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EMPIRE FIRST

Shall we break the plight of youth,
And pledge us to an alien love?
No! We hold our faith in truth,
Trusting to the God above!
Stand, Canadians, firmly stand,
Round the flag of fatherland!

Britain bore us in her flank,
Britain nursed us at our birth,
Britain reared us to our rank
Mid the nations of the earth,
Stand, Canadians, etc.

In the hour of pain and dread,
In the gathering of the storm,
Britain raised above our head
Her broad shield and sheltering arm,
Stand, Canadians, etc.

O triune kingdom of the brave,
O sea-girt island of the free,
O empire of the land and wave,
Our hearts, our hands, are all with thee!

Stand, Canadians, firmly stand,
Round the flag of fatherland.

JOHN TALON LESPERANCE.

OUR OTTAWA LETTER.

After a silence of six months, or thereabouts, (which I would fain hope was not acceptable to the readers of THE CRITIC in the same measure as it was deplored by me) I have taken up pipe and pen to resume our social chats upon men and things.

Appropos of the pipe, what a crusade, to be sure, is being waged against it by those dear philanthropists of the softer sex whose zeal for promoting the welfare of erring man takes the shape of deliberate attempts to rob him of the few sublunary joys wherewith Providence has endowed him! First, in their onslaught upon what they are pleased to term the demon "alcohol," these pretty propagandists of a very intolerant fanaticism, banish from our tables that very pleasing and harmless accompaniment to a good dinner, so dear to the heart of every Englishman and Canadian, beer; next club-life is tabooed, and its amusements denounced as a continuous round of evil practices; then, when those unhappy creatures ironically termed the "lords of creation" turn in their affliction to the solacement of the "weed," lo! a cry goes up for an Hegira of the Pipe. But here, my brothers, we must make a stand! Are we to tamely submit to this irrational training, and forever forego the dreamy ecstasies engendered by fragrant Virginia burning deep in capacious bowl of meerschaum or briar? A thousand times, no! If, when they call us to arms, we are too gallant to oppose them under cover of smoke, let us then suggest a compromise upon fair and equal terms, that is to say, when the ladies consent to abandon their inordinate tea drinking, their tight lacing, the use of cosmetics, and kindred practices commonly regarded as injurious to health, then, and not till then, will man put away his tobacco.

Most men of literary and sedentary occupations are possessed of a "weakness for the weed." While there are a few, doubtless, who would subscribe to Ben Johnson's diatribe against it in his *Every Man in His Humor* where he says, "It is good for nothing but to choke a man, and fill him full of smoke and embers!" many more would approve the witty couplet of Charles Lamb:

"For thy sake, Tobacco, I
Would do anything but die."

Perhaps we cannot blame old Earl Warwick, who lived in those mellow days when the sword was mightier than the pen, for being obliged, according to Shakespeare, to confess when asked to decide upon a point of evidence submitted to him,—that—

"In those nice sharp quilllets of the law,
Good faith, I am no wiser than a daw."

but what can be said of a Judge upon the bench in these days of nineteenth century progress and enlightenment who can neither read nor write? In a recent number of a Canadian legal journal a case is reported wherein a Commissioner of Small Causes in the Province of Quebec (a functionary whose duties require better educational attainments than the qualifications for a Justice of the Peace in Nova Scotia) was constrained to confess before the Circuit Court, where his proceedings in the case were enquired into by virtue of a writ of *Certiorari*, that he was not only not able to read the documents before him (written in his mother-tongue, by-the-way) but that he did not and could not sign them with his own hand! There is almost an air of pathos about his crude efforts to regularly discharge the duties of his office, and his confession of illiteracy is made with much naïveté according to the report which is written in French. It is as follows: "Quand j'ai rendu le jugement en question, je ne savais ni lire ni écrire, mais un homme de loi m'a fait un exemple de ma signature, et m'a dit que je pouvais signer de même et que c'était suffisant. C'est comme ça que j'ai signé le rapport qui a été transmis à cette cour, mais si j'avais su que tel rapport dut être envoyé devant cette cour, je ne l'aurais pas signé." Your readers will, I think, commend the decision of the Circuit Court, which held that it was essential that a Commissioner should know how to read and write, and that the absence of such knowledge is a radical incapacity, rendering null any judgment pronounced under such circumstances. There is a note of warning in this case to local administrations which have of late grown so prodigal in creating petty justices.

I observe that one of your local contemporaries has been saying pleasant