

posed that Canadian history is really too insignificant to be placed in the list of important studies.

Undoubtedly our American cousins have gone to the other extreme, but they err on the right side. They exalt their national heroes until the famous ones of antiquity are mere pigmies beside them. Their historians often venture so far into the realms of romance that it becomes a sad awakening to the American when his equilibrium is restored by something more than a cursory glance at civilizations older and mightier than his own. But this policy foolish as it may seem has its beneficial effects. A nation has been formed under the most adverse circumstances, and out of the most heterogeneous elements, and the rapid and nearly complete absorption of German and Celt, Saxon and Spaniard after a short residence in the republic is one of the remarkable features of the century.

Whoever sets before him the task of writing a history of Canada that shall be worthy the name must have exceptional abilities for the work. To tell the brilliant story of the older continent in an age when its two mightiest contestants for power extended their battle ground to the new world; to trace the struggle going on in the midst of a barbarous civilization inimical to both parties, terminating with the fight beside a picturesque fortress; to show how this victory by crushing out one power led the sons of the other to found an independent state; a few remaining with the conquered in loyal allegiance to the victor beyond the sea; to follow the fortunes of this latter colony in northern latitudes, its success eclipsed by the rapid and magnificent progress of its free neighbor to the south, its development retarded by the ill-sorted union of two distinct races; to chronicle the acquisition of self-government, and other advances made in the present century, the combination of the two people being still left imperfectly consummated—a confederation and not a coalescence—with its fatal drawbacks of divided interests and wide differences of sentiment; all this will require the touch of a master hand. What attempts have thus far been made in the line of biographies of political leaders, or sketches of particular regimes are conspicuously lacking in fairness. They exhibit more of the bias which is a constant obstacle to a just appreciation of contemporary men and events, than is accountable for. But their faults are due to the entire absence of a thorough study of Canadian history. The difficulty of writing an impartial account of the present is enhanced by prevailing ignorance of the past. The question is not a trivial one, nor are the interests at stake wholly sentimental. Sentiment, as a Canadian writer has said, is one of the strongest things in nature; upon it has often hung the fate of empires, and to ignore its wonderful power under certain circumstances, when it can help to weld together people differing in race and religion, when it may induce even the sordid of mankind to rise above material prosperity, and sacrifice private ends for the public good, is folly of a dangerous sort. If the progress of a national course is stopped even for an instant by the interposition of men's personal interests its success is endangered, and thus ideal pictures of future greatness, idle in themselves, but valuable in proportion as they tend to bring about unity in contending with a

common enemy, have frequently been the rallying cries that have preceded and produced some of the most wonderful achievements of history. The common enemy of Canadians is disunion, and to combat the disintegrating influences of a growth stealthily but none the less sure, a powerful agency appealing broadly and effectually seems just now absolutely necessary. Ignorance begetting prejudice, and prejudices hatred is the road to national ruin, and *facilis descensus averni*. A remedy may be found in allowing narrow bigotries to sink into oblivion, and by the cultivation of a broad sympathy amongst those whose lot is cast together, and who could not if they would cut the chain which sectionalism and the bitterness of party spirit has made irksome.

This is the issue before Canadians, and they must meet it squarely. If believing that we may yet bridge over our differences and emerge a more united and contented people is an illusion scouted at by those wise philosophers whose proposals are always more correctly logical than humbly practicable, still let us cherish the fond conceit with the tenacity "that shall not die and cannot be destroyed."

The cherishing of the desperate thought that to quench our young nationality in the mighty but utterly alien civilization of the American Republic is the only means of averting the fate which will result from the present discord threatening daily to become perpetual, cannot be defended as expedient, just or manly. A calm moderation is what is required to adjust the difficulty in a safe and statesmanlike manner.

The Canadian historian has therefore his work cut out for him, and small encouragement will he have to perform it, if there is a persistent and general avoidance on the part of his countrymen to learn the lessons taught by the history of older nations and to apply them to the study of our own times. The maxim of the copy book, "respect yourself and others will respect you" is worthy of a nobler use than the school-boy puts it to, and the fundamental truth it touches is grossly neglected by the educationalists and public men of Canada in the scant respect they pay, and the place they assign to the history of their country.

A. H. U. COLQUHOUN.

## Every Fortnight.

So the GAZETTE has got a critic at last!—a regular George Augustus, whose shoe-latchets Laclede is hardly worthy to unlouse. No *bon-vicant*, however, is the new acquisition, but a regular "sour-pill" to use a vulgar expression. In one point he is sadly deficient, namely in the cookery line. You must expect no new receipts for tomato-sauce or resurrection pudding; all such subjects being *debarred* from this column.

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Let me commence my work by saying that all communications, whether of a combative or peaceable nature, referring to matters treated by me in this column should be addressed to "Critic, P. O. Box 1290." I shall be glad to answer any questions which