

## SAUNTERINGS.

Nobody need plume himself upon a knowledge of the capital whose smattering of the political aspects of the place, picked up in the three most disagreeable months of the year, is not supplemented by an acquaintance formed in June. The narrow area of observation during the Session—Sparks Street, the Parliament buildings, New Edinboro', Sandy Hill, and the West End—expands to a gracious extent one would not dream who saw it only under the rigours of February and March, or the half-hearted relentings of April. Long, tree-shadowed walks diverge in it, and across the end of one wanders the quiet line of the blue Laurentians, and another breaks, not a mile from Parliament Hill, into a country roadside rambling pleasantly past the toll gate and along by places where the air is sweet with the cherry blossoms that drop their whiteness over the fence upon the way, and across the wooden bridge that spans the straight, cool reaches of the canal. And the blue and fanciful Rideau, and the lucent and shadowy Gatineau, and the brown and tawny Ottawa, all hasten from afar among those strange, round hills to the north to meet us here, and the glistening ways by which they have come are bordered with the spreading pine and the dusky tamarack and vigorous young clumps of outrolling ferns.

Under one of the town bridges, known from its peculiar curvature as "The Maria Street camel's back," the canal is slow and turbid and narrow and very like all other canals. But often fifty boats moored along the bank tell very plainly that this is only a town-washed state of things, and that further up the oarsmen have their reward. Boating is, beyond any other, Ottawa's summer diversion. It is too hot to ride, and too expensive moreover; tennis is always exclusive, and the field games require hard and constant practice, but a boat is always ready, whether one's own or to hire, makes no demands on time or energy, is a cheap luxury, and lends itself to the cool of the evening to twilight or to a moonlit hour, as no tennis, racquet or lacrosse would dream of doing.

To know the water intimately, you must go in a canoe, a boat is a clumsy, inert, unsympathetic clog after the aboriginal idea, that skims the water like a withered leaf, trembles with every eddy, answers the whim of your paddle almost before it is expressed. And a favourite canoe-voyage is around the bend through the Deep Cut and Muchmore's Cut to the neighbourhood of the Exhibition buildings, portaging across to the Rideau just where the May is blossoming mildly about an abandoned old farm house and the pale green flame of the birches is showing against the clumps of pines beside it. From this point to Billing's Bridge where another portage is necessary back to the canal, the Rideau is the daintiest stretch of water one could fancy. It is very remote from the human life pulsating within half a mile of it; for the most part uninvaded woods troop alongside, with all the sweet cries and cadences of the under-world in them, chiding all day long the vast silence that never lags upon the heels of humanity. And it seems just now that all the trees that ever one knew are growing together here in these woodlands, their riotous spring happiness disciplined by the spruce and sobered by the tamarack. There are islands in the river, and reedy places between the islands and the shore, where in a month there will be a wonder of water-lilies. Along the banks the shumachs are swinging their tassels and the wild strawberry-blossoms sit meekly in the sun and the columbines dance in the wind, and every marshy spot is yellow with marigolds. And through it all the river goes, pausing and pondering in the shadows, racing over a mimic rapid in the sun, twisting and straightening, narrowing ruefully, broadening sweetly, listening all the time through her own foolish gurgle to the musical gossips of the new come cat-birds and whip-poor-Wills and wild canaries.

The Ottawa Field Naturalists are a number of clever and energetic people who do not propose to allow the opportunity of residence upon the top of the most venerable and interesting portion of the earth's surface to go unimproved. Every Saturday therefore they gather together, with hammers and specimen cases, and lunch baskets, and sally forth in vans to the woods and the fields. There they look for specimens, bits of rock, plants, insects, fungi, fossils, and upon some class of these the specialist for the day makes public a certain percentage of what he knows. I have heard the Ottawa Field Naturalists less respectfully called "the Bugs and Beetles," but that was by a person who confessedly did not know one from the other, and could therefore be excused for confusing the various orders of the animal creation.

Last Saturday one hundred and twenty-eight people packed themselves into six vans and drove out to Kirk's Ferry, on the Gatineau. The excursion would doubtless have been as edifying as any similar one in the past, if it had not rained. If it had not rained, however, three or four of us would have missed the acquaintance of Stainslaus Pasquette who is master of the small white hostility in which we took refuge, and "Stennis," as he called himself, was a fair equivalent for much Latin. The sign that swung over his hospitable door was a little ambiguous. "S. Pasquette" was painted on it in thin crooked black letters, but over the further announcement, "Hotel," was nailed a pine slab. The acute observer might guess the original inscription by the edge of the letters, but to the general public it seemed intended to express blankness, despair.

Stennis explained it, in answer to an inquiry by one of the party for *vin du pays* to add its much needed cheer to our luncheon. He stood on the rag carpet of his own neat little sitting-room, with its coloured lithographs of the saints on the walls, and its white muslin curtains falling in two stiff cascades before the windows, and its beautiful artificial flowers in a blue vase on the table, balancing a plaster image of St. Joseph, and explained it. He made a fair type of his class as he stood there, talking and gesticulating. Thick black hair—baldness has not yet crept up the

Gatineau,—sharp brown eyes, a broad-faced smile that showed teeth discoloured by tobacco, and a well knit pair of shoulders, from which his argument required a hitch every now and then.

"I tell you both in little time. I pay my licenz *autrefois* hunners dollars, every time—straight. Dis time dey reduce number of licenz. I was reduce also." He laughed with an air of making the best of it, but the shrug that followed instantly was serious.

"Dey don' look at it right way, I tink. Here's my place. Two mile from any ho-tel. Right at de ferry. Now I kin on'y sell sof' stuff." He had given us ginger "pop." "But," with a lowering of his voice, and a respectful look at the ladies, "folks stop here, most all want hard stuff—want strong glass. I can't sell 'em."

Stennis was a model of propriety throughout his entire conversation with us, and never once alluded to anything of a bibulous nature by other terms than "strong glass" or "soft stuff." Temperance principles to the contrary, notwithstanding, we sympathized with him in his fallen fortunes, especially when he introduced a convulsive and wide-mouthed young Stennis, of two months, with all the pride and gratulation of a father with no stimulants in his business connection.

"You put on de boots, now," said he, giving his offspring a ferociously funny poke under its chin, "an' fetch in de wood dis aft'noon, you hear?"

"He is smart child, dat child! He speak Engleesh as good as French. Eh, Stenny?"

In reply to an inquiry as to whether our innocent potatoes had been paid for by a member of the party, desirous of disbursing for the common benefit, the French Canadian spirit of acquisition came out.

"Yass. 'E 'ave pay for de sof' stuff,"—meditatively. Then with sudden inspiration, "But for de bottles, non! I do' know if he want to take 'em away!"

We comforted him with the hope of summer boarders, who could not possibly come where "hard stuff" was sold, and came away.

SARA J. DUNCAN.

## OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

THE ARGONAUTS OF NORTH LIBERTY. By Bret Harte. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company.

Bret Harte has in many of his short stories shown what goodness there may be in those who are accounted bad; what virtues may still linger in those considered irreclaimably depraved; what heroism and unselfishness even the outcasts of Poker Flat may give proof of. In this book he endeavours to show the badness of a woman who is professedly good—excessively good. The effort has not been successful; but we have long ceased to hope for a really good novel from the author of *Gabriel Conroy*. His short stories are admirable; his novels are unhappy compilations of sketches. In this one he is peculiarly unhappy. The literary critic will find in it evidences of literary art, but the uncritical reader can hardly be benefited in any way by a story which represents life and character, not with the fidelity of an artist, but with the carelessness or malignity of a lampooner.

## LITERARY GOSSIP.

MACMILLAN AND Co. will publish shortly, a new volume by Matthew Arnold, entitled "Essays in Criticism."

MISS ANNIE ROBERTSON MACFARLANE, the critic of fiction for *The Nation*, is writing the history of the French in Canada, for Putnam's *Story of the Nations* series.

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS will publish during this month "The Story of Turkey," by Stanley Lane-Poole, which will form the nineteenth volume of the *Story of the Nations* series.

A new venture in Canadian journalism is about to be hazarded by the Desbarats in Montreal. Its name, *The Dominion Illustrated*, indicates what will be its principal feature. Prominent members of the Royal Canadian Academy are to furnish drawings. Mr. Henri Julien will supply the cartoons, and the critical and scholarly Lesperance, whose name is mentioned as editor, will take good care that the literary departments of the paper will be kept up to a high level.

It is believed that there are some very remarkable libraries that might be exhumed from the buried cities of Uxmal and Mayapan, in Yucatan. The ancients must have been highly civilized, since they made use of a written language and alphabetical characters. It is the hope and ambition of Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, the archaeologist and explorer, to present to the scientific world a series of manuscripts written by the founders of these cities. He discovered that Freemasonry existed in pre-historic time, and has brought to this country photographs of old masonic symbols which correspond very nearly with those now in use.

THE QUEBEC BANK.—The statement of the Directors of the Quebec Bank, published in another column, presents a fairly satisfactory year's business. Its circulation and deposits have largely increased, \$100,000 have been added to the "Rest," which now amounts to nearly half a million, and the industries in which the bank's capital is, as appears from the Report, chiefly invested, have been, during the year, prosperous.