

## SNAPS AND SCRAPS.

Mme. de Staël, as Principal Grant remarked, wanted Goethe to explain his philosophy in a couple of sentences. And there are some provincial writers who are inclined to settle the affairs of the universe in an editorial. One of these sages has disposed of Imperial Federation as "idiotic." Were it to imitate this flippancy, I should speak of those Canadians who favor the present colonial status as the mean school of politicians; of those who prefer independence, as the bumptious school; of those who lean towards annexation, as the discreet or frugal school; of those who hope for Imperial Federation, as the patriotic school. Patriotism means, etymologically, a love for the country of our fathers.

Dr. Johnson cynically styled patriotism "the last refuge of a scoundrel." And it is true that some people use patriotism, as others use temperance or religion, as a cloak. There are men who remain at home, as parasites and spongers, because their "patriotism" forbids them to desert their country. There are others whose patriotism only means their theory that their country to its inevitable injury should support its native drones and scamps and squeeze out honest and industrious immigrants. But true love of one's country involves a wish for its moral and material improvement; and of course none knew better than the worthy doctor that true patriotism was the last sentiment which a scoundrel was capable of feeling.

Nothing caps patriotism more than party-feeling. Patriotism called for unanimous action to stamp out the rebellion; partisanship (in very few quarters, it is true) sought to interpose difficulties. Patriotism requires the execution of Riel; partisanship is sure to oppose it, in Quebec at all events. Patriotism, at the close of the rebellion, will demand the prompt and stern punishment of those officers and agents, by whomsoever appointed, whose crooked ways goaded misguided half-breeds and Indians to rebellion, by destroying their trust in Canadian truth and justice. Partisans will strive (intellectually, let us hope) to protect the offenders and to gloss over their offences.

A new species of political war-cry, says C. L. Norton in his "Political Americanisms," came into vogue during the last Presidential campaign. "It was based on the well-known habit of drill-sergeants in marking time for a squad of recruits to enable them to march in step. He calls out as the respective feet touch the ground, 'Left—left—left—right—left—left' the pauses between Nos. 1, 2, and 3, being twice as long as those between 3, 4, and 5. It is believed that the idea of calling out 'Blaine—Blaine—James—G.—Blaine' in this cadenced measure originated in a Republican meeting in New York, where in a pause between speeches, a party of Columbia College students began stamping in cadence, after the manner of the 'gallery gods' during too long an intermission at the play. Some one started the Blaine cry, the idea took instantly, the whole assembly followed suit, and when the meeting was over, the crowd formed an impromptu procession and marched in step to its own music. These war-cries proved a conspicuous feature of the campaign. Both parties invented five-footed sentences, and distiches, and the esprit of great processions everywhere was increased tenfold by these cadenced sing-song cries, which almost compelled men to march in step, and kept up the excitement as nothing else could have done. They even assumed a threatening character during the days immediately following the election, when the result was still in doubt, and might easily have become war-cries in earnest, had the suspense continued a little while longer. During this campaign too, the peculiar student cheer (Bah—Bah—Bah) instead of the old time and more formal 'Hurra' three times repeated, was for the first time generally used in political ranks. So, too, was the custom, also borrowed from the colleges, of spelling some catch word in unison, as for instance 'S.O.A.P.' the separate letters being pronounced in perfect time by several hundred voices at once."

"Soap" was certainly a very appropriate political war cry, voicing the hopes and aspirations of the "boys."

Oscar Wilde certainly is a very funny fellow. An American publisher sent him a copy of a new magazine, and invited his criticism. Here is an extract from Oscar's opinion:

"Then, as regards your prose-writers: I like the College Professor best, but the standard is good everywhere; still, if I might say so, a little more care both as regards style and substance should be taken. Rossetti is not living (p. 190), and *in medias res* (p. 192) could not pass even at a fancy ball for *in medio tutissimae*. That a book 'will be read with interest by the illiterate' (p. 151) is too charming to alter, but that 'no man was more fortunate than Carlyle was in his marriage' is a somewhat too painful paradox (p. 134); still, there is much that is good, and the advice to 'read the daily papers as a method of acquiring judgment and good sense' (p. 188) is an excellent bit of humour on which you must allow me to congratulate the author."—*London World*, April 23.

In the May number of the magazine referred to by the *World*, I observed that an apparently complimentary letter of Oscar Wilde's was published, with his signature lithographed, but with ominous asterisks in two or three places. The whole of the above satiric paragraph was omitted, except the words, "As regards your prose-writers, I like the College Professor best, but the standard is good everywhere." The rest of the extract was probably furnished by somebody who appreciated its humor, to wit by Oscar himself, to the editor of the *World*.

The same American magazine has devised a cunning and cheap mode of advertising itself. It announces in circulars, as well as in its own columns, that it is "arranging with eleven of the famous authors of the world, who, with the Editor, will write a series of twelve articles for the magazine to appear in the twelve consecutive numbers beginning with May issue, 1885." \*\* To any subscriber "who is acquainted with the style of prominent writers," and guesses correctly the writer of each of the twelve articles, \$500 will be paid. Further on the publishers promise "to select only such writers whose style is distinct and discoverable."

Though "The English Governess at the Siamese Court" has attracted a good deal of attention, it is not commonly supposed that we have in Halifax at present anybody answering to the description of a "famous author." But the enterprising publishers referred to, having elastic and charitable notions of what constitutes fame, have invited an astonished resident of this city to contribute a specified article to their incognito series, writing, as an inducement to moderate terms: "You see we purpose publishing a sketch of your life and your portrait at the end of twelve months, as one of our symposium." From which two things may be inferred—that the cuto publishers will get their "prominent writers" cheap, and that no one of their subscribers will guess the twelve names and win the \$500. The citizen referred to has not the least idea of posing, like a jay in peacock's feathers, among "the famous authors of the world (1)."

Among the quaint sayings of children, culled from *Truth*, which were printed in the *Critic* the week before last, was that of an infant who, noticing a bald spot on the top of some man's head, informed its owner that he was growing through his hair. A few days earlier a Truro gentleman who owns a splendid beard, though his head is partially bald, was asked by a three-year-old girl, "Uncle, where is the hair off the top of your head?" Then, receiving no answer, this young lady cried out a minute later, as if struck by a sudden thought, "Oh, me see, it has slid down to your chin!" Were not this anecdote vouched for by a well known clergyman, one might fancy it had been invented by Major Mendax or an editor of—well, not to be too personal, of *The Tell-a-truth*.

Captain Boynton's self-advertising joke upon H. M. S. "Garnet" has had some disagreeable results. The lieutenant who overhauled his retreating boat has been courtmartialled for letting it go without reference to his superiors. The sentry who omitted to fire upon the jester has been sentenced to 42 days' imprisonment. And no officer or man in the warships in our harbor can now return to his ship after 11 p. m. The sentries are instructed to fire on *any one* approaching the war vessels after that hour. I hear that Boynton added insult to injury by inviting the officers of the "Garnet" to his liquor saloon in New York. If Captain Boynton would paddle out in one of his patent floating suits in search of the fabled Atlantis, and never come back till he found it, he would be putting his suit and his body to their best possible uses. Donnelly, it is true, claims to have discovered the highest peaks of Atlantis; but its abysses still remain unexplored.

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