

THE SATURDAY READER.

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CONTENTS.

OUR UNDERTAKING.
LOGOMACHY.
BRITISH AMERICAN
LITERATURE.
QUEBEC LITERARY AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LITERARY GOSSIP.
LIST OF NEW BOOKS.
THE FAMILY HONOUR.
LONDON FIRES.
THREE EPOCHS (Poetry).
EMILIE VERNON.
BULL-FIGHTING IN
VENEZUELA.

TO A FRIEND ON HER
BIRTHDAY (Poetry).
THE GYPSIES' SONG
(Poetry.)
KATTIE AND THE DEIL.
IN JEOPARDY.
CAROLINEAL DISTRESS.
PASTIMS.
CHESS.
TO CORRESPONDENTS.
HOUSEHOLD RECEIPTS.
SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.
WITTY AND WHIMSICAL.

Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,
"THE SECRET OF STANLEY HALL."

By Mrs. J. V. NOEL.

OUR UNDERTAKING.

THE present number completes the first volume of the READER. Six months ago, after much hesitation and many doubts, the first number of our paper was offered to the public. Although feeling then that a periodical of the class we proposed to publish was an acknowledged want in Canada, we had still before us the grim warning which the fate of our predecessors furnished. Since the *Literary Garland*, published for several years by Mr. John Lovell, was discontinued, no purely literary paper, although several have appeared, had succeeded in gaining any hold upon the affections of the public. One by one they had been issued—had dragged on for a brief space an unappreciated existence—and then ignominiously died the death. Our own experience convinces us that they failed,—not because Canadians were unprepared to sustain a Canadian literary paper—but because the conductors of the several journals were unhappy in their efforts to cater for the public. They did not interest any large class of readers in their success; in fact, they failed to meet the wants of the public, and consequently were allowed to pass away, with but here and there a feeble expression of regret.

Although the READER is not yet all we desire it should be, nor all we hope to make it, still we are able to say that its success, so far, has exceeded our most sanguine anticipations. It is now established on a firm basis, and we pledge ourselves that no effort shall be wanting on our part to make it an ever-welcome guest at the family fireside. We desire to extend our circulation beyond the cities and towns, and to reach the people. Our hope is that our paper will find its way into thousands of the homes of our brave, toiling backwoodsmen, and there cheer the hardy "bone and sinew" of our country with its weekly feast of good things. It has ever been our aim that the moral tone of the SATURDAY READER should be unexceptionable, and that the articles admitted into its columns should be healthy, varied and interesting—mingling with the more substantial and thoughtful papers a good proportion of light and pleasant reading.

We felt that it was only by giving prominence to fiction that we could hope to displace the class

of American periodicals that have so long deluged Canada. We must fight the enemy with his own weapons, but with this difference—the temper of our steel should be purer. The heroes who walk across our mimic stage should not be gentlemen who delight in the sensational—belauded scoundrels who revel in murder and seduction—but creations of a purer fancy, living in a purer atmosphere. And we may add that, although our labours have extended over but six short months, still we have been frequently gratified by receiving warm commendations, and expressions of sympathy with our efforts, from all parts of Canada. We do not think the SATURDAY READER could pass away without leaving a void that would be felt.

And now a word or two as to the future. We do not propose changing to any extent either the character or arrangement of the READER. To some departments we hope to give greater prominence; and in this connexion we may state that it is our intention to devote more space to music and musical items. We hope to place this department of our paper under the care of a gentleman whose name alone will be a sufficient guarantee that whatever is done will be well done. In fiction we think we have a goodly feast prepared. Next week we shall commence the publication of a tale, entitled: "How I made Money in Wall Street, and how I Married." It will extend through about six numbers of the READER; and we direct the special attention of our friends to this tale, as perhaps the best of the shorter tales we have yet offered to them. "The Secret of Stanley Hall" will be completed in our next issue, and in number twenty-eight we shall give the first instalment of one of Paul Ferval's celebrated novels, entitled: "The Two Wives of the King." A translation of this work is being specially prepared for the READER by a gentleman in every way competent to do justice to the original. "The Two Wives of the King" is a historical romance of the 13th century—of surpassing interest—and like Sir Walter Scott's historical novels, will be found to throw much light upon the manners and customs of the far away and little understood age of which it treats. Short tales and sketches, either original, or selected from the best English publications, will be given in each number of the READER; and carefully written articles upon political or literary subjects will be prepared by the editorial staff.

We cannot conclude this article without expressing our sincere thanks to numerous friends, who have voluntarily come forward to render us their assistance in carrying on our work. Most of them are personally unknown to the Editor, many of them, as represented in their contributions, have become frequent and welcome visitors to his sanctum. It is probable that he may never enjoy the opportunity of thanking many of them face to face, yet at least in imagination he can—and gladly does—extend to one and all the right hand of fellowship. Fellowship in sentiment and fellowship in effort.

LOGOMACHY.

WORD fighting has brought plenty of grist to the printer's mill, or rather must have well nigh exhausted the stock of many a paper mill. So much pamphleteering by learned Deans and Dons has it provoked; so many pleaders, special and general, has it retained on behalf of the Queen's English, so many "pros and cons" in re letter "h" in humble and hospital, that it is high time the printers, publishers, postmasters, and paper manufacturers of Canada should share in a profit hitherto monopolised by their brethren of like craft in London and Edinburgh. "Good Words" told us some two years ago that the number of letters received on this subject well nigh "overwhelmed the editor." Such was the flood of ink poured into his sanctum; the interference of the Royal Humane Society seemed requisite to save him from actual drowning. The annual overflow of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa, and the spring "freshets" of Canada scarcely bring more work to the plate layers and navies of the Grand Trunk Railway, than did this literary flood to the printer's devils and proof readers of Edinburgh—with this substantial difference that while the Canadian flood lessened the railroad traffic and receipts, this flood of correspondence increased the circulation of magazines and pamphlets and repaid all the actual cost three-fold.

We were just going to write "Now to begin," but we forgot where we were. In Canada we must drop the Anglo-Saxon "begin," and out of respect to the first settlers of our Province, use the French word "commence." "When at Rome, do as Rome," is a motto drilled into every schoolboy; and we should be despising its moral if we uttered the word "begin" in Canada, much more if we deliberately wrote it. It may be fairly questioned if any boy educated in a common school in Canada ever heard of another word having the same meaning as "commence." If the Bible translation had been left to Canadian divines, the first three words would not have been "in the beginning," but "in the commencement." Everything commences, nothing begins. No one perhaps can find actual fault with "commence," but why invariably use eight letters of the alphabet, when five would suffice. "Brevis esse laboro" is utterly set at naught, when mamma says, "now baby don't commence to cry," when "don't cry" is all that is requisite; and cooks tell their mistresses "the water is commencing to boil," when "on the boil" would suffice. These are no far-fetched instances of the useless introduction of this mouthful of a word, for I have not only been told "that horse will commence to kick," instead of simply "he will kick," but actually that a man in *extremis* would "commence to die" unless a doctor was fetched.

Whether the letter H should or should not be sounded in "hospital" and "humble" is, after all, it seems a vexed question, but perhaps it is not too much to say whoever drops the aspirate in either of these words, does so at the peril of being set down as "pedantic" which Johnson defines to be "awkwardly ostentatious of learning." Canada, as a rule, is far in advance of England in pronunciation generally, and especially in the correct use of the aspirate. This is one of the first things that strikes the ear of the new arriver from the old country. Let any American or Canadian travel through England from John O'Groat's house to the Land's End, and he will be fruitfully puzzled by its numerous provincialisms, as station after station, the name of each is intended to be hallooed out, to prevent the passengers from overrunning their respective journeys. There is scarcely one he can recognise, until after a severe study of his "Bradshaw," he