

CELTIC STUDIES IN CANADA.*

TIME was when the only external evidences of the study of Celtic in Canada were the Gaelic Sunday services of Presbyterian ministers in rural settlements, and the occasional appearance of poems in the same language in connection with the bagpipes, at what some of their votaries called "The Culdawnian Gemms." The Presbyterian Theological Colleges, even, paid little or no attention to the language of the Gael, allowing Highland students to qualify themselves as best they might for preaching in the speech of Paradise. Of recent years, however, these studies have received a great impetus, arising, doubtless, from the prominence attained by them in the Old World, and to their advocacy by such scholars as Professor Blackie, Dr. Matthew Arnold, and M. Gaidoz, of La Revue Celtique. In some of our larger cities, occasional services in Welsh as well as in Gaelic are held; and several newspapers of note furnish their readers from time to time with a Gaelic column. Some time ago, a Celtic Society was formed in Kingston, in connection with the University of Queen's College, which did good work, and comprised among its members gentlemen who, though not to the manner born, had acquired much proficiency in the Gaelic tongue. Whether that Society flourishes or has departed this life I cannot say, but the first supposition has this in its favour, that the "New Queen's Yell" is:—

Queen's! Queen's! Queen's!
Oil thigh na Banrighinn gu brath!
Cha gheill! Cha gheill! Cha gheill!

In Toronto, the Gaelic Society of later birth maintains an honourable existence under the worthy presidency of Mr. W. I. Mackenzie; and some of its members, notably Mr. David Spence, have enriched the Transactions of the "Canadian Institute" and other journals with articles on the language and the literature of the Gael.

The Celtic Society of Montreal is, however, the most ambitious and prominent of such institutions. Organized in 1883, under the Rev. Dr. MacNish, of Cornwall, who bids fair to be its perpetual president, as he is the greatest master of the Celtic languages on the continent, this society published its first volume of transactions in 1887. This first volume of 230 pages has found many readers on both sides of the Atlantic, and is daily increasing in value. The Society thereafter quietly continued its work until about a week ago, when a second volume of eighty-eight pages made its appearance, comprising some of the papers read before the Society during Sessions 1884-85 to 1886-91. It contains ten articles, one of them being a poem on Niagara, a well-worn subject, by Mr. Archibald MacKillop, the blind bard of the Society. As in the former volume, valuable materials for the history of the Celt in the Lower Provinces, in the County of Glengarry, and in the North-West, were furnished by the Rev. Dr. Blair, John McLennan, Esq., ex-M.P., and the Rev. Dr. Bryce, so, in the present, Sheriff MacKellar and Mr. Archibald MacNab, ex-M.P., give accounts of the settlement of the townships of Aldborough and Lochiel, respectively. These reminiscences of honoured pioneers are simple, but graphic, and full of interest. Two writers, who have passed into the other world since their papers were placed in the Society's hands, Mr. Neil Brodie and the Rev. Neil MacKinnon, have learnedly and pleasantly discussed the question of the continuance of Gaelic speech in Canada; and another departed member, the Rev. D. W. Rowland, has exploded the myth about the Madoc or Welsh Indians. A thoughtful essay in comparative philology is the Rev. John MacKay's Gaelic Substantive Verbs. Mr. Hugh MacColl indicates the existence of Gaelic poets in Western Ontario, and furnishes a modern tale of witchcraft. A paper replete with classical lore and historical reasoning is that of the Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair, entitled "Are the Kelts of Kimmerian origin?" Mr. Sinclair is a scholar worthy of the highest respect, so that when I answer that "a positive konklusion cannot klearly be konfirmed," the cacography of the response has reference not to the writer, but to what seems to my mind a senseless schism in orthography, somewhat on a par with "fonetik spellin."

The gem in the Transactions of the Society is the president's paper on "A Gaelic Cuneiform Inscription." Some time ago, under the title, or, as our American cousins improperly say, *caption*, "Umbria Capta," Dr. MacNish furnished indisputable proof of the Celtic character of the Umbrian Eugubine Tables, engraved in Italy in 180 B.C. In that communication to the Canadian Institute the learned president characterized the language of the Umbrian Tables as the oldest Gaelic extant. He has since found reason to change this opinion, while still adhering to his reading of the Tables; for a cuneiform tablet from Tell el Amarna in Egypt, transliterated by Drs. Sayce and Winckler, yields sense and exhibits relationship in and to no known family of human speech but the Celtic. That its language is neither Semitic, sub-Semitic, Indo-Germanic, or cuneiform Turanian, the labours of specialists have abundantly proved. Drs. Sayce and Winckler think it is Hittite, but this, Professor Campbell, who has made Hittite his forte, confidently denies. Since, then, Dr. MacNish furnishes an accurate and close grammatical and lexical rendering of this ancient document by the Gaelic branch of the Celtic tongues, there is no valid reason for doubting his conclusion, that Gaelic was a literary language in the neighbourhood of Palestine before the time of Moses, or some 1600 years B.C. It is impossible to over-

estimate the gain to Comparative Philology, as well as to Historical and Ethnological Science, imparted by this important discovery, which solves the vexed problem of Sumerian speech.

PESSIMISM.

THE city hums with an eternal din;
Each corner seems a mart for busy trade,
Where man, and child, and tender, soft-cheeked maid
Rush to their tasks, and fiercely strive to win
A crust from the mad whirl, where good and sin
Are by each other's side twin-powers arrayed.
Scarce can we tell to whom is homage paid,
When good is worshipped, where sin's rites begin.

Sorrow and weeping hang about the good;
Weeping and sorrow are in sin's drear track;
Shadows seem hovering over all the earth.
Here one would die, but sin supplies life's food;
There one goes burdened and with toil-bent back,
He follows good, and starves 'mid others' mirth.
Kingston, Ont. T. G. MARQUIS.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"ART SALES"; THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—Into the three personal cases cited by your correspondent, "R. A. D.," in your paper of the 11th inst., I do not propose to enter. It would be, at best, but matter of opinion. As to the general question, however, nothing could have surprised me more than the charge against Canadian artists of "ridiculous prices affixed to their pictures." I should have said exactly the reverse. I may be an object of derision to every commercial mind—or let me rather say to some of them—but I have, at one time and another, bought some eight or ten Canadian pictures, in oil and water-colour, at the very moderate prices asked without proposing the reduction of a single dollar.

I can give you a very remarkable example of how prone artists are to under-estimate their productions. In an early number of the *Fine Arts Quarterly Review* there is a regular professional record of the sale by auction of the "celebrated collection of the late Mr. Elhanan Bicknell." It was his habit to purchase, almost exclusively, off the easels of living artists. In this way he laid out about £25,000, and his pictures realized about three times that sum. This fact I had from one of his daughters. In some instances the prices given originally are added "as a curious item for comparison." From this it is to be gathered that certain pictures of nine painters brought to Mr. Bicknell's family a clear gain of more than £27,000, a loss to the same extent falling on the artists, say \$130,000, and mark particularly that these were not men who could be supposed not to know the value of their works, but painters of the highest established reputation, already rich men, most of them, and well able to hold out for their full price, all of them members of the Royal Academy but two, and they water-colour painters of corresponding repute. Their pictures not only doubled and trebled their cost, but fetched eight, nine, fifteen, twenty, and even in one instance thirty times the amount received for them. This may well seem to be fabulous. I have purposely abstained from more figures than were absolutely necessary, because they are always confusing, but, in case of incredulity, every amount shall be verified to the letter from the printed record itself, wherein the whole sale is reported, picture by picture. It is in the number of the *Review* for October, 1863, pages 420-422.

It may be added—though not to the point—that a sketch by Stanfield, done, it is said, in three hours, fetched £141, say \$700. The time spent on a work of art may or may not be any criterion of its value. Sir Joshua Reynolds replied to an objector on the ground of so many hours only being given to his portrait, "Sir, it is the work of thirty years."

For the rest, Canadian art is struggling yet, and must until it can conquer its position; may that be soon! Then its present depreciators will be on their knees to it, as has been the good fortune of all art princes, ancient and modern.

R. C. A.

HOW FREE TRADE WOULD NOT BENEFIT CANADA.

The most logical conclusions from the truest principle are practically false unless in drawing them allowance is made for the counter-working of other principles equally true in theory and equally dependent for practical truth on co-ordination with the first.—Bishop Stubbs.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—Allow me to thank Mr. Sutherland for his kind letter in your issue of December 4, and to agree with him that it is nearly time our controversy were brought to a close. I suppose it were too much to expect that gentleman to confess that he is mistaken in his views of unrestricted free trade as practically applied to Canada, regardless of the action taken by other countries in the matter, for the folly of trying to convince a man against his will has become proverbial, and I suspect that Mr. Sutherland has already reached that age at which the opinions and ways of most men have become definitely crystallized whether for good or for evil. His ideas have

been cast in a free trade mould and are probably unalterable. I have no reason to doubt that Mr. Sutherland is sincerely devoted to the best interests of our country, and I never was conscious of having insinuated anything to the contrary, but, although I duly respect his opinions, I think the course he advocates is not the one best adapted to Canada's welfare and to the development of her institutions and to the ensuring of our freedom. That there are many wrongs to be redressed in connection with our internal government cannot be truthfully denied. It may be that the principle of protection has been carried to extremes in some respects, and the voice of the country is beginning to demand freer commercial intercourse in certain directions, and limited reciprocal free trade seems to be the recognized fashion of the more advanced nations, but it is as important to encourage the taste for manufacturing in a young country as it is to encourage independent government, for many of the wants of its people are peculiar to local conditions that cannot be satisfactorily supplied from without.

I think it is an answer to those who severely criticize the National Policy to say that they are "running down the country," for the construction of the C.P.R., as it now stands, was part of the programme of that policy, and the opponents to the construction of the road are charged with opposing it upon the assumption that our North-West was not worth the expense of opening it up for settlement, and the agents of competing American roads took advantage of that statement made by some of our "leading statesmen" and gave it the widest publicity throughout Europe, but their ultimate object having been attained, and the fallacy of their false statements regarding our North-West having been revealed, I think we may confidently look forward to more rapid progress in the future. The annexation cry, coincident with the course taken by the Opposition at the last general election, did us some damage, as it had a tendency to excite a distrust in the minds of foreigners as to the stability of our institutions. Of course it would be too much to say that these are the only or even the principal causes of our backwardness as compared to our neighbours, for the most important reasons are quite beyond our control such as climatic conditions which in certain respects are in favour of the United States, and that was a most important consideration with the early settlers. While "New France" was still little better than a howling wilderness many of the States had become tolerably well settled, and the tide of emigration once having set in that direction and capital invested in the country with everything favourable a more rapid growth was ensured to them. As for the unusually slow growth of Canada during the last decade it may be accounted for by the special efforts put forth by certain American railroad companies who are heartily jealous of the C.P.R. to induce settlers to the Western States. If our growth has been comparatively slow it has been steady and healthy, and, beyond a few skirmishes with the Indians, our country has never been rent asunder by conflicting interests. Moreover, we have no negro problem for our statesmen of the not very distant future to settle.

In training and developing a child it is the first duty of the trainer to try to ascertain what the natural gifts of the child are, and to encourage their early development by urging it to activity and removing obstructions to healthy progress, and that generally requires a little sacrifice at the start in order that the final result may be more satisfactory. Recent reports show that Britain's foreign trade is seriously on the decline, and this fact together with the statement that there is considerably over a billion of dollars of British capital invested in Canada and the United States alone, besides what is invested in the South American States, the West Indies, Africa, India, Polynesia and Japan, has a very important bearing on the conclusion of the present controversy, for is it not clear that the principal cause of the falling off of British trade is the protective policies adopted by her former customers?

It has occurred to me to ask Mr. Sutherland where he proposes to find a permanent and profitable market for all our natural products? This world is not Utopian in character; it is the old story of the struggle for the "survival of the fittest." Thanking THE WEEK for its courtesy and hoping I have cleared the subject up a little for Mr. Sutherland, I will now close.

C. H. CHURCH.

Merrickville, Ont., Dec. 11, 1891.

THERE is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone; you can't isolate yourself and say that evil that is in you shall not spread. Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe; evil spreads as necessarily as disease.—George Eliot.

It is certainly curious and, perhaps, a little alarming to be told that the douce Ayrshire folk, panting to become adepts in cheese-making, but unable to find a capable scientific instructor in North Britain or among the Southern pock-puddings, had actually sent to Canada for a cheese-master. What had been the result? It was said that before the scientific system of Canadian cheese-making had been adopted, the Scotch dairy-farmers had got within a shilling of each other in the prices which their cheeses fetched at market; but, after sitting for a while at the feet of the magician from the Dominion of Canada, the Ayrshire cheeses realized fifteen shillings per hundred-weight more.—*London Daily Telegraph*.

* "Transactions of the Celtic Society of Montreal; comprising some of the papers read before the Society during Sessions 1884-85 to 1886-91." Montreal: W. Drysdale and Company. 1892.