

have been achieved. This has been quite perceptible within the past ten years, at which time there may be said to have been a literary revival. In one sense, the French of the Province of Quebec may claim to have given the impulse, which is the more creditable that they have had to struggle against a number of obstacles, not the least of which is the limited number of their readers. Among the English writers the range has been wider, embracing almost every branch of letters and, while the number of published books has not been very large, the amount of good work in the newspapers and the periodicals—reaching almost every class of readers—exerted a powerful influence on the expansion of the literary spirit throughout the Dominion. The spell worked even in Manitoba where in spite of land "booms" and depressions; Half-breed and Indian uprisings; railway speculations; threats of secession, and Ministerial cataclysms, men found time to devote to the cultivation of even light literature, in published books. From the far Saskatchewan, at Prince Albert, which was a military camp, four years ago, Charles Mair had the inspiration to put forth the dramatic poem entitled "Tecumseth," which stands to his "Dreamland," of some fifteen years since, in the same interesting relation of improvement as was the Canadian literature of that time compared with that of to-day.

Some singular people are disposed to question the fact of this improvement and one or two writers have been so venturesome as to deny that there was such a thing as Canadian literature at all. Of course there is no arguing with such people, no more than there is any use in heeding the croakers that are everlastingly belittling the material prosperity of this country, and the quality of its institutions. Indeed, one factor explains the other. Canadian literature there is precisely because the country is doing well, giving opportunity to the author to write and means to the reader to encourage the works of his countrymen. One thing is certain—that we have done very well, in the past decade, and that the outlook for the future is specially bright.

GEROME'S GLADIATOR.

The reader will remember that there is a difference of interpretation of Gerome's celebrated picture of the "Gladiator's Death." Mr. George Murray, M.A., of Montreal, holds that the legend under the painting, *pollice verso*, as meaning "thumbs down" and death, is wrong, while "Lacledé" and others maintain that it is right. The following letter on the subject, from the pen of "F. C. E.," an Oxford first-class man, and one of the ripest Greek and Latin scholars in Canada, will be read with interest, although written in a light tone of banter:—

I beg leave, with great diffidence, to suggest that perhaps Prof. Murray and myself are both more or less right, as is generally the case when honest men differ honestly on most points. The Romans were a gesticulating, emotional, histrionic lot—so much so that Tacitus makes out that an orator speaking to soldiers, the toughest of the ground to melt their sympathies, and thus succeed in doing so, instead of being led off to a hospital as a "poor demented old gentleman." The Romans, when in the arena they wanted a man killed, would hardly sit with their fists held out in front of them and their thumbs stuck up, like a greedy boy with his fists on the table, each side of his knife and fork, thumbs *excurrent* (as botanists say), waiting for his dinner.

When they wanted a gladiator to kill his fallen foe they would probably lean eagerly forward

with that tigerish thirst for blood (which is in all of us, if we only give way to it), and a forward and spasmodic movement of the thumb—going through the dumb motion of "rip him up"—*vertere terram*, or *glebas*, as Prof. Murray quotes: "Dig it into him." Thus, *premere pollicem* would mean "let the thumb lie idle against the hand," as Prof. Murray most knowingly expounds: "Don't care if you kill him or not; so, let him go." *vertere pollicem* would mean to extend it horizontally upwards or downwards, with a movement implying "dig it into him."

As no point of knowledge is worth any very lengthy disquisition, in a life which only lasts sixty years, unless it teach us something about our Maker or ourselves, what we can learn from all this is that, bad as we are, living in an age when men are found soul-murderous enough to *sell liquor to others*, yet Christianity has had some effect on us, and we are not such a bad lot as the ancient Romans, with their *panem et circenses*.

A WORD FROM WELLINGTON STREET.

A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid. Almost every approach to Ottawa reveals the beauty of her lofty situation. Above the waters rise the hills, above the hills mount the towers, and above the towers float the flags. A fine view of the city used to be afforded by the old railway from Prescott. In this case, the waters were the smooth and shallow waters of the River Rideau; the hill was the Sandy Hill of Lower Town; and the city seemed fairly to bristle with towers. But the view probably more familiar to the traveller at the present time is that obtained by coming on the Canadian Pacific Railway from Montreal. Now the waters are the dark and turbulent waters of the River Ottawa; the Hill is Parliament Hill, rugged and abrupt, surmounted by the legislative towers. Or, if one takes the steamer Empress and approaches Ottawa by water, the altitude of the city appears even more exaggerated. Nature certainly has been lavish of her gifts, and the place is beautiful for situation.

The towers here, perhaps more frequently than elsewhere, are surmounted with flags. Sessional gaieties, the opening of Parliament, the prorogation of the same, the departure of one Governor, the arrival of another, birthday anniversaries and civic demonstrations—these and similar occasions at the capital offer frequent opportunity for the display of bunting. In connection with these demonstrations there is, no doubt, considerable loyalty; but a large part of it also, I am inclined to suspect, is owing to personal gratification. The Anglo-Saxon has a great fondness for crimson and gold. During the *regime* of the Marquis of Lansdowne a little incident in point was afforded by one of the demonstrations in his honour. Three lusty fellows were cheering themselves red in the face, and it came out that one was cheering for O'Brien, another was cheering for the Marquis, while the third, with commendable frankness, admitted that he was cheering simply "for a *toime*." So with us; we celebrate with the object, among other things, of having a "toime."

But Ottawa in midsummer, though more beautiful, is quieter. During the season, in considering what to do, one is perplexed by the very multiplicity of events; but afterwards one is perplexed as to what to do, because there is simply nothing to do. Well, the city is fast relapsing into the quiet so characteristic of an Ottawa summer. The opera is over. The voice of the M.P. is no longer heard in the land. The legislative halls are empty. The carpets are up. One finds it like

Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed!

However, one now has time to read and to think; this is something to be thankful for. Although in some cases, I fear, the thinking may be only the sentimental reviewing of unconscious but artistic tableaux, enacted in conservatories that now hang thick with cobwebs; while possibly the reading, on account of the oppressive weather, may be

light. Do you know I have evolved, out of my own brain, all by myself, the profound theory that light mental pabulum and light physical pabulum go together—fiction and caramels. One naturally expects a great deal from a theory like that.

In the consideration of theories even more profound than the one I have mentioned, the presence of the library of Parliament would, no doubt, be of service. Certain restrictions, however, are being introduced, through the influence of Mr. Griffin, I believe, which will render the books less accessible. For example, instead of being allowed, as formerly, to look over the shelves and select one's book at random, one has to decide from the catalogue beforehand, and ask for it. This is less convenient, though safer possibly. There is a movement on foot also to prevent one from taking his reading home with him, and to retain all books within the building. The view taken by the authorities seems to be that it is not the office of this institution to be a circulating library for the city of Ottawa. But the beauty of the room, the lofty dome, the airy coolness, the quietness, the inspiration of the many books,—all the associations are congenial to reading; so that, if at all convenient, one's having to read in the library would not be any very great hardship.

From the eminence just outside of the library, in the evening, looking west over the River Ottawa, and beyond the transpontine city of Hull, and across a ten-mile stretch of country to the Laurentides purple in the distance, one may behold all the pageantry of a transcendent sunset. Sometimes in radiating ribbands of amber and gold, sometimes glinting through gorgeous draperies of cloud,—it is always indescribably lovely. In the course of a stroll the other evening, a member of the present ministry remarked to me that, among all his travels among the most renowned scenic beauties of the world, he had never seen anything surpassing this. But as the day is so far spent that we have already reached the sunset, I think it must be time for me to close.

Wellington Street is our Downing Street. Not only are the departmental offices there, but the Government has taken the maintenance and control of it off the hands of the municipal authorities here. And the Dominion of Canada may be considered as its possessor, rather than the city of Ottawa in particular. It is to be hoped, therefore, that persons to whom Ottawa as a city might be a matter of comparative indifference may find something of interest in a racy chat from Wellington street.

WILLIAM H. P. WALKER.

LITERARY NOTES.

Queen Marguerite, of Italy, is a capital Hebrew scholar.

Lord Tennyson intends to pass next winter on the Riviera, and he is negotiating for a villa at Cannes.

Flavius Josephus Cook was born at Ticonderoga, and old settlers there call the grave and dignified lecturer "Flave" to this day.

"Saugeen", of Quebec, asks us to publish Coppée's *Etoiles Filantes*, with translation if convenient. His will shall be done.

Sir Frederick Leighton, President of the Royal Academy, has been decorated with the high Prussian order Pour le Merite, for science and art.

The four leading female colleges in the United States are: Wellesley, with 620 students, Vassar, with 283, Smith, with 367, and Bryn Mawr, with 79.

The readers of these Notes are asked to tell who provoked the threat contained in the Chien d'or tablet—Cardinal Richelieu, or Intendant Bigot?

M. Remy de Gourmont has just published in Paris a new and brilliant history of Canada, under the title of "The French in Canada and Acadia."

Those members of the Royal Society who have papers printed in the volume of "Transactions", are supplied with 100 extra copies of their own paper, on fly-sheets for personal distribution.

The Canadian Architect and Builder is the title of a handsome folio newspaper published monthly at Toronto, by C. H. Mortimer. It has reached its fifth issue with every appearance of public favour.

Sir William Dawson's new work on his travels in Egypt, Palestine and other Eastern Countries, has more than the usual scientific value, inasmuch as he treats of the manners and customs of the ancient people.