

carrying advantages of our railways and the vast improvement in our modes of agriculture. All this is told in language of genuine admiration, and the writer winds up with fitting words on our geographical position. "The Dominion sits astride the civilized world. Its territories lie on the track of one of the great lines of commerce of the future. On one side it commands the Pacific, on the other the Atlantic. It holds out one hand to the civilized East and the other to the swarming and now awakened West. The short way from China to Europe lies through Canadian territory, and, thanks to Canadian enterprise, it is now possible to travel from England to Australia without once leaving the shelter of the British flag."

THE NATIONAL SPIRIT.

The Canadian colony in London were mindful of the twenty-first anniversary of the birthday of Confederation, and they gathered at a banquet, on the 12th of July, to celebrate the event. Leading Canadians, and Englishmen, having had dealings with Canada, were there, and some stirring speeches were made. While all the utterances were timely and thoroughly in situation, that of the Honourable Oliver Mowat, First Minister of Ontario, was pitched in so fitting a key, and attuned to such lofty sentiments, that it deserves more than a passing notice. After complimenting his friend, Sir Charles Tupper, on his patriotic allusions to his native land, he recalled the fact that he himself, with the Honourable the Agent-General, had attended the conference of 1864, and that they were, therefore, both among the Fathers of Confederation—a title to glory and remembrance quite enough for any man. Mr. Mowat declared that the British North America Act was as perfect as they could then make it, but that it still afforded room for improvement, and they were endeavouring to better it by infusing therein a larger portion of the spirit of the British constitution. This is simple, but very sound, doctrine, and the honourable Minister broadened it by the argument of contrast, saying that while our constitution was not without its weak points, which experience shows ought to be strengthened, still, in his judgment, it is far superior to the American constitution.

Animated by his surroundings and the inspiration of his subject, Mr. Mowat made one or two important statements which certain public speakers and writers will doubtless take a note of in future discussion. He said that while the flaws in our constitution are removable, it is well to remember that this instrument was of our own forming, and not imposed on us by the Imperial Government. Here is a very important statement made by one of the three chief leaders of the Liberal party, and one of the most successful public men in Canada, and it is in contrast to what we used to hear of Nova Scotia having been driven, and Quebec hoodwinked, into the Union.

Mr. Mowat then waxed eloquent in praise of the Mother Country, and of the relations which Canada has held, is holding and should hold with the birthplace and the home of so many Canadians. At the same time he could not say that these relations will be lasting or that they will remain unaltered. On this question of the future, the speaker was plain-spoken, reminding those "enthusiastic Canadians" who yearn for Independence that twenty-five years from now we might think of that change, but "we cannot think of it now." The dream of

Imperial Federation he passed over without argument, but on the scheme of Annexation he said he would have no discussion, as he thought there was no one present "who would look at the proposal that we should give away this great country, which has been entrusted to us, to another country altogether." This sentiment was received with cheers, that will find an echo on our side of the water, and Mr. Mowat closed the speech of a statesman and a patriot by saying that whatever may happen in our relations with the old land, "it will make our connection with the Mother Country indissoluble and perpetual."

IS CANADIAN LIFE INTERESTING.

A few weeks before his death Matthew Arnold managed to offend the American people. He had looked at their life, that is, their manners, their morals, and he pronounced the whole uninteresting. It wanted beauty and distinction. A first reading of Matthew Arnold raises a suspicion of harshness, but a second or third reading invariably puts one in touch with his method, his secret, and enhances one's estimate of his wisdom and his justice. What he said about the American people in his article in the *Nineteenth Century* was not really harsh when considered as a whole, but he had taken the newspapers as an illustration of the want of beauty and distinction, and the newspapers took their revenge by publishing only his hardest-hitting sentences. The indignation of the people was great, but his death changed the course of the torrent, or stopped it, and they are now reading what he really said, and there are evidences in the reviews, and elsewhere, that some of his remarks are being thoughtfully considered and taken to heart.

Is Canadian life interesting? We propose to apply Mr. Arnold's definition of the word *interesting* to Canadian life. He chose the word from one of Carlyle's letters. One of Carlyle's younger brothers had talked of emigrating to America. Carlyle dissuades him.

"You shall never," he writes, "you shall never seriously meditate crossing the great Salt Pool to plant yourself in the Yankee land. That is a miserable fate for any one, at best; never dream of it. Could you banish yourself from all that is interesting to your mind, forget the history, the glorious institutions, the noble principles of old Scotland—that you might eat a better dinner, perhaps?"

Mr. Arnold went on to say:—

"There is one word launched—the word *interesting*. I am not saying that Carlyle's advice was good, or that young men should not emigrate. I do but take note, in the word *interesting*, of a requirement, a cry of aspiration, a cry not sounding in the imaginative Carlyle's own breast only, but sure of a response in his brother's breast also, and in human nature."

Perhaps a slight emphasis on one word in Carlyle's letter might weaken the force of the definition. "All that is interesting to *your* mind." It is just possible that an educated American may find something that is interesting to *his* mind in the history, the institutions and the principles of the United States! Mr. Arnold does not seem to deny this, but his contention appears to be that there is not a sufficient quantity of that which is interesting to give beauty and distinction to the national life. How is it with us in Canada? Is our history rich enough, are our institutions glorious enough, are our principles noble enough to impress our national life with beauty and distinction? The question is a vast one, but it must be briefly answered here.

And, first, we have a rich history. It has not, however, been well popularised to any extent. It has not yet been placed before the people in such a way that its lessons can affect or its fortunes attract the popular mind. The textbooks in the schools, in fact, are calculated to repel from the study. We have able students and

earnest engineers engaged in the subject, but we still want a popular history that will inform the national mind with beauty and distinction. Our institutions were almost peacefully made free, but they are none the less valuable on that account. They are valuable, but they are not valued as they might be. They are certainly not esteemed as glorious. Finally, our principles are not compact enough, nor definite enough, to inspire one with their nobility.

Canadian life is not, we believe, interesting in the Arnoldian sense. It might be made so, however, by the development of a stronger national spirit; and a stronger national spirit would be developed by a more profound, a more *interesting*, teaching of the course and the purpose of our history. Let us begin at the foundation by making the right book to put in our schools!

Richmond, P.Q.

J. C. S.

LITERARY NOTES.

The new Duchess of Rutland is a frequent contributor to several English magazines.

More than one-half the scholarships given at Cornell this year were won by female students.

Benjamin Sulte has just published a history of the parish of St. Francois du Lac, in the Nicolet district.

The *Union Libérale*, of Quebec, will devote a weekly column to Canadian antiquities. The writer signs "Biblo."

The Duchess of Rutland, a writer on social topics for women, is coming to America to widen her sphere of observation.

The sister of Keats, the poet, is living in Madrid, Spain, and is in good health. She is employed in an attempt to obtain from the English Court of Chancery a fortune which belonged to her grandfather.

A portrait of Robert Burns was discovered not long ago in a junk shop, at Toronto, where it was purchased for a few dollars. The signature of the Scotch painter, Raeburn, was found on it, with the date 1787.

The publication of a paper has just been commenced at St. Paul, Minn., called the *Western Tree Planter*. The paper will advocate the planting of trees on the western prairies, and will give special directions as to tree planting.

M. O'Reilly, of Rouen, a Frenchman, of Irish descent, whose son studied in Montreal, two or three years ago, is about to publish a new History of Canada in French. In France his name is pronounced *Aurdie*, or, *Anglic*, Oralee.

Joaquin Miller is living the existence of a hermit in the mountains near Oakland, Cal. He is engaged upon a poem of some length, entitled "Legends of Christ," embodying quaint stories picked up by Miller when he lived in the Levant.

The *Canadian Gazette* learns that Mr. Henry F. Moore, the well-known editor of *Bell's Weekly Messenger* and the agricultural correspondent of the *Times*, will pay a visit to Canada this year for the purpose of reporting upon that country.

Mr. John Ropes, of Hartford, has been engaged for thirty-five years in making a collection of ancient newspapers. It embraces 51,000 copies of papers, in which are represented 8,000 different publications. The claim is made for the collection that it is unrivalled.

The most valuable manuscript in the United States, judging from the price paid, is in the possession of John Jacob Astor. It is the "Sforza Missal," for which \$15,200 were paid. It is dated in the fifteenth century, and comprises 484 pages of vellum bound in red morocco.

The story is told that a lady who had read Rider Haggard's "She," noticed two startling grammatical blunders, and wrote a few lines to the author, calling them to his attention. A few days later she received a letter of thanks from Mr. Rider Haggard, enclosing a cheque for a guinea, as a reward for her pains.

The largest sum ever known to have been paid for a single book was \$50,000, which the German Government gave for a vellum missal, originally presented to King Henry VIII. by Pope Leo X. Charles II. gave it to an ancestor of the Duke of Hamilton, and it became the property of the German Government at the sale of the Duke's library a few years ago.

The first volume of the new "Oxford Dictionary of the English Language" has just been completed, after thirty years' labour. Although foreign, obsolete and compound words have been eliminated, there still remain over 15,000 words, beginning with A to Z, which are current, though doubtless not in every day use. And yet Shakespeare and the Bible were written with a vocabulary of only 7,000.