

"Pericles, Prince of Tyre," and parts of "Henry VI.," are not his authentic productions. Some of his plays were also known by other names, thus "Julius Caesar" was called "Cæsar's Tragedy"; "Henry IV.," "Hotspur"; "Much Ado About Nothing," "Beatrice and Benedict." Only thirteen of those we possess were printed in his time. The rest were transmitted orally, and much corrupted in consequence. He also sold his plays, and lost control over them. Both Elizabeth and James I. enjoyed his dramatic works, given as they were then in crudest form and shape. I often think how astonished Shakespeare would be at the present reproduction of his plays under Mr. Irving's brilliant management. In my own mind, his plays, in order of merit, rank as follows:—1. "King Lear," his greatest tragic drama; 2. "Macbeth," best adapted for dramatic representation; 3. "Hamlet," most suited for study. The sleep-walking scene in "Macbeth" is a marvel of powerful and simple language; in it only one word, Arabia, exceeds two syllables in length. The chorus in "Henry V." is remarkable for descriptive force, and the commonplace incident of the knocking on the door in "Macbeth" after the commission of the crime, and the fear aroused in his mind, is most effectively introduced, and shows Shakespeare's profound knowledge of human nature. Another touch of art is *Duncan's* arrival in the same play. Tennyson shows similar ability in dealing with trivial events in "Guinevere," when he refers to the war-horse neighing without the gate. All great poets must be students of nature; in the speech of *Imogene* in "Cymbeline," descriptive of the cowslip, we see the Bard's careful observation of the great Mother. That he was attentive to the habits of birds is often evident elsewhere. Tennyson follows in his footsteps in "The Princess" and "The Idyls."

The present Poet Laureate is indeed a worthy successor of the great Bard, though he lacks the qualities necessary for dramatic writing, and is also devoid of humour; in only two of his pieces is there any trace of it, while Shakespeare's *Falstaff* is irresistible, and his fools and jesters appeal to all. His patriotism will always render him dear to Englishmen; its strongest expression is found probably in "John" and "Richard II." Shakespeare's sonnets, so little studied, are remarkable for their genius. In them, as Milton wrote, he warbled his native wood notes wild. His "Venus and Adonis" and "Rape of Lucrece" are the best known, but their readers are few in number. It is not clear what special form of belief Shakespeare followed. I am inclined to regard him as a member of the Church of Rome, to which his mother belonged. He was a worthy creation of the Golden Age of Literature, and his influence on the English language, then in a transitional state, was most beneficial. Double negatives and double comparatives abounded, and confusion of constructions occurred, also the use of classical words employed with active and passive force. All living languages undergo great changes, and Dryden, who wrote fifty years after Shakespeare, speaks of him as unintelligible and obscure. Latin words were used in place of their Anglo-Saxon equivalents. Lessing, Schlegel, and Goethe in Germany, and Coleridge and Lamb in England, have founded a Shakespearian library, while Holmes's book on the Baconian theory and Wilkes's refutation of it, have extended the study of his works in America. English, as a composite language, is the grandest, richest, most felicitous, and most varied of all tongues. Of this we can have no better illustration than our own Bible, and it also owes more to Shakespeare's writings than to anything except the Scriptures. In nothing is the want of cultivation more apparent than our current literature. The mania has been for classics, and now the introduction of Latin is opposed. German and French in different ways resemble Greek; the latter modern tongue is remarkable for its precision, and most useful in scientific exposition, but unsuitable for high dramatic purposes, while Italian is the most melodious, and Spanish the most majestic of languages, and has been aptly called the language of kings. That English is the most powerful and expressive no one can doubt who glances at "King Lear," "Macbeth," "Julius Cæsar," the "Merchant of Venice," or "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The wealth and complexity of the language are infinite, and Shakespeare, as its exponent, is its Master Regenerator and Refiner, according to Cardinal Wiseman. His plays are now studied in schools, and there is also a school of classics with Shakespeare at its head. Without him we should have had no Scott, no Longfellow, no Tennyson.

In conclusion, Canon Norman said there were two Shakespeare Societies in Montreal, of which he was an honorary member, and though he could not always attend their meetings, he was ever present at the annual Shakespearian dinner, where the flowers upon the table were those mentioned in his writings, the glass and ornaments appropriate to his time, and the menus adorned with quotations from his works. He hoped similar societies would soon be formed in Toronto, which enjoyed a more literary reputation than Montreal.

E. S.

CORRESPONDENCE.

HOME RULE IN NOVA SCOTIA.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In your last issue you devote a short article to the grievances of Nova Scotia, as ably set forth by Mr. Fellows in the December number of the *Nineteenth Century*. With the general tenor of your remarks no Nova Scotian repealer will find any fault. On the contrary, all will be glad that so able and influential a paper as THE WEEK has the sagacity to perceive, and the frankness to admit, that the agitation for repeal in Nova Scotia is not "altogether factitious and hollow;" and you are also quite right in saying that "the attempt to force industries unfavoured by nature into existence by protection has proved no compensation for the loss of natural trade."

Certainly such has been the experience of Nova Scotia in respect to her trade with Canada.

But my object in writing is not to discuss this question, tempting as it is. I desire, in justice to the memory of my great countryman, Joseph Howe, to correct an error into which you have fallen. You say: "The feeling that she was sold (as assuredly she was) by Joseph Howe, and dragged into the Confederation by the hair of her head, naturally rankles in the mind of Nova Scotia, since the result has been disappointing." Permit me to say that this is entirely incorrect. Mr. Howe had no part in the shameful business of dragging Nova Scotia into Confederation. He was not in the legislature of Nova Scotia when this outrage upon the manhood of her sons was perpetrated. The odium of that political crime (I cannot call it by any less vigorous name) is divided between Sir Charles Tupper, the leader of the Nova Scotia Government of the day, and Sir Adams Archibald, the leader of the Opposition. After being fierce opponents for years, these men clasped hands, and united their political fortunes over the prostrate form of their country. Mr. Howe battled against them both outside of the legislature, and did his best to prevent the consummation of a scheme which he believed was fraught with disaster to the best interests of the Province he loved so well, and to whose advancement he had devoted a lifetime of unselfish patriotism. However, by methods which it is not necessary to detail here, the scheme was carried against the unmistakable hostility of overwhelming masses of the people, embracing all ranks and classes from the labourer to the millionaire. Mr. Howe did not cease opposition even then, but after the elections of 1867, when it was found that the people had condemned Confederation by electing fifty-four anti-confederates out of the fifty-seven members chosen to represent them in the Local and Federal Parliaments, he proceeded to England, in company with three other Nova Scotia delegates, and spent some months there, endeavouring to get the British Government to repeal the act. He enlisted the sympathies of John Bright, who consented to lay the case of Nova Scotia before Parliament. Mr. Bright said that both parties in England favoured the union scheme, and declared that to ask for repeal so soon after the passage of the act would be folly, and that he would not get a hearing. He advised, as the best course, to ask for a commission of inquiry to look into the matter. Mr. Howe and the other delegates consented to this, and Mr. Bright made a speech of characteristic eloquence having this object in view. His proposition was voted down with a promptness and decisiveness that convinced Mr. Howe, the Nova Scotia leader, that there was nothing to hope for in the shape of repeal, from that quarter. The British Government, through the Colonial Secretary, advised the Nova Scotia delegates to give the union a fair trial, and threw upon the Canadian Government the responsibility of making such a readjustment of the financial basis of the union as would make it more satisfactory to the people of this Province. Out of this counsel grew the Better Terms negotiations, which resulted in very considerable financial concessions, and in Mr. Howe "accepting the situation," as it was called, and a seat in the Government of Sir John A. Macdonald.

There was then, and there always will be, doubts concerning the wisdom of Mr. Howe's action at that time, but whatever may have been said in the heat of political passion when the subject was fresh, no man now seriously believes that he was prompted by mercenary or corrupt motives in making the best of a bad business. His name is now held in loving remembrance by all our people, and whatever bitter feelings animate the hearts of Nova Scotians in respect to their ill-starred connection with Canada, you may rest assured that Joseph Howe is absolved from any participation in them.

The position of Nova Scotia is briefly this: We have given the union a fair trial. We are now drawing towards the close of twenty years' experience of its working. At the end of that time we find that unfavourable as were our anticipations of the effects, the reality has exceeded them. On the 15th of June last the question was fairly put to the people, and they endorsed repeal with marvellous unanimity. We await the result of the Dominion contest, not doubting that the verdict of June will be repeated with equal, if not greater, emphasis. Then we shall be in a position to appeal to the British Government for release from a connection which we have found exceedingly burdensome, with the prospect that each succeeding year will find us in a worse position than before. Having faith in the justice of our cause, and the proverbial British love of fair play, we believe that, after a full hearing, our wishes will be gratified.

Apologising for the length of this communication, I am, yours respectfully,
NOVA SCOTIA REPEALER.

[We give this vindication of Mr. Howe's memory with pleasure. In using the term "sold" we did not mean sold for money, but for place. Is our correspondent quite sure that he knows all that occurred, and especially all that passed between the Government, or any member of it, and Mr. Howe? Assuredly all who heard Mr. Howe's speech at the Cobden Club Dinner might well be filled with amazement when he appeared in a Confederation cabinet. The wife of Cæsar certainly did not in this case keep herself above suspicion.—ED. WEEK.]

ARS VICTRIX.

ALL passes. Art alone
Enduring stays to us;
The Bust out-lasts the throne,—
The Coin, Tiberius.

—Dobson.