

THE RAMBLER.

Without a library, public or private, worthy of the name; without a literary or scientific society, if we except those born of yesterday, struggling for an existence, without a roof over their head and one which is in a semi-moribund state; without one whose annals will demand the respect of an intellectual scholar; without a portal over which a time-honoured date of the long distant past is carved as the epoch of its foundation for public usefulness; without a gate into which an intelligent stranger may be introduced, where he can be in communion with the great authors of the past, or regaled with a sight of their great works, in their original shape, we are, nevertheless, asked to believe that we live in an intellectual and civilized city, one whose foundation dates back nigh two hundred and fifty years.

It is a privilege of the Anglo-Saxon community to bewail the dark era which overspread Canada under the French régime; but over one hundred years have elapsed since, and Montreal has not emerged from the literary darkness which enveloped the city during that unfortunate period. A few spasmodic efforts have been made by venturesome *litterati* to start societies of a literary character or to issue an occasional volume; but the lack of support, indifference, if not absolute contempt and ridicule, with which such efforts have been rewarded soon proved their death knell, and thus Montreal remains, with the God of Mammon alone reigning over its social life. Miles of residences may be visited and, with the exception in a few of the more pretentious houses of a show book-case of Russia leather volumes, half bound, highly gilt, a library is unknown. There is no literary life; no *salon* where minds of a congenial nature may meet; no intellectual conversation in household or club other than that of the last novels or the superficial parrotism of the latest magazine article, or a political disquisition, about which there savours as much novelty as one finds in a religious controversy, and here intellectual "high life" ends.

It is, therefore, not a matter of surprise to find that no public libraries or literary societies of importance or age exist in Montreal. I have critically examined the shelves of the Fraser Institute, originally intended by its donor to be a public library and sufficiently endowed for the purpose, but its trustees have proven thoroughly incompetent for the work entrusted to them and, so far, it is a mere abortion, and will remain so unless placed in more intelligent and appreciative hands. Its shelves are laden with books, four-fifths of which are of no value or interest whatever, and would seem to have been bought by the yard or ordered upon the percentage system; its management is slovenly and would bring discredit upon a fifth-rate library in any town of the United States or England. In reference books, historical works, original editions, Americana, Canadiana, Bibliography, or the Sciences, it has practically none, and yet there are to be found some twenty thousand volumes on its shelves! The McGill library possesses the nucleus of a fine assortment in the leading departments of a library of utility, but unfortunately it is of a semi-private nature. The McGill authorities will permit citizens or strangers introduced to the use of the library; but the very necessity of this introduction takes away from its usefulness, and few therefore avail themselves of the privilege.

The merchant princes of Montreal, together with the Corporation, should endow under proper management (free from any individual control, never mind how exalted that may be; as, frequently, the more exalted the man, the more contracted and narrowed his ideas, his mind being more firmly set with prejudices and whims) a public library of reference worthy of this great city, where authors in their original and best editions can be consulted in all phases of literature, and further establish a Museum of Art upon the lines of the Metropolitan of Boston, where ancient art may be seen in the best obtainable examples, affording an attraction and amusement to the stranger.

They will thus remove from its portals the stigma of illiteracy and impotency in authorship, for which Montreal is now as remarkable as it is for its wealth and commercial attainments.

In the United States, cities of one-fourth the population of Montreal are endowed with several public libraries of magnitude and value, as well as numerous private libraries and museums of art, and there the wealthy merchant and retired gentleman considers it an honour to be enrolled as a member of a literary society or to give it his meed of support and encouragement in a more practical shape. It is with the finger of pride they point you out, as a result of their literary encouragement, the residences of Mark Twain, Mrs. Stowe, the Trumbulls, etc., as adorning their city with a fame, more lasting and attractive, than that which will ever surround the finest granite palace Montreal can dazzle the eye with. It is only necessary to mention Providence R.I., and Hartford, Conn., without speaking of the great intellectual city of Boston, which does not equal Montreal in wealth, though it surpasses it (not very largely) in population, where may be found more public and private libraries, worthy of the name, to the square yard, than Montreal has, even in gilded book-cases, to the mile.

Montreal.

COGNOSCENTE.

THE greatness of the poet depends on his being true to nature, without insisting that nature shall theorize with him, without making her more just, more philosophical, more moral than reality, and in difficult matters leaving much to reflection which cannot be explained.—James Anthony Froude.

THE Stanley wedding has been the topic of the week.

Why? No one exactly knows. The African hero is certainly a very fine fellow, and his bride a woman of undoubted beauty and talent, but the glory which surrounded their marriage in the Abbey seems to me to have been a kind of reflected glory. One would not for the world disparage the heroic qualities of such a man as Henry M. Stanley, or underrate the pretty romance which brings him back to England a conqueror of maiden's heart as well as of sandy deserts and thick-lipped natives. But the grim figure of Livingstone rises as I write between me and the gay crowd in the Abbey, while I am glad to think it rose, too, before the mental vision of Dorothy Tennant as she deviated from the path laid down for her last Saturday, and proceeded to lay a wreath of white blossoms surrounding a scarlet L, on the tablet which now covers all that is mortal of David Livingstone. Well it was they made the letter scarlet—signifying the renown with which shall ever blaze that heroic name—immortal in the annals of English history and exploration.

Poor Livingstone! You remember how his teeth had become loosened by feeding on native corn husks before Stanley found him. With the advent of the irrepressible New York *Herald* correspondent, better fare appeared, both men taking much solid comfort out of a species of soft cake prepared on the spot and specially soothing to the Livingstonian gums. Said the Doctor in his famous journal, "I have to thank the disinterestedness of Mr. Bennett in sending such a man as Stanley after me. In a few more days I should have had to beg from the Arabs."

No one ever questioned the disinterested affection of Mr. Bennett or the whole-souled devotion of Stanley, yet the noisiness of the former and his continual allusions to the thoroughness of the American flag perhaps tended to belittle the really great and good offices of the hero. That, however, is now all past and gone. Stanley has a right to be judged upon his own merits, and very well can he stand upon them, too, yet with no small stock of that humility which has ever accompanied those ardent souls, great in exploration. Perhaps, as he bowed before that historic altar at Westminster, he thought—of Gordon—and Livingstone—and wondered which were better, to die in harness with set teeth and heaving heart, or to rest calmly after work is done, and hear on all sides the pleased verdict of one's friends and country.

But that Stanley, like Geraint, should waste his time in mere uxoriousness is not to be believed. If his health permit he will without doubt venture once again out to the continent rapidly coming into the light of everyday acquaintance. The explorer is like the actor; their careers have this point in common—a great and ceaseless glamour.

Which makes me think how, in the long run, things do right themselves in art as well as morals. It is confidently said of Mrs. Langtry that she is leaving the stage forever. I should not be at all surprised; she has not the physique nor the qualities of a great actress. Her title of professional beauty having expired, she goes out like a candle, for although her revival of "As You Like It" was conscientious and elaborate, it did not speak to the hearts of the public. She does not appear to be wanted on the stage. Whereas Ellen Terry gives as much satisfaction as ever, perhaps more. She has been recently reading portions of "Macbeth" to Birmingham audiences, accompanied by Sir Arthur Sullivan's incidental music for orchestra. These impersonations appear to have revealed the charming Ellen in a new and powerful light. *En passant*, what an artist the Bernhardt is! She refuses all offers to act in English! Sensible Sara! We are so tired of Rhea and Janauschek, Modjeska and Company.

I think we shall all be rather sorry to bid Gen. Middleton farewell. The situation has been very awkward for him and I suppose he must go. A friend and contributor to the *Law Journal* says he "cannot believe that the General would willingly do wrong." But nobody is infallible, and we can all remember, or most of us can, many trivial appropriations which were not found out, or, if they had been, would not have been attended with disastrous results. I know a man who would not steal for anything, yet when he goes to stay at a friend's house, uses up the soap and the pins and the ink and the pens as if they were his own. Then, he borrows his friend's dressing-gown, "It's a great deal nicer than my own," and the number of books and papers and penknives, and scissors and razors that find their way into his room is astonishing. There is nothing absolutely wrong but just a kind of dimness of vision respecting *meum* and *tuum*, and nothing but early training will ever eradicate this defect. But nobody wants to hear me preach this lovely July morning.

I always read Macaulay's account of the Siege of Derry, on the 12th of July. It's easier than going to see the procession, and cooler. Then, I know I have done my duty, and—is there anywhere a more magnificent piece of writing?

But if you were to emulate the Irish schoolmaster and say to one of those black-ringed young gentlemen riding the white horse—I beg pardon, charger I mean—

Come here, my boy. Hould up yer head,
And look like a gintleman, Sir!
Now tell me who King William was,
Now tell me if ye can, Sir!

What kind of an answer would you get? I fear very little to the point, though uttered, it might be, with every appearance of audacity and ready assumption of knowing all about it.

THE EVOLUTION OF SENSIBILITY.

THE proprietors of Scott's Emulsion of Cod-liver Oil have, among their illustrated advertisements, one representing a jolly, good-natured looking sailor, dragging after him an enormous fish. Whenever my eyes fall upon that picture an uncomfortable feeling creeps over me, not unlike the sensation of one who, having a habit more or less disapproved by his conscience, is visited by a fear that he must one day be found out in it and condemned. For the belief has for some time been forcing itself upon me that our present attitude towards the lower animals is not sanctioned by the principles of the "revelation" of evolution, as set forth by its apostle, Darwin; and that future ages will have need charitably to make allowances for our comparative ignorance, else we must appear in their eyes somewhat as cannibals do in ours.

I am led to this belief from two considerations: First, that the sympathy of man with other men varies directly with his ability to realize their kinship with himself, and is increased by everything that tends to wipe out arbitrary distinctions and minimize his feelings of a difference between them; and, as the doctrine of evolution more and more gains ground, it is easy to see that this sympathy may (or must?) extend itself to the lower animals. Secondly, that the sacredness of human life so far from being an "innate idea" has been the slow growth of ages and of civilization; and already it is apparent that the feeling is spreading beyond the confines of humanity.

With savages, we know, sympathy rarely wanders beyond the narrow limits of their own tribe, nor even within these limits is it too prodigally diffused. Alien tribes, strangers, are to them legitimate game. Not only may they be freely sacrificed to their need or their aggrandisement, but the sight of their sufferings, is one of the keenest of their pleasures. Even among civilized peoples, it may often be noted that the nationality of the sufferer has a great deal to do with the amount of sympathy felt for the suffering. "It is hard," says Major Bellenden, in "Old Mortality," "to cut a poor fellow down who cries 'Quarter' in the hamely Scots' tongue." It is a matter of almost contemporary history how blunted were the feelings of the Southern slaveholders to the sufferings, the agonies, even of "their fellows, guilty of a skin not coloured like their own." Even the artificial division of society according to rank makes for the deadening of sympathy between different ranks. Condemned criminals, being reckoned a class apart from the rest of the community, were long thought unworthy of the slightest consideration, and were handed over without remorse to a course of treatment of which now the bare recital serves to fill us with shuddering indignation. Instances might be indefinitely multiplied. Read Macaulay's history, read even Lecky's, which covers a period nearer our own, and then try to estimate the enormous growth of man's humanity to man in the very recent past. Truly a feeling together with all mankind is spreading everywhere throughout civilization, and with civilization; because man begins at last to realize that, however differently circumstanced, men are under all circumstances bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. In spite of all pessimists may say of the decline of faith and the evils following upon that decline, the counsel "as ye would that men should do to you, do ye likewise to them" was never so well lived up to as it is to-day; for it is the foundation of that true morality, which is but another name for general well-being.

"Sympathy beyond the confines of man," says Darwin, "that is, humanity to the lower animals, seems to be one of the latest moral acquisitions." It has gained rapidly since he wrote these words. What is the significance of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Of the protests one meets almost daily against inflicting suffering upon animals, of sacrificing their lives in mere wantonness, of the contrivances for ending their lives, where the end is decreed, as painlessly as possible? And does it not seem entirely reasonable to believe that, as the theory of evolution is more and more accepted, we shall by degrees cease to look upon the animal creation as having been handed over to man to work his will upon, but shall rather see in them only infinitely less fortunate brethren, descendants of a common parent? And can this view fail of powerfully influencing our relations towards them? Doubtless there are many men to whom "disinterested love of all living creatures, the most noble attribute of man," is something entirely incomprehensible. But these are mere survivals of a less perfect type of moral evolution than, fortunately, has the ascendant amongst us.

To the most cultivated minds of a few centuries ago, our present sensitiveness concerning the taking of human lives would have been food for perhaps scornful amusement. Amongst the most polished nations of old, the lives of slaves and of infants were held in as slight estimation as they are to-day in those barbarous or semi-barbarous lands where the blood of the useless or the weak members of society is spilled as freely as water. Far enough removed from that stage, yet, almost equally far from ours, were the times, scarcely yet out of sight, when death was freely dealt out to starving thieves or misled "rebels." Now it is quite apparent to any observer of the signs of the times, that the days of capital punishment,