

# THE WEEK.

Fourth Year.  
Vol. IV., No. 45.

Toronto, Thursday, October 6th, 1887.

\$3 00 per Annum.  
Single Copies, 10 Cents.

## CONTENTS OF CURRENT NUMBER.

	PAGE
CANADA IN FICTION .....	719
EVENTS IN ENGLAND .....	720
INDUSTRIAL PARLIAMENTS .....	720
NOTES FROM THE CONTINENT .....	723
TOPICS—	
Trial by Jury in Quebec .....	724
The American Fisheries Commissioners .....	724
Mr. Balfour .....	724
A Coalition Ministry .....	724
France and Germany .....	725
Russia and Persia .....	725
England and India .....	725
Agricultural Conjectures .....	725
A New Explosive .....	725
Burial Reform .....	725
Party Spirit .....	725
CONFLICT (Poem) .....	726
PROMINENT CANADIANS—II.—DR. DANIEL WILSON .....	726
MONTREAL LETTER .....	727
OUR LIBRARY TABLE .....	727
THE ARTS AND THE STAGE .....	728
CURRENT COMMENT .....	729

## CANADA IN FICTION.

In a recent number of the Boston *Literary World* Canada is presented to the American novelist as an inviting field for his skill.\* It is not so long since that we would have looked in vain in either American or British serials of standing for even a passing reference to our country. Less than ten years ago Sir Francis Hincks had an article returned to him by the editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, simply because it was Canadian in tone, while in the United States only at rare intervals could a paper from this side of the line succeed in attaining publication in the magazines.

Matters have changed within the last four years, and no magazine of reputation nowadays can afford to let a quarter go by without printing something about Canada, her people and resources. This is flattering, but, judging from the efforts of the best English and American writers in the newspapers and monthly publications, Canada is we fear pretty much of a study yet. A distinguished London journalist told me not long ago that he was always commissioned by his chief to write Canadian articles because he had once been in America. Canada he had never seen, but his acquaintance with New York and Boston rendered him an authority on Montreal, Toronto, and our Northwest. Even the London *Times* to-day contrives to get its Canadian news by way of Philadelphia, and the *Daily News* published its story of the rebellion from day to day from tintured telegrams sent by its New York correspondent, who could not even spell the names of our picturesque battle grounds. Time may change all this. Two decades ago it was indifference; to-day, it is ignorance. May we not hope that intelligence may come soon!

The *Literary World* has long looked for the American novel. Howells and James, Harte and Miss Murfree, Mrs. Stowe and Simms have not written it, though all of them have put American people in American situations, on American territory, and scenery and incident have been strikingly national. What is really demanded by those who ask for an American novel will probably be answered by the man or woman who produces in the next century, probably, the equally long-looked-for American play. One would think that Cooper had contributed a real American story, just as one is apt to regard Mr. Howells' work as a real development of American art in literature. The American novel should deal with American life and movement—in the forest, by the lakes, or in society. Novels treating of such life and movement have been written by the score, by men and women whose equipment for the task cannot be criticised or impugned. The *World*, however, remains unsatisfied. The expectant novel has yet to come. Meanwhile, it pays us the compliment to suggest that perhaps out of Canada, "that true North," the strong and worthy tale that everybody is sighing for may appear. Our critical contemporary gives a brief catalogue of what has been done by American and Canadian writers in the direction indicated already. The list presented is absurdly brief, particularly the roll which contains the achievements of our own novelists. Mr. Kirby's remarkable *Chien d'Or* is merely noted, while that eminent gentleman's poem on the Loyalists, which is known only to a very limited circle of readers, is mentioned first, and submitted to the reader as if it were our novelist's chief claim to recognition. The *Golden Dog* is really a very good story. The historical matter, rich and ample, is ingeniously put together, but its great length repels any but the industrious and persevering reader from honestly investigating the fortunes of Mr. Kirby's

creations, from cover to cover. And yet the story as it stands to-day, seven hundred pages long, was originally just twice that length when the London publisher returned it to its author, with the usual letter of regrets. Still, it is by far our best piece of fiction, and Canada is deservedly proud of it. The *World* names Vera's *Honor Edgeworth*, the anonymous novel of *Constance of Acadia*, and Captain Marryatt's *Settlers in Canada*. The two last should certainly not be included in a list of Canadian fiction by Canadian authors. There is no mention in the *World's* article of John Lesperance's really striking *Bastonnais*, which treats in a highly dramatic way of life in Canada during the exploits of Benedict Arnold and the outlawed woodrangers. M. Frechette's play of *Papineau*, and M. Napoleon Bourassa's touching tale of *Jacques et Marie*, which afford good studies of French and Acadian manners, customs, and methods of life, are omitted from the list published in the *World*. Nor do we find a word about *An Algonquin Maiden*, the joint production of two of our most entertaining writers, Mr. G. Mercer Adam and Miss Wetherald, which illustrates several episodes of value in our social history. The charming collection of short stories, *Crowded Out*, by Mrs. Harrison ("Seranus"), is inexcusably omitted, and yet those tales reveal an intimacy with life and experience in French-Canadian country homes which few can read without interest or emotion, the spirit and characteristics of the people being emphasised with sympathy and tact. The writer in the *World* alludes to Charles W. Hall's *Twice Taken*, which deals with the siege of Louisburg in a lively manner, but the same author's metrical legends of the Gulf are not considered, apparently, worthy of remark, though to our mind they show better workmanship. James De Mille's series of juvenile books, *The B. O. W. C.'s*, is alike discarded, but the same writer's *Lily and the Cross* receives honourable mention. To say nothing of French novels, of which we have more than a score of average merit, there are still a few fairly written tales in English, the work of Canadian writers. Mr. Grant Allen is a Canadian novelist as well as a man of science, but as he publishes his writings elsewhere, and never puts Canada into his fiction, we may not include him in a list of distinctively Canadian romancers. But after surveying the field, what can be said? Why, only this: Canada has the material for many good novels. The country is full of incident, wonderful scenery meets the eye at all points, and every foot of the ground is rich in history of the most eloquent and picturesque character. War and peace, the Indian and the early settler, the *habitant* and his grand surroundings, invite the novelist and the painter. The strong and brilliant novelist has yet to come. We have done fairly well. There are some good names on the list, but only a few have performed the work required of them in an artistic and skilful manner. Every one who takes an interest in letters says the Canadian field is a mine of wealth to the romancer. I have myself repeatedly urged our authors to develop the romances at their command. But the time is passing away, and the mine remains unworked. The field is so rich, and we might add so vast, that we cannot long expect to enjoy a monopoly of it. Thus far, American writers have stayed their hand. Some of them have been generous enough to say that the Canadians should remain in undisputed possession of their material. But if we do nothing ourselves, may we hope to long enjoy this immunity? Rich preserves like ours may expect the poacher any time, and who is there to say him nay?

The *Literary World* sounds a warning note when it says:

But Canada, with its adjuncts, is a land of equal form and colour with Mexico, its romance is of a healthier type, and our sympathy therewith would certainly be far stronger. The Prescott of Mexico, too, is fully matched by the Parkman of Canada; nothing is lacking but the skilled and glowing mind to fuse the mass, and mould it into an image instinct with life. If any one of our readers has just returned from Quebec, he will feel the truth of what we say; only perhaps he will add that the bald prose of Canadian history is so romantic that it is almost painting the rainbow to turn it into fiction. Just now, when there is a call for romance as against realism, and when our novelists are scouring the continent from the villages of New England to the canyons of the Sierras in search of a promising "claim," why does not some one of them, or more, turn their eye northward to this almost untrodden but inviting region of great forests, great waters, great heroes, great events, and great episodes, and adventure a literary effort in that direction? If Hawthorne could only have had Parkman to go before him! Who knows but the coming "American novel," for which we are all expectant, is to be a Canadian novel, and that it is to appear out of the North?

It would be a pity if our local men and women were to lose this

\* See THE WEEK, September 29.