



HOME MAGAZINE



Life, Literature and Education.

Many deaths, due to skating over rotten ice or into air-holes, have already been chronicled, seven being the record in Canada for one day. As spring approaches the danger increases. No ice is safe in mild weather, or even during the cold weather which may follow a succession of periods of mild weather, and where flooded fields or skating rinks are not near enough to be patronized, the pleasure should be foregone for the season.

Of the making of battleships, as of books, there is no end. A fortnight ago France launched her first Dreadnaught, the nucleus, no doubt, of a fleet of Dreadnaughts such as that which Britain, by whom this type of battleship was originated, is developing on British waters. At the same time comes the news that Argentina will, in the immediate future, build two cruisers, stronger than those now under construction for Brazil. . . . And so battleship is piled on battleship, and fleet on fleet.

In the meantime, the peaceful land-lubber cannot but reflect on the good that might be accomplished for humanity were the vast sums of money expended in building and maintaining the warships of the world devoted to industrial and humanitarian ends.

A year or so ago Britain broached the subject of limitation of armaments as a topic for discussion at The Hague, but the suggestion was thrown down, especially by Germany, and so the Peace Conference, eschewing from its councils consideration of the very arm and might of war itself, became, for the time, little better than a gigantic farce. Nevertheless, limitation of armaments is a question which must eventually be considered. Otherwise, it is not irrational to ask when or where the endless spending of money in such defences shall end; or if, indeed, it can end with anything short of the bankruptcy of the people who must supply the funds.

One of the chief topics of present political interest is Senator Scott's scheme, introduced into the Senate during the last week of January, for the reorganization of that body. He suggests that two-thirds of the Senate be made permanently elective, each new Senator being given a term of service lasting for eight years; that Ontario and Quebec be divided into sixteen electoral districts each for representation in the Upper House; Nova Scotia and New Brunswick into seven each; Prince Edward Island into two; Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta into three, and British Columbia into two. For the present, a member of the existing Senate would be allotted to each district, which, at his death, would be given the privilege of electing a Senator. By this plan, only one-third of the Senate would be appointed by the Government.

The scheme is a singular conceit, and one that has no reform in it. It is a mere political device.

Parliament, and for that of the Senate in Canada, should have taken rise within those bodies themselves, and at almost the same time.

Time was when these bodies were great in their might. As instituted, they were designed to be "cool and deliberate" second bodies, above and apart, by reason of age and experience, from the fluctuations of the emotional public, an exaltation which of itself—seeing that Lords and Senators are, after all, only human—was bound to give good culture to a few germs of weakness. . . . But, "Autres temps autres mœurs." Presently a democracy, constantly growing both in numbers and perspicacity, was to be reckoned with, and to-day it is not remarkable that that same democracy should see in this voluntary movement for "reform" a recognition of the fact that the ever-swelling murmur of a dissatisfied public must eventually be met, rather than a burning desire of the bodies in question to become more potent factors for the good of the commonwealth.

In England, the plan brought forth by the select committee of the Upper House has been little more satisfactory on the whole than the tactics of the proverbial old man, who, in "trying to please everybody, pleased nobody." In Canada, Senator Scott's recommendations are meeting with somewhat greater favor, although they are generally looked upon as scarcely drastic enough to meet the requirements of the situation. The public is beginning to grow somewhat restive under the assumption of emotionalism laid upon it, and, even granting such a postulate, is inclined to question as to whether it requires 84 Senators, each endowed with an annual sessional allowance of \$2,500, plus a mileage, greatly augmenting that amount, to deliberate on the hot-headedness of the emotional public's emotional representatives in an emotional House of Commons. In view of the efficient work done by the Railway Commission, there are even those who dare to query as to whether a council of five or seven, simply advisory to the Commons, and not endowed with the power of veto, might not do all the work accomplished by the eighty-four Senators, and at a substantial saving to the public purse.

Whether so radical a measure be wholly advisable or not, there is no question that a movement to reduce the number of Senators would be generally popular, as would also the introduction of the elective principle in connection with it, a step which must act as a revivifier upon a body now rather generally looked upon as dead. If we are to have an Upper House at all, it should neither be a Mausoleum nor a House of Charity. It should be a useful institution, not a mere shelving place in which to stow away public servants who have outlived their usefulness, or whom, for any other reason, it is deemed expedient to put quietly out of the way. If the public men who faithfully earn the right to be regarded as knights of cool and deliberate wisdom are not getting emolument enough to pay them for their services, in Heaven's name pay them for what they are worth while they are in harness, and let them lay by for the rainy day

as other men do; but do not expose them to the indignity (which, however gracefully accepted, is, nevertheless, an indignity) of submitting, as a great majority of the Senate must needs do, to the glossed-over charity of a shelf of do-nothingness in the Senate Chamber. It might not be deemed wise by all to abolish the Senate, as proposed by Mr. E. A. Lancaster, M. P. for Lincoln and Niagara, in a Bill introduced by him at the beginning of the present session, but, if retained, the wisdom of keeping in it only men who are independent, capable, active on occasion, and of undoubted usefulness to the country, surely stands above question.

People, Books and Doings

Canada has been receiving a musical treat during the past fortnight, such artists as Josef Lhevinne, called "the real Rubenstein II.," Madame Marchesi, one of the queens of song, and Miss Gertrude Huntley, pianist, having appeared in some of the leading music-halls. Gertrude Huntley is a young St. Thomas, Ont., girl, who has for some years past been a pupil of the celebrated Moscovski, of Paris.

The Carnegie Institution has awarded a contract for the construction of a vessel to be known as the magnetic survey yacht "Carnegie," which will be built without the use of iron or steel, or any other magnetic metal, the propelling engines, machinery, etc., being composed chiefly of bronze. The vessel will be used to make an accurate magnetic survey of the ocean.

Cold is now recognized as a germ disease, and inoculation is being recommended as a preventive against it by some of the leading physicians of the larger cities.

Among many sayings of Napoleon, compiled by Mr. H. F. B. Wheeler in his recently-published book, "The Mind of Napoleon," the following may be quoted as of especial interest to British subjects: "Had I had an English army, I should have conquered the universe, for I could have gone all over the world without demoralizing my troops." . . . Of Blucher, the great soldier-emperor said: "The old devil has always attacked me with the same vigor; if he was beaten, an instant afterward he was ready again for the combat."

The poet Swinburne entertains a horror of tobacco. Upon one occasion he went into the Arts Club, and found somebody smoking in every room. "James the First," he said, finally, to those within earshot, "was a knave, a tyrant, a fool, a liar, a coward; but I love him, I worship him, for he cut off the head of the blackguard Raleigh, who invented this filthy habit of smoking."

A WOMAN'S GLORY IS HER HAIR.

A very remarkable fair has just been held at Limoges, in France. It is a market which is held annually, and is frequented by large numbers of girls, with their mothers, for the sale of their hair. They come from all parts of the Limousine, Auvergne, Quercy, La Vendee, Brittany, etc., the women of these Provinces being celebrated for the length, abundance and fineness of their hair. A number

of booths are erected in the place before the church, and in these the buyers from Paris, Berlin and Vienna, attended by experts, take their places. There are always large numbers of peasant girls in attendance, and it is very pathetic to watch their faces as they go from booth to booth to see where they can obtain the best prices for that which is their chiefest pride and adornment. The hair is of all colors and shades, from the golden tresses of the Bretonne and the rich chestnut of the Auvergnaise, to the raven black of the Limousine.—[T. P.'s Weekly.]

The Passing of the Pauper

Within the past year, Australia and Great Britain have grappled more or less successfully with the old-age pension problem, and now we have the fruits of a similar attempt, here in our own Canada, which was initiated during the Parliamentary session of 1908.

The information prepared for the public on this theme, and circulated for distribution by pamphlet in the middle of January, is, on the whole, a very highly-satisfactory revelation. Dominion Government annuities will not fail to become recognized as a boon without precedent; nor will they fail to become popular with the masses of the people.

The father of this comprehensive scheme is Sir Richard Cartwright himself, and as that Knight is nothing short of an Archimedes in his own way, there is assurance to begin with that the whole idea has been conscientiously and accurately calculated before submitting it to the public.

Perhaps the first point to be recognized—and it is a vital one—is the fact of the Government assuming complete responsibility for the annuitant, in precisely the same way as it does in the case of a post-office savings-bank depositor. Such security, of course, transcends, infinitely, anything that could be offered by an incorporated trust or life-assurance company. Before passing, it might be mentioned that the interest allowed the savings depositor is not as great as that guaranteed the annuitant by one per cent.—four per cent. being the annuity-fund rate; and, also, that all savings-bank accounts at present on the Government ledgers may be constituted at any time an annuity fund, bearing, upon transfer, the extra percentage.

The annuities offered range from fifty dollars to six hundred dollars. Payments as low as twenty-five cents per week may be made to secure them, and, as in the case of life-insurance policies, it is to the advantage of the annuitant to take out his contract at as early an age as possible.

The second great point is the absolute freedom from risks, as regards lapses of payments. If the contract cannot be carried out, provision is made for the return of all deposits, together with three per cent. interest thereon.

In case the annuitant dies before completion of the term of years specified in his contract, the deposits made constitute an insurance policy, virtually payable to his heirs or estate. Forfeiture for non-payment is