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It is not unworthy of notice that the cities to which our Mayor and aldermen made their last pilgrimage of inquiry are of Canadian birth. As M. Rameau points out, New France differed from New England in no respect more than in the boldness with which its missionaries and adventurers pushed their way westward to the Ohio and Mississippi, and down to the Gulf of Mexico. To-day the march of discovery and evangelization can be followed in the names which the later lords of the soil have graciously spared, from Detroit westward to Duluth and the River St. Louis, and from the south-west angle of Lake Superior to the delta of the Mississippi. The whole of the irregular triangle between Lakes Superior and Michigan and the Mississippi, and a considerable area beyond it abound in remembrancers of French exploration and conquest. Even in later times Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota were largely settled by French Canadian pioneers, the story of whose enterprise and struggles may be read in Mr. Tasse's interesting volumes and in the publications of western historical societies. In our admiration for the growth and greatness of those thriving centres of population, manufactures and trade, we may recall with pardonable pride that Canada had no little share in starting them on their path of progress.

The Siberian Railway that Russia is going to build will be one of the grandest undertakings of the present century. It will complete in northern latitudes, the girdle of which our own trans-continental line showed the possibility. Such an enterprise as an iron road through those bleak boreal regions, the very name of which has been associated with all that makes life least worth living, would, a few years ago, have been scouted as a madman's dream. But it is not very long since the notion of piercing the "Great American Desert" with a railway was held up to ridicule at Washington—the conception of our own line antedating the first serious proposal to build a road to San Francisco by many years. Siberia, though hitherto known chiefly as a penal colony, is by no means the wilderness which the popular western estimate makes it out to be. It contains some productive areas, is rich in mines, has a valuable fur trade, and comprises several important towns. The great Moscow road that starts from Perm on the Kama and crosses the Urals to the mining centre of Ekaterinburg was till lately the sole line of land communication. The railway from Perm to Ekaterinburg has been continued to Tyumen, from which point the Moscow road extends to Omsk and other settlements, also sending branches south to

the Altai country and to Turkestan. Other routes have been laid out, and the large navigable rivers in summer and sledging in winter greatly facilitate travel and transport. Regular posts are maintained throughout the country. There are about twenty cities and towns with populations ranging from 5,000 to 40,000 souls. Some of the more northerly towns, such as Obdorsk, Narym, Viluisk, are merely administrative centres, with seldom more than 1,000, sometimes as few as 300 inhabitants. That colonization should have pushed so far north, even to that extent, tends to confirm the hopes of Lieut.-Governor Schultz and others as to the future of our own Mackenzie Basin. It is not impossible that Russia's determination to carry out the great project, which may now be deemed assured since the despatch of a commissioner to study the American and Canadian lines, will impel English capitalists and engineers to resume the scheme of an overland route through Asia Minor, Persia and Beluchistan to connect with the Indian system.

Day by day we receive reminders that the old order is changing into a new one, the full meaning, purpose and destiny of which we know not yet. A few weeks ago a wave of memories surged over the world of writers and readers on the simple announcement of the death of an elderly English baronet. The deceased had done nothing remarkable, having lived the life of an English country gentleman, taken his turn as high sheriff of his county, and served, as a loyal squire, in the county militia. But Sir Percy Florence Shelley was the son of one of England's greatest poets, and the death of the son suggested the sadly shortened life of the father. And now England and all who speak the English tongue are called upon to mourn another of England's greatest poets, a poet who lived out his days, yet whose influence will be farther reaching and more profound after his death than during his long life. His literary career covers nearly sixty years, but mind-growth can hardly be traced in his poems. Some of the later productions of the earlier half of his life as an author show as much maturity as he ever attained, and Ruskin's judgment of more than a generation ago applies, both in its praise and its censure, to the whole cycle. From first to last Browning was the poet of spiritual development, of soul-struggle with the powers of darkness, of the conflict between high aspiration and the tendencies of the lower nature, and he loved to treat of types in which the contending forces were strong and so nearly matched as to make the issue doubtful. His power of mental impersonation was so rare that when he had once put on the mask, he thought and spoke as though the metamorphosis were real and thus often puzzled his readers by taking them through a spiritual labyrinth of which he alone possessed the clue. Possibly, he sometimes found it difficult himself, when the hour of inspiration had passed, to recover by enforced illusion, the clue which he had thrown aside. Hence his frequent inability to give a reason for seemingly wilful obscurities. Hence, also the wonderful truthfulness of the representation of the inner life of his characters.

"Robert Browning," says the greatest of art critics, "is unerring in every sentence he writes of the middle ages, always vital and profound; so that, in the matter of art, with which we have been specially concerned, there is hardly a principle connected with the mediæval temper, that he has

not struck upon in those seemingly careless and too rugged rhymes of his." Then, after reproaching, almost in its integrity, Browning's remarkable poem entitled "The Bishop Orders His Tomb in St. Praxed's Church," as an example of his insight into the spirit of the Renaissance, Mr. Ruskin adds: "It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the 'Stones of Venice' put into as many lines, Browning's poetry being also the antecedent work." Then comes the reproach which has ever since been echoed and re-echoed in so many tones: "The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated writing needs so much solution before the reader can fairly get the good of it, that people's patience fails them, and they give the thing up as insoluble; though, truly, it ought to be to the current of common thought like Saladin's talisman, dipped in clear water, not soluble altogether, but making the element medicinal." This last word gives the key to some of the best fruit of Browning's mind, which, though sometimes drastic enough, has an alterative and healing power which many have advantageously tested.

The Philadelphia correspondent of the London *Times* has been keeping a watchful eye on the doings of Mr. Blaine's Pan-American Conference. Indeed, it has attracted much more attention in England than it has in Canada, and, if we have regard merely to its commercial aspects, not without reason. The trade between Great Britain and South America has for years been of considerable importance, amounting to a total of not far from \$200,000,000. It may be imagined, therefore, that the mercantile class in England looks with anything but favour on a movement which, if successful, may seriously diminish its profits, or possibly, end in diverting this vast volume of business to the United States. In Canada, on the other hand, if we have little to expect, and, certainly, the result of Mr. Jones's mission so far has not been hopeful, we have not much to lose. Some years ago the feeling was somewhat less indifferent. When the *Comte d'Eu*, the pioneer steamer of the direct line between Canada and Brazil, arrived at Halifax in December, 1881, strong hopes were entertained that a trade which had long been neglected, was about to receive an impulse that would bear good fruits. But the results, as shown by the yearly returns, have not answered the expectation. There is no reason, however, why the trade between Canada and the West Indies—especially Jamaica—about which there was so much discussion three or four years ago, should not be trebled or quintupled. In this connection, it is hoped that the Jamaica Exhibition of November next will show a full representation of Canadian products and manufactures.

In connection with some phases of political controversy in this province, it may not be without interest to mention that a man of some note in his day, John Byrom, author of a once famous system of shorthand, and a contributor to the *Spectator*, was wont to maintain that Gregory the Great, not St. George of Cappodocia, or St. George of Merry England, or any other George, was the rightful patron of the Order of the Garter. He defied the Willises, Stukeleys, Peggs, and other antiquaries of the day to refute his hypothesis. There is, of course, no connection between the Order of Saint Gregory the Great and the Order of the Garter. The latter (dedicated, by general consent, to St.