

Although Dickens has not "illuminated his works with the author's own candles," he has felt, and expressed like a great artist, the poesy which dwells among the humble classes, and in their *milieu*, by his gaiety, wit, and a communicative emotion. Therein consists the success of Dickens with the French; he conquered English conventionalities, which with the French are ranked somewhat as eccentricities. Not that Dickens thinks like the French, but he has on things human, on the relations between classes, such general views and feelings, that they are accepted as more French and less British.

Dickens, in his worldly personages, equals almost Balzac; towards the French Revolution he is as realist as *Murger* and *Henri Monnier*. It is impossible for him to rank any of his characters higher than an "Esquire." If he travels outside the orbit of the humble, his figures are mannikins. Not so Thackeray; he gives a true and faithful transcript of actual life; he nothing extenuates nor sets down aught in malice; his men and women are neither the best nor worst; he is a realist in his way, and ranks on the Continent as one of the three great English novelists of the century. Then anything coming from Thackeray's pen has a great literary importance, which explains the favourable reception extended to his hitherto unprinted "Contributions to *Punch*." Thackeray, in these fugitive squibs and skits, is seen in working dress, not official costume. His glory suffers nothing from the autopsy. These fantasies of youthful days are as gay, as true in tone, and as fresh as on their first day; the style is as pure and the language as elegant as in "*Esmond*" and the "*Newcomes*." Are such not the privileges of *chefs-d'œuvre* of all kinds?

It has been remarked Thackeray had Addison's love of virtue, Johnson's hatred of cant, Horace Walpole's lynx eye for the mean and ridiculous, and Goldsmith's kindliness and wide charity for mankind. But to enter Thackeray's gallery, it is essential at least to have a footman in scarlet plush and silk stockings, for he is the delineator of the governing classes, and his dukes, marquises, countesses, bankers, and merchant princes are as living as nature. Now these are social strata the French can no more comprehend than they can the seigneurs of their own *ancien régime*. In their nature they are, perhaps, as pure types as those of Dickens; but they are more local, appear less human, and hence less comprehensible by the foreigner.

ZERO.

NOTES FROM QUEBEC.

AN interesting course of winter lectures, given under the auspices of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, was brought to a close on Friday night, March 19. Before referring to the lecture itself, it is perhaps desirable that we should say a word or two about the "Literary and Historical Society," which, we regret to say, has fallen upon evil days. The history of the society was sketched with conspicuous ability by Dr. Harper, Rector of the Boys' High School, in a lecture which he delivered some weeks ago. The men who originated the Society have long since passed away, and their successors have not shown the same enthusiasm for the work so worthily inaugurated, and hence it has languished almost to the point of death. Fortunately for the Society it has a live president, in the person of Mr. George Stewart, Jr., F.R.S.C., and it was mainly through his efforts that the late excellent course of lectures was carried to a successful issue. The lecture on Friday night, March 19, was delivered by Mr. Shehyn, M.P.P., President of the Quebec Board of Trade; and a more gloomy outlook we have rarely seen placed before a Quebec audience. Mr. Shehyn's subject was "Railways and Waterways," and although the *Chronicle* devotes more than a column to the lecture, the essential points presented by the lecturer are almost entirely overlooked. Mr. Shehyn argued and fortified his arguments by indisputable evidence that under no condition of circumstances was it possible for the waterway to compete with the railway. Two or three rough articles of merchandise might be carried more advantageously by water than by rail, but the possibility of reaching anything like a speedy transit was out of the question, even when steam was used on the canals. The difficulty of contending against the displacement of a body of shallow water in a narrow channel, and its wash against the opposite banks, was referred to at length, and the opinion of eminent engineers quoted; he then pointed to the fact that—notwithstanding the great improvements that had been effected in enlarging and deepening the canals, as well as in increasing the carrying capacity of the barges from 8,000 to 80,000 bushels,—the waterways had not been able to hold their own against the railways. It was a difficult matter to get those who had property invested in canals to recognize the inevitable; and consequently they were everywhere to be found knocking at the public treasury, seeking for help in some shape or other. For example, they wanted the canals deepened to-day, and to-morrow they felt confident that the abolition of tolls was the one thing mostly needed, to enable them

to compete successfully with the railways. In reply, Mr. Shehyn showed that where both requests had been complied with the result gave hardly any appreciable increase of tonnage, and did not reduce the cost to such a point as would enable the owners to compete with the railways. The canals had never paid for the cost of construction and maintenance, and under all the circumstances the best thing for the country to do with them was to sell them out to the highest and best bidder. In discussing the question of Western traffic, he held out no hopes to those sanguine gentlemen who are always predicting that the trade of the West would somehow or other find an outlet by the St. Lawrence route. They had only to look at the vast network of railways on the American side to feel convinced that there was not the least chance of their wide-awake neighbours permitting such an important traffic to pass their doors, even if Canada could compete with them upon equal terms—which she could not. It was five millions against fifty; and those fifty backed up by an almost inexhaustible capital, and an enterprise that never flagged. From the neighbourhood of the great lakes they would doubtless continue to draw large quantities of freight; but even here they would have to exercise great vigilance, and see that the Canadian Pacific Railway was not permitted to play them false. If that corporation built a bridge above Montreal, it simply meant that they were cut off from the main line of Western traffic, which would find an outlet by way of Boston, or some American port. On the whole, Mr. Shehyn does not appear to share in the confidence of those who have, from time to time, expressed themselves hopefully about Quebec's future. There are some capitalists interested in the Lake St. John Railway, and this particular interest is being preached up vigorously at present as that upon which the future prosperity of Quebec hangs. The same thing was said about the North Shore and similar enterprises, so long as it was necessary to make the public "pay the piper." Mr. Campbell proposed a vote of thanks to the lecturer, pointing out the immense wealth that was ready to flow into the Ancient Capital upon the completion of the Lake St. John Railway. Dr. Harper seconded the resolution, without saying anything about the railway, an omission that is probably due to the fact that, being a Scotchman, the learned Rector of the High School is not much of a visionary. Col. Rhodes drew attention to the state of things in the port of Quebec; he urged the President of the Board of Trade to send the information to every centre of commerce that at present there was an open waterway to the sea. It was a fact of very great importance, and might have considerable influence upon the commerce of the port. We incline to the opinion that the worthy Colonel overestimates the value of open water in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. A month from this date, steamers find the navigation risky enough, and are very often under the necessity of turning back to Halifax. Indeed, it would be culpable to attempt the navigation much before the 1st of May, even if the "lights" and "buoys" were all placed, owing to snowstorms and masses of floating ice. The truth is, Quebec is like a man drowning, prepared to grasp at any straw; but her day has gone, and she has nobody to blame but herself. Mr. Shehyn practically says as much, and there is no use in closing our eyes to the inevitable.

A good deal of amusement, in a quiet and unobtrusive way, has been elicited from Sir A. P. Caron's speech. The true cause of Mr. Amyot's defection from the Conservative side has not so far become public property, but it will by and by; in the meantime, it is now recollected that when the Ninth were leaving Quebec, more than one person declared publicly that they were not going to fight, and this opinion, however it got abroad, appears to have been well founded. There is something irrepressibly comic in Amyot's military tactics, and the novelty of a whole army in the field protecting "forts and provisions" is nothing short of a revelation in military science. Judged in an off-handed way, it may be said to promote eating and to minimize fighting. "The volunteers," says this modern master of the art of successful war, "are specially adapted for the protection of the forts and provisions." We declare with some confidence that this is a humanitarian view of the art of war that, if generally accepted, will work a revolution among the nations of the earth. Place the regimental colours in a biscuit box and hold it to the death, and if the enemy don't die through the interposition of ball-cartridge, you can kill him in a negative way through hunger.

THE promotion of Archbishop Taschereau to the Cardinalate of his Church is an event of considerable importance in many ways. Everybody in the Ancient Capital admires Archbishop Taschereau for his many excellent qualities. The Roman Catholics see in him a prelate of great personal piety, profound sagacity as a chief pastor, and the representative of a house illustrious among French-Canadians; while the Protestants of Quebec look upon him as the embodiment of all that is praiseworthy among Roman ecclesiastics; his Grace is ever ready to help them in their