

such kind of literature. There is a kind of morbid love to pry into pettinesses, to learn how such a man dresses, how such a statesman sleeps, how such a murderer eats; there being a demand for such stuff, the demand must be supplied. This minute painting is quite unnecessary; it is of the nature of gossip, but it is interesting to many; and, perhaps, the first portion read of the country papers is the "city correspondent's" letter. Carried to an improper extent, this passion of describing detail, and minute and non-essential points, is very hurtful. At the best it is stale, flat, wearying, and very unprofitable; but it is gossip, and men love gossip better far than women, although they say they do not. Some men make their fortune by gossip; in trade they call to take an order, and have some choice anecdote ready; with their glib tongues they tickle their customers into good humour. They make their presence welcome, and their calls a necessity, just as Sam Slick did his clocks. He never pressed people to buy them; he only asked permission to leave one on the mantel-shelf; but when left, the householder grew used to it, and found it hard to part with it; and so the gossip will often make a clever salesman, and become of permanent value to his employer. In a higher grade of society he becomes the diner-out, the professional brilliant talker and retailer of smart sayings. But, it must be admitted, the pleasant art of conversation is greatly lost, our grandsons will probably see the last of the good old conversationalists, whom it was a pleasure to listen to, even though they did gossip.

While men are more fond of gossip, women—and we appeal to the sex if this harsh verdict be not true—are more fond of scandal. The reason for this may be, that women are more innocent, and at the same time more fond of attributing motives than men. Man knows that the world is a more complex machine than a woman takes it to be, therefore he passes over a motive, and retails only the anecdote; but woman, not content with personifying the story, identifies the persons and attributes a motive—hence the slander. She does it because she is often a much more ill-natured person than the male gossip, and also because her character is the more simple. Her greater fault arises from her greater virtue, just as the sweetest wines make the most acid of vinegars. When this tongue-stabbing, back-biting passion for slander has been once indulged in, it grows greater and greater every day.

In private life it is of course impossible to stop scandal; but we are not obliged to listen to it. If we do, the best way is to believe at least only half we hear, and when we hear a story which is against anybody, if it be true never to repeat it, because it is charity to cover over the defects of others; if it be false, then for the greater reason let the calumny rest in our own bosoms. A little good nature will go much farther than a great deal of acuteness in blunting the edge of reports. The ill news, which travels fast, does not travel so fast but that it picks up something on its way; and as a mere matter of precaution to guard ourselves against deceit, we should shut our ears against Scandal.

*Quevedo Redivivus.*

### LANGUAGE.

Announcements are frequently made that a language will be taught in a very few lessons and by an entirely new method; as a rule, these announcements are merely exaggerations and it is found that very little more progress, if any more, is made by the pupils than if they had followed the old methods. I propose to give a few notes on the proper way of learning a language. In order to know how to learn a language it is absolutely necessary that the mind should thoroughly appreciate the fact that language is composed of sounds and not of letters; further, language is under the control of the community as a whole, and in a similar manner is in a constant state of change. Therefore the laws of grammar change: what is right to-day, may be wrong to-morrow; so we cannot make a set of rules and say that they are unalterable. Further, in verity the greatest fact to remember in studying a language is, that it consists of sentences and not of mere words. As children, we learn our mother tongue by stringing words together into sentences, and we must follow the same plan in order to learn foreign tongues easily and correctly. I venture to assert that not ten pupils out of a hundred who have studied French in an English school even during the entire course can converse with French people to any appreciable extent. A glaring example of this has come under my notice in the case of a pupil, who, after *four years'* study of French and finishing his course *with honours* in it, could not string ten words together with any sort of readiness. The reason of this is that he had learnt a long list of isolated words, had hurried through different French authors, translating them into English, but had not had one single opportunity to apply his knowledge in a practical conversational manner.

We find in Ollendorf's systems the nearest approach to a proper method of learning languages, and the success of his text-books is sufficient corroboration of this. Other systems begin by analysis and grammatical rules, instead of which we should begin with the sentences and not with the words. Analysis is the duty of science, while practical education requires that we shall be able to understand and make ourselves understood. We must begin with the most common and best known forms, and according as we have time, inclination or use, devote ourselves to the grammatical and philological minutiae.

Suppose that we have in view the object of acquiring languages for practical use, the less need will we have to know and study intricate or obsolete idioms; these may be useful in the study of comparative philology, but not otherwise. Further, it is an extremely difficult matter to learn a dead language in anything like a proper manner. How many are there, even scholars, who can converse or think in a dead language? They are far less numerous than those who have an intimate knowledge of foreign living tongues, though this latter class is by no means large in numbers. One must have a very large and accurate knowledge of foreign living tongues in order to properly understand and use the dead languages. Without this, the years spent over Latin and Greek are wasted, and the time thus spent would have been more profitably employed in storing the mind with something which would be practically useful to us in after-life, and we could surely find certain studies which would combine this practical usefulness with that wonderful "mental training" of which so much has been spoken and written. It appears to be rather a senseless practice to devote the greater part of the education to the study of those dead languages, Latin and Greek, and to use only the odd intervals for studying a modern language or two. This has a deleterious effect upon our after efforts to gain a conversational knowledge of modern languages, and leads us wholly astray regarding the true character of speech. However, in this there is the redeeming feature that what little Latin or Greek is learnt by the average pupil is forgotten almost entirely after leaving school, and it is hardly to be regretted, as the study of these languages alone is of very little benefit to any one so far as actual life and its necessities are concerned. The proper way is to learn first living and afterwards dead languages, and thus follow a system consistent with science and nature.

When a person is able to converse and think in a foreign idiom, then he can study it in the light of comparative philology. He will then see that all the "phenomena of language," though apparently arbitrary or contradictory, are subject to law, and that sentences and words have histories of their own, and are what they are, for definable reasons. This is one of the most interesting of studies, quickening the intelligence and gratifying a legitimate curiosity; but to begin the study of a language with all these intricacies is certainly absurd and unsatisfactory. Having gained a knowledge of philological laws, as exemplified in modern languages, he can then devote his time to the study of the ancient tongues, and will see that each one is a link closely connected and together form one grand continuous chain of development.

*Aggie Fern.*

### THE PROBLEM OF CANADA.

Such is the title of a pamphlet just received, and, as the writer is informed, very influentially distributed by Malcolm McLeod of Ottawa (*Britannicus*). It deserves to be studied by every citizen of the Dominion, for it does in truth discuss the great problem of the future construction and management of the Canadian Pacific Railway for the benefit of the Canadian people and development of our country and its history. The following extract is taken as the motto of the *brochure*, and which, having been written in 1849, might be labelled "Dangers Delayed":—

"A momentous subject is now brought to the notice of the people of Great Britain. It ought not to be neglected until, perhaps, a voice from her Colonial children may go forth proclaiming 'It is too late'; for then the opportunity of uniting in firm and friendly bonds of union 'this wondrous Empire on which the solar orb never sets' will have passed away for ever. It is the great link required to unite in one powerful chain the whole English race."—*Pamphlet by Major Robert Carmichael Smyth, R.E., 1849.*

When a great enterprise has to be effected, it is pleasant and comforting to see the way clear to get it accomplished within the time expected, and to do so without difficulty or financial strain. We had been more than once assured by Sir John A. Macdonald, in the case of the Canadian Pacific Railway, that except in the one point of the speed of construction, which it was less easy to define, this was fairly within the scope of the Government carrying out their intention of completing the line from the country's own resources, and by means of its own credit and lands. Of course, when the burden partially and the profits entirely are shifted to the shoulders and the pockets of wealthy capitalists, a sense of relief comes to those who were officially responsible for its realization. We must hope that the ease of the new conditions may be extended to all concerned; that is, to the people in common with their rulers.

We hope—and, knowing the firmness with which the Canadian people have been in the habit of asserting their understood rights in the past, even if sometimes a little less mindful of their duties, we believe that the near future will prove that it will be no easy matter to deprive the ordinary settler on the fertile belt of his free-grant and preëmption rights, or to depreciate or diminish those rights in any way below their present substantial value; for, while certainly a law-abiding people in Canada, we are, as compared with the mother country, a more democratic people, and the very form of our institutions is more democratic. The precise bearing and tendencies of the great new power proposed to be introduced amongst us has not yet been subjected to much discussion in the public press, and indeed it is as yet but very imperfectly comprehended by any of us; but all great public questions do get