

The CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS is published by THE BURLAND-DESRAZATS LITHOGRAPHIC AND PUBLISHING COMPANY on the following conditions: \$4.00 per annum in advance, \$4.50 if not paid strictly in advance, \$3.00 for clergymen, school-teachers and postmasters, in advance.

All remittances and business communications to be addressed to G. B. BURLAND, General Manager.

All literary correspondence, contributions, &c., to be addressed to the Editor.

When an answer is required, stamp for return postage must be enclosed.

City subscribers are requested to report at once to this office, either personally or by postal card, any irregularity in the delivery of their papers.

## NOTICE.

We are preparing an unusually fine

# Christmas Number

OF THE

CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS,

Containing a series of

## HOLIDAY PICTURES.

Accompanied by several

### Christmas Stories.

POEMS, SKETCHES AND ARTICLES.

ORDERS SHOULD BE SENT IN EARLY.

# CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS.

Montreal, Saturday, Dec. 8th, 1877.

## BLOCKING THE STRAITS OF BELLE ISLE.

Some months ago an article went the rounds of the papers advocating a new climate for Canada by blocking the Straits of Belle Isle. The argument of the writer was that an immense flow of northern water is continually rushing into the Gulf of the St. Lawrence through the Straits, while for some months the cold effects of this current are aggravated by the presence of huge blocks of ice, whose chilling influences tell all along the north shore of the Gulf. The theory built upon this was if this cold current and the annual immersion of the icebergs were diverted from the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, the surrounding temperature would be materially raised, the coils of Arctic floods would no more be felt along the shores of Quebec, vegetation would take the place of sterility, and a vast tract of land, now lying idle and uncultivated, would be brought under cultivation, and prove a source of great wealth to the country. Furthermore, it was urged that the absence of the current which now sweeps into the Gulf and up the St. Lawrence would permit of a greater influx from the South of the Gulf Stream, which at certain seasons of the year, by the action of the trade winds, is forced into the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, the result being that, on the neighbouring shores, as in Prince Edward's Island, the temperature is high and vegetation flourishes. Finally, the writer states his conviction that the St. Lawrence would remain open all winter, as salt water ice is never seen in the Gulf or Straits of Belle Isle until the northern field ice is close at hand, when the stob ice begins to form.

This theory, which has the merit of boldness and ingenuity, received some attention throughout the country, and several papers expressed themselves favourably towards it. But Hon. Mr. FORTIN, who is unquestionably our best authority on the physical geography of the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, as he is best acquainted with our Gulf fisheries, has advanced a number of arguments against the project which it may be worth while, once for all, to summarize. He denies the alleged influence of the Gulf Stream on the St. Lawrence Gulf, asserts that the Polar current

has but little effect on the Gulf beyond the east point of Anticosti, and maintains that the blocking of the Straits of Belle Isle would be attended with engineering difficulties that would make its accomplishment impossible. In a late number of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the author of the scheme publishes a second article answering Dr. FORTIN. To prove the influence of the Gulf Stream on the Gulf, he indicates the great rise of the temperature of the water from 27 and 28 degrees in the Straits to 52 degrees near the mouth of the Gulf. To establish the effect of the Polar current far west of Anticosti, he adduces the experience of mariners during the last forty years, who speak of a steady current setting all along the north shore, even up to Quebec itself, the effect of this Arctic current being to freeze the water of the river and to cause winter to set in at Quebec a month earlier than at Montreal. This latter statement will not be generally accepted as a fact, nor will the difference of temperature between the two cities be attributed to the water, there being other meteorological causes easily assignable. This discussion, however, would lead us too far, and we must leave it for another occasion. As to the work of blocking the Straits, the writer insists that, according to high engineering authority, it is quite feasible. The only detriment might be the cost, but the question remains whether the result would not justify the outlay. Of course, it is not expected that the project will be taken up at once, and meantime nothing but good can come of a full discussion for and against it.

## A NEW ASTRONOMICAL THEORY.

That man is always entitled to respect and attention who thinks for himself, and who, while he comes before the world in the bravery of his opinions, has the grace to temper his boldness with a certain show of modesty. Of these is Mr. DUGALD MACDONALD of this city, author of a pamphlet entitled "The Heavenly Bodies: How They Move, and What Moves Them." We confess that we opened the work with a smile of incredulity, and read its initial pages in a spirit of hostile criticism, but after a careful perusal of the whole, and a rehearsal of the principal passages, our opinion of the author and his theory was very materially altered. Of the former we may say that he is a skilful writer, master of idiomatic English, clear and concise in exposition, and at times really eloquent. As a merely literary man, Mr. MACDONALD may at once claim high rank. Of his theory, it is, of course, impossible to speak in detail within the narrow space of an editorial article, and it is still less within our attributions to enter into an argument about it. We must confine ourselves to a summary, which may as well be drawn from the author himself, thus giving the reader an idea of his method. According to him "the sun is at capital of the solar system, and each planet is but a province of that system, and these provinces, as well as the sun, are separated from each other by an unfathomable sea of medium. The heat of the sun causes the motion of the medium; the motion of the medium causes the sun to revolve on its axis, as well as the planets. The revolution of the sun on its axis communicates a second motion to the medium, causing it to revolve. The medium revolving, carries the planets in their orbits around the sun. By one grand law, the sun, in consequence of its magnitude and the intensity of its heat, maintains itself in a central position, and exercises an influence nearly equal in every direction. The sun is not only the capital of the solar system, but it is likewise the throne on which is seated in royal magnificence that great Fire King who rules the motions of the planets by his heat, calls into existence all the inherent properties of matter, including that of gravity itself, and performs all the wonderful phenomena we see in the world."

The theory of a medium in space forms the nucleus of the author's reasoning, and

the bulk of the work is devoted to its elucidation. It is not claimed as original, but traced to Sir ISAAC NEWTON himself, so that while astronomers and physicists will attack the writer for opposing the prince of philosophers' great law of attraction, he will be able to quote NEWTON in his own favour. For ourselves, we are not prepared to accept all the statements of this pamphlet, and there are several of the illustrations that we do not well understand, for which reason we shall be pleased to see them more fully discussed by specialists, but the theory is ingenious and not intrinsically improbable, while many of the branches of argument appear satisfactory. The account of the creation of the world, however, is fantastic, and not being really attached to the subject, might be omitted, as perhaps the only portion that is clearly fallacious. To make a material entity of that which is a metaphysical negative is amusing; and when our author divides light from darkness in this sense, he recurs to that literal interpretation of a Biblical phrase which is the greatest stumbling block in the way of credible exegesis. With this exception, we commend the new pamphlet to the attention of all reflective and progressive readers.

All we feel inclined to say to-day about the new Society that is being formed in Montreal is that the title which has been suggested is an incorrect one, seeing that a Canadian nation does not exist in fact, although this Dominion may be ranked as a progressive nationality. A feeling of individuality as a community may be proper enough, harmonizing with our separate institutions and not at all incompatible with our allegiance to the Empire, but that does not make the title of "Canadian National Society" a desirable one, as it will be evident that it might very easily be made to signify a great deal more than it is the present intention of its promoters that it should do. "Dominion Association" would be better, we believe. Such a society, when organized, could not live on sentiment alone, and whatever the purposes with which it might be charged—and there is surely an abundance of social work to be done, and fields white unto harvest, if we will only in a quiet spirit permit our eyes to behold them—the new gathering of honest subjects and citizens ought never to be allowed to degenerate into a political party or to take the shape of a cabal of any sort or description.

Our American neighbours may well take to heart the loss of their navy ship *Hudon*, and though, as usual, they show a brave spirit under the circumstances, we think something more even than that is needed. Our contemporary, the *Tribune*, gives what it calls the average man's opinion. The average man is an excellent producer and consumer, but it is the opinion of the expert we want in this case. A well-chosen commission of naval architects and navigators would very soon bring to us more of what we want to know than all the newspapers in the Union could do without their aid. Do, please, let us have the voice of the expert, if only once, for a change. Naval architecture and the rules of seamanship are matters of universal concern.

Now that the election in Quebec East has terminated, it is to be hoped that the unusual animosity which it gave rise to will be allowed to subside, and that all will return to a feeling of good fellowship. The probabilities in favour of Hon. Mr. LAURIER, which we stated two weeks ago, have been fulfilled. Now that his seat at the Cabinet Board as Minister of Inland Revenue is secured, we are certain that even his adversaries are prepared to offer him their sincere congratulations, as we heretofore do ours. An opportunity is henceforth set before him of applying his talents to a wholesome administration, and of establishing himself as one of the real leaders of his party.

We are gratified to find that our estimate of the American press, in respect of the Fisheries Award, has not been belied. The large majority of the influential papers of the United States urge the prompt payment of the money, and many adduce the generous example of Great Britain, in similar cases, as one that it would be gracious to imitate. We are no less pleased to see the *London Times* discussing the question in an unusually large spirit, with a knowledge of this Canadian topic rather foreign to its normal mood. It particularly insists that the Award should in no wise get entangled with a bid for Reciprocity, and in this sentiment we fully agree.

## PERIODICAL LITERATURE.

Not sufficiently appreciated, but altogether worthy of attention, as perhaps the best test of current literary progress in Great Britain, the United States and Canada, are the quantity and quality of the periodical press. We purpose making a brief review of several of these publications, divided under the two appropriate headings of illustrated and non-illustrated. As to quality, it may be generally remarked that these periodicals represent the highest culture as displayed in any nation of the continent, and as to form the only one not yet carried out, though altogether worthy of imitation, is that of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, generally considered to be unrivalled by any similar publication in the world.

### THE ILLUSTRATED PERIODICALS.

The oldest of the American illustrated magazines is *Harper's*, of New York, in many respects singular of its kind. Its prominent features are sketches of travel and the best novels of the day, which appear generally from the advance sheets of authors. To a great many readers accounts of travel have an attraction beyond any other kind of literature, and *Harper's* always supplies this liberally. Another feature consists of articles on the fine arts, admirably illustrated. The illustrations of this magazine are abundant and admirably wrought, making of the bound volumes a series of albums very precious for the drawing-room table. The editor is G. W. Curtis, one of the luminaries of American literature, a scholar of profound acquirements, and a writer of fastidious taste, whose pen is conspicuous in the *Easy Chair*, the *Literary Record* and the *Drawer*. The next in age is *Lippincott's Magazine*, of Philadelphia. Daintiness may be set down as the characteristic of this charming periodical. The illustrations are very choice and the whole typographical execution is irreproachable. Published by one of the oldest and wealthiest firms in the country, nothing is spared to make the magazine worthy of its proprietors. The publishers are ably assisted by the editor, Mr. Kirby, a native of New Brunswick and an author of high standing. *Lippincott's* has the additional merit of having brought forward to public recognition and estimation many writers of the interior, who would have been unable to penetrate into the charmed circle of Boston and New York coteries. It is also very popular at the South, being the exponent of much of that solid culture which is peculiar to the old families of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia. *Lippincott's* is just entering upon its twenty-first volume.

There are few instances of such rapid and deserved success as has attended *Scribner's Monthly*, of New York. Its blue cover is a welcome sight at the beginning of every month. A succulent pamphlet in its every page. Much reliance has been placed, from the first, on its illustrations, especially in the mid-summer and holiday numbers, which are always palpitating with interest. *Scribner's* has made rapid headway in England, which may be set down as an additional tribute to its excellence. It has the rare advantage of being under the direct editorial management of Dr. Holland, who is also one of its proprietors. He thus takes a double interest in it. Besides his own works, which are first contributed to its columns, he has charge of a very important department, distributed into Topics of the Time, The Old Cabinet, Home and Society, Culture and Progress, and The World's Work. They are as much sought for as the regular contributions.

Hats off to the scarlet figure of *St. Nicholas*, patron of the young ones. The magazine of this name, published by Scribner & Co., New York, is now sent forward to the number of one hundred thousand, and yet it is only three years old. It is impossible to write a word of exaggeration in respect to this exquisite publication. It is positively the best magazine of its kind in the world. The illustrations are the work of the best artists in the United States, and we apprehend the demand for them has developed the latent talent of many new designers and sketchers, both male and female. The letter-press is in uniform keeping with the artistic department, and its success is chiefly due to the editor, Mary Maples Dodge, an author who requires no introduction to our readers. We need scarcely add that *St. Nicholas* is sure of still further appreciation, if it simply maintains its present standard, to say nothing of future improvements.