

A LIMITED CONSTITUENCY.

THE weekly and monthly output of literary material in London and New York is amazing to everyone who is in a position to really know its bulk and its variety. The amazement arises from several causes: from the consideration of the vast number of people engaged in this enormous product; the vast activities, intellectual, mechanical, financial and commercial which are sustained and stimulated by and for it; and the mystery which prevails as to the consumers of all this material. It is alleged that gold mining is the most profitable of all forms of business enterprise in the aggregate. But one cannot help thinking that the actual profit on this vast output of the printing press must be very small. No one who keeps in touch with many people can fail to be struck by the fact that although there is such a great outpouring of reading matter there are apparently few readers. The newspaper is the only printed production which has a constituency that is obvious to us all; but the greatest newspapers in the world do not reach more than a small percentage of the people. All the circulations of all the papers would still leave a large margin of people who see no newspaper at all.

In a more remarkable manner the same thing is true of magazines and still more true of books. The people who do not read any magazines are as a thousand to the one who reads even one magazine. The people who do not read books are as ten thousand to the one who habitually reads books. And the fact is that in spite of the overwhelming output of the press, the constituency for it is really very limited; and there is still an extended constituency of almost unimaginable dimensions waiting for the literature of the future, which can be brought cheaply to their doors. A simple test would show how small is the constituency for even the most remarkable books. We may suppose that Macaulay's History is one of the best known books in the English language, and one more talked about, one more often referred to in other books than any other of the same kind. Yet we venture to say that if one were to stop at a street corner the first fifty men of middle age or under who passed, and asked them if they had read Macaulay's History, not more than five of them would be found to have read it. In spite of its great fascinations, its great success, its constant vogue, its apparent popularity, it is not in fact popular at all, and vast multitudes of reading people have never looked into it. The fact is that if a book were really "popular," really reached the great public, and had a sale among the people who read it and loved it, one good volume would make an author's or a publisher's fortune.

A BOOK BY CHILDREN.

A FORETASTE of what the generation that is approaching maturity will be able to yield in the way of essay, tale, poetry, and historic narrative is afforded in a little volume just published. It is entitled "Sea, Forest and Prairie: being Stories of Life and Adventure in Canada Past and Present, by Boys and Girls in Canada's Schools." These stories were selected by the Rev. Charles J. Cameron, A.M., F.H.S., from about 5,000 stories written for prizes offered by the Montreal Witness during three successive years. The task of awarding the prizes was entrusted to Dr. S. E. Dawson, Dr. J. M. Harper, Prof. Roberts, Mr. Wm. Houston, Mr. Justice Ayl, and the Marquis of Lorne for the first and the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava for the second and third competitions consented to award the Dominion prizes. Mr. Cameron has fixed upon fifty-five tales, having in view a fair representation of the different provinces as well as the merit of the compositions. Miss May Selby Holden, the winner of the Dominion prize in the first competition, is a young lady who resides in St. John's, Nfld., in the second and third years. It was awarded to Miss Maude Saunders, of Laurenceton, N.S. The subjects are various. Some of them relate to incidents of heroism, adventure or peril that happened under the old regime; others pertain to the Loyalist cycle; the war of 1812 furnishes themes for others; the rebellions of 1837 under Papineau and Mackenzie are not forgotten; neither are the Fenian raids and the half-breed risings. From Newfoundland to Vancouver no region in British North America has failed to supply scenes to young narrators. In time the range is a quarter of a millennium. The Huron missions, the romance of Acadie, the wars between New France and New England, the Revolution and its sequel, the Loyalist settlement, pioneer life, woodcraft, shipwreck, sealing, the potlatch, the blizzard, the H. B. Co., haunted and other famous houses, the traits of Indian character are among the subjects of the stories. Not the least interesting contribution in the book is from the pen of a young Italian lady (Lillie Loukes) and is an attempt to account for the presence of the aborigines in the new world on the first arrival of Europeans.

The editor has deemed it best to leave errors of statement and date uncorrected, giving the stories just as they were sent in. It might have been well to rectify such mistakes in an occasional footnote, as young readers may take it for granted that what is presented to them in book form has the stamp of accuracy. As a Montrealer, I should like to have seen a few pages devoted to our city's story, especially in this anniversary season. When I saw the heading, "The

Haunted House," I naturally expected to find the interesting account of the McTavish mansion, which was one of the contributions published in the Witness. The McTavish family played no unimportant part in the enterprise of the early British period, and the monument gives a living interest to the story. In the intelligent account of a potlatch festival contributed by Merle Halliday, of Victoria, B.C., there is record of a curious instance of Indian magic or sorcery which puzzled the witnesses. When the British Association met in Montreal a committee was appointed to investigate the physical characters, languages and industrial and social conditions of the North-western tribes of the Dominion, and several reports on the subject have been published from year to year. The potlatch and other usages of the British Columbian tribes, their shamanistic practices, their secret societies, their ceremonial dances, etc., are here fully described, but nothing so perplexing as Master Halliday's feather trick seems to have come under the notice of the investigators.

WAR IN WALL PAPER.

A storm is brewing in wall paper business circles because of the alleged efforts of the National Wall Paper Company to boycott manufacturers who are not working in harmony with that corporation. The National Company is said to control 80 per cent. of the entire output of the United States, and it is claimed that they have secured almost the entire trade of the country by offering a rebate of 10 per cent. to such jobbers and retail dealers who purchase their supplies exclusively from firms that are controlled by the combine. The mode of procedure is to have the customer sign a contract each year, at the end of which he must make an affidavit to the effect that he has not during the year purchased any goods from outside firms. All accounts must be settled 30 days before the rebate is allowed, the object of this time allowance being to give the combine firms a chance to renew the yearly contract. It is also claimed that the combine contemplates increasing the price of wall paper by shutting down a number of mills in order that stocks may be reduced to a very low limit. The 20 per cent. of the manufacturers not in the combine are preparing to organize in the near future for the purpose of fighting the National Company, and believe that they will have the support of the retailers, who now suffer because a number of large jobbers are allied with the big concerns, and are given such favorable terms that they can undersell all outside houses. The retailers claim that the trade is demoralized and profits reduced to the starvation point by the encroachment into their domain by houses supposed to be strictly jobbers. It is