

her tum-ti-ti-tum; the surrounding group commenced to slowly clap their hands with the accompaniment of a chant, the words of which sounded very much like sa-ma-ou-na-ou, which sentence was chanted over and over again. From between the trees on the right advanced, in fours, a group of warriors with limed hair and coloured cloths round their loins, and profusely anointed with cocoa-nut oil, each held one, and some two war-clubs in his hands, and came forward in a kind of prancing dance; from the left a similar group advanced likewise prancing. When these groups had met face to face they retired backwards and then again advanced, this time passing each other and waving their clubs. Forming in single line the two bodies again approached, and when passing each other, exchanged clubs; this performance was twice repeated, and the whole of the time the prancing kind of dance was kept up. The old lady here began to quicken speed and the dancers to give vent to their feelings in shouts. Forming in one line about eight feet deep, they advanced in a threatening manner toward us, shouting and flourishing their weapons, wildly leapt over nearly on the top of us they suddenly dropped their clubs and retreating; them and back again, at the same time recovering their clubs and retreating; by this time, what between their overcharged feelings of excitement and exertion they were breathless and streaming with perspiration, while their leader whom, from his ridiculous likeness to the great German Chancellor, I had named Bismarck, was nearly mad with excitement. The orchestra quickened more and more, the dancing became still more frantic, and the yells still more, if possible, ear piercing, until Bismarck with a final diabolical yell and supreme jock fell exhausted, and the collapse of the Chancello: was followed by that of his followers amid the plaudits of the audience and a final tum-ti-ti-tum from the old lady.

The war-clubs used by these people are of a peculiar shape about four feet long and curved like a hockey stick at the club end, this club end is flat on both sides, profusely carved, mostly in a diamond pattern, and covered with lime. Other clubs have their heads carved in the likeness of a pineapple and are named after that fruit. The handles are beautifully worked over with sinnet made from the cocoa-nut fibre, and coloured red, black and yellow, these colours are obtained from clay. After the Meki-meki I was accommodated with a shake-down in the Chief's hut for the night. I should not have mentioned this fact, except from the circumstance of the hut being lighted by a *coal oil lamp*!! The romance of the day was spoiled, there I had been, as I flattered myself, utterly away from all traces of civilization and in the very marrow of savage life when the whole fancy and picture was blurred by a miserable little Cockney-looking, tin coal oil lamp, procured from a store in the little town of Levutia, the capital of the Fijian group.

R. E. H.

MODERN LITERATURE.

One need not be a cynic to observe that our literature is slowly but surely approaching the chaotic. There was a time when somebody found leisure to remark, for the benefit of those not well versed in such matters, that of bookmaking there was no end. To-day both the observer and the observation would be superfluous—every body knows what we would convey, and everybody is engaged in extending the happy practice he complains of. If already in Byron's time (and even much earlier, for that matter) it could be said that—

"Rhyme and blank maintain an equal race;
Sonnets on sonnets crowd, and ode on ode;
And tales of terror jostle on the road!"

we may rest assured that this condition of affairs will be found appreciably augmented seventy years later. And what will it be in another hundred years or so? Who knows where it all will end—and who cares?

Doubtless in the near future the civilized portion of the human race will consist of nothing but poets and prose-ists, and then—to stoop to a somewhat rugged phrase—God help the savages! Man, for want of an audience, tired himself of reading continually what none of his brethren can afford to listen to (being in a similar "fix" themselves), will rush to foreign shores and force the wretched inhabitants thereof to lend their ears, like Marc Antony's countrymen.

Other countries doubtless have their share of this Reign of Learning, but in England and on this side of the Atlantic it has had its surest and greatest development. We need but conjure up the myriads of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals, and glance over the monthly, weekly—even daily—book-lists to become aware of the progress that letters have made among us. Even a red-hot enthusiast might rub his hands in satisfaction and exclaim: "Was ever such a time as this? such an universal spread of enlightenment—such an ever such a baptism of Heliconian fire?" Athens and Rome, the centres of ancient civilization and refinement, never dreamt of anything like it in their palmiest days.

If we survey the history of English literature, beginning with Caedmon the Anglo-Saxon, it is just like tracing the Mississippi from its source, which widens gradually and grows in volume, until it reaches the Gulf and finally the Ocean. The nineteenth century may be likened to the Gulf of Mexico in this respect,—succeeding generations to the ocean.

It cannot be said with show of reason that the art of writing has deteriorated, although it has become more volatile. Much of the poetry and prose that have come down to us from the first éras of our literature would find no mercy at the hands of the public of to-day. Some portions of it would be admired, but only for its quaint rudeness, while the rest would be voted downright stupid and fit only for the hardened antiquary. It is true that there are great and shining lights scattered all along the stream—even as far up as Chaucer, Wycliffe, and James of Scotland, when writing was in its infancy: there have been periods in its course compared with the compact brilliancy of which the present dwindles into insignificance—that of Shakespeare and Milton, of Pope and Addison, of Goldsmith and Johnson, for instances: but never before to-day have minor writers been as numerous and maintained so high a standard of excellence. The past ages seem to have concentrated all their energies in producing a limited number of Titans; later days, with America as well as Great Britain at their command, abound in giants and countless legions of six-footers, delightful

Pucks and beautiful dwarfs. Their number is their bane, so far as remembrance is concerned. Many of them, doubtless, would rank as Titans, standing alone, as in the olden time, and not made too common by so many brethren.

There was a time when the student could easily keep up with the accumulated literature of his day, and when old authors were not so generally neglected by the public. But to-day, who can pay the necessary attention to the past, and still continue abreast of the times? Only the most skilled of book-worms. No author, unless he be of the first water, or the happy inventor of a "Pilgrim's Progress," a "Don Quixote," or a "Robinson Crusoe," can count upon a permanent place in the popular affection.

More than half of the poets and writers already live only in the archives of the past, in history and the encyclopædia, and now many tyros and novices in the chase for fame have fallen short of even this distinction!

Some men write for a name, some for the mere pleasure of writing and for money; others still, and by far the most numerous class, for all these combined, or as much of them as they find healthful. Many, even some of the most deserving, have recognized how small is the chance of perpetuating their memory beyond their own day; of melancholy interest to these are the following words which Barry Cornwall at 76 wrote to a friend:

"I see a great deal—all behind me; but the prospect before me is not cheerful. Sometimes I wish I had tried harder for what is called Fame, but generally (as now) I care very little about it. After all, unless one could be Shakspeare—which (clearly) is no easy matter—of what value is a little puff of smoke from a review? If we could settle permanently who is to be the Homer or Shakspeare of our time, it might be worth something; but we cannot. Is it Jones, or Smith, or —? Alas! I grow short-sighted on this subject, and cannot penetrate the impenetrable dark."

Melancholy indeed then is the outlook for us! cry the youthful Knights of the Quill, resting dismayed upon their lances. Melancholy indeed, unless you prove yourselves Amadis de Gauls and Rinaldos in the lists; or, to speak modernly, Napoleons and Wellingtons among the foot soldiery. The vast, vast majority can hope only for a butterfly existence at best. But even that is generally deemed worth trying for; and fight as hard as you can, and trust to the caprice of time to make you remembered, must be the motto of all.

A time must come when our Westminster Abbeys will not suffice to hold the illustrious dead, nor all the bookshelves in creation their productions. Perhaps this catastrophe to human greatness will be avoided by a mysterious survival of the fittest only among the great, as in the affairs of nature, and the preservation of only the *crème de la crème* of their works. Perhaps the present volcano will exhaust itself before bringing on the threatened event; or the Fates, to parody Gray slightly, may

"Shut the gates of Learning on mankind,"

for a season; or mankind itself may, in sheer desperation, throw off its self-imposed yoke and sit down calmly to survey the past and regain its breath.

Another guesser might suggest the wreck and loss of our language as the ultimate remedy for all our literary ills. Then a new tongue might arise out of its ashes and give a fresh race of poets a chance.

But, whatever the future may bring, let us glory in the present, even to-day when savages may become the only listeners left. As I said when starting out, a man need not be a cynic to make the above somewhat sombre reflections. We can make use of no Malthusian doctrine to regulate the children of the muses; law cannot prohibit them, and should not in a free country. It is pleasant to think that even now there is a poet, or writer, for every few hundred of his countrymen, and that no one need die for want of literary nourishment. As some of the latter-day humorists would say, the next thing we know literature will be as plentiful and necessary as whiskey, and even the poorest will be able to obtain their glass. Well, so let it be. Sound, healthy literature, even from a mere sensual point of view, is a good thing, and as long as the masses are the better for it, let all enjoy the blessing. Perhaps through the gigantic rivalry among the caterers to the public taste they will be sure to get plenty, and the best, if they are critical enough to pick it out.

WILLIAM MILL BUTLER.

CORRESPONDENCE.

It is distinctly to be borne in mind that we do not by inserting letters convey any opinion favourable to their contents. We open our columns to all without leaning to any; and thus supply a channel for the publication of opinions of all shades, to be found in no other journal in Canada.

No notice whatever will be taken of anonymous letters, nor can we undertake to return those that are rejected.

Letters should be brief, and written on one side of the paper only. Those intended for insertion should be addressed to the Editor, 162 St. James Street, Montreal; those on matters of business to the Manager, at the same address.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—The *Post* of 9th inst. tells us that the Irishmen of Hamilton have set "a splendid example" in the formation of an Irish society embracing all creeds. This is a very gratifying piece of intelligence. Success to the society, may its members be many, and I suggest that copies of Father Graham's "great lecture" on the Irish Famine, published in the same paper, be forthwith forwarded to the society for general circulation. The tone and obvious intent of that remarkable performance are altogether so conciliatory, so characteristic of a man whose mission is to preach peace and goodwill among men—even among Irishmen—that, in connection with the "splendid example" set by the Irishmen of Montreal respecting the formation of that other Irish society on the 12th July last, it could not fail largely to influence such timid Hibernians of the Protestant persuasion as may hesitate about entering the new organization. Perusing Pere Graham they would find their faith designated "an alien and upstart heresy," their Church in Ireland an "English garrison," and its clergy "clerical scoundrels." The speakers in Exeter Hall elegantly termed "fanatics, blasphemers, and liars." These extracts, from what the *Post* describes as "a faint echo of the living word that fell from the lips of one of the ablest Catholic orators in America," and which the *Post* tells us received "enthusiastic applause

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