

the part of the Government, coupled with a promise of reform. But such have not been the tactics of the Government leaders in Parliament, or in the press, and such will not probably be its tactics on the platform.

With regard to the alleged extravagance, there is perhaps less need of so direct an issue. There can be no doubt that there is at least a powerful sentiment in the country which approves of a bold and progressive policy, or of whatever can be made to appear as such. To this sentiment arguments in favor of what can be deemed by many small economies, appeal in vain. The courageous policy which built the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and which is now proposing to construct the Pacific cable and to bonus magnificently a fast Canadian Atlantic steamship service, commends itself to multitudes, probably to the majority, as better than the more cautious one which would wait to count the cost, estimate the resources, and calculate closely the probable loss and gain, until possibly the favorable moment for action might have passed. Of course, if the Opposition leaders are conscientiously unable to lend their aid to the bolder plan, they are in honor bound to oppose it, regardless of consequences to themselves as a party seeking power. We are speaking for the moment simply from the point of view of probable success in the approaching contest, in which we cannot but think opposition to these great projects will tell powerfully against them.

However uncertain the outcome of the contest might be, were the battle to be fought solely on the merits of the two old parties, as determined by their relations to the three great questions we have named, there can be no doubt that its uncertainty is increased to a degree which puts all present foresight at fault by the introduction of other and new factors into the problem. Such are the unknown quantities represented by the Patrons of Industry and the P.P.A. The former is unquestionably powerful, especially in the Province of Ontario, but on which side the weight of its influence will be most felt it is hard to determine, though on most points, notably the tariff question, their platform seems to resemble much more closely that of the Opposition. The crusade of the latter, whatever may be its strength, is directed against men, or rather against men's church affiliations, rather than against political principles, and is, therefore, still more uncertain in its effect. As the present leaders of both parties happen to be Roman Catholics, the members of the P.P.A. are, of course, bound to oppose either to the extent of their ability. As they can scarcely hope to be strong enough to brush aside the supporters of both the old parties and put a Government of their own choosing into power, it seems not unlikely that their efforts will do little to affect the balance of parties.

A STRANGE (CLASSICAL) COINCIDENCE.

The celebrated astronomer, the late Richard A. Proctor, has given almost a scientific character to the subject of Strange Coincidences by the interesting papers with this title published in his miscellaneous essays. Most persons have, I suppose, happened now and then on coincidences so strange as to seem, as the Scotch say, uncanny. But these strange coincidences, like our strange dreams, are usually left (wisely no doubt) unrecorded. If now, in violation of this wise rule, I place on record one of my personal experiences in this way, I am tempted to do so not merely because the incident seems to me exceptionally remarkable, but also because it gives me an opportunity, of which I am glad to avail myself, of associating my name with that of a very old friend, Mr. John Langton, but recently passed away after a very useful and active life unusually prolonged.

Some twenty years ago, at Ottawa, Mr. Langton and the writer, being both at that time in the public service,* Mr. Langton walked one morning into my office and after the usual greeting said, "Have you ever thought of the meaning of the expression in the Psalms, 'My lines are fallen in pleasant places'?" The question was not official, but that did not surprise me, as Mr. Langton, in spite of his onerous official duties, kept himself in touch with the world of Literature and Science and not unfrequently interjected into our official intercourse some unexpected literary or scientific query. I was obliged to admit that I had never thought of looking into the strict meaning of the words, but threw out the suggestion that the "lines" might possibly refer to the fisherman's lines. "No," said Mr. Langton, "the 'lines' are the surveyor's lines and the passage merely means, 'I have been given a goodly lot of land.' At least," he added, "that is the translation in the Septuagint,† and the word *σχόινια* used there for the surveyor's lines, is a curious one, meaning properly a reed or rope of reeds, the primitive measuring line." The word *σχόινια* seemed utterly strange and unfamiliar and I could not help feeling that my little Greek was rapidly becoming less by disuse. Hardly had Mr. Langton left my office when I remembered that I happened to have in my office a copy of Gaisford's Herodotus, picked up at an auction a few days before, and which, for some unaccountable reason, I had taken to my office instead of to my house. Thinking then of *σχόινια* and with a view to test my rustiness in Greek, I took up a volume of the Herodotus and opening it at random struggled through a page or two of the quaint "Father of History," when to my amazement I came upon the following lines in an answer of the Delphic oracle to the Lacedæmonians:‡

δώσω τοι κτλ.
καὶ καλὸν πεδίον σχοίνῳ διαμετρήσασθαι,
"I will give you to measure out with the line a fair land."

Seldom has oracular response caused more surprise. There was the *σχόινος* the measuring line, there too, the *καλὸν πεδίον*, the pleasant place or fair land§ of the Psalmist. I could hardly believe my senses.

* Mr. Langton was Auditor General and the writer Deputy Minister of the Interior.

† The translation in the Septuagint is: *σχόινια ἐπέπεσαν μοι ἐν τοῖς κασιότοις*—Psalm xvi. 6.

‡ See Her. 1-66.

§ In the Prayer-book the translation is, "The lot hath fallen to me in fair land."—Psalm xvi. 6.

Was there anywhere in the Greek classics so apposite a parallel passage as that on which I had thus strangely lighted! Herodotus in hand, I rushed down to Mr. Langton's office and holding out the volume bid him read the passage. Needless to say he was as much surprised as I had been and said that he had never met with such a remarkable coincidence. And remarkable it surely was. Consider the facts. That I, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, charged with the management of the Red Indians of the North-west and elsewhere in Canada, whose education certainly did not include Greek, should have in my office a Greek author of any kind was *a priori* highly improbable; that the Greek author should anywhere contain a passage so exactly parallel was equally improbable. Again that it should have occurred to me to look into the book for the purpose of testing myself in Greek was also most improbable, and lastly, that opening one of the volumes at random, I should have come at once on this particular passage was perhaps the most improbable of all.

I would merely say, in conclusion, that if any classical scholar can point out in the whole range of the Greek classics a passage where the *σχόινος* and the *καλὸν πεδίον*, the "surveyor's line" and the "fair land," are similarly brought into juxtaposition, I shall perhaps not consider the coincidence I have recorded as so remarkable. Until then I shall think myself justified in placing it high in the category of strange coincidences.

E. A. MEREDITH.

ENGLAND'S LAWS IN THE OLDEN TIMES.

A glance through the Statute Book gives, perhaps, as good an idea as anything of the manners and customs of England in the middle ages, besides an occasional insight into the doings of the world at that period. We hear of the blindness of justice and inefficacy of the law at the present time, but in those dark days justice was only a name, and law meant only the pleasure of the king and the powerful nobility.

For many years human life was regarded almost as worthless, often being taken in punishment of what we should deem now trivial offences. For a long time man was regarded as belonging to the soil, to be bought or sold with the land, similar to the position of a Russian serf in our days.

In those days superstition was rampant; and the dread of foreign competition exercised the minds of England's legislators to an unwholesome degree. Indeed, in the early part of the middle ages the Statute Book received its chief additions from Acts relating to the customs and trade of England, interspersed with severe denunciations of heretics, traitors and night walkers.

The Flemings were a particular bugbear, inasmuch as they wove a better class of woollen cloth than that turned out by English workmen. The import of their goods was prohibited, but they were allowed to settle in England, and bring their looms with them. The apparel of the king's "loving subjects" was the frequent cause of contention, and Parliament seemed to exercise considerable anxiety, considering the great number of acts required to settle the costume of the commonalty. In