

Letters to the Editor.

THE CANADIAN FLAG.

SIR,—I have to ask the use of your columns to add my humble quota to the discussion with regard to the propriety of adding some emblem to the British flag to distinguish it when flying at the masthead of a Canadian vessel or, elsewhere, as a distinctive mark of our political position in the Empire.

For the last century the Union Jack has been recognized as the British ensign all the world over; in this view it has been the Canadian flag. It is, I believe, now considered that there are reasons for distinguishing the Dominion distinctly in its position as an integral portion of the Empire. England, Ireland and Scotland have each a distinctive emblem separate and apart from the national ensign. In the army each separate regiment is known by its colors. On the same principle Canada, Australia, and South Africa may similarly claim each some symbol on the flag to denote their respective positions.

The Union Jack, in its present form, has been flying since the first year of the century and symbolizes the union of the three kingdoms. Before the union of Ireland with the other two kingdoms the flag was not what it is to-day. On the union of Scotland and England in the time of James I. the national ensign bore the red cross of St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew on a blue field, constituting the first Union Jack. On the union of Ireland in 1801, when a new ensign was demanded, the red cross of St. Patrick was superimposed over the white cross of St. Andrew, as is seen on the familiar Union Jack of to-day.

The flag known as the British ensign shows the Union Jack in the upper quarter. There are three such ensigns, white, blue and red. The white is used as the flag of the Royal Navy, the blue ensign is borne by ships enjoying certain privileges, such as vessels in the service of public departments, or commanded by officers of the naval reserve, or belonging to members of yacht clubs. The red ensign is borne by all other British ships, and is the flag we usually see.

During the last few years a flag has frequently been displayed as the Canadian flag. It consists of the red ensign with a shield containing the heraldic arms of the Dominion shown on the field. Attempts have been made to obtain, for this introduction, general recognition as the national ensign. It may, however, be objected to on several grounds: (1) The heraldic device is exceedingly complicated and can only be introduced with difficulty. (2) It is not easily distinguishable on vessels seen from a distance. (3) There is no precedent on any flag of the Mother Country for the introduction of such a combination. The flag on which the British arms are displayed is the Royal Standard, which is hoisted only when a member of the Royal Family is present. The British arms are never associated with the Union Jack on any flag, and the introduction of the escutcheon of the Dominion, on the red ensign, to denote the national flag of Canada, is obviously without warrant. The conception is said to have taken its origin with an enterprising printer of bunting in Glasgow, whose sole object was to push his trade in what, doubtless, he believed to be a perfectly legitimate way.

A good deal of attention has been directed to the subject lately. It has been properly suggested that whatever may be added to the British red ensign to make it distinctively Canadian, the addition should in no way be complicated, that it should be easily distinguishable at a moderate distance, and so simple that the wife of a fisherman or pilot would have no difficulty in shaping and placing it on the flag used by her husband on his fishing smack or pilot boat.

Two emblems have been proposed as substitutes for the heraldic arms attempted to be introduced: (1) a beaver; (2) a maple leaf. So far as simplicity is concerned no objection can be raised to either. The question, however, arises, is either, in other respects, suitable? The beaver may appropriately enough be taken to signify industry, a quality which cannot be too highly commended, but industry is not everything in the life of a nation. There are other members of the same natural order (Rodentia), such as rats and mice, not less active and industrious than the beaver, and for this quality alone no one would dream of selecting one of these vermin for our national emblem. The lion, the bear,

and the eagle have been chosen for such purposes by other nations to indicate bravery, but I am not aware that courage is one of the qualities for which the beaver is famed.

The maple leaf, whatever its recommendations, cannot be held to represent unity. In a forest of maples the single leaf is but one of the vast number in the countless foliage. Nor, can it be appropriately taken as signifying permanency as every maple leaf disappears with the summer of its life. If a single green leaf be plucked it shrivels in a few hours; if it be pressed to retain its form, it becomes as fragile as glass. In no form has the maple leaf the quality of the endurance which we desire to have associated with our national emblem, and I am at a loss to understand what special connection it has with Canadian history to lead to its selection for such a purpose. With respect to colour, it can scarcely be held that the natural colour of the beaver or of the leaf is suitable. Placed on the red ensign neither would be visible at any distance, and it would clearly be in opposition to nature to depict on the flag a white beaver or a white maple leaf.

In my humble judgement we could with great propriety append to the red ensign a single large white star, with points representing each Province radiating from a common centre. At the present time we have seven Provinces in the Dominion and consequently such a star would have seven points. With additional Provinces the element of constancy of design would be obtained by increasing the points of the star, one for each new Province.

In this proposal we would have all that can be claimed for simplicity of design. A large white star on the lower quarter of the fly of the British red ensign would be seen at any distance, the flag itself could be observed; it would be a symbol of unity, and would represent the "many" combined in "one." A star, moreover, is an object of symmetry and beauty. The star of Canada displayed on the red ensign of the Empire would soon be known wherever a Canadian ship sailed; while in our own land it would be hailed with pride and affection by every Canadian youth. In all parts of the world it would be recognized as the Northern Star of America, the meteor flag of the Dominion.

In respectfully submitting the suggestion I will add that I have considered the observance of two main principles as indispensable. *First*, that there should be as little interference with the flag of the Empire as possible. *Second*, that the addition to the flag be, alike, simple, appropriate, and effective. The same principles should similarly be observed in the flags designed specially for the use of other great British Colonies. Take the case of Australia. When our distant sister Colonies come to be united perhaps they, too, may obtain the requisite permission to place on the British ensign a star to symbolize their union. The Australian or Southern Star necessarily would differ from the Canadian or Northern Star, in colour and in the number of points constituting its form.

I submit a sketch* of the proposal which I have felt it my duty to bring to public attention.

Ottawa, May 28th, 1895.

SANDFORD FLEMING.

INTIMIDATING WITNESSES.

SIR,—One of the painful episodes of the trial of the Hyams' brothers for murder illustrates the growing evil of grossly abusing witnesses who give unwelcome evidence. Witnesses often require to be animadverted upon for the manner in which they give their evidence, or for other good reasons. It is right for counsel to do this. But I refer to conduct such as we might expect to find in a bar-room, but which ought never to be permitted in a court of justice. I was present in a court in Ontario when a visibly half-drunken lawyer grossly insulted a respectable citizen who was giving evidence. The outraged man vainly appealed to the stipendiary magistrate for protection against the legal bully. At a great trial in Canada—several years ago—an eminent lawyer, without the slightest justification, assailed the fair fame of a young lady who gave evidence, and the judge did not, as he should have done, rebuke the offender. It was reported in the press that the lady's sweetheart threatened to chastise the lawyer. Had he done so, all would have said it served the man right.

* The Editor of THE WEEK is so much impressed by the appropriateness of the proposal made by Dr. Fleming in this letter that he has taken means to have the sketch printed on the cover of this issue of the journal.