

CONFEDERATION MEDAL.

Messrs. Wyon, who made the great seal of Canada, were also commissioned by the Canadian Government to execute the medal commemorative of Confederation. The size of the medal is three inches in diameter. The obverse bears a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen, who honoured Mr. J. S. Wyon with sittings for the purpose. The likeness of the Queen is excellent, and the style of the composition and treatment is much better than that of the head of Her Majesty in our present coinage. She wears a crown, which is both simple and rich in effect, from which, in accordance with her custom of late years on State occasions, falls a veil which covers the back of the head. The portion of dress which is visible is ornamented with a rich border of rose, thistle, and shamrock; and from a necklace is suspended a locket, frequently worn by Her Majesty, containing a portrait of the late Prince Consort, and specially selected by Her Majesty for representation upon this medal. The reverse side exhibits an allegorical group of figures, representing Britannia presenting the charter of Confederation to the four provinces. Each of these figures is distinguished by appropriate emblems. Ontario carries a sheaf of corn and a sickle; Quebec holds a paddle, and bears a fleur-de-lis on the shoulder; Nova Scotia holds a mining spade, and New Brunswick a timber-axe. The medal struck in gold has been presented to the Queen; in silver to the members of the Quebec Conference, and in bronze to Senators and members of the House of Commons.

THE GARDENS OF VERSAILLES.

The gardens which extend behind the mammoth castle of Versailles enclose the natural galleries of France. The descent to the gardens is made by the famous stairs lined with twelve hundred orange trees; and when the visitor enters he finds them in about the same condition as when Le Nôtre left them cultivated to the highest perfection, on the plan originally designed by himself. Since the eighteenth century there is scarcely a word of ridicule that has not been hurled at Le Nôtre's conception. When the grounds were levelled, and terraces substituted for undulating surface; grass plots formed, hedges trimmed, and trees made to grow by rule; when flower-beds were regulated by strict measurement, and ponds encircled with stone walls, it was said that Le Nôtre had deprived nature of beauty, that he preferred the cold symmetry of geometrical proportion to the easy freedom of natural beauty in all its forms. The chessboard-like appearance of Versailles park, with its trimmed trees and methodical arrangement of all its attractions, gives an appearance of justice to the complaints against the taste of the designer. But the same scene, enlivened by the presence of the elite of society, with the great king holding his court therein, seems a true picture of the olden time, wherein the artist had but subjected nature to such rules as the ideas of his time, and the habits of the society in which he lived, required to fulfil the original design. Tried by the times in which the plan was conceived, its execution ought to be regarded as a great triumph of genius. On a summer evening when the moon's pale light heightens the shade, and rounds off the angularity of the severe outline, the gardens can be seen to the greatest advantage. The deep shadow of the buildings covering the wide plains, where marble statues stand forth like spectres in the gloom, with the ponds, the sparkling fountains, &c., make a panorama of rare and exquisite beauty.



THE CANADIAN PROVINCES CONFEDERATION MEDAL.



THE GARDENS OF VERSAILLES.

SOLAR WONDERS.

MARVELS OF THE SUN—THE ZOLLNER "PICTURES."

From the London Spectator, Nov. 13. Astronomers have been revealing so many wonders in the vast globe which rules the planetary scheme, that we cannot yet hope to see the startling results of their researches co-ordinated into a consistent whole. On every hand new marvels are being brought to light. At one time Mr. Lockyer surprises us by exhibiting the velocities with which the solar storms rage across the blazing surface of our luminary. At another, the energetic astronomer who presides at the Roman Observatory tells us of water within the fierce tumult of the solar spots. The Kew observers track the strange influences of the planets on the solar atmosphere, watching not only the great tide of spots which sweeps in the ten-year period over the solar storm-zones, and then leaves our sun clear from speck or stain, but also the ripples of spot-formation which come in shorter periods, and seem inextricably blended to ordinary observers with the great periodic disturbances. Lastly, Lockyer, Huggins, Zollner, and Secchi describe the magic changes of form which pass over tongues of flame, projecting thousands of miles from the solar surface. We have before us as we write a series of coloured prominence-pictures taken by Dr. Zollner, the eminent photometrician. It is impossible to contemplate these strange figures without a sense of the magnificence of the problem which the sun presents to astronomers. Here are vast entities—flames, if we will, but flames unlike all those with which we are familiar. And these vast tongues of fire assume forms which speak to us at once of the action of forces of the utmost violence and intensity. The very aspect of these objects at once teaches this, but it is the rapid changes of place and of figure to which the spots are subjected that are most significant on this point. Here is a vast cone-shaped flame, with a mushroom-shaped head of enormous proportions, the whole object standing 16,000 or 17,000 miles from the sun's surface. In the cone-figure we see the uprush of lately imprisoned gases, in the outspreading head the sudden diminution of pressure as these gases reach the rarer upper atmosphere. But turn from this object to a series of six pictures placed beside it, and we see the solar forces in action. First, there is a vast flame, some 18,000 miles high, bowed towards the right, as though some fierce wind were blowing upon it. It extends in this direction some four or five thousand miles. The next picture presents the same object ten minutes later. The figure of the prominence has wholly changed. It is now a globe-shaped mass, standing on a narrow stalk of light above a row of flame-hillocks. It is bowed towards the left, so that in those short minutes the whole mass of the flame has swept thousands of miles away from its former position. Only two minutes later, and again a complete change of appearance. The stalk and flame-hillocks have vanished, and the globe-shaped mass has become elongated. Three minutes later, the shape of the prominence has altered so completely that one can hardly recognize it for the same. The stalk is again visible, but the upper mass is bowed down on the right so that the whole figure resembles a gigantic A, without the cross-bar, and with the down-stroke abnormally thick. This great A is some twenty thousand miles in height, and the whole mass of our earth might be bowled between its legs without touching them! Four minutes pass, and again the figure has changed. The flame-hillocks reappear, the down-