

DRAUGHTS—CHECKERS.

Many persons are inclined to look upon the game of draughts merely in the light of a pastime, but we claim for it a higher position, and to regard it as a valuable method of mental training. Its pursuit tends to develop the important virtues of patience, courage, courtesy and self-reliance. These are the positive traits of the game that challenge our admiration. Even its negative features are worthy of consideration. It is totally devoid of any element of chance, and its influence is, therefore, repellent of the excesses which disfigure and militate against games in general. The abuse of intoxicating liquors cannot be associated with it, as the indulgence therein must be at all times preventative to its practical development in any full sense. Thus it is evident that it does not encourage the mischievous and alluring propensity of gambling, but that the only incentive to strive to succeed is honorable ambition to excel in a mental contest.

It is pre-eminently a game which is unobjectionable in all its features and associations, inexhaustible in its variety, the rudiments of which are easy of acquisition by the learner, and yet ever presenting new aspects and combinations to delight and reward the diligent or advanced player. It may be played by all—rich or poor, old or young, youth or maiden—with equal pleasure and profit. It affords a "mental recreation, a solace, a strength, and an equipment to sustain and cheer us in the work and warfare of our daily life."

IRISH LANDLORDISM.

While it is unquestionable that thousands of industrious and well-disposed Irish tenants are deterred by the tyranny of the League from pursuing their avocations, and paying their way in the quiet and peaceful courses common to honest men in any other country; and while the operations of the Land Courts have placed the Irish tenant in a position of privilege unknown in any other land, two recent incidents suffice to show the real evils which have in many instances, rendered Irish Landlordism obnoxious to the general charges against it. The correspondence between Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, when Secretary for Ireland, and Lord Clanricarde, has been published by the former, and redounds very much to his credit. From it, it appears that the Irish Government did its best to influence Lord Clanricarde to much larger concessions to his tenantry than that nobleman was disposed to make, and demurred—to the verge of the obligations of law and order—to afford police assistance to the Marquis in aid of his evictions, on account of his unyielding attitude towards his tenants. The action of the Marquis of Ely demonstrates the evils of absenteeism. A reduction of twenty per cent. being asked by the tenants, and refused, it occurred to the Marquis to visit his estates himself, a measure of justice which does not seem to have recommended itself to him for the long period of twenty years. Having seen with his own eyes, he voluntarily made a reduction of fifty per cent. This was certainly in the way of amends, and, therefore, praiseworthy; but the very act of reparation proves the injustice which must have been endured by the tenants, and convicts the noble landlord of very blamable, careless, and long-continued neglect. Many English owners of Irish estates have undoubtedly been excellent landlords, but they have not been numerous enough to vindicate the mass, and every case of careless oppression which comes to light lessens the sympathy which might otherwise be felt for a class suffering from interference with the old ideas of the rights of property in landed estate.

THE CRUISE OF THE "SUNBEAM."

On the 14th December, the *Sunbeam* returned to Portsmouth from her last cruise. She sailed from the same harbor in Nov., 1886, and had run over 36,000 nautical miles, having, besides going round the world, completely circumnavigated the continent of Australia. Fortunately for England, amidst her remarkable foreign and stupendous colonial blundering, she never fails to develop from time to time men of wealth and position, whose far-seeing and unselfish patriotism goes far to fill the gaps between the fitful and imperfect investigations occasionally set on foot by her government.

Such an one, in an eminent degree, is Lord Brassey, and there is something very pathetic in his quiet and steady persistence in the self-imposed duty of examining the coaling stations of the Empire, after the sad bereavement which must have marred, not only the enjoyment of the voyage, but the happiness of a life. All the world knows the *Sunbeam* through the lively pen of Lady Brassey, and it needs but little feeling or imagination to realize the aching void which the disappearance of so bright a presence must have left.

Lord Brassey, however, as has been said, bravely and patiently worked out his plan, and has furnished to the nation much valuable information and suggestion, though couched in the guarded and reticent language of one who has known the responsibilities of office.

Among the important stations visited were, the Cape of Good Hope, St. Helena, Ascension, the Mauritius, Bombay, Rangoon, Aden, and Port Darwin and King George's Sound in Australia.

The abandonment of the barren, costly, and exposed station of Ascension is strongly advocated, and the substitution of St. Helena recommended, and many officers of experience, both naval and military, bear out Lord Brassey's views.

The English public is made fully aware of the absolute requirements of the nation as to the defences of the stations, and of how little has as yet been done to secure them against the almost certain risks of war. In this

Lord Brassey's reports strengthen the clear-sighted opinions which Lord Carnarvon has equally felt it his duty from time to time to lay before his country.

But perhaps the most interesting portion of the account of the voyage is that which relates to Australia, in which great group of unembarrassed colonies Canadians cannot but feel considerable interest, an interest which will be intensified by the direct communication with our own Western Province, which will, no doubt, by and-by, be accomplished by the great steamers of the Canadian Pacific Syndicate.

King George's Sound, at the western end of the Great Australian Bight, has a fine harbor, and when fortified, will be a point of great importance, corresponded to by Port Darwin on the north-western coast.

Port Darwin challenges additional interest from the fact that the enterprising Government of South Australia is pushing a railway across the entire breadth of the continent, from south to north, the terminus of which will be at this point.

That this is a striking instance of public spirit will be apparent from a glance at the map. South Australia, though a misnomer, Victoria being really the southernmost colony of the mainland, yet has its settled portions almost entirely on the southern coast. Until recently, the charts showed its territory as extending straight up through the middle of the continent, to the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Torres Strait. Later maps display a central territory called "Alexandra Land," and a "Northern Territory," which includes Melville Island and Port Darwin. But probably, if the Railway is in South Australian hands, there would be no objection to her retaining the jurisdiction originally assumed for or by her. In that case "Central Australia" would be a more appropriate designation.

However this may be, the rapid growth of the Island continent in importance, the ready adoption by her several Legislatures of measures of defence in concert with the Imperial Government, the magnitude of her population, which may now be fairly estimated at 3,000,000,—exclusive of New Zealand, which forms no part of Australia, but has nearly three quarters of a million of her own,—her fast increasing trade, and her wholesome energy of development, must continue to invest her great public measures with a world-wide interest and attractiveness to all who think the uttermost parts of the earth best filled up and permeated, in the interests of progress and freedom, by an English-speaking civilization.

A RELIABLE WITNESS!

That an immense quantity of grain is shipped from Montreal to Europe, and more particularly to the British Isles, is a fact that we had thought the least well-informed citizen of the Dominion thoroughly understood. That a large part of this grain came from Chicago, Milwaukee, Duluth, and other upper lake ports, and was shipped direct by water through the lakes, and the Welland and St. Lawrence canals, is also another fact we should have thought was generally known. Imagine our surprise then, at being editorially informed through one of our exchanges, that, although millions had been spent in constructing canals to divert the grain traffic of the West to the St. Lawrence and Montreal, not a bushel of grain had been drawn away from Buffalo, the Erie Canal and New York. As its authority for a statement so erroneous, the editor quotes from a letter of Mr. Frank Wilkinson to the *New York Times*, which for deliberate misstatement, it would be hard to parallel. We should have liked to be able to impute Mr. Wilkinson's statements to ignorance, but as he asserts that he had devoted some months to a personal investigation of the lake traffic, and had visited all the leading lake ports, we are debarred from doing so. Western shippers of grain to Europe seek naturally the cheapest and most direct route, and, during the season of open navigation, the St. Lawrence affords the shortest, and when shipping facilities are adequate, one of the cheapest all-water routes to Britain. As a consequence, all the grain that can be handled at Montreal is shipped that way. Mr. Wilkinson then sneers at the canal system of Canada, and says—"they (the Canadians) have spent about \$40,000,000 in digging canals to accommodate this traffic, and still it resolutely refuses to go down the St. Lawrence River. They can fling \$50,000,000 or \$150,000,000 additional, if they can borrow so large a sum from credulous Englishmen, into their canals and river improvements, and they cannot divert one bushel of grain," &c., and so on, *ad nauseam*.

This is, no doubt, highly palatable to New York readers, but we are at a loss to understand why the editor of a Canadian paper should seize upon a gross misstatement, and endorse it as a proof of the failure of the canal system of the Dominion. In his prefatory remarks on the above quotation, the editor says:—"But there is one statement to which it appears to be advisable to call the attention of the Canadian tax-payer in the Maritime Provinces, even at the risk of laying one's self open to the flimsy and foolish charge of running down the country."

Well, we do not regard the charge of belittling the country as so flimsy and foolish a one; and surely so grave a misrepresentation of facts justifies the accusation which it is felt necessary to deprecate. On this point no more need be said.

One more quotation from Mr. Wilkinson, and we have done:—

"Montreal merchants sell imported goods almost exclusively, and these stuffs are not called for on the wind-swept plains where the No. 1 hard wheat grows, neither do the men who work in the lumber camps and at the mines call vociferously for imported goods. They all call for coal, and more coal, and they never receive a sufficient amount to carry them through the winter, though they call for coal almost continually."

Men working in lumber camps "calling for coal, and more coal," will strike Nova Scotians as decidedly absurd, and will show more clearly than we can point out the (to use a mild term) eccentricities of the writer's style.