

In nearly every land the national ensign has been altered, improved, and made a banner-emblem appropriate to the country and to the people. There is but one exception—Canada!

True, we have a flag; but who can describe it? Only those versed in the proper language of heraldry. Until the *Canadian Almanac* of the present year was issued, it was doubtful if one person in a thousand could tell what was our Canadian national flag; and, to-day, who can tell the meaning of its complicated device, even when they see it? Why? Because the arms of the Dominion (or, rather, of four of the Provinces) are a too intricate "design" to be remembered. It is not in reason to suppose that a mixed medley, a dazzling splash of color, should be expected to appeal to the national sentiment of the masses; and there is no reason why the "arms" should occupy the place of a simple, appropriate emblem, which would be known and recognized by the Canadian people from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Does Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, alone, compose our Dominion? Have not the Provinces of Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and British Columbia (and the North-West Territory) the same right to be represented on the flag by their Provincial arms also? Some may affirm that the arms of five Provinces are to be seen on the flag, and—in many cases—seven are placed there; yet the authorities recognize only the four mentioned. Still, these same officials at Ottawa send out, as the proper Canadian flag, an ensign containing the arms of seven Provinces, surrounded with a wreath of oak and maple leaves, and the escutcheon surmounted with a crown! It is quite probable that, even among those who are engaged in making flags, there are a score or more ideas as to the right device on the standard; indeed, many very highly educated men and women of our country suppose that the badge is a wreath

of maple leaves enclosing a beaver.

Would that they were right! But the old favorite emblem does not find place on the shield bearing the arms of the Dominion, or the flag of our beloved Canada. We have crosses, and lions, ships, and fish; we have thistles, and lily-flowers, and sprigs of maple; but no beaver! If it is right to decorate the ensign with all this fantastic conglomeration, this multifarious collection of things horticultural, zoological, piscatorial, and nautical; if it is proper to charge the mother flag with the armorial bearings of every Province, as is often done,—then should the Imperial banner of Germany comprise the arms of each kingdom, duchy, principality, and free-town within the empire; then should the Stars and Stripes be spangled with the insignia of every State in the Union! We may not be iconoclasts,—far from it, we may have the greatest respect for aught that has been hallowed by time and circumstances, and dislike (nay, dread) anything of the nature of radical change, but we may approve of those minor alterations which modify appearances, and yet go so far toward intensifying their significance.

The arms of Canada, as an escutcheon, are in their proper place; although, in deference to heraldic requirements, it would be better to have eight provinces or territories represented than the odd seven, but they should not be on the flag. It cannot be doubted that if this multiform cognizance were eliminated from our ensign, and, in place of it, the authorities would adopt some neat, appropriate symbol—as, for instance, the maple leaf and beaver, or a wreath of maple leaves—the government would be congratulated on its good sense, and Canadians would rejoice at the change. Thus we should have an emblem worthy of our country, a truly representative device, on the grandest flag that ever waved over a free and enlightened people—the British en-