyright Law, which while it is proposed to exclude from the Dominion, in the interest of British authors, unauthorized American reprints of their works, would aid the native industries by legalizing with the copyright owners' consent their production in Canada. This native legislation, copyright being a subject which a colony is not permitted to control, has once been vetoed, and is now threatened to be vetoed again, by the Imperial authorities. The injustice to Canada of this course is manifest, and is as detrimental to Canadian literature as it is detrimental to the British copyright owner. With the lack of the power to make our own treaties, this Downing Street control of copyright is one, and not the least, of the irritating drawbacks of colonial rule.

Equally disastrous to our publishing industries, though the Dominion we believe is alone responsible for it, is the postal tariff between Canada and the United States. By it American magazines are permitted to come into Canada free, and the myriad popular libraries issued across the line, consisting for the most part of piracies of British copyrights, enter the country at the incredibly low rate of one cent per pound weight. Thus, again, is our literature subjected to an overwhelming competition, and an injustice is done to the native publisher, whose book issues in passing through the post are taxed four cents per pound, or four times the rate which the American publisher has to pay. It may be said that the latter has to meet the fiscal impost on books of fifteen per cent; but this, in the case at least of single books entering the country, is seldom levied, save perhaps in the cities; and on magazines as we have said the American publisher goes wholly untaxed. Compared with the native publisher, the British book manufacturer is still more unfairly discriminated against, for while the American sends his wares into Canada at the cost to himself of only a cent a pound, the English publisher has to pay in postage the equivalent of twenty cents a pound. Such anomalies in the tariff, and the unfair advantage

which Americans have received through the Postal Convention, operate adversely to the interests of the Canadian publisher and seriously handicap Canadian Literature. Better, we have heard the Canadian publisher say, would it be if we were annexed, or that there was an end to British connection.

No one desires to speak unkindly of the tie that binds us to the Motherland; but those who see the retarding effect on the national life of the country, and note particularly its dwarfing effect on literature, can hardly wish it long to continue. England, as her public men constantly tell us, looks someday to see Canada emancipate herself; and when the time comes for assuming the responsibility would no doubt bid god-speed to Canadian independence. When that hour arrives and Canada at last shall stand on her feet, we may look for a great quickening of the literary life of the country and see its national aspirations rise into noble fruitage. An end we may also reasonably expect would then come to the ignoble policy of drifting; while patriotism would receive an impulse, which it is now without, towards welding together the loose and disintegrated sections of the inchoate nation. Until then let us abide in hope, and meantime be kind to the forces that are now shaping what we believe to be its high destiny, and will then mould the fair character, and give scope to the abounding energies, of the Canadian people. Of those forces, not the least helpful and perhaps the most benign, is Literature. Never more than now, it will be admitted, is its aid needed in evoking patriotic feeling and fostering national sentiment.

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### AN INCIDENT BY THE SEA.

WHEN we arrived in Colombo the Indian mirage that had been floating deliciously before our minds, fantastically magnificent as only a mirage can be, suddenly lifted before a British reality. Big hotels, and banks, and steamship offices, main-street drapers' shops, and suburban pharmacies where they sold everything, including the last bit of yellow-backed literature. Instead of temples climbing to the sky, we found the latest manifestation of commercial architecture; instead of nabob's palaces, the "married officers' quarters." We who wanted to lie under the palm trees, listening to the lazy burr of native life, eating strange luscious things and watching our fine dreams take body, we had to go into a Y. W. C. A. kind of coffee-house for—luncheon, a luncheon of buns from which missionary zeal had deducted half the normal quantity of currants, of soda water in which missionary influence had paralyzed all the "fizz." Of course, I can't help confessing that it was not disagreeable to be met by the kindest British hospitality, warmed to greater kindness by a tropical sun, rather than by a set of gleaming white teeth with ill-disguised designs upon our persons; only the Cingalese are the softest-mannered people in the world, the evidence of the missionary hymns to the contrary.

They were very charming to us, the English inhabitants of Colombo. The "oldest inhabitant" whom we visited in his bungalow, furnished like an English gentleman's farm-house, gave Garth as a present his beautiful "Guide," bound in red leather, and a later edition bound in cloth, and four pamphlets of statistics, and the promise of all the useful information—which we didn't require. The principal paper of the place put in the most fatherly little paragraph, charging its readers to help us in any way they could, and casting us upon their hospitality—as if we had been lady delegates to a convention. But all this wasn't Eastern, nor was it what we had come for. After all one can only get what is Eastern, what one has come for, here and there throughout the East.

I was sitting in our room in the "Galle Face Hotel." It was a very big room, high, with big windows, big doors, and two big beds, fearfully white and covered so closely with mosquito netting, I thought at first there must be somebody dead in them. The air that came through the windows was as hot as if the windows opened on to a fire. Now and again a wandering crow, overpowered by the heat, rested him awhile on the shutter. We of the West have no idea of the sociability of this Eastern variety. It hopped to the sill, strutted fearlessly about the floor and seemed disposed to all sorts of friendliness, until it saw the pamphlet of statistics over which I was pondering. Of course, if I had come to Ceylon for that, if I had come to learn about the legislation and not where the loveliest loiterers were to be found; about English commerce, and not about the mysterious mass in the native town; about dusty facts of wars and conquests, and not the secrets of the pine groves, there was no use talking. And it flapped disgustingly away. Suddenly Garth came in on tiptoe and put something between me and the pages of the pamphlet of statistics. It was a flower. It was a very large flower, with a multitude of velvety rounded petals, pearly pink, like the lining of a shell. I took it up in my hands. I looked into it as one looks in the face of a living thing. Its perfume was fine and strong. I bent lower over it with a sort of rapture. I put my lips close, close to its warm soft leaves. Then I felt my brain grow giddy. It was the heart of India that I held. Between me and the pamphlet of statistics Garth had put a lotus.

One evening after sunset I went into the *Petta*, the native quarter.

Like most "planet pilgrims" whose knowledge of Her British Majesty's Eastern possessions has been bounded to

what they can see while the P. and O. steamers stop to "coal," we had come to the conclusion that between Her British Majesty's subjects and the natives there was a lack of understanding, a lack of sympathy, a lack of any sort of desire on the part of each to appreciate the other, which it was our duty to rectify to as great an extent as time would permit. Like most "planet pilgrims," we thought the fault lay principally on the British side. The British would make no concessions. They were there to govern, and to administer justice, and to make money (perhaps, I ought to write these duties in the inverse order), and the heart of India might talk to the stars and the palm trees murmur to the sea, it did not concern them. Neither did it concern them to pay the nations those delicate little compliments—the employment of their stuffs for European clothes and of their designs for European furniture—which might have appealed to the savage intelligence with infinitely more beneficial effect than the uncompromising justice of a bargain, or the awful justice in the carrying out of the law. Garth and I decided that one of the means we might employ to bring about this sympathy between the two nations we deemed so necessary was to—no, not exactly—adopt the native dress; but to buy ourselves frocks made out of native material. The idea had come to us before, as early as our visit to Singapore, but then we were directed to a masculine dressmaker. One doesn't all at once get reconciled to the idea of a masculine dressmaker, but a genuine tailor is a very different matter and the steamer started off in the meantime. I was going into the *Petta* to buy this native material. The hostess of the "Galle Face" warned me the *Petta* was scarcely safe at noon-day and that the Cingalese were a villainous set. I regarded my hostess with all the pitying superiority of one or two days' experience, and concluded the English were even more blindly prejudiced than I feared. I unhesitatingly took a *jinrikisha* with a lithe, swift runner, and we—if a man who takes up shafts doesn't cease to be a man—darted out into the Indian twilight.

The "Galle Face Hotel" is about a mile from the town. It stands off alone by the sea in a sort of sentimental contemplation; that was one of the reasons why we chose it. It is the most appreciative British structure in Colombo. The road to the town runs along the shore. On one side the sea, and on the other a wide stretch of ground stretching inwards without any houses. When the rank and fashion, who make of this road a sort of Rotten Row, have gone in after dark, it is almost deserted, and utterly still, but for the even, incessant, muffled chords the waves play on the sands.

The natives were coming home from their work in the English quarter. As the eye of the "Planet Pilgrim" rests upon them after having rested upon the British labourer, his resentment at the small measure of regard they receive grows apace. The men are not slouchy, and patched and red-faced; the women, even the poorest, have nothing bedraggled and tawdry about them. They are fit to be painted or cut in marble as they walk in an exquisite procession of soft, deep colour and delicate line against the fading light of the sky.

The shop my runner took me to had Europeanized its stock to a great extent to suit its European customers; but, beside the old conventional prints and muslins, there was a pile of native stuffs it gladdened the heart to behold. These stuffs were chiefly such as are used by the Cingalese gentlemen for their nether garment—an improvised article of clothing that looks much as if they had hastily wrapped themselves in a table-cover. The choice was not wide, but there was no need for it to be, everything was so charming in colour and design. At first I felt a strong temptation to buy a most characteristic bit with exquisite blue and red in it on a pale yellow background, but the pattern betrayed a zoological inspiration, and I feared that, if I wore it, I might be mistaken for an animated chart of the animal kingdom of the country. The material I finally fixed upon was not so ambitious, but none the less pretty—a yellow cotton, with a delicate border of red embroidery, telling it was "native." My runner, who had left his *jinrikisha*, and stood watching me from the shop door, approved my choice by a smile, and some other men whom I had not noticed before and who also stood at the shop door, approved too. I had no objection to my runner's approving—a runner for the time being is your guide, interpreter and councillor,—but I objected to the other men. The native sympathy seemed to be coming rather more quickly than I felt prepared for, rather more quickly than I quite understood.

The sundry preliminaries of getting a new dress, preliminaries which alone are enough to restrain the feminine extravagance of the West, had an unimaginable charm in the back room of that shop in the *Petta*. The hideous little parlour with its horse-hair furniture, the air redolent of garlic, the fussy pin-eating dame, gave place to a nook hung with Eastern stuff, the smoke of burning perfume and a dark, delicate-limbed creature who seemed to be of fallen princely fortunes. He had very fine, clever fingers this dark creature, and an artistic eye, and when the surprise of the situation subsided the situation appeared to me very strongly artistic.

On our way home, passing the big pond of lotuses that lies on the outskirts of the native town, something started up from the road-side and a moment afterwards I recognized one of the men who had stood at the door of the shop in the *Petta* smiling his approval upon me. He was smiling still. I resented his smiling; I resented the man; I poked my runner with my umbrella and told him to go on. But my runner didn't go on. He stopped and exchanged a few words with this disagreeable apparition