

The CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS is printed and published every Saturday by THE BURLAND LITHOGRAPHIC COMPANY (Limited), at their offices, 5 and 7 Bleury Street, Montreal, on the following conditions: \$4.00 per annum, in advance; \$4.50 if not paid strictly in advance. All remittances and business communications to be addressed to G. B. BURLAND, General Manager.

TEMPERATURE

as observed by HARRIS & HARRISON, Thermometer and Barometer Makers, Notre Dame Street, Montreal.

THE WEEK ENDING

Nov. 6th, 1881.			Corresponding week, 1880		
Max.	Min.	Mean.	Max.	Min.	Mean.
Mon.. 60°	52°	56°	Mon.. 43°	39°	41°
Tues.. 54°	37°	46°	Tues.. 43°	39°	40°
Wed.. 54°	36°	45°	Wed.. 43°	34°	38°
Thur.. 62°	45°	53°	Thur.. 44°	28°	36°
Fri.. 58°	40°	49°	Fri.. 51°	31°	41°
Sat.. 46°	28°	37°	Sat.. 51°	37°	44°
Sum.. 46°	38°	42°	Sum.. 57°	45°	51°

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CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, Nov. 12, 1881.

THE WEEK.

It is always pleasing to contemplate an act of heroism, and none ever better deserved the name than the behaviour of Capt. JOHN ALEXANDER STRACHAN of the *Cyprian*, which went down in one of the terrible storms of last month, near Nevin. Plentiful as are the tales of British pluck at sea, no more superb instance of self-sacrifice is to be found in the records of our sailors. The steamer had struck on a rock, the boiler tubes had burst, and the fires gone out, while in the sea which was running it was impossible to launch a boat. There was nothing for it but to plunge into the waves and make for shore, and out of twenty-seven men, eight accomplished the perilous journey assisted by the life buoys which alone enabled them to live in that sea. The Captain, like the others, was equipped for the attempt when, at the last moment, he discovered a poor stowaway lad, who had concealed himself on board at Liverpool and who even in this moment of universal terror was afraid to show himself. Without a moment's hesitation the captain stripped off his life buoy and bound it upon the lad, plunging himself unaided into the almost certain destruction which awaited him. We do not hear whether his self-sacrifice was rewarded by the saving of the life for which he gave his own. Honour to the brave.

We should like to know the sporting editor of the New York paper from which the *Quebec Chronicle* quotes its remarkable description of the *Atalanta*. We should like to know it because we want to get some lessons in nautical writing, in which, after reading the article in question we feel that we are seriously deficient. It must be so nice to be able to speak of a boat "tapering into a run which is as near perfection as can be attained," (like the writer's own style,) but this is merely the preamble, so to speak. The sentence we want to study with a view to imitation, and with the aid of a dictionary and grammar and a confidential communication from the author, runs as follows:—*"Her stern is unique. It is what might be called a concave pink with elliptic quarters, surmounted by a round taffrail."* Unique! Well we should smile.

MR. GOLDWIN SMITH has attracted a good deal of attention by his recent expressions in England on the subject of "Modern Royalty," in which he says

some hard, but not altogether undeserved things of those in high places. The view which he takes of the advantages to be derived from an occasional visit of the Queen to Ireland, has met with much opposition, especially from those who have little practical acquaintance with the character of the people. That a visit at the eleventh hour, when the national feeling has become as embittered as it undoubtedly has, would do any good in subduing the present excitement, is more than doubtful, while the risk would be such as to make it almost certain that none will be attempted. But we can hardly imagine that any of those who witnessed the Prince of Wales' last visit to the country, and remember the enthusiasm with which he, and at another time the Duke of Connaught, were received, and the extravagant enthusiasm of loyalty which the visit aroused, would deny that the presence of royalty has had a distinct effect whenever it has been vouchsafed, and that a series of visits from the Queen would have been enough to raise a healthy feeling which would have taken the place of the present excitement to a large degree.

THERE is another way in which such visits would benefit Ireland. There is no doubt that the Royal residence in Scotland has done much to make that country popular amongst noble owners of estates in the north, who usually spend a large portion of the year on their property. The same rule would apply to Ireland, where a periodical visit from the Queen would aid to make absenteeism less frequent. Ireland only wants to be made the fashion, for noble lords to discover that there is good sport to be had, and good company too in the field, unless Ireland is changed within a very few years.

THAT Mr. SMITH touched a vulnerable point in the Royal harness is proved by the Prince of Wales condescending to notice the letter and reply to it in a measure, in a recent speech at the opening of the new harbour at Swansea. The Prince rarely if ever himself enters the list of controversy, but his references to the criticism of the Professor (whom he styles "his old friend") are graceful, as always, and somewhat apologetic. The Prince at all events, whatever the tongue of Rumour may have to say concerning his private character, is a hard-working man, none more so, and fulfils always in a pleasant and gracious manner, the onerous duties which his position entails, and which, owing to the almost complete withdrawal of the Queen from public notice, are heavier than usually fall to the lot of the heir to the throne.

LOUISE MICHEL has done good service to herself, the Irreconcilable Radicals, and the Government by countermanding a monster procession advertised to have gone to the Elysées to-day to ask pardon for the regicides NOURBIT and BAREZOWSKY. She writes to the papers that she would scorn to ask a favor from men who should be condemned as traitors. So the disorderly demonstration will not be attempted, the promoters being aware that though a new Republic law allows free public meetings, the Republic, no more than Royalty, will tolerate terrorism in the streets. Instead of asking a pardon from Mr. GRÉVY, LOUISE MICHEL's followers now propose to present NOURBIT with a sword of honour. As he is in prison, a pound of tobacco, were he permitted to receive it, might be more agreeable to him.

BOOKS AND BOOK-MAKERS.

"God be thanked for books," said Dr. Channing, but he did not say all books. On the contrary his strictures and specifications were pretty sharply defined. But if the general reader of literature ventures to be reverently thankful for something in the way of mental pabulum besides that which makes us "heirs of the spiritual life of past ages," it becomes every day more evident that there is a somewhat numerous class of authors and book makers who have reason to be heartily thankful to that varied public taste which enables them to be heirs to their

daily bread and many of the luxuries of life as well.

The story writers of the day are a motley company, so varied in degree and kind that no epithet can be applied to them in common. There is a vast difference between those who feed weak minds with their interminable strings of weaker literary slip-alop and those who rank, or aspire to be ranked with Fielding, and Goldsmith, and Dickens; with Thackeray, and Hawthorne and Irving.

But as to the rank and file between these extremes;—which of them give us books fit to be "tasted?" how many of them to be "swallowed," or "chewed and digested?"

Taking a list of these, if a complete list be possible, and where is the line to be drawn? That is a question for competent literary authority to discuss. "In a wilderness so vast as that of books, to go astray often and widely is pardonable, because it is inevitable," said de Quincey; but, after all, the searcher after the best current "reading matter" need not go very far astray if he seeks only the works of those authors who are in the highest repute among people of unquestionable literary authority. It is not a difficult matter to select such authors, and among them is unquestionably William Black.

To establish the exact rank of a good writer is a thing that can never be satisfactorily done, except perhaps to the satisfaction of the critic who attempts it. To establish the relative place is a matter almost equally difficult. However, to distinguish the positively good from the absolutely bad is not a hopeless task even for the amateur novel reader, and among the former the greater part of Mr. Black's works may be placed with certainty. And so, for the present, disregarding his claims to be rated with the standard and best novelists, we may safely "taste" of his books, even if we do not eventually decide to "swallow them."

For so good an author as Mr. Black, the difference between his books is somewhat surprising. It is, moreover, a difference not so much in kind as in quality. Had he never written anything better than "Three Feathers" or "The Monarch of Mincing Lane," his admirers would not have so much to say about his doing for these times what Thackeray and Dickens did for an earlier period; but, on the principle that a brain and a man are to be judged by their weakest and strongest parts respectively, Mr. Black is one of the best novelists of the present time.

The source of his strength does not always lie in the plot. The thread on which his narrative hangs is generally extremely slender, if we except "A Princess of Thule" and "McLeod of Dare," the latter of which is perhaps, his most ambitious work. Its plot is bold and powerful, and its denouement thrilling in spite of a degree of improbability which might have been avoided, had the author chosen to transfer the time back to the date of our great-grandfathers. But just here is one of the secrets of Mr. Black's success in securing and retaining his reader's interest. Almost invariably, he writes of the present time. He describes things as they are to-day. In his latest book he gives us little glimpses of Brighton and the life there, not as it was even five years ago, but as it is to-day. Whatever the cause, there is a subtle influence which always gives the predominance to the present over the past in our interest, and Mr. Black is quick to make use of this and all similar means of holding our attention. His characters are dressed in the latest styles. Mr. Tom Beresford's conversation is embellished by the newest slang, while the Rev. Mr. Jacob is at the top notch of the very latest high church principles. In other words, Mr. Black's fiction rarely deals with past manners or historical events, but relies on the latest phases of society as matter of more powerful interest. By this and similar means, a crisp freshness is imparted to his books, and especially his latest story, which is highly attractive to the reader who desires mere relaxation and entertainment.

There were two things, however, which chiefly made Mr. Black's reputation. The one was his "word-painting" or descriptions of scenery; the other was the fruitful theme of Scotch life, manner, and characteristics, a new vein of which he seemed to have discovered and which he certainly worked to much advantage. He has chosen to desert his vantage ground for the time at least, and the result as seen in "The Beautiful Wretch" will hardly justify the departure. But if this book is not so interesting to his readers as "A Daughter of Heth" or "A Princess of Thule," it is because the materials are chosen from the common property of story writers, and are, therefore, less novel and original than the materials which Mr. Black used for what may be roughly classed as his Scotch novels; and, if this last book be set down as comparatively a trifle, it is because the author has not chosen to embellish it with those beautiful and elaborate, though never wearisome, descriptions of scenery and natural phenomena with which his previous works are graced. The plot and purely narrative portion of the story are, with two or three exceptions, as elaborate as he is accustomed to produce for a much more satisfactory book. The opportunity is certainly not lacking, either at Brighton or that part of the Continent to which he conducts us, for masterpieces of those descriptions of which he has proved himself so well capable. Instead of this we are put off with a few bits here and there, which are, however, all the more welcome because of their rarity, and we are invited to study a type of young lady by no means uncommon. We are almost let down to the commonplace of a story-paper love tale; and, although

the ease, grace, good English, and occasional brilliant "points" of the book save us from that, the reader will be compelled to conclude that "The Beautiful Wretch" never would make the fame or fortune of an anonymous author. Ease, grace, correct English and "points" will not alone make the reputation of a writer who aims at the highest artistic excellence. A superabundance of points is the very thing to spoil the "construction" of a novel. In this respect good writing may be compared to good acting; a redundancy of points weakens both instead of concentrating attention on the general effect. We are not accustomed to look to Mr. Black for models of construction as we do to Gaboriau and the other modern French novelists who make a speciality and are masters of that art, but we are justified in expecting a narrative consecutive in details and incidents. It may be said, in a general way, that an incident however brilliant and original in itself, which does not grow out of something preceding or lead to some subsequent effect is not only glaringly unartistic, but ruins the unity of the tale. This is not mere criticism; it is a well established principle, and we have an excellent illustration in the whole of the tenth chapter of "The Beautiful Wretch." This chapter is a bit of strong writing and shrewd character drawing, but it is a sacrifice to a "point." It introduces two persons who have not been heard of in the preceding chapters and who are not mentioned again to the end of the book. Captain Francis King might as well have been made the eldest son at once and the unity of the book preserved. It is not meant by this that the variety added to the book by the chapter mentioned ought to have been omitted, but that the simplest and universally accepted law of construction requires that it should have been incorporated with other chapters and incidents. We do not bolt a section of beef and eat our horse-radish afterward; it is more palatable to take them together. Considering the scope and apparent aim of this little book however, a strict analysis would be hypercritical. It answers its evident purpose as a trifle for "summer reading," without extending, or even upholding the fame of its author. We may expect many more ambitious and better things from the same pen, because Mr. Black has shown that he possesses too much talent to have written himself out. Especially, if he returns to the materials and the methods which first made him widely read and admired, we shall have something for which we may be truly thankful among the mass of weak and sentimental novels with which we are flooded. Although he has produced much, Mr. Black is only just approaching the meridian of his powers, and it is reasonable to expect that he will give us something in the future to place him more nearly on a par with his illustrious predecessors whose fame he emulates but has not yet approached.

HOW TO STORE AND KEEP POTATOES.

Of late years the potato has been one of the most profitable of farm crops in the East, and this chiefly arises from the fact that it is somewhat difficult to keep any very great quantity of them. Thus only so many of them are grown as can be preserved, and the accommodations are limited there is no glut in the market as there are with things which are grown and must be sent to market at once. Of course there are times when potatoes rule low. This is apt to be the case with early ones, grown especially for early purposes, and which follow the same law that rules in transient vegetables. So, also, with those who grow potatoes and have no conveniences for storing them. These have no market in the fall, and must take whatever price may rule for them. Those who have good cellars under their barns, or in any safe place from frost, and yet cool and dry, can generally make potato-growing pay very well; and these are usually the ones who do. The infected tubers will often rot, especially if the mass heats a little, and the diseased ones will often communicate the disease to the rest. In a cellar this can be seen and noted, but in a mound out of doors no one knows of the trouble till Spring, when great loss is found. Besides this, it is so difficult to get at them in Winter that those who have no way to preserve potatoes except this, as a general thing prefer not to grow at all rather than to be bothered with this. Dampness undoubtedly favors the spread of the potato disease, and therefore where there is any chance at all of the disease existing in the roots, they ought to be stored as dry as possible. Those which are to be kept in this general way should be dry and cool; but this should be especially seen to in the case of seed potatoes. Since the potato beetle came among us, it is clear that we have had the very best results from early planting and by the use of the earliest varieties. Now these early kinds are more easily affected by warmth than the late ones. They sprout easily, and coolness is therefore the more essential for them. Some people think it makes little difference whether seed potatoes sprout or not before planting, and we have known people to tear off sprouts several inches long and cut up the tubers in full faith that they will sprout out again and be none the worse for it. They generally grow, but they are constitutionally weaker and much more liable to disease than those which do not sprout till ready to go into the ground.

A MELBOURNE despatch reports the loss of the steamer *Calcutta* from thence for Sydney, and the foundering with all hands of the British ship *Omaha* from Batavia for Melbourne.