

THE RAMBLER.

CORRESPONDENCE.

YOUNG ENGLISHMEN COMING TO CANADA.

restriction in all the groceries. It is the paradise of the publican; here he abounds to the loss and disgrace of the fine historic old town. On the public streets drunkenness is seen in every stage, from the boy of fourteen, reeling home, a sight for angels to weep over, to the old outcast, with swollen nose and bleary eyes, lost beyond recovery. Around the corners of the streets lounge groups of men, besotted, degraded, their hands thrust deep into empty pockets, their brains beclouded, most of them half seas over. Here I saw women, mothers of families, in bare feet, reeling from side to side, little ragged children weeping in affright behind. I also passed a nice-looking, well-dressed woman, a mechanic's wife they said; she was being "oxtered" home by two frowsy, barefooted mill-girls, the onlookers laughing, and the police eyeing them from afar. During a month's residence there I attended divine service in the different churches, but not one word of religion and morality. The most rigid orthodoxy was argued and thumped into the people, but not one word of entreaty, of expostulation or warning against what is playing the mischief everywhere. Really, the way in which the Scotch hug their theology and their whiskey reminds one forcibly of the frantic embraces and expostulations of one forcibly of the frantic embraces and expostulations of Mr. Micawber's faithful spouse: "No Micawber, I'll never, never leave you;" the while the inexorable bailiff, of advanced thought and common sense seek entrance to carry off the bankrupt theological systems, together with the whiskey, to the limbo prepared for all things defunct.

To get back to the town itself and its associations—here I stand upon the Auld Brig and look across at the New, while below I see "Ayr, gurgling, kiss his pebbled shore," or take a stroll down the High Street and gaze upon the thatched roof, and the same old windows, within which the immortal "Tam grew glorious, o'er a' the ill o' life victorious." Nay! as I live, here come gambolling along, nearly tripping one up with their antics, "two dogs," one of them a huge collie, descendants of Caesar and Luath, no doubt—"an' what for no?"

"Can you tell me where Burns' cottage is?" I asked a policeman humbly. "Burns—Burns," he repeated meditatively, "um—ah—what's his other name?"

Ye Gods! I looked at the great ruddy Apollo in buttons, and gasped for breath.

"I dinna ken onybody o' that name about here—is't George, or James, or what?"

"I meant Burns the poet," I cried, from the depths of my disgust with the man's ignorance.

"Oh!" he broke out with a great jolly laugh, "It's Robbie ye mean; what' for didna ye tell me it was Robbie's hoose ye wantit?"

Most gloriously had he redeemed himself. Burns to all the world, but here it is "Robbie, oor Robbie." I wonder whether any other human being has ever lived who is so welded in the affections of the people as Robert Burns.

Directed by my friend in blue, I turn to the north-east and take the road to Alloway, about three miles from where I stand. It is a fine evening, with a red sun just sinking i' the haze beyond Ailsa Craig, deaf as Meg in "the woin' o' t." Walking along between green hedges, with the scent of sweet-briar abroad in the gloaming, I turn and see over my shoulder the moon, a semi-circular white fleece hanging dreamily over the woods below "the distant Cumnock hills," out-owre which she glowered a hundred years ago; even on that memorable night when Burns, special reporter for Posterity, interviewed the King of Terrors anent Dr. Hornbook, his practice and mal-practice. Wandering along the road to Alloway, one sees that the poet did not go far a field for his inspiration. The country side all round about is sylvan, picturesque, and fertile. Far heights crowned with clumps of trees, soft velvety slopes, leaning down towards flower-bordered, wimpling streams; wide, well-tilled and fruitful fields, with the long black smoke-stack of a coal mine rising up here and there many miles apart. Snug farm houses, with a decidedly comfortable, well-to-do air, nestling behind wheat-stacks, built like huge mediæval towers round about them, stately mansions rising on the wooded banks above the Ayr, brawling musically on its winding way between rows of lordly beeches. In such a country the singer could not but sing. To a superficial observer it is beautiful, much more to him of the seeing eye. Suddenly at a bend of the road, at the entrance to the village, a handsign points to the cottage where Burns was born. It is but a little white-washed cottage, consisting of the old "but and ben," but before it the foot pauses reverently, for here one of the world's few immortals first drew mortal breath. I did not break the spell by entering to inspect the relics, shown as belonging to Burns, and which may or may not be genuine. In such collections there is always more or less "fake." But about Auld Alloway Kirk, standing, ivy-clad and roofless, amid the old world graves, there could be no "fake," nor yet about the brig, across which Meg bore Tam at break-neck speed, with all the furies behind her. And lo! there is the Doon—bonnie Doon—clear and limpid, flowing on with gurgling fairy laughter between its flowery banks, blooming—"oh! sae fresh and fair!" A simple unnoted stream, until Burns sang of it in tones of love and sorrow, and made it classic.

JESSIE K. LAWSON.

RECENT handsome and full editions of De Quincey's works have been issued in England, accompanied by almost too laudatory notices in the leading periodicals. Yet I suppose De Quincey is little more than a name to hundreds of reading Canadians, and personally I do not wonder, for I have ever experienced some difficulty in placing him accurately. That Vision of Sudden Death seems always disappointing. Possibly it is as a political economist that he ranks highest, and I confess I know very little about political economy. In fact it seems to me that by association with the great Lakists he came into more prominence than was his due. Then like Coleridge his talk was more wonderful than his accomplished writings. In appearance he was small and attenuated, with large dreamy yet penetrating eyes, and a face "carved," we are told, with lines of intense thought and suffering. He was absent-minded to a charm—do we not like our geniuses to behave as such since they are so privileged?—often wore a coat three sizes too large for him, and a hat that fell over his eyes. Yet, Professor Wilson said of him: "a person of the highest intellectual, and imaginative powers; a metaphysician, a logician, and a political economist of the first order; a profound and comprehensive scholar, a perfect gentleman, and one of the best of men."

Ah! there is a reward, if you like, in ringing far-sounding words from one of the sagest of men, Christopher North. But even the Professor could make mistakes, and this recalls to my memory a curious thing which occurred to me a long time ago in connection with this matter. I was lounging about the streets of Liverpool one September night, the last one before embarking for home and Canada, and gazing with sensations of profoundest surprise at the numbers of illuminated glass barrels and kegs that hang overhead in the principal streets. There is nothing like them anywhere else—those flaring, glaring, staring barrels, inviting enough I suppose to hundreds of the frequenters of these miserable gin-shops and whiskey-palaces, but my friends and myself naturally preferred to linger elsewhere, and we soon stopped in front of a second-hand book-stall, presided over by a torch and a wizened old man in spectacles. I turned over carelessly enough the leaves of some tattered book at the very edge of the stall, and soon found I had stumbled upon the review of Tennyson's poems, which the Laureate refers to in his lines "To Christopher North."

Although a student of Tennysonianism, I had never read the review before, and I was not to be moved from my corner by the torch-lit stall until I had done with it. The scene has always been present with me since. And near by—the chattering tongues of gin-fed women and children rang out in the soft September night-air—well, in those aspects Liverpool is certainly not a nice place.

Apropos of book-stalls, I am going to prepare a column some day soon out of the odd volumes I have looked into, not in Liverpool but here upon our own Yonge Street, and you will be amused at the result, I am satisfied. I saw a dozen or so copies of "Once A Week" marked at 60 cents the lot the other day, and in turning over the pages discovered the name of George Meredith more than a few times. Do you suppose this can be the George Meredith, author of "Diana of the Crossways" and "The Egoist"? Next to the second-hand book-stalls I place the Cheap Jacks, who make our street corners very English in appearance. Why—I saw the very original Marigold there only last night, accent, manner, dress—everything! Then there are the Art Sales. These are very interesting, and you find out all about the proclivities of the *nouveaux riches* if you look in at the Mart, where Mr. Lydon so seductively holds forth—he really is a delightful auctioneer.

I do not dare to say that æstheticism is out of place in a new country, yet I could wish that the æsthetic among us did in truth "live up" to their plaques and tea-pots. For instance, when a lady buys a large Japanese vase—one of those gigantic mottled things three feet high—at a sale of Art Treasures from "ould Erin," and finds fault with it subsequently because both sides are alike, what is to be done? I know just what she means and what she misses. She desires to have one side magenta with green fern and a bird of paradise; the other, pale green with a wreath of violets. The Catalogues to these Art collections are frequently interesting. What relation for instance does a "Fine Old Irish Cruet" hold to a Fine Old Irish Gentleman? Not so important a one, I fancy, as the "Fine Old Irish Toddy Ladles" or the "Porridge Spoons" and "Broth Basins." And to what a funny tune goes in one's head, "Pretty Little Salver, on tripod feet"?

Now for a breach of confidence. I have a friend—a little friend—oh! Carlotta, pardon me—who ventured into poetry the other day for the sake of—A Feather Fan. She did not get the fan, but all the same her acrostic was a very pretty one. She gave it to me to have my opinion of it, and here it is:—

I ce and snow on the sidewalk, panes and pavements white,
Coats buttoned high to the throat, and caps pulled down,
Hastening homewards, eager for warm delight,
I dream of a drawing-room far from the crowded town!
Bright with screen and lantern and many a shining fan,
Arabesques quaint and glowing, just as in gay Japan,
Never can I forget thee, gracious Ichi Ban!

Very good, Carlotta; go on, my dear. There is a very pretty climax indeed in those few lines, and I wish to encourage you. If I had been one of the *Mail's* judges, you should have got that fan.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—The late tragedy at Woodstock and the melancholy fate of two young men, both gentlemen and both educated at an English public school, teaches a plain and terrible lesson to those who are responsible for the starting in alife of the rising generation of young Englishmen.

On the one hand we see a young man of great ability brought to a shameful death because he either of necessity or by choice sought to live by his wits rather than follow an honourable occupation, while his victim came to his untimely end simply because he had not taken ordinary business precautions to investigate the truth of the statements upon which he was staking so much valuable time and money.

There is in England a large and rapidly increasing class of young men who through no fault of their own are unable to find remunerative work in the Old Country and are consequently driven to seek more promising employment in one of our colonies.

The immigrant on arrival is hampered by many drawbacks. He has no friends, no business reputation or interest. He is ignorant of the ways of the people and the conditions of the different walks of life from which he has to make a choice, and worse than all he is ignorant of his own ignorances. In nine cases out of ten the best years of his life and his small stock of capital are wasted on a false start. He has bought his experience. In a few cases it proves a good investment but in many the loss is irretrievable.

For a boy who is destined to earn his own livelihood in any one of the colonies, it would be wiser to spend the last years of his education in that colony, during which time he could concurrently with his book-learning acquire some knowledge of the country and the work for which he is suited. The majority of our immigrants, however, have not decided to leave the Old Country until they have passed this stage. For such there is a great need of some system by which young men and parents in the Old Country can obtain the latest accurate information in detail of the conditions of life prospects and requirements of the different occupations in the different parts of the country and some recognized and responsible authority from whom they can obtain an accurate report respecting the desirability of any special business.

We have already established in Toronto the St. George's Society, with branches in some other cities in Canada.

This Society has done much good work in assisting immigrants of a different class; it would be well if its usefulness could be extended in this particular line. An agent should be established in every town of importance in British North America and an official paper or magazine published every month, for circulation both in England and this country, containing authentic reports on this special subject from each agent throughout the country. Each issue should contain the names of the agent in every town or settlement, from whom any special report could be obtained upon payment, if necessary, of a small and recognized fee. Such a paper would be supported by large contributions both in this country and in England, and, if not a very profitable undertaking, would at any rate be self supporting.

We have heard a great deal lately about the farm pupil swindles, etc. It is time that we found some practical means of remedying this evil. I shall be gratified if the crude suggestions thrown out by this letter caused some discussion on this subject and resulted in some active steps being taken to prevent the unnecessary and disastrous waste of money and energy which has so long been a source of wonder and remark.

B. A., OXON.

West Toronto Junction, December 1, 1890.

THE wonderful stories that have been told of the properties of the kola nut are more than confirmed by our consul at Bahia, who has written a special letter to Lord Salisbury on this subject. The West African carriers at that port, who use kola and carry the bean wrapped in banana about their person, are not physically speaking superior men to the Brazilian negro; yet the African, though constantly masticating kola, can, we are assured, endure fatigue which no Brazilian traveller can withstand. Where it takes eight Brazilian negroes to carry a load with difficulty, four African porters carry it cheerfully, singing and chanting as they trudge along, each with a bit of kola bean in the mouth. As a rule the kola-eating African gangs who labour at the hard task of unloading vessels earn, we are told, twice as much as their competitors. The beans, which are described as unintoxicating and in no way injurious, are said to act as a nutritive, and quench thirst: yet they are not strictly a stimulant. The supply at Bahia comes from Lagos. It is best soon after it is gathered and is sold according to freshness at twopence or threepence for each bean. It appears that the attention of the Government of India has already been called to the extraordinary properties of kola nuts, and practical information has been supplied to them from the authorities at Kew.—*St. James' Gazette*.

It is true that men not unfrequently sacrifice love to ambition, but few women have ever done this voluntarily. Love with them, as weighed against all things else, will kick the beam.—*Bayard Taylor*.

THE universal trouble with female writers is that they pitch their enthusiasm two or three notes too high, just as in chirography they deal too liberally in italics.—*Haliburton*.