

have been to conceive that any serious harm could result from making public, with the permission of all parties concerned, a conversation of the kind in question. But they have chosen to pursue a very different course and one which can scarcely commend itself to their warmest supporters as consistent with the rights and dignity of the Canadian Parliament. The subject-matter of the conference is one of vital importance to the well-being of Canada. We pride ourselves justly on the thoroughly democratic character of our institutions. Members of Parliament are the chosen and accredited representatives of the people. The officers and members of the Government are the servants of the people, accountable to them through their representatives. The position taken by the Premier and Mr. Foster, to the effect that all the people's representatives have a right to know is the result reached in any such International Conference, cannot be admitted for a moment. There are many cases easily conceivable when it is of the first importance that Parliament and the people should know the steps by which certain results were reached, or the causes which led to failure of results. Even in their informal discussions at Washington, the Government delegates were not acting, could not act, as private individuals. They were still the representatives of the Government and of the country. In this particular case it is easy to see that vast if not vital interests depend upon the positions taken by the respective parties in the informal discussion and upon the causes of failure. Without such knowledge it is impossible for Parliament or people to form correct and just opinions as to the manner in which the Government and its delegates performed the mission for which they had expressly sought a popular mandate, and as to the desirability of attempting further negotiations of the same kind. In a word, the House of Commons will, it seems to us, fail in their duty to the people, show themselves remiss in guarding the principle of responsible government which a former generation so highly prized, and possibly sow the seeds of future trouble, if they do not in this case strictly hold the Government to its accountability, and insist upon the right of the people and the Commons to the fullest information as to the attitude of both their own Government and that of the United States in regard to the burning question of commercial reciprocity.

The idea that the Imperial Government might have reasons of its own for withholding the information in question to be withheld from the Canadian people seems to us too improbable to need argument. Such a suggestion, if it were really meant, would be unjust to the Mother Country and adapted to give rise to surmises which we are sure can have no foundation in fact. England has not given us self-rule with her right hand to withdraw it with her left.

Electric search lights are being adopted by customs officers in England in order to avoid the possibility of explosion while rummaging for goods on board tank and other vessels carrying petroleum or explosives. Ruby-colored lights for the examination of imported cases of photographic negatives in a dark chamber are also to be supplied to obviate the risk of premature development.—New York World.

SPEECH SOUNDS IN CANADA.

a ago; æ act; aa alms; qq all; ei veil;
ea bear.

A letter in a recent issue of *The Week* on "Our National Voice," opens up a very interesting subject. It can hardly be denied that many of our people have rather a harsh way of treating their vowel sounds. If attention could be directed to this by teachers in our schools a great improvement might be made. Most teachers themselves, indeed, should examine their own way of speaking and teach by example as well as by precept.

The article referred to speaks of what is called the flat sound of "a" in many words in which other parts of the English speaking world use the beautiful Italian sound. This "flat" sound is the vowel usually written by modern phonetists—Ellis, Sweet, Murray, Miss Soames and others—æ. It is correctly used in such words as act, atom, carry, arrow, have, hand, madcap: (ækt, ætom, kæri, æro, hæv, hænd, mædkæp.) But there is a tendency with many speakers in Canada to use it erroneously instead of the Italian (a), written phonetically (aa) in calm, halve, calf, psalm, palm, and with a few speakers even in ah, father, alms. It is amusing and unpleasing to Old Country speakers to hear the Book of Psalms pronounced as the Book of Sams. The Italian a is sounded with the mouth moderately wide open and the tongue very little raised and farther back than æ. All the authorities give it as the correct sound in all the above words: (kaam, haav, kaaf, saam, paam, aa, faaθhr, aamz); and in words in which the a is followed by r, either at the end of a word or followed by other consonants, as are, car, far, armour, Arthur, cartridge, Parliament: (aar, kaar, faar, aarmr, Aarthr, kaartridzh, paarli-mant).

In another class of words such as ask, fast, master, France, can't, command, dance, the same Italian a is given by many—and I think the best—of the authorities. This is universally used in London and the south of England and very largely in Edinburgh and other parts of Scotland: (aask, faast, maastr, fraans, kaant, kamaand, daans). It is perhaps more particularly with regard to this class of words that usage in Canada tends to (æ), which we hear (æsk, fæst, mæastr, fræns, kænt, kamænd, dæns). It is impossible to dogmatise about such words. Usage unquestionably sanctions both. But even those in Canada who admit the greater beauty of the sound (aa) in such words, hesitate to adopt it, because they have been accustomed to hear (æ) and it seems affected to change. If, however, we honestly do prefer the (aa), we should have the same courage to adopt it that we have to drop any other objectionable habit, such as using an ungrammatical phrase or a wrong pronunciation. It will not improve matters to attempt the use of an intermediate sound between (æ) and (aa). People who have a difficulty in striking a sound between ant (ænt) and haunt (hænt) (see next paragraph) will not succeed very well in attempting one between ant (ænt) and aunt (aant). And if any one desires to discontinue the use of (æ), it can only be done by using a vowel clearly distinguishable from it.

Another class of words spelt with au but usually pronounced (aa), such as jaunt, haunch, are often pronounced by Canadians with the vowel in all, awl, haunt (phonetically written qq), as (hqqntsh, dzhqqnt), instead of (haantsh,

dzhaant). This practice also extends to some words written with (a) alone. Thus we find Chicago pronounced (shikqgo, shikægo, and even shikaargo); Hochelaga, (hoshilqga or hoshilæga). The correct sound is of course (shikaago, hoshilaaga). The tendency with such speakers is to carefully avoid the use of (aa) except before r.

Once more, Canadians do not seem to show care enough in distinguishing the two different sounds of (a) in such a word as Canada. The first sound is (æ), the other two are the "obscure" or "natural" vowel which is found also in the unaccented syllable of the words ago, ocean, idea, silent, freedom, London, succumb. This is the most frequent sound of (a) in the English language, and is therefore the sound represented by the later phoneticians by the single letter (a). The word Canada therefore is (kænada,) but we often hear it (kænædæ), and I remember hearing Sir Adolphe Caron pronounce it (kænadaa), which is natural to a French speaker and better than the other error. Some Americans, chiefly New Englanders, would say kænadei (ei being a phonetic sign often used for long a) or kænadi. We hear also (eisei, amerikei) or (eisi, ameriki) for Asa, America (eisa amerika). This does not prevail to any great extent in Canada. But we do hear it in the indefinite article a, as in (ei mæn, ei hors), for (a mæn, a hors).

I don't know what is the correct pronunciation of the word "a" when under stress or emphasis. I rather think (aa) is to be preferred to (ei) or (æ). In all the other European languages this is the ordinary sound of the letter a, not only in Italian, but in French, German, Spanish, and in our own Scotch. When not under stress the indefinite article is of course the natural vowel (a), while its other form is ('an) if unaccented, ('æn) if under stress. For long a we have given as a phonetic digraph (ei). This does not imply that it is a diphthong, though there is usually a perceptible glide in most words; that sign is used only because there is no single letter available. Before r where there is no glide suggestive of i, long a is written by Miss Soames (ea) as in (bear).

The above all refer to the letter a. Many curious points might be mentioned for all the vowels and for some of the consonants. On the question of Italian a, we are inclined to the South English usage, as stated above. On the sound of long o, of long a (oi), and on the treatment of r before a consonant, I think we should resist the South English practice.

Two excellent books might be referred to as useful for instruction to teachers especially. One is called "Pronunciation for Singers," written by Alex. J. Ellis, the greatest orthoepist who has written in English, author of the article on Speech Sounds in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. This book is published by John Curwen and Sons, London, 1877. It is intended primarily for singers, but is in every way as useful for speakers, and is the only simple book I know of that covers the ground fully. Another most useful book is an *Introduction to Phonetics* by Miss Laura Soames Beale, with an endorsement by Miss Dorothea Beale, Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College. There are several excellent works by Henry Sweet, but they are perhaps rather too closely based on London colloquial speech.

School-teachers should give attention to this subject and a revolution might easily be effected in the direction of purifying and beautifying the language of our Canadian youth.

ARCH. MCGOUN, JR.