

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE BRITON'S LAND.

[A Lay of Imperial Unity.]

The following patriotic lines were contributed by Mr. John Dennistoun Wood, of Melbourne, Australia, for many years a Councillor of the Royal Colonial Institute, and were published in the opening number of the "Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute," by special direction of the Council:—

Should German, Russ, or Frank demand
What country is the Briton's land,
As no vain-glorious boast would I
To that enquiry thus reply:—
His is the land where the north breeze
Blows foam across the Orcades;
Where Donegal's rock-wall flings back
The foiled Atlantic's fierce attack;
Where Dover with its cliffs of snow
Serenely views his ancient foe;
Where Calpe's (a) warders hold the key
That shuts and opes the Inland Sea;
Where lies the Isle (b) which monk knights bold
Against the Moslem held of old;
Where stands the Cape, (c) by tempests beat,
Round which Da Gama steered his fleet;
Where billows from the Antarctic pole
Against Cape Pillar's (d) basalt roll;
Where graze Australia's myriad flocks
And shine her golden sands and rocks;
Where the twin summits of Mount Cook (e)
The England of the South o'erlook;
Where lies Ceylon 'mid pearly seas
With palm-leaves rustling in the breeze;
Where rolls Hydaspes, (f) which of yore
The Macedonian's galleys bore;
Where, born mid Himalayan snows,
By marble mosques (g) the Jumna flows;
Where by the Irrawadi's stream (h)
Is heard the elephant's shrill scream;
Where summer isles (i) lie in the seas
That wash the golden Chersonese;
Where Hong Kong with ship-crowded bay
Stands at the gateway of Cathay;
Where mountains, clad with mighty pines,
Rise steep above Columbia's mines;
Where down the cliffs with thund'rous roar
The waves of the Saint Lawrence pour;
Where fishers by Newfoundland reap
The finny harvest of the deep;
Where on the Caribbean Isles,
Begirt with Palms, the ocean smiles;
Where Demerara's fertile plains
Exult in wealth of sugar-canes.
On arctic shores, in tropic seas,
The Briton's banner courts the breeze;
Beneath the palm-tree and the oak
He speaks the tongue that Shakespeare spoke
Beneath the Southern Cross and Bear
His children lip the self-same prayer;
Upon his land n'er sets the sun,
His harvest toil is never done;
As soon as England's veiled in night
New Zealand hails the eastern light;
When icebergs block Canadian seas
Grain ripens at th' Antipodes;
Each hour his ports throughout the world
Behold his vessels' sails unfurled,
Or hear the rattle, as descends
The anchor when the voyage ends.

One now we are, and shall remain
Till moons shall cease to wax and wane,
A hundred lands together strung
On this strong cord—one Crown, one Tongue.
Melbourne, Sept. 29, 1890.

KING OF RATTLERS.

The largest rattlesnake ever seen in Georgia was killed Saturday in Lee County upon the plantation of Secretary of State General Phil Cook. The news comes through Phil Cook, Jr., a son of the General. The snake has terrorized the neighbourhood for years, and its death was the occasion of a jubilee celebration amongst the darkies in that vicinity. Even the white people joined in the general feeling of relief that so dangerous and dreaded a neighbour was rid of at last. The snake, by actual measurement, was a little over eleven feet long. It had nineteen rattles and a button. The snake has been hunted

- (a) Calpe is the ancient name of the Rock of Gibraltar.
- (b) The Knights of St. John bravely held Malta against the Turks in the 16th century.
- (c) Vasco de Gama was the first European to sail to India round the Cape of Good Hope, formerly called the Cape of Storms.
- (d) Cape Pillar is the south-eastern extremity of Tasmania.
- (e) Mount Cook, the highest mountain in New Zealand, rises in two peaks.
- (f) Alexander the Great launched his flotilla on the Hydaspes, now the Jhelum.
- (g) At Agra and Delhi.
- (h) In Upper Burma the wild elephants may be heard trumpeting to each other across the Irrawadi.
- (i) Penang and Singapore.

for years, and traps innumerable have been devised for his capture. His den is in an impenetrable section of the Kinchafoonee swamp. Near this is a cypress pond, and between the swamps and the pond is the road. Hundreds of times his track has been seen across this road. People that have not seen it were loath to believe the stories told about it; but the truth finally became established and the Lee County rattlesnake became famous from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Every year the story is reprinted, with timely variations, to go the round of the press. The snake has swallowed young pigs, chickens, rabbits and other small animals, and was dreaded by the negroes like a ghost. It was difficult to induce them to travel the road between the pond and the swamp at night. Saturday the snake was found across the path near the pond, by Mr. Phil Cook. Without disturbing it Mr. Cook went off for help, returning with three or four negroes armed with hoes and clubs. Stealing up near the snake the negroes fell upon it with the hoes and clubs and finally killed it. It was cut open, and in its belly was found a full grown buck rabbit. This probably accounts for the dormant and comparatively helpless condition of the snake and the ease with which he was despatched. The snake was then thrown across the shoulders of one of the negroes and carried to the house. Though the negro was a stalwart, muscular man, he staggered under the load. It was heavier, he declared, than a sack of guano. General Phil Cook says it was the largest rattlesnake he ever saw or heard of. At any rate, this is the end of the famous Lee County monster.—*Atlanta Constitution.*

AUTHORS' BLUNDERS.

APART from natural objects of any description, what an abyss of blunders do the exacting rules of grammar plunge us into. "Neither" and "nor," for instance. How absolutely uncontrollable some pens find these little words, and what a tiresome trick they have of taking upon themselves pluralizing properties to which they have no right. Continually we hear "that neither Ida nor Gerald were able to speak for some minutes." Well, then, we suppose both of them was silent. One needs to come to close quarters with these Will-o'-the-wispish parts of speech. They are almost as terrible to deal with as those perplexing verbs to "lay" and to "lie." Over these, authors, otherwise irreproachable, frequently trip, while the great host of minor writers appear to give up wrestling with them, for we get a heroine who had "laid" on the sofa an hour; and a hero who "lies" his tired head; or another who cries out, "let that glove lay, sir," in nearly every book we open. As for past participles and past tenses, we give up noticing their little vagaries, so constant is the stream of characters who "rung for their maid, and drunk the water hastily after having sang the song—" And so forth! But one of the commonest stumbling-blocks in fiction is that much-courted and frightfully mismanaged orb, the moon. Considering how useful this luminary is for love scenes, meditations, murders, etc., the way in which people who introduce it persist in ignoring its natural movements is really most ungrateful. Thus we are frequently confronted with "day-old silver crescent moons, high up in the clear heavens"—when? Why, as soon as the sun has set? New moons are continually rising in the west, while full moons get solemnly up at midnight. More than once they have preferred to do this in the north, but in for one eccentricity they think perhaps they may as well be in for another. As for waning moons they get up as the sun goes down, and wander about, north, south, east, and west, just as the situation requires them. For the better control of poor slandered Luna, may we suggest a helping hand in that shining light of every family bookshelf—"Whitaker!" Another meteorological snare is the rainbow. Far less frequent in fiction than the moon, still, when it does get there it ought to be properly placed. What was that lady thinking of, who, having put her heroine in a church towards the close of a showery day, made her gaze out of a window in a western (!) apse, "and behold in the heavens before her a brilliant many-hued bow?" Very few minutes later we hear the building was in total darkness, at which we are not surprised. After achieving that phenomenal effort in the west, Nature must have wanted repose. Sport of all kinds is dangerous ground for the uninitiated. Even tennis is full of traps. No young man should say to his pretty partner, "A love set then to us," when their opponents have scored in half the games. Nor is it really practicable to play tennis, as a veteran writer lately made her young people do, "by faint twilight in mid-November, till near dinner-time," and dinner was at seven forty-five, and they were playing on a grass court! But that writer being veteran may never have joined in the game, and so failed to realize how net and balls become invisible before the twilight is even faint. In the same way writers little acquainted with the *Field* have been known to send a house party fox-hunting in July; others send them cub-hunting in February; some make their gentlemen bring home big bags of pheasants in April; others go hare-hunting late in March. On a par with these are the incautious folks who make their characters "tap thermometers," to see if they are rising, or who make the said thermometers record the astounding register of two hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the shade, or who send visitors to the Academy in September or to the Monday populars in May, or make their linnets lay "sky-blue" eggs.—*London Society.*

NORTH AMERICAN LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY

The Annual Meeting of the North American Life Assurance Company was held at the head office of the company, Toronto, on Tuesday, January 27th, 1891.

Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, M.P., president, was appointed chairman, and Wm. McCabe, secretary, when the report was submitted, of which the following is an abstract:—

REPORT.

The directors of the North American Life Assurance Company present their tenth annual report with great satisfaction, owing to the solid progress which has attended the operations of the company, which now ranks as one of the leading institutions of the Dominion.

At this, the second quinquennial period in the company's history, it is interesting to note the marked success achieved during the past five years, as shown by the following table:

	Total Income.	Per cent.	Total Ins. in Force.	Per cent.
December 31, '90.....	\$366,818 61		\$10,076,554	
December 31, '85.....	165,697 25		4,849,287	
Increase.....	\$201,121 36	121	\$5,227,267	108

	Total Assets.	Per cent.	Total Surplus.	Per cent.
December 31, '90.....	\$1,042,440 11		\$128,718 58	
December 31, '85.....	346,890 95		37,500 95	
Increase.....	\$695,549 16	205	\$91,217 63	243

As will be seen from the table, the total insurance now in force is over ten millions.

The large addition to the assets of the company is almost entirely in interest-bearing investments, and the amount of overdue interest, being less than one-fourth of one per cent., indicates the high quality of the securities held by the company, unexcelled, it is believed, by any other financial institution on this continent.

The increase in the surplus over that of the preceding year is \$56,878.54, a gain of eighty per cent., and that fund now stands at \$128,718.58. This large addition must be extremely gratifying to all interested in the company, and especially to those who hold its investment policies.

The cash interest income reached \$50,518.81, an increase in the year of forty-three per cent., and was more than sufficient to pay the death losses of the year.

On the recommendation of the managing director, the board thought well, at the end of its second quinquennium, to still further strengthen the company's claims to public support, by having a valuation of all its obligations by a distinguished consulting actuary of eminence and experience, whose independent examination and valuation would command increased confidence.

Wm. T. Standen, of New York, whose name is well known in Canada, and who is one of the executive officers of the Actuarial Society of America, has made such examination, and his report will be placed before the meeting.

During the present year the first series of the company's Ten Year Investment policies matures. The consulting actuary has allocated to these policies profits in excess of the company's Semi-Tontine estimates, which will be paid on the anniversary of each policy, and which have been very satisfactory to those whose policies have already matured. This company was the first Canadian institution to adopt this form of insurance, and it has become so popular that nearly all the other Canadian companies—several of them after denouncing it for years—now issue policies upon it in one form or another.

An analysis of the profit-earning powers of the successful Canadian companies, as compared with those of the large American companies, has demonstrated the great advantage in this respect in favor of our home institutions among which this company stands out prominently.

ALEXANDER MACKENZIE,
President.

The following is an abstract of the financial statement of the North American Life Assurance Company for the year ending December 31st, 1890:—

Cash income for the year 1890.....	\$ 366,818 61
Expenditure, (including death claims), endowments, and all payments to policy-holders.....	158,593 73
Assets.....	1,042,440 11
Reserve fund.....	829,176 00
Net surplus for policy-holders.....	128,718 58

JAS. CARLYLE, M.D., Auditor.
WM. McCABE, Managing Director.

Audited and found correct.

E. A. MEREDITH, LL.D., } Auditing committee of the board.
B. B. HUGHES, }

To the Directors of the North American Life Assurance Company:

GENTLEMEN,—The valuation of your policy and other obligations, which has been checked by me, shows a surplus of \$128,718 58, after providing amply for every liability of the company, real or contingent, in accordance with the requirements of the laws of the Dominion. Five years ago my report to you showed a surplus of \$37,500 00, so that the work of the past five years has yielded nearly three and one-half times the amount of surplus that resulted from your first quinquennial period of corporate existence.

Five years ago I deemed it but just to congratulate you upon the large proportion of your business written upon the Twenty Year Investment Plan, because of all other plans this one seemed to me to contain more of the essential elements which would go towards building up a very strong and healthy life company, and I notice that since that time the proportion of these policies to the entire amount of your issues is still larger. From an examination of your plans of insurance I know of no company having a better earning power, and confidently believe that the future results will prove alike satisfactory to your policy-holders and all interested in your company.