

Mr. Hall Caine, representative of the British authors, sailed from England on Wednesday, on his way to Ottawa to interview the Canadian Government on the subject of the suspended copyright bill. He is armed with letters of introduction from the Colonial Secretary, but is clothed with no official character; he comes as an individual representing others to complain of the Canadian copyright bill, and if possible to secure amendments in it. It will be only courteous that he have a hearing, though it be impossible to carry on any formal negotiations with him. People who have interests at stake go every day to Ottawa to attempt to influence legislation, and sometimes even unofficial foreigners are admitted to a hearing. What the precise nature of the modification is which is suggested in the amendment said to have been drafted or altered in the Colonial Office, has not been made public. Sir Hibbert Tupper gives as a reason for not discussing the question with Mr. Caine that the Canadian Parliament is an unit on the question; but the withholding of the Imperial assent so long from the bill makes a case of argument, and anything that would help towards a settlement, not improper to be done, should be welcomed. The official negotiations must, of course, be between the two governments interested. The draft to be sent out represents the view of the Imperial Government. One who professes to know alleged that it contains an academic assertion of copyright. If this means a right in British authors as against the right of Canada to legislate on the question, it raises a point on which Canada is not likely to yield. If the right be admitted in Canada, the objectors say, it cannot be denied to Australia, or indeed to any other self-governing colony. This may be admitted. Australia, which refused any longer to receive British convicts and which barred out Chinamen in the face of treaties, may be relied on to assert the full right of legislation over copyright whenever she may feel prompted to do so. The Canadian bill may in reason be altered, but if there be any assertion of the right of legislation over copyright, it must be in favor of Canada.

At the dinner of the Bankers' Association, Quebec, Admiral Erskine, replying to a toast, undertook to give a loose sort of assurance, such as is apt to pass current on such occasions, "that so long as Canada remained a part of the British possessions, Canadians would look to the British navy as its chief defence." It is not at all certain that this accords with the actual facts. Canada has an open frontier along the lakes, into which it is not probable that many, if any, British vessels of war could get, so easy would it be for the enemy, if it were the United States, to destroy one of the canal locks. Of vessels that could be converted into a rude kind of war ship the Americans have an overwhelming preponderance on the great lakes. The points where effective defence could be offered would be Quebec and Halifax, and there, especially at Quebec, the forts would play a great part. What Admiral Erskine said, apparently half in banter, half in earnest, about Canada constructing an ironclad or two, at a cost of five millions of dollars each, for the defence of the country, does probably not point to the best means of contributing to the home defence. Such allusions may set men to thinking about their duties and responsibilities, but beyond this they are not likely to effect much; still if they do that the utterance may not be wholly in vain.

IMPROVED WATERWAYS.

Aside from the doings of the Deep Waterways Convention, great interest continues to be taken in the project of a great ship canal which would enable vessels from the

other side of the Atlantic to go up to Duluth. If this dream of the North-West be ever realized, a new type of vessels will have to be developed, none of those now used on the lakes being suitable for ocean navigation. The revolution, like the superseding of sail vessels by steam, would cause an enormous loss of capital invested in the present lake vessels. Means are still found of greatly cheapening water communication on the lakes, while the railway charges remain nearly at the old figures. And the new steel canal boat, unpromising as it may look at the first blush, on account of its inferior size, seems destined to play a decided part in the cheapening process. Of such boats there will next year be a regular service of five fleets between Cleveland and New York. At the same time, the building of large lake boats for certain purposes still goes on, ten 400 feet long, for the carrying of ore, being now under construction. The advantage of water carriage over rail is causing the centre of the northern iron industry to ship to or near Lake Erie. The reduction of freights on Lake Superior ore, which is destined for generations to come to furnish enormous supplies of the raw material for making pig iron, tends to bring about this change of the centre of the iron industry of the north. Doubts are still expressed whether a supply of water could be got for a canal where, or near where, the Erie canal now runs, large enough to carry ocean vessels. Regarding the St. Lawrence route, no such doubt can exist. It is the natural highway to the ocean, and to rival it by an artificial waterway capable of carrying ocean borne vessels would be a costly fight against nature. Still, if the water supply can be depended upon, the achievement would not be impossible; and if any people were likely to accomplish it, they are to be found in New York. In spite of all the efforts made to prevent such a result, the New York canals are in a declining state, the tonnage carried having shrunk from 6,673,370 tons in 1872 to 3,882,560 in 1894. It is plain that if this decline is to be arrested, something more than has hitherto been attempted will have to be done.

PROTECTION AGAINST FIRE.

Lessons are being given us every month or two upon the futility of trusting to chance that a village or a town will not be swept by fire. Elsewhere we have mentioned the experience of Erin, Ontario, last week, in being swept by fire for half a day and nothing but buckets to fight the fire with. Now we find in an American exchange the story of Lockport, a town in Illinois which had no fire engine, no fire company, no means of combating flames. The inhabitants were too busy to think about such things. But a few days ago fire visited Lockport and swept it. The loss in buildings and merchandise was between \$400,000 and \$500,000. The citizens, as the account says, were blind to their own interests—the merchants especially so in making no provision against an always menacing danger.

Many towns have a sort of craze to get industries established in their midst, and pay large bonuses to get them. Do the councilmen of towns and villages ever consider how the lack of fire protection keeps such industries away from certain places? The *Shoe and Leather Gazette* says, in writing upon this subject:

"If I were a merchant casting about for a location for a shoe store, or a store of any kind, I would hesitate a good long time before settling in a town without adequate fire protection.

"If I were a merchant in a small town that did not possess fire-fighting facilities, I would get a hustle on myself, and not lose it until such facilities were obtained. In