

any fragments of literature have been preserved the most interesting to us are, of course, the American. If the judgment of Prescott as to the literary faculties and achievements of the more advanced of the nations of the new world at the time of the Conquest be deemed too flattering, we have the testimony of less enthusiastic writers to an intellectual promise which was susceptible of fruitful development. Recent exploration and criticism have done much to shed light on the races of Central America especially. Even if we feel inclined to doubt the genuineness of some of the higher poetic flights ascribed to the native bards, we cannot question that of the objects with casts of which M. Charnay has enriched the Smithsonian Institution. Neither is it unreasonable to conclude that a people who erected such noble monuments of art should have developed, in time, no mean or feeble gift of literary expression.

It is thus seen that, even without the grand triumph of which Cadmus is the traditional hero, the human race had achieved intellectual victories of considerable range and import. But how are that range and that import enlarged when we attempt to survey that mighty commonwealth of letters of so many races and languages which the gift of Cadmus quickened into endless life! How shall we compute the sum total of that stream of thought and fancy and multifarious knowledge which, for nearly thirty centuries, has flowed on and on, sometimes rich and full, sometimes sinking almost out of observation, but never wholly interrupted, down to our own generation?

Montreal.

JOHN READE.

PERSONAL POINTS.

Lord Stanley is having a real taste of the Canadian salmon during his holiday.

Mr. O'Connor Power is very much pleased with the Northwest, and will say so publicly when he gets home.

Sir John paid a flying visit to Toronto and Kingston, last week, combining, as his long experience enables him to do, business with pleasure.

President Cleveland wrote a gracious letter to the French-Canadians of the United States, in national convention assembled at Nashua, N.H.

Prince Roland Bonaparte has been received with unusual show of hospitality wherever he has gone in Canada. His high personal character and devotion to science have been his passports.

At Nashua, among the Canadians who distinguished themselves for public service as American citizens, was Major Mallet, an officer of the Civil Service at Washington, and who fought in the late war.

The brother of the Secretary of State was likewise a Northern soldier, who came forth with the rank of Major, and is now a Lieutenant-Colonel. Mr. Chapleau returned to Canada, unlike his countrymen in the United States.

Of Canadians who fought and died on American battle-fields, by the thousands—there were 46,000 French-Canadians in the army of the North—the names are remembered of Fortier, Fleury d'Eschambault and Lieutenant Blais.

In the twenty-first year of the Confederation, one of the fathers of that event, Sir Alexander Campbell, goes back to visit, in England, the scene of his labours on that behalf. Chief Justice Galt is administrator of Ontario in his absence.

At a meeting of the Prohibition Committee, held in Montreal, on Wednesday, a resolution for the establishment of a third, or Prohibition, party was voted down. Messrs. Jamieson and Fisher, M.P.'s, and Mr. Dougall, of the *Witness*, spoke very sensibly against it.

The retirement of Mr. Griffin from what was called the practical headship of the Post Office Department is a noteworthy event. Mr. Griffin was the oldest officer in the service, and seemed to be a fixture. It is said that he was, in a way, privileged as holding an Imperial commission.

The Deputy Head and Chief Clerk of the Privy Council of Canada is in the Northwest, swearing in the two new Lieutenant-Governors—Dr. Schultz and Mr. Royal. Mr. John J. McGee is the worthy representative of the lamented D'Arcy, and the only bearer of the family name in Canada.

SOLDIER'S SONG.

FROM THE VAUX DE VIRE OF BASSELIN.

Farewell, all my loves, go take yourselves wing,
Farewell, all my loves, farewell till the Spring.

My only care is now to live,
And this the reason I will give:

No money I find;

Can I live on the wind?

So, if gold do not readier come from the King,
Farewell, all my loves, go take yourselves wing.

Montreal.

WILLIAM McLENNAN.

QUAINT FANCIES AND RHYMES,

BY A COLLECTOR.

The writer means, in a series of brief papers, to give the readers of *THE DOMINION ILLUSTRATED*—or, at least, those who are fond of what is odd and fantastic in verse—examples of Provençal poetry, as revived, in our day, among English and American writers. This will be found most agreeable and instructive reading and will introduce the student to the works of De Banville, De Gramont, Julienne, Saintsbury, Hueffer, Gosse, Boulmier, Matthews, and chiefly the handsome volume, embodied in the series called "The Canterbury Poets," edited by Gleeson White.

I.

THE BALLAD.

This first form of verses consists of three stanzas of eight lines, followed by one of four lines, called the envoy; or three verses of ten lines, with envoy of five, each of the stanzas and envoy closing with the refrain. The envoy is like the moral of the fable. It should contain all the honey of the bee, if the ballad is of love, and all the sting of the wasp, if the verses are steeped in satire. The prince of balladists is Clement Marot, who flourished from 1497 to 1544, and the piece which is accounted his best, and a model for all time, is the song of May, or paraphrase of III. Daniels, in eight octosyllable lines:

En ce beau mois délicieux,
Arbres, fleurs et agriculture,
Qui, durant l'Yver soucieux,
Avait esté en sépulture,
Sortez pour servir de pasture
Auz troupeaux du plus grand Pasteur;
Chacun de nous, en sa nature,
Louez le nom du Créateur.

Les servans d'amour furieux
Parlent de l'amour vaine et dure,
Où vous, vrai amans curieux,
Parlez de l'amour sans laidure.
Allez aux champs sur la verdure
Ouir l'oyseau, parfait chanteur;
Mais du plaisir, si peu qu'il dure,
Louez le nom du Créateur.

Quand vous verrez rire les cieus,
Et la terre en sa floriture,
Quand vous verrez avant vos yeux
Les eaux lui buillier nourriture,
Sur peine de grand forfaiture,
Et d'estre larron et menteur,
N'en louez nulle créature,
Louez le nom du Créateur.

ENVOY.

Prince, pensez, veu la facture,
Combien est puissant le facteur;
Et vous aussi, mon écriture,
Louez le nom du Créateur.

Imitations of Marot are now innumerable in the English language. Within the past decade the monthlies, fortnightlies and weekly periodicals have teemed with them, and they already form a large and interesting collection. All those who have attempted the ballad, however, have not succeeded equally well. Indeed genuine success has been only with the few, such as Austin Dobson, Andrew Lang, W. E. Henley and William Sharp. The remainder are more or less artificial, much of their work smacking of school-boy tasks, and in the few American samples there is a tinge of familiarity, an attempt at broad humour which repels, instead of inviting. Chas. G. D. Roberts worthily represents Canada, although his subjects are mostly classical, and there is no inspiration from the beauties of his own native land. Here is his ballad to the Nightingale:

From gab of jay and chatter of crake
The dusk-wood covered me utterly,
And here the tongue of the thrush was awake.
Flame-floods out of the low, bright sky
Lighted the gloom with gold-brown dye
Before dark: and a manifold charming
Arose of thrushes remote and nigh,—
For the tongue of the singer needs must sing.

Midmost a close green covert of brake
A brown bird listening silently
Sat; and I thought—"She grieves for the sake
Of Itylus—for the stains that lie
In her heritage of sad memory."
But the thrushes were hushed at evening,
Then I waited to hear the brown bird cry,—
For the tongue of the singer needs must sing.

And I said: "The thought of the thrushes will shake
With rapture remembered her heart; and her shy
Tongue of the dear times dead will take
To make her a living song, when sigh
The soft night winds disburthened by.
Hark now!" for the upraised quivering wing,
The throat exultant, I could descry,—
For the tongue of singer needs must sing.

L'ENVOI.

But the bird dropped dead with only a cry,
I found its tongue was withered, poor thing!
Then I no whit wondered, for well knew I
That the heart of the singer will break or sing.

Among English examples of the ballad it is much harder to choose, but on account of the subject, which turns on the Nothingness of Things, the following double ballad will doubtless prove interesting. It is from the pen of W. E. Henley, who published a series of these poems, in a paper called *The London*, during 1877-78:—

The big teetotum twirls,
And epochs wax and wane,
As chance subsides or swirls;
But of the loss and gain
The sum is always plain.
Read on the mighty pall
The weed of funeral
That covers praise and blame,
The isms and the anities,
Magnificence and shame,
"O Vanity of Vanities."

The Fates are subtle girls!
They give us chaff for grain;
And Time, the Thunderer, hurls
Like bolted death, disdain
At all that heart and brain
Conceive or great or small,
Upon this earthly ball.
Would you be knight and dame?
Or woo the sweet humanities?
Or illustrate a name?
O Vanity of Vanities!

We sound the sea for pearls,
Or lose them in the drain;
We flute it with the merles,
Or tug and sweat and strain;
We grovel or we reign;
We saunter or we brawl;
We answer or we call;
We search the stars for Fame,
Or sink her subterranean;
The legend's still the same:—
"O Vanity of Vanities."

Here, at the wine one birls,
There some one clanks a chain,
The flag that this man furls
That man to float is fain.
Pleasure gives place to pain:—
These in the kennel crawl,
While others take the wall.
She has a glorious aim,
He lives for the inanities.
What comes of every claim?
O Vanity of Vanities!

Alike are clods and earls.
For sot and seer and swain,
For emperors and for churls,
For antidote and bane,
There is but one refrain:
But one for king and thrall,
For David and for Saul,
For fleet of foot and lame,
For pieties and profanities,
The picture and the frame,—
"O Vanity of Vanities!"

Life is a smoke that curls—
Curls in a flickering skein,
That winds and whisks and whirls,
A figment thin and vain,
Into the vast inane.
One end for hut and hall!
One end for cell and stall!
Burned in one common flame
Are wisdoms and insanities.
For this alone we came:—
"O Vanity of Vanities!"

ENVOI.

Prince, pride must have a fall,
What is the worth of all
Your state's supreme urbanities?
Bad at the guests the game,
Well might the sage exclaim:—
"O Vanity of Vanities!"

It will be noticed that this Double Ballad is composed of six stanzas, of ten lines each, exclusive of the one line of refrain. It is a hard metre to handle, which accounts for its scarcity even among the French.