

in that tongue. But a more enthusiastic patriot, who was also a zealous scholar, determined to save it from death. Gathering around him a group of young men of kindred sympathies, he inaugurated that research into the history, antiquities and early literature of Bohemia which was destined to prove so fruitful. Not only was the past ransacked for its treasures of legend and song, but new poets, essayists and historians restored to Czech more than its ancient glory as a literary language; and with the creation of this modern literature, the Czechs became a nation.

Unhappily this fulfilment of Czech aspirations brought them into sharp rivalry with their former lords and, as the struggle became more eager, rivalry intensified into hostility. Conscious of their power, the Bohemians claimed the full rights of a distinct nation. Able leaders fought their battles, and in 1849 Bohemia was once more recognized as a kingdom. Though this victory was followed by a period of reaction, the demand for autonomy was persevered in till Bohemia obtained its Diet and a place in the council of the Empire. But the Czechs were still far from the goal of their desires. They had seen Hungary in 1867 put on a par with the western portion of the Empire, and they would be satisfied with nothing less than complete home rule. Naturally the Germans of Bohemia, led by their nobles, resisted these pretensions. Centralization was as much their interest as autonomy was that of the Czechs. Race prejudice aggravated political partisanship, till the feud reached a pitch of bitterness to which the Anglo-Irish conflict offers no parallel. Even agreement in creed (the bulk of both races being Roman Catholic) failed to soften the rancour with which they regarded each other. At last there came a crisis, and the situation became so intolerable that the Germans (following an example that the Bohemians had set them twenty years before when they declined to sit in the Reichsrath) withdrew entirely from the Diet and left the Czechs to their own devices. In so doing they were unconsciously paving the way for a compromise; for the Czechs, having no opposition, soon split into two parties on the normal lines of Conservatism and Liberalism.

The Germans, self-ousted or boycotted from the Diet, took their revenge in the Reichsrath, where their strength was unassailable. For, though not so numerous as the Slavs even in the Austrian half of the dual monarchy, they are the ruling race, and all the Slavs have not yet recognized the need of combining their forces. But it was clear to the more enlightened statesmen of both origins, and especially to Count Taafe, the Austrian Prime Minister, that to prolong such a feud of races would ultimately be detrimental to both sections of the people. The Czechs, to attain the great end of their national yearnings, the acknowledgment of their independence under a sovereign of their own, like Hungary, required the co-operation of a majority of the German element. The spirited Young Czech party would still, indeed, have remained proudly aloof, trusting to the justice of their cause—for it was of their own free will that the Bohemians first elected a Hapsburg as their king—and to the inherent vigour of their leaders. But the Old Czechs began to grow alarmed at the daring radicalism of their rival kinsmen, and were not sorry to have the aid of German Conservatives in stemming the tide. A Conference, therefore, was arranged for the settlement of a question which for years had been a source of heart-burning to the Germans of Bohemia—that of language.

A few weeks ago the Conference concluded its labours, and notwithstanding confident predictions of failure, it proved successful beyond the expectations even of the most sanguine. The *modus vivendi* is somewhat complicated in its provisions. Both the Emperor and Count Taafe—to whose tact and patience the reconciliation is mainly due—were more anxious to leave no room for future complaint than to formulate a scheme that would satisfy the sticklers for legislative symmetry. The new settlement recognizes both languages and grants ascendancy to neither. In districts where Czech prevails, Czech will be the language of the law courts, schools and public offices, and just the same rule will apply to the German districts. In mixed districts provision will be made for separate schools and bi-lingual officials in the courts and public departments. This is regarded as a victory for the Germans who had hitherto to learn Czech in order to practice in the courts and to have their children taught it. This will no longer be obligatory. The Young Czech party looks upon this arrangement as a check to Bohemian aspirations, but the moderate men of the Old Czech party are pleased at the result. In the Diet Germans and Czechs will vote by courts (*curiatim*), whenever a certain number of deputies ask for separation. But such demand will only be made when a question affecting one or other race is before the Diet. On other occasions the lines of race will be disregarded. The system is somewhat complicated, but it has broken the dead-lock that has prevailed for years. Henceforth Czechs and Germans will both have everything their own way, but only where they do not come into rivalry. In the courts, if all the suitors are Czechs or all Germans, only Czech in the one, only German in the other, case will be spoken. But if some be Czech, some German, the procedure will be bi-lingual. The same plan will apply to education. The Constitution recognizes the right of every citizen to the use of his mother tongue, and protects him against any inconvenience that may arise from his exclusive use of it.

#### THE CLERGY RESERVES.

To the Editor of THE DOMINION ILLUSTRATED :

SIR,—I believe that your correspondent, Mr. Hemming, is right about the division on the Clergy Reserves Act of 1854-5. The ministry of the day was a coalition one, and the parties and their votes got a little mixed. But as respects church endowments. The parliament of United Canada and the Dominion agreed that all connection between church and state should be removed, but agreed also that in effecting such removal, acquired rights, legal, equitable or moral, should be respected, and they were so: those of the Roman Catholics, by the allowance made on account of the Jesuits' Estates Fund, and those of the Protestants by that made on account of the Clergy Reserves Fund. I believe that made in the case last mentioned was considerably greater in amount than that made to the Roman Catholics in the other, and that this fact might have been taken into consideration by some who most violently denounced the government for not disallowing the act of the Quebec Legislature. W.

AN EXTRAORDINARY INSURANCE TRANSACTION.—The most wonderful stroke of business in the annals of life insurance was that which was effected on the 24th of December last by the Mutual Life Insurance of New York. It consisted in the payment to the company of a premium of \$578,345 in a single cheque for insurance on the lives of five members of a single family. Each policy was \$100,000 and the insured chose to make but one payment, thus commuting cost. This premium, which closed the year's business of the Mutual Life is greater than the sum total of the business of four companies for a whole year by \$30,943.47.

#### ON THE THRESHOLD.

On the 5th inst. Prof. Roberts lectured in Quebec on a subject that is dear to him, the literary and political outlook in Canada. He called his subject "On the Threshold," because we are now standing as it were on the threshold of destiny. In the course of his lecture Prof. Roberts said:—

A very few years ago there was no such thing as "the literary life," properly speaking, in Canada, and our literary prospects were almost *nil*. A few men-of-letters we had—poets, historians, romancers—who had captured some reputation in the face of heavy odds. But they were isolated, unsupported, and fettered with disadvantages. Now, however, when the cynical critic presents himself, and declares there is no literary life in Canada, he is regarded as a cheap aspirant for the seat of *Arbiter Elegantiarum*. He is generally counselled to go apart and cultivate his superior discernment, with the prospect of one day being admitted among those austere and impeccable critics who pity us for thinking that even America has as yet produced a book. The fact that our beginnings of a literature are still somewhat crude in many respects, and for the most part distinctly tinged with amateurishness, in no way militates against the existence among us of what we may frankly call the literary life, with all its accompanying power of influencing the national life and sentiment. Our numbers are already such that the instinct of the craft begins to draw us together; our fellow-countrymen begin to acknowledge our *métier*, and listen for our judgments. This being the case, let us glance at a few of the special advantages, restrictions, and possibilities which are incident to literature in Canada. These are so inextricably woven together, that I can only plunge into the subject at a venture, and hold up for comment whatever first comes to my hand. I doubt if even the indifference of contemporaries has had power to kill a really pre-eminent talent—one for whose loss the world has been the poorer. Yet we cannot doubt that many an ardent purpose and unquestionable power has been chilled into inferior development by a lack of recognition. Of course I do not speak of *pecuniary* recognition, which, meaning far more to one department of literary effort than to another, must be referred to in another connection. In this matter of recognition our authors of the present are most fortunate. The first hint of special ability, whether in prose or verse, finds a host of eager watchers to herald it, in the hope that it may meet all our expectations. It is greeted on every side with encouragement and sympathy; it is bidden to come forward and "not blush so to be admired." This is very stimulating to the object of it, and at the same time brings him (or her, as the case may be) into the focus of a concentrated though kindly scrutiny. Our expectations are decidedly high, whence it follows that they are seldom *quite* fulfilled. But of this fact we do not find it necessary to make public proclamation. The new arrival is welcomed heartily into our ranks, to be counted our fellow till he can prove himself our chief. This appreciative system may not be in all respects an unmitigated blessing. We may, perhaps, incline too readily to the detecting of young swans among the ducklings; but surely, seeing that we must expect to err at times, it is well to take heed that our error, when it happens, shall lean toward the generous and human side. It is a mean fear which makes men shrink from giving praise with both hands to whom praise is due. But this sort of pettiness is rare, I think, among Canadian writers. As a class we display singularly little cliquishness, and we are almost entirely undisfigured by those bitter jealousies which divide literary circles in England, France and America, and which give the Philistines on all sides such infinite occasion for mirth. Let us preserve this magnanimity of tone, while remembering to combine honesty with generosity. By the avoidance of literary squabbles we will maintain our dignity, though, perhaps, at the expense of a little free advertisement; and let us bear in mind that the functions of true criticism are less hopelessly obscured by an indulgence in too generous panegyric than by those efforts in elaborate sarcasm which are designed primarily to display the would-be trenchant wit of the critic.