

THE LATEST BRITISH STATISTICS.

(London Advertiser.)

From the latest statistics of the Colonial Office for 1889 it appears that the British Empire (India included) embraces no less than 9,289,000 square miles, with a population of 328,000,000 souls. Other statistics which help one to realise the wealth of the British colonial empire are those relating to railways. There have been built in the colonies during the last half century 45,000 miles of railway, at a cost of about £400,000,000. Indeed, the growth of the colonial empire is so continuous and so rapid that statistics of a few months old are sure to be below the mark.

One of the planks in the platform of the Imperial Federationists is the collection and publication of Imperial statistics. The idea is to furnish people at home information of the advantages offered to settlers, and openings for capital in the various British dependencies, and to bring the colonists into closer relations by promoting trade and making known to each other their respective requirements and products. In this manner a good deal may be accomplished in the way of diverting to the colonies the stream of British emigration with its accompanying capital that has so enormously enriched and built up the United States. The idea is a good one from every point of view, and Canadians whether Imperialists or otherwise, will be glad to see it carried into execution.—*Ottawa Journal*, April 13th.

SHAKESPEARE.

III. THE PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE.

In the wonderful upheaval of thought and resurrection of conscience, referred to in our last chapter, one of the principal objects of all Englishmen was

"To fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world," and the general questions of the day were such as Theseus asked,—*"Say, what abridgement have you for this evening? What masque? What music? How shall we beguile the lazy time if not with some delight?"*

The delight being in "revels, dances, masks and merry hours."

These revelries were given on their grandest scale by noblemen and courtiers and often lasted a week, sometimes for a longer period.

"A fortnight hold we this solemnity in nightly revels and new jollity."

One of the most memorable of these entertainments was that given by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth Castle in 1576, on the occasion of a visit from Queen Elizabeth, which was kept up for nearly three weeks with almost incredible magnificence. As Shakespeare was 12 years old and the castle was the centre of a great gathering from all the country around, it has been conjectured that he might have witnessed some of the scenes. Indeed some believe that a distinct reference is made to the great display in "the midsummer night's dream," for Stratford was only some 14 miles from the castle, but, be that as it may, Shakespeare doubtless had many other opportunities of witnessing the great fetes which formed so interesting a feature of his time. It must have been a quaint and wonderful sight to have seen in quiet England amid the gothic and floral surroundings and peaceful pursuits of its busy people, such splendid tournaments as George Peele rhymes about—lords and ladies in magnificent dresses, covered with precious stones, and riding on Spanish or Italian horses, richly caparisoned; followed by heralds bearing the ensign of England, and trumpeters in red and yellow velvet. Then the marshals and judges of the lists, accompanied by many noble personages, next the bands of combatants, lances in rest and visors down.

"In armour bright and sheen fair England's knights.
In honour of their peerless sovereign,
High mistress of their service, thoughts and lives.
Make to the tilt again; and trumpets sound,
And princely coursers neigh and champ the bit;
When all addressed for deeds of high devoir,
Press to the sacred presence of their prince."

Continuing in "Polyhymnia," Peele tells of the separate combats between the great nobles and soldiers of the day, he describes, minutely recording the colors worn by them and their squires. Lord Compton ran against Master Henry Nowell.

Compton comes in.

"His courser trapped in white, and plumes and staves
Of snowy hue, and squires in fair array,
Waiting their lord's good fortune in the field,
His armour glittering like the moon's bright rays."

Nowell meets him.

"All armed in sables, with rich bandalier
That baldrick-wise he ware, set with fair stones
And pearls of Inde, that like a silver bend
Showed on his varnish'd corselet black as jet;
And beauteous plumes and bases suitable;
And on his stirrup waits a lusty train
Of servants clad in purple liveries."

Sometimes there were as many as forty knights, with each a goodly retinue of squires and pages, clad in green, orange, white, crimson, blue, silver, etc., according to the colors of their masters. Of the magnificence of such a spectacle, set in the midst of the royal court itself, conception is at a fault. Then the masque was a romantic show and dazzling performance, wherein ancient deities, allegorical figures, incarnated virtues and vices, humanized animals, animalized men, spirits from fairy-land and shadow-land, angels and demons, giants and dwarfs—all clad in lustrous garments and speaking in ornate diction and fanciful metre, singing sweet songs and dancing melodious measures.

It can well be understood that these shows and masques would not appeal to the intellectual sympathy of our dramatist. He certainly used them as material in two of his plays; but he did not squander his great genius in their separate production for the delectation of royalty, as did Ben Jonson and others. Of one he says, through the mouth of a character who is watching it, "this is the silliest stuff that ever I heard. The best in this kind are but shadows and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them."

(To be continued.)

An out-of-town paper tells its readers how to preserve fruit. Many new-fangled ideas are set forth, but none better than the ancient custom of leaving the bull-dog unchained.

"Papa," queried little Roscoe, "am I made out of clay?"
"Why, yes—I suppose so—that is—the Bible says so, and—"

"And is that why Uncle Frank says I am a little brick?"

Goodness gracious! and has it come to this? A lady in the horse car remarked to her companion, "Of course I like to go away in the summer. It's such a change. But then it is so tiresome to have one's husband around all day!"

You can't always judge by appearances. The young fiend in human form who jalaped the water melons at a Sunday-school pic-nic proved to be the same boy who always sang, "Forward, Christian Soldier," with the greatest warmth and fervor.

Indignant physician—"Man, what have you done? You sent my patient the wrong prescription and it killed him."