

OUR AIN COUNTRY.

Each man dreams of what the future may hold — of what it ought to be — and, disappointments notwithstanding, dreams on resolutely. Waking, he presses on perseveringly towards the goal of his ambition — a world-wide brotherhood of nations; a social state worthy of its name, where all shall dwell in unity, and where political, social, and religious freedom unfold in each man the highest attributes of humanity. Obstacles and difficulties have met him at all points; enemies within and without; folly, ignorance, and inexperience; divided interests rivalries, and competitions; — all these have made waste where the energies used among them should have gone to help to make the strength of the whole. But, if sometimes faltering, the race has worked on. There come to us times when something arrests the attention; a trivial thing, may be — an anniversary, a fête, a death, or the demolition of some old building, making way for a new one. In the pause arise questions. Where are we? How far have we progressed? And to each must be the same answer: The end is not yet. To us in Canada, if some important rights have yet to be claimed and won, the present question is — What use shall we make of the rights already acquired? Any given form of government is not necessarily a guarantee of progress or safety; that guarantee is to be found alone in the hearts of the people, in the possession of pure and fixed ideals, and in the culture of heart and soul as well as of mind. Man stripped of his ideal is a poor thing:

“ Unless, above himself he can
Exalt himself, how poor a thing is man.”

That love of country is one of the most beautiful ideals, has been sung in prose and verse in every language, civilized and barbaric, and in all earnestness it may be asked: First, granting that the Press is the every-day educator of the masses, how, in this Canada of ours, do we at the present moment plant, foster, and develop this loveliest of ideals in our children? If, on the one hand, we read articles almost foolish in their over zeal, for one of this class there are a half-dozen where comparisons injurious to home are drawn, and where, instead of a wise imitation of neighbor-

ing institutions being advised, there is an almost undisguised motion towards the extinction of our national individuality. If we trace the various steps by which this young Dominion has advanced in the path of progress and improvement from the time Jacques Cartier planted the lilies of France at Gaspé, to the memorable 13th of September, when upon the Plains of Abraham, the standard of England replaced them, and down to the last 1st of July, the twenty-seventh anniversary of our Dominionhood, we shall see that to be a significant part of that glorious British Empire, whose morning drum-beat girdles the earth, and whose language is destined to become the universal tongue, is no mean destiny.

It is somewhat difficult to be truly interested in, or proud of, the things of which we are to a great extent ignorant. Our schools teach Canadian History, and every child is now thoroughly at home in the leading points which go to make up what may be termed our Constitutional History; but that mass of historic detail which gives piquancy to the story as a whole, has as yet been collected after a hap-hazard fashion; and when well done, as it has been in some cases, has not received recognition in our schools by being made familiar to the scholars. In the Province of Quebec, the stereotyped method of bestowing foreign books as prizes, has, since 1873, under M. Ouimet, as Minister of Public Instruction, been superseded by the bestowal of books of fancy, history, or criticism, which deal in Canadian matters. Since Confederation, our annals and social circumstances must be of interest to all enquiring minds in the different provinces. Quebec and Nova Scotia can furnish works elaborating the rich stores of literary lore to be found there, and if in the Province of Ontario, the mines equally rich have not been equally well worked, Scadding, Dent, Canniff, and others, have been pioneers whose works deserve wider acknowledgment; and the widest would be to put them in the hands of our young people. “Give me the children, and you may have the people.”

Some time ago, in an American paper, there appeared, from the pen of a well-known critic and writer, a list and eulo-