

of an aloe grow nearly three feet in one night, and many species of gourd rival in rapidity of growth that of Jonah of old, while one can actually see the leaf of the banana or plantain push up and expand while one is watching it. A slashing in the forest is grown up into impenetrable bush in a year and the forest traces or bridle-paths must be cutlassed twice a year to render them passable.

Decay is equally rapid. Fallen trees are resolved into water and carbonic acid with a swiftness of decay that seems incredible. The carbon that in our frozen north accumulates as leaf mold and peat on the forest floor is here kept in an unceasing whirl under a tropic sun and tropic rains, and the "eddies in the whirl of molecules" are sharp and short. I saw a soft wood tree—the "Mahant" of the creoles, nine inches in diameter, girdled. In less than six weeks it had fallen by decay and the attacks of Termites, and in six months I observed its empty grave, both trunk and roots having melted away into the atmosphere with magical rapidity.

One's first feeling on entering the "High woods," as the primeval forests are called, is one of confusion, helplessness, almost terror. There is such a bewildering sameness in the infinite variety that one would lose himself in ten minutes without a compass or a landmark of some kind. The eye retains only the impression of countless perpendicular lines, which, as soon as one becomes accustomed to the gloom, are seen to be trunks of trees, lianas, and creepers, all straining upward in fierce competition towards the sun food above. Trunks of all sizes and shapes, fluted and cylindrical, smooth and prickly, are supported by huge buttresses or are lifted high in the air, supported by a labyrinth of roots, among which you may walk with the giant bole over your head. Trees whose bulk almost appals you, are thus lifted bodily in the struggle going on beneath the soil. The surface of the ground is covered with boalike coils of roots, that, unable to find space beneath the soil, roll along its surface in fantastic coils like families of snakes.

On attempting to move you find that the atmosphere is full of strings and threads, roots of parasites, perched up aloft, dangling down to the ground, tendrils of creepers, stretching their sensitive points in search of support, and climbing vines innumerable. The cutlass must be used at every step, and even with that indispensable weapon one gets stuck fast every few minutes unless great care is taken.

Now for a rapid look at several of the parasites that abound around us.

A long madder-brown root  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. in diameter drops straight as a plumb line from a bough a hundred feet overhead. By carefully pulling on this we bring the plant down, together with a shower of parasites, wild pines and ferns, that were growing on the bough. The plant is a pretty one, with dark, green, glossy, laurel leaves and bright, madder-colored bark. A broken twig exudes a milky sap that tells the botanist that this is the celebrated parasite the "matapalo," or "Scotch Attorney." In fifty years this insignificant plant would have been a stately tree, standing where its first long air-root first entered the soil. Its life history is as follows:—Birds eat the green egg-like fruit of the matapalo. A seed is dropped upon some tree-top, where its gummy coating secures it. It germinates, throws up a tiny shoot into the air, and begins to let down its long root towards the ground. At length this is reached, the root takes firm hold of the soil, sends out side-fibres, calls down from the rapidly growing plant above other roots, until the whole bole of its host is enclosed in a labyrinth of roots that squeeze the life out of the doomed tree with their ever-tightening folds.

Soon the limbs drop and the trunk decays, and in the place of the stately tree stands the matapalo, a rapidly coalescing tangle of roots and stems, master of the soil on which stood the patron of its treacherous infancy. In a few years these stems will have completely coalesced into a compact smooth bole which will bear no trace of its complex curious origin. Its common name, "The Scotch Attorney," is given it by the creoles because they say if a Scotchman gets the attorneyship of an estate he becomes proprie-

tor in a very short time by certain methods, that they rudely say, are closely analogous to those of the matapalo.

This Matapalo is a fig, its nearest relative being the great ban-yan of India. How curiously it has been modified from the typical members of its family is seen in the fact that its seeds will not grow in the soil, although the latter part of its life is passed rooted in the ground like any other tree.

C. B.

(To be Continued).

#### THE NEW CANADIAN DRAMA.\*

(SECOND NOTICE.)

As befits the historical drama, Mr. Mair seizes upon those stirring incidents which belong to the period he describes; and in his treatment of them they seem to be re-enacted with all the play and movement of the time, fired by patriotic speech and loyal, manly sentiment. The second act deals with the summons to Tecumseh and his chiefs to meet the American general (Harrison) in Council at Vincennes, "to bend," as Tecumseh fears,

"to lawless ravage of our lands,  
To treacherous bargains, contracts false, wherein  
One side is bound, the other loose as air."

Tecumseh and the other chiefs conclude to go, but fearing treachery, some four hundred Indian warriors accompany them, and on arriving at Vincennes, Harrison expresses surprise at this invasion of the braves, each of whom, the Shawnee chief pathetically urges, represents a wrong. Harrison, rising in the Council, thus addresses Tecumseh:—

"I asked Tecumseh to confer with me,  
Not in war's hue but for the erds of peace,  
Our own intent—witness our presence here,  
Unarmed, save those few muskets and our swords.  
How comes it, then, that he descends on us  
With this o'erbearing and untimely strength?"

TECUMSEH (rising): "You called upon Tecumseh and he came,  
You sent your messenger, asked us to bring  
Our wide complaint to you—and it is here;

[Waving his arm toward his followers.]  
Why is our brother angry at our force,  
Since every man but represents a wrong?  
Nay! rather should our force be multiplied;  
Fill up your streets and overflow your fields,  
And crowd upon the earth for standing room:  
Still would our wrongs outweigh our witnesses.  
And scant recital for the lack of tongues."

Space forbids our following this interview further, which is marked by many fine passages, put in the mouth of the conciliatory Harrison and thundered forth by the justly indignant Tecumseh, with other fierce invectives by the chiefs who accompanied the latter to the Council. Very pathetic is an observation of Tecumseh, "the red man's memory is full of graves," and doubly pathetic his reminder (to Harrison) of the early dominance of the Indian race on the continent, in the passage commencing—

"Once we were strong,  
Once all this mighty continent was ours,  
And the Great Spirit made it for our use,  
He knew no boundaries, so had we peace  
In the vast shelter of His handiwork,  
Till from the East our matchless misery came!  
Since then our tale is crowded with your crimes,

\* "Tecumseh: a Drama." By Charles Mair, author of "Dreamland, and other Poems." Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., and Williamson & Co., 1886.