

After a few miles have been traversed, an abrupt turn to the left brings him into the narrow and rugged canon of the Beaver, a small stream which here empties into the Columbia. The ascent through this gorge is at first made on the right bank, but as the valley opens out, the stream is crossed, and the ascent of the eastern slope of the Selkirks is begun in earnest. As the summit of the grade is approached, several snow sheds are passed through. Rogers' Pass station, the summit of the Selkirks, near Mounts Carroll and Hermit, has an elevation of about 4,306 feet above the level of the Pacific Ocean. Leaving this station, the descent of the western slope is begun, down the valley and canon of the Illecillewaet River. One shed on the western slope is about three-quarters of a mile long, and is passed through shortly before the "Loop" is reached. The others vary in length according to their position.

There are more snow sheds on the western slope of the mountains than on the eastern, on account of the snow-fall being heavier and the slides more frequent on that side than on the other. The effect of "weathering" on the Pacific side of all the ranges of mountains is very clearly marked. The ascent of nearly all the mountain slopes of British Columbia is, as a rule, easier when made from the eastern side. This probably arises from the fact that the warm waters of the great "Japan Current," striking the coast of America in the neighbourhood of Vancouver Island, and which renders the climate of Victoria so mild, causes a greater degree of severity farther inland. The warm water at the coast of necessity produces a great deal of moisture, which, as it moves inland, is successively caught by each of the mountain chains and is condensed and deposited in the form of snow or rain, according to the altitude, on the western slope of each range. This process, going on for ages upon ages, has produced a powerful modifying effect on the physical aspect of the country, and it is not improbable that it is to the influence of the Japan Current, analogous to the gulf stream in the Atlantic Ocean, that the skill of the engineer has been taxed to a somewhat greater extent in the Kicking Horse Pass and the valley of the Illecillewaet than in the valleys of either the Bow or the Beaver Rivers.

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A CANADIAN LITERATURE: ANOTHER VIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

The excellent article in last week's VARSITY on Canadian literature contains many observations with which all thoughtful persons must agree. The objection of the writer to much of the current criticism on recent Canadian literature is especially well taken. The praise bestowed upon these books has been too indefinite and indiscriminate in its nature. Too much stress has been laid on the fact that they are the work of Canadian authors and that they treat of Canadian subjects.

What we need most now is deep and philosophical criticism, thorough and sincere, but at the same time sympathetic and encouraging. Such criticism will be of course creative no less than destructive. While condemning the bad, it will point out the good specifically and encourage it. We have had enough and too much of the superficial comment, the promiscuous eulogy, and the trivial commonplaces which are made to do duty for criticism in even our best journals.

The growth of a national literature can be fostered, but it cannot be forced. The people of the United States tried the latter plan after their assertion of political independence, and the result was a ridiculous failure. Their authors flattered each other without stint on every occasion, and their critics found a Shakespeare or a Milton in every hamlet. But the waters of oblivion are flowing over the most famous names of that period, and the lights which were intended to illumine the world have gone out forever.

A national literature is the expression of a national spirit and life. We in Canada cannot of course have a national literature until we are a nation. This does not imply simply political independence of the mother country. There must be also the unification of the multifarious elements which enter into our political existence. At present we are not a unity but an aggregation—a heterogeneous collection of national types

from all the states of Europe, with a well-marked tinge here and there of the aboriginal race. Not until many generations shall have passed will this unification be completed, and then, if ever, we may look for what might reasonably be called a distinctive Canadian literature.

Yet it is doubtful if we will ever have a typical literature in Canada. As time goes on it is probable that the forms of thought and expression prevailing in Britain, the United States and Canada will become so thoroughly assimilated to one another, that any line drawn between them will be purely arbitrary and fictitious. The facilities for personal communication and for the interchange of thought between these kindred peoples have been so enormously increased of late years that any distinctions that yet exist will doubtless soon be obliterated.

But to return to the VARSITY article referred to: Some of the positions taken by Mr. Miller are, I think, untenable. He speaks rather slightly of the cultivation and expression of individual tastes and judgments in literature. I must join issue with him here. Literature is but the expression in language of life and experience. This expression to have power and weight must bear upon it the fervent impress of sincerity. Thus the author must draw his facts and ideas from the crucible of his own experience. It will not do to take them ready made from the workshop of another. If his work is to live he must breathe into it the breath of his own life; he must inform it with his own very soul.

Imitation is the death of art in literature as well as in everything else. Let us be ourselves. Within that limit we are greater than Shakespeare. I am not sure that the great writers of the past are altogether a blessing to us. Perhaps they are only so many Old Men of the Sea on our shoulders. It is an open question whether we should not be grateful to the Turk that burned the library at Alexandria. There are other libraries which might be burned with advantage to-day.

Canadian authors have no need to imitate. The true, the noble, and the beautiful are all about them if they will but look. There are as good men and women here as in England. They also are moved by fine enthusiasms, and great heroisms are wrought out here. Our sky is blue, our waters clear, birds sing here also,—our own birds, the grass is green and our wild flowers are fair.

Yet a young Canadian writer in his prize essay on "Morning" introduces the English lark, though he probably never saw one, and certain recent Canadian poems and works of fiction have the trail of old country prejudices over them all. And what else at bottom does Mr. Miller mean by the universal in literature but the European English in general, or in particular, the Shakesperian or the Tennysonian or the Matthew Arnoldesque? For the universal exists only in the particular, and there is a fear that we confuse the two sometimes, and elevate to the rank of universal what is after all only a particular. But the possibilities of our literature are not concluded within England or in the works of even her best authors, past or present, and a servile service to them is by no means the highest literary virtue which a Canadian writer can possess.

A. STEVENSON.

A MODERN INSTANCE.

In July, 1885, I made one of four, camping on Preacher's Point, Muskoka. We were a happy party, congenial in tastes just so far as our common object went, which if the truth be known, consisted in the catching of innumerable black-bass and the total exclusion of all cares incident to town life.

In a state of self-satisfied laziness,—a state by the way, not particularly peculiar to the evening about which I write,—I reclined full length on a buffalo-robe and with head raised on one hand, complacently watched Sholto's progress in the interesting preparations for the evening meal. The ruffled waters of Lake Joseph, shimmering and glistening in the moon-light, rolled up on the rocky beach below me. Mingled sounds reached the ear. The humming of mosquitoes and the croaking of a hundred odd frogs filled in the short intervals between the screechings of a particularly non-consumptive owl, who, with mistaken zeal, made the air painfully resonant, from an opposite peninsula.

In one of the few periods of momentary quiet, the regular repetition of an unusual sound, the splash of a paddle, claimed