

In private life, the Hon. John Neilson was genial, cheerful and courteous. Of temperate habits, he was a lover of nature, rejoicing in the noble scenery that surrounds Quebec. As a writer, he was concise and pointed, eschewing verbosity and being sparing of ornament. He never made evil use of the weapon that he wielded, always aiming at high objects, the promotion of his country's prosperity and of goodwill and kindly relations among persons of all classes, races and creeds. Seldom has a higher tribute been paid from the pulpit to a journalist and legislator than the sermon in which the Rev. Dr. Cook summed up his qualities and services, and spoke of the estimation in which he was held. That English journalism in this province should number such a man as Mr. Neilson among its early leaders is something to be proud of.

ALMANAC LITERATURE.

At the beginning of the year the almanac is much and everywhere in request. At the close of it, the old familiar friend, whose advice has been so often sought, in shine and storm, is generally cast aside and a new, clean, dainty successor is taken into favour. It is only after the lapse of some generations that the discarded almanac acquires a sufficient seasoning from the lapse of time to be, not only venerable, but valuable. Our Canadian almanacs of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th are sold at a price which no new almanac, however fair to see, or full of various lore, can compete with. Some collectors make old almanacs a specialty. Nor is it as curious only that these records of the past are to be prized. Some of them contain precious information to be found in no other source. Almanacs differ greatly in their character. Some are simply mediums for advertising, and of these some are comprehensive—embracing nearly all kinds of merchandise that are bought for money, while others confine themselves to some special article—most often a patent medicine or a series of such cure-alls. Others cling to the original purpose of the almanac—the character of the changing seasons, the feasts of the Church, secular holidays, etc. But for the most part the almanac is a *vade mecum* of statistics of universal interest. In an article on the subject some time ago, *Temple Bar* touched pleasantly on a feature that is common to a class of them—the immense number of anonymous centenarians that they commemorate. "Four, six, ten, twenty-five of them occur on the same page, and the general table of this mute, inglorious class of village Fairs give Scandinavia, for instance, 168 of 100, 7 of 105, 1 of 110, (it sounds like an examination sum,) 1 of 139, 'several'—which is ample if vague—of 140, 1 of 156, and 1 of 260. Perhaps that large section of the human race which, in Dundreary phrase, 'likes to wonder,' does make to itself pastime out of such figures without a name, and, if they do, why should they be stopped at centenarians, or stickle about a century or two more? For these there can even be found a few 'name sorts,' as the nurserymen say. In his description of the Portuguese invasion of Diu in 1537, Faria relates, and of course 'without any expression of doubt,' that a Bengalee Moor, who was in receipt of a pension for age from the King of Cambay, was 'by authentic information' 300 years old. None but himself had been his "hair renewer," and not alone his hair but his teeth had grown and fallen and grown again five or six times. No one would have given him more than sixty winters—which was probably about the impostor's real age—but his tale to the Portuguese was that one day toward the end of his first century, as he was fishing from the river bank, another oldster, with a belt round his waist, whose hands and feet were pierced by wounds, begged to be carried across the river on his shoulders. In return, the stranger promised him that he should retain his health and strength until they met again. When the Portuguese were well established at Diu, curiosity led this old tercentenarian rogue into the Franciscan chapel of their fort, where there was a statue of St. Francis. 'There he is,' cried this sixteenth century 'Rummum,' 'that's the man I carried over the river 200 years ago!' By rights he should, of course, have died then and there, according to Da Cunha, the Portuguese Governor, having 'in consideration of the miracle' continued to him his native pension, the old humbug is said to have drawn it for some eighty years longer—perhaps by the aid of one or more posthumous deputies; for Faria asks us to believe he did not die until 1618, which would make him 381 years old instead of the round 300; but why bother about a figure or two?—it was so far off and so long ago."

Lady Mount-Temple's gift to the National Gallery (No. 188 in Mr. W. M. Rossetti's list of his brother's works), Rossetti's picture "Beata Beatrix," begun in 1863 and finished in 1865, has been hung in its place at Trafalgar Square. It has been presented by Lady Mount-Temple in memory of her late husband and to commemorate his admiration for the artist. The picture was No. 293 at the Academy in 1883, and represents the Beatrice of Dante in a semi-supernatural trance, ominous and symbolic of death but not, as it has been erroneously said, in any sense dead. It was painted some time after the death of Mrs. Dante Rossetti, but the features and even the expression, so nearly resemble those of this lady that it has not unreasonably been described as a portrait of her. There are two replicas of the picture; neither of them is equal to the Mount-Temple version. It has been engraved.

PERSONAL

Mr. Remi Tremblay takes the place of Mr. Vidal as editor of *La Patrie*.

Mr. Vernon Smith, C.E., who died recently in Ottawa, was a pupil of Robert Stephenson.

The Pinxit Club of Point St. Charles held their first annual ball and supper on the 18th inst.

Miss Maud Ogilvy contributed an animated description of the opening of Parliament to the *Montreal Star*.

About eighty couples enjoyed the usual festivities on the last ladies' night of the Montreal Garrison Artillery.

Max O'Rell (M. Paul Blouet) will shortly pay another visit to Montreal under the auspices of the Press Club.

Sir Donald Smith, M.P., who recently returned from Europe, has left Montreal for Ottawa to attend to his parliamentary duties.

The absence of Lady Stanley from the opening of Parliament and from the "drawing-room" held in the Senate Chamber last Saturday was universally regretted.

Prince Arthur is to be invited to Toronto to spend next Queen's Birthday as the guest of the city. It is hoped that H. R. H. the Duchess of Connaught will accompany him.

The new members introduced to the Speaker of the House of Commons this session of Parliament were the Hon. C. C. Colby, Stanstead, Mr. Rufus H. Pope, Compton, and Mr. Thomas Earle, Victoria, B.C.

The Hon. Col. Rhodes, in replying to the Hon. Mr. Flynn, as to the number of persons eligible to a grant on the ground of having twelve children, said that there was one member of the Assembly who had a right to claim it.

The Rev. J. Edgar Hill, B.D., gave a lecture last Friday at the Church of the Messiah on Tennyson's "King Arthur," which was well worth listening to. Mr. Hill's characterization of the Laureate's ideal of true manhood was very fine.

"The Victoria Rifles' Dances" may be considered one of the most successful social institutions of Montreal. The committee is composed of an officer and sergeant from each company, and the entertainment provided at the Armory leaves nothing to be desired.

By the death of Senator Trudel, founder, proprietor and editor of *L'Etendard*, Canada has lost one of its ablest writers. Mr. Trudel exerted a large influence on an important section of the Ministerialist party in this province, and his place will not be easily filled.

Mgr. Gravel, Bishop of Nicolet, and Mr. Emile Lecaille, a young Montreal artist, who has been for some years studying in Paris, were passengers on board the steamship *La Bourgogne*, which ran down the steamship *Torridon*, and which had such a rough voyage across the Atlantic.

Military men are justly proud of the elevation of Major Boulton to a seat in the Senate. The Hon. Mr. Boulton wore his uniform as he moved the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Hon. Mr. Lougheed being the seconder. Both gentlemen spoke ably and to the point.

Miss B. L. Macdonell read an interesting paper on "The Literary Movement in Canada up to 1841," on Saturday evening, the 18th inst., before the united societies of Historical Studies and of Canadian Literature. The paper showed much research and was frequently applauded. Mr. W. D. Lighthall presided.

Mrs. Harry Bate is said to have worn one of the most picturesque gowns on the floor of the House on the opening of Parliament. It was composed of a skirt of white silk, slashed with narrow bands of moss green ribbon, and had a long train of moss green silk. The square bodice and sleeves were bordered with broad bands of moss green velvet.

The following are the officers of the Society of Canadian Literature for the ensuing year:—President, Mr. George Murray; first vice-president, Mr. George Martin; second vice-president, Mr. W. D. Lighthall; secretary, Mr. Geo. S. Wilson; treasurer, Mr. Horace T. Martin; council, Mrs. N. T. Leach, Miss C. Macdonell, Miss B. L. Macdonell, Mr. John Reade, Mr. E. D. Brownlow.

Among Montrealers and Quebecers present at the "drawing room" of Saturday last were Lady Dawson, Miss Chaffee, Miss Masson, Miss Eveline Smith, Miss Edith Jack, Miss Rose, Mrs. Robert S. White, Miss Curran, Miss Masson, Miss Blanche Wurtele, Major J. H. Burland, Mr. J. A. Heckman, Montreal; Mlle. Tessier, Miss Kane, Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Dobell, Quebec; and Mr. John Black, St. Johns.

A lady correspondent of the *Star* (Miss Maud Ogilvy) picked up from "the floor of the House" the following little versification, the happy significance of which will be generally acknowledged:

"I am growing too old," said Sir John, "I fear,
I've entered my third score and sixtieth year?"
But the tone of his voice, and the toss of his head,
Gave the lie direct to the words he said,
And I thought from his looks at the present date,
That whether in council or hot debate,
At seventy six he would carry more weight
Than two men each of thirty-eight.

The will of the late Mr. Thomas Ritchie bequeaths \$6,000 each to his brothers—Chief-Justice Sir William J. Ritchie, ex-Judge John W. Ritchie, Judge Norman J. Ritchie and Rev. J. J. Ritchie; \$20,000 to his cousin, Mary Ann Almon; \$8,000 each to Eliza McColl and Amelia McColl; \$1,500 each to his nephew and nieces, George W. Thomas and Elizabeth Ritchie and Labat Gray, and the residue to his nephew, Thos. Ritchie. The estate is valued at between \$300,000 and \$400,000. The fortunate nephew, Thos. Ritchie, is a director of the Merchants Bank of Halifax, and a member of the law firm of Henry, Ritchie & Weston.

The ceremonies at the opening of Parliament last week are said to have been unusually imposing. Sir John Macdonald, K.C.B., who looked remarkably well, was accompanied by Hon. J. J. C. Abbott, Hon. John Haggart and Hon. Frank Smith. The military men present were Lieutenant-Colonel Prior, M.P., A.D.C.; Lieutenant-Colonel Smith, A.D.C.; Colonel McPherson, A.D.C.; Major Prevost, A.D.C.; Major-General Sir Frederick Middleton; Lieutenant-Colonel Powell, Adjutant-General; Lieut.-Col. Panet, Deputy Minister of Militia; Lieut.-Col. Bacon, Lieut.-Col. White, Lieut.-Col. Irwin, Lieut.-Col. McPherson, Lieut.-Col. Macdonald, Major Stewart, Majors Todd, Toller, Hodgins and Heron, of the Guards; Lieut.-Col. Anderson, Majors Wright and Sherwood and Captain Rogers, of the 43rd Rifles.

Among persons of distinction who were present at the opening of Parliament were Cardinal Taschereau, in his gorgeous robes; Vicar-General Routhier, Rev. Father Dawson, of Ottawa College; Lady Macdonald, Lady Thompson, Miss Caron, Lady and Miss Ritchie, Mrs. C. H. Tupper, Mrs. E. Dewdney, Mrs. G. E. Foster, Mrs. Costigan, Mdme. J. A. Chapleau, Miss Carling, Mrs. Justice Burbidge, Mrs. A. M. Burgess, Mrs. Dr. Brien, Mrs. J. M. Courtney, Mrs. R. R. and Miss Dobell, of Quebec; Mrs. A. H. Gilmour, Mrs. D. W. Gordon, Mrs. J. Innes, Miss E. and Miss Miall, Mrs. F. Madill, the Misses Paterson, Mrs. A. W. Ross, Mrs. Heneker, the Misses White, Sir John Lister Kaye and Rev. Principal Adams. The justices of the Supreme Court were also present in their robes of scarlet and ermine.

THE HARAS OR HORSE BAZAAR.

The word "*Haras*," in the sense of horse bazaar, which has lately come into use among the horse-breeders of this province, was not unknown in mediæval England, as well as in France. The Latin form of it—"*Haracia*"—is used for "a stud of horses" in ancient documents cited in Stubbs's "Select Charters." Whether it has any connection with our English word, "horse," we cannot say, but the resemblance is suggestive. Earl, in "The Philology of the English Tongue," classes "horse" among those simple words "in which we cannot see more than one element unless we mount higher than the bier of the present treatise"—that is, to a period remoter than that in which the English language had taken shape. Some philologists make it cognate with the Latin "*currere*" (to run), so that swiftness would be the original meaning. In that case a horse would be what he is sometimes called, a "courser." When fleetness is desired it is to animals of Eastern origin, but western breeding that resort is had. The *haras* or horse bazaar is still a great institution in the ancient cities of the hither Orient. The following description of such a market appeared not long since in *Murray's Magazine*:—We come to an open space crowded with people and horses, which our host informs us is the public horse market of Damascus. Here we see various men riding up and down on horses which have been committed to their charge to sell, shouting the last bid which has been offered to them. They seem to fetch very low prices. Several good horses we see sold for less than £10 each. One specially fine-looking animal is "knocked down" for £15. But the business is not finished. A long dispute immediately ensues between the intending purchaser and the owner, the former attempting to obtain the horse for a few piastres less than the stipulated amount. There is an innate love of bargaining in a true Oriental. He never can do without it. In this case the owner seems to feel pretty sure of obtaining a good price for his horse, even if the present man should back out. So he remains silent, with an occasional inconsequent remark, such as: "It matters not!" "Wallah, who am I to argue with thee?" "Wallah, my horse is as dust! Take it, without money!" All of which expressions are equivalent to cold negatives, and naturally exasperate the other man, who is wasting oceans of rhetoric in the attempt to induce him to come round to his own way of thinking. Finally the latter exclaims with a heart-warming show of generosity and philanthropy: "Wallah, are we not brothers? Wherefore all this noise? Is it for money? May Allah forbid! You want one thousand six hundred piastres? Here is the money. Take it," and here he presses the bag of treasure into the other one's hands and makes as if he were going to turn away. "Never mind about your horse; I care not for it. Shall we part enemies because of money?" But here the other, who now has his money secure, runs after him, falls on his neck, and, kissing him on both cheeks, assures him that his horse to him is worthless; that since his brother wishes for it he must have it—as a present. And then they repair, in company with the "*dallah*," or the man who has done the auctioneering part of selling the horse, to the Government office close by, when the affair is registered and legally settled. Oriental business ways appear passing strange to our minds.