

to be a chief reason for the 1897 celebration in Canada. As I have pointed out on previous occasions, whether Cabot's landfall be claimed to have been in Newfoundland or on the the continent, it is certain that it took place at the entrance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It heralded the course of continental discovery by that northern inlet, and it was through that inlet that the chief features of the internal geography of the continent were laid open to mankind. It was important to the world geographically, it was important in its bearing upon the future history of our continent, and, above all, as far as Canada and the British Empire are concerned, it was important as the first step towards the discovery and colonization of Canada.

O. A. HOWLAND.

SIR,—The proposal made by Mr. Howland in your issue of the 21st ult. to celebrate in 1897 the 400th anniversary of Cabot's discovery of this Continent, will, I am sure, meet with general approval. Permit me, however, to suggest that we might, if Her Majesty is still upon the throne, couple with that celebration the sixtieth anniversary of the accession of our beloved Queen. Every true citizen of the Empire looks forward with hopeful anticipation to Victoria surpassing all her predecessors in length of reign and of life, as she has already surpassed them in the purity and perfection of her sovereign rule; so that it would appear peculiarly appropriate that we should hit off the double event, as it were, with one loyal burst of British-Canadian enthusiasm.

Toronto, July 9th, 1895.

J. G. THOMPSON.

"AGNOSTIC."

SIR,—In THE WEEK of the 5th inst., Dr. William Clark says of Professor Huxley that he invented the word Agnostic, and that the word very well describes his own position. I do not find it in any English dictionary, or in Worcester's. How is it pronounced? *Agnosco* has the opposite meaning. Must we say A-gnostic? To me it seems a badly contrived word. Worse than "*Electrocute*," for that, though *abominable*, does not mean the reverse of what is intended. Pray enlighten, or ask Dr. Clark to enlighten us in your next number, and oblige your old subscriber and sometime contributor,

W.

Ottawa, July 8th, 1895.

The *Imperial Dictionary* gives two pronunciations, Ag-nostic or A-nostic; but the former is almost universal. It defines the word as meaning "one of a school of thinkers who disclaim any knowledge of God or of the origin of the universe . . . and holds that the infinite, the absolute, and the unconditioned are beyond all experience and consequently beyond its [the human mind's] range."

The new *Standard Dictionary*, after defining the term, gives the following from Huxley's *Essays upon some Controverted Questions*: "I, the man without a rag of a label . . . took thought and invented what I conceived to be the appropriate title of *Agnostic*."

[ED. THE WEEK.]

WOMEN'S SOCIETIES.

SIR,—"Fairplay" has made, I think, an unnecessarily virulent onslaught on my mild effusion. I did not "attack" the Woman's Council. All I said was that in view of the multiplicity of women's societies I thought it, as I still think it, a most unnecessary institution. I did not even remark, as I might have done, on the singularity of such an organization, in a Christian country, beginning operations by a refusal to say the Lord's Prayer—a prayer so broad that it is said by all denominations, and was, I believe, used at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. That the subjects discussed were important and very various I am well aware, but, after a careful perusal of reports of the papers read, I much question if anyone went home much wiser. Such subjects as the training of children, literature for the young, etc., cannot be discussed with much practical benefit at conventions. Every parent must be guided, to a great extent, by his or her own judgment and common sense, as the treatment which is suitable for one child may be ruinous to another, and books which are good for some children may be quite unsuitable for others. No hard and fast rules can be laid down, as so much depends on disposition and temperament. Thus it will be seen that experience is the best teacher, and mothers can only gain this experience by a careful study of their children.

Does "Fairplay" seriously think that it is necessary for

a woman to attend a convention, or belong to an association, and perhaps travel hundreds of miles in order to learn how to teach her daughter the important arts of sewing and house-keeping and her children the common precepts of Christianity? Surely not.

Women, I am proud to say, have done, and are doing a noble work amongst the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, but this they have done for hundreds of years without the aid of national councils, and I beg leave to say that the greatest talkers are not *always* the greatest workers. Organized charities, well managed, are very excellent things and great blessings, but these large societies, which take up everything, from woman's enfranchisement, upwards or downwards, cannot be said to come under that head. They afford a grand opportunity for many to talk who have nothing to say, and give many other well meaning people a pious excuse for neglecting their own duties, and thus defeat the very objects they profess to further.

That the Woman's Council is approved of by men of eminence is true, but it is also disapproved of by others equally intelligent, in proof of which I quote briefly the following from a leading Toronto journal: "We wish we could congratulate the Christian women, who met in this city recently, on the success of their gathering, but we cannot. There were in it some most serious defects so that, upon the whole, we feel that it would have been better if it had not been held. . . . They negatived the creeds of Christendom so far as they could. . . . The object seems to have been to get together the largest possible number of women, and produce a great impression by the size of the organization."

Now I would advise "Fairplay" to leave apostolic times alone; the passage quoted refers to *widows of three score years and over* and the good works St. Paul enumerates are not such as to require attendance at any convention for their better performance.

It is both novel and refreshing to hear the great apostle cited in defence of what I might call, for lack of a better term, public women, as he is generally understood to hold strong opinions on the opposite side. I think he especially says in another place that the younger women shall be "keepers at home."

I cannot truthfully say that St. Paul is fortunate enough to hold exactly my opinion on the "Woman Question," he is a little too conservative, but I have no objection to sheltering myself behind him especially when doing so gives me an opportunity to "hoist mine adversary with his own petard." This whole subject has so many side issues that it cannot fully be discussed in the limited space of a newspaper letter. I shall therefore conclude by reminding "Fairplay" that few people think exactly alike, and that it is not at all necessary to be discourteous to all who differ from us.

OSSERVATORE.

Women and Books.

TO AMARYLLIS, WHO WOULD WRITE.

When lovely Amaryllis speaks,
Her words my homage so compel,
That ready for days or weeks
Content I'd sit,
To hear the wit
And wisdom from her lips which fell.

And ah! when Amaryllis sings,
All conversation dies away;
A bird she is, bereft of wings;
The nightingale,
Would wholly fail,
To imitate her upper A.

But oh! when Amaryllis writes . . .
She hopes to conquer fame by dint
Of scribbling stories, and invites
Her swain to praise
Each clumsy phrase,
And bids him get the stuff in print!

Nay, let an easier plan be tried,
And if for sure renown you look,
You've but to lay the pen aside;
We'll soon declare,
The maiden rare,
Who never even wrote a book!

St. James Gazette.