

A PROPOSED CANADIAN FLAG.

SIR,—Permit me to add a few words to what has already been written upon the subject of altering the flag of Canada to one which, it is thought, will better represent our growing nationality than does the existing, officially authorized emblem of the Dominion.

The flag of Canada as now used, is simply the Red Ensign of England, with the arms of the Provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, quartered on a shield and placed in the centre of the "fly," or unoccupied red field of the flag. This device, it is said, is difficult to see on the flag when viewed from any considerable distance. Further, there are now seven Provinces in the Dominion, and the three later may possibly consider themselves entitled to representation on the flag. Whether they are entitled to this species of recognition or not, there certainly exists among the majority of Canadians a feeling that it would be more appropriate to withdraw the distinctive and strictly provincial badges and to introduce a fitting and permanent national emblem.

It has been urged that the beaver is not suitable for such use, inasmuch as it is usually classed by naturalists as belonging to the order Rodentia, which includes rabbits, rats, and mice and other animals of a more or less objectionable nature. The order in which an animal may be placed in any scheme of classification should not be considered, when estimating its suitability as the typifying distinction for a nation. The Lion of England belongs to the sub-order Digitigrade Carnivora, which includes the dog, jackall, wolf, cat, fox, hyena, and even the coyote. The fact that the lion walks upon his toes, lives upon flesh, has sharp teeth and claws in common with (when viewed by man) less dignified animals, and is classed with them, solely for the convenience of the naturalist, did not weigh with those who selected the King of Beasts to represent England. Ruskin says:—"A lion is continually puzzled how to hold a bone; and an eagle can scarcely pull the meat off one, without upsetting himself." This animal and bird are certainly very awkward when looked at from Ruskin's point of view. If excellence in bone-picking was the test applied, the monkey would probably rank far ahead of either. Such dexterity clearly implies a certain superiority, possibly of brain power or intelligence, though few nations would consider it a sufficient reason for taking the monkey as an emblem and not the lion or the eagle. The question whether one of the lower animals is a suitable representation for a people is one which admits of discussion. If it is considered appropriate to do so, the beaver may fairly be judged as a good and fitting emblem for Canadians. The animal is industrious, persevering, one which after boldly exploring the water courses of the country makes a home for itself by felling the trees of the virgin forest. These characteristics have been held to denote our nationality. The beaver actually does what many of Canada's intrepid pioneer sons have done. The audacious and predatory bravery of superior equipment, possessed by an animal or bird of prey, has not found any expression in our blazonry, because it rightly has no place there. The beaver's peculiar chisel-pointed teeth, possessed in similar form by the rat, should not be a serious objection when considering a highly significant emblem.

The maple leaf, in its native green shown upon a properly proportioned white shield, and placed upon the fly of the Red Ensign, would seem to be the most suitable and fitting alteration for the flag of Canada. The beaver's colour, like that of the maple leaf, is objectionable when shown on the red ground of the flag, but either would be quite easily distinguished, and be without any incongruity when displayed in this manner. The device of the maple leaf on the white shield has the advantage of being simple, easily made, readily distinguished and thoroughly and intimately associated with Canada. The maple leaf is the "flower" of the Dominion, in the heraldic sense. In that sense it no more denotes unity than does the Thistle of Scotland, the Shamrock of Ireland, the Rose of England or the Lillies of France. It may be frail when plucked from the stem; but it does not in this differ from any of the other emblems. Its botanical peculiarities should not be any serious bar to its acceptance as our distinguishing badge.

The use of heraldic emblems upon the flags of different countries is certainly sanctioned by custom. The United States Revenue flag has the canton occupied by the coat of

arms used by the Government—the shield with bars, the eagle with arrows, and stars above its head; the bars on the fly being placed across and not along the flag. Italy, Austria, Portugal, Turkey, and Brazil have all distinctively heraldic devices displayed on their flags and four of them show a shield. These are the flags used by the merchant marine and are not in any sense Royal standards. The green maple leaf upon a white shield would be well within the lines of precedent if placed in the fly of the red ensign.

The proposal to use a seven rayed white star, each ray to indicate a Province, is good in that it gives us an emblem as easily seen as need be. One of the stars of heaven, however, cannot be considered to indicate unity anymore than one maple leaf taken from the countless foliage of the forest. The star has no connection with Canada in any way and is associated in the minds of most people with the United States. The single star upon a blue ground was the flag of the Southern Confederacy. Texas, one of the most southerly of the States, is represented by a single star, from which fact it has taken the local name of the "Lone Star State." The stars adopted by Congress as the emblem of the union of the various States was appropriate because the union formed was, as it were, a new constellation in the political heavens. Stars have, therefore, come to be more associated with the formation of a republic than with monarchical institutions, and this fact has probably led to the appearance of the star on the flag of one, at least, of the South American republics.

The badge of the Governor-General's Foot Guards at Ottawa is a star with six rays, one for each of the then Provinces, before Prince Edward Island came into the Dominion. On each ray is the initial letter of a Province, and though the star may be appropriate to the regiment, it certainly has no national significance, for the reason that a star cannot be strictly or locally identified with any country in the same intimate way that the leaf of an indigenous tree may be.

The flag I should be glad to see adopted by the Dominion is the Red Ensign, with an ample white shield in centre of the fly upon which one green maple leaf and stem would be displayed, representing the Canadian nation. The leaf being taken as typical of the tree, as it fairly may be, is peculiarly appropriate for Canada, having the power of growth, and in short all the potentialities of life, expansion, improvement, increased strength, and solidity—the type of unity and prosperous existence. Though the leaf individually may be fragile, the tree is hardy, strong, perennial, deep rooted in British soil, from which it has drawn the very sap of life and from which it may not lightly be uprooted.

GEORGE S. HODGINS.

Windsor, Ont., 8th June, 1895.

THE LEAK IN THE BARREL.

SIR,—Speaking of the immigration of pauper children as conducted by Miss Rye, Mrs. MacPherson and Dr. Barnardo, you say that it is either a most blessed work of philanthropy or a criminal scattering of the germs of vice over this country. You lean, if I construe your article rightly, to the more favourable opinion, and you observe that altogether too much importance is attached by the opponents of the system to the doctrine of hereditary transmission of moral or immoral qualities. In the course of a long connection with charitable agencies I have heard a good deal said on both sides of this question. There is something, I suppose, though there may not be so much as extreme science believes, in the influence of hereditary transmission. There is something in the influence of early habit. There is something in the lack of that home affection, which, rough as home may be, an institution can hardly supply. On the whole, probably the immigration of pauper children is, except where there is extreme need of population, more certainly beneficial to the children themselves than to the country to which they are brought. This is not a conclusive argument against the system, much less is it a disparagement of the benevolence by which the system is carried on.

I cannot, however, help reminding those who are discussing this question, that the best of all immigration policies would be one which, by giving Canada a free commercial development and her natural market, would keep native