

A stone was placed on the mouth of the grave, and the masons mortared it down; soil was spread on the top and sown with corn in rows, so that it would be impossible to disturb it without detection. The Commissioner and his friends watched the process from beginning to end, and were the last to leave the spot, excepting for the faithful Nellama; but she too had to creep away as the night fell.

But all unseen to the watchful eyes of Nellama, on the morning of the fourth day a tiny insect entered the grave. It moved timidly—pausing, hesitating, and making as though it would go back, yet always returning and steadily progressing. With the unerring instinct of its species it advanced until it reached the motionless body. It mounted inch by inch with laborious perseverance, retracing its steps, exploring, feeling, testing with its tiny antennae, till it came to the closed and sightless eyes. There it stood, as motionless as the unconscious man, except for the nervous tremor of the antennae. Suddenly it turned and left the body, making straight for the hole by which it had entered, so cunningly bored through the unburnt brick and the plaster into the soft earth beyond. Hours passed, and nothing moved within the living grave. At midnight, two slender horns were pushed through the tunnel, and the pioneer descended the wall on its old track. It had carried its message to the hordes of its clan, and legion upon legion followed in its train. The soul saw it all, and a great agony seized it. It strove to speak; it strove to move that mortal log, through which it was wont to find means for the expression of its emotions, and to feel earthly pleasure and pain. One shake of the hand, one thrust of the foot, and the foe with its legions would flee. But the soul was powerless. On streamed the torrent in an ever-increasing flood, till it grew to a vast, seething mass of busy atoms. On, on went the pioneer of the hand till once more it stood before the sightless eyes.

Peroo was to lie in his grave till the green blade sprang above it. Both he and his father had expressed their willingness to make that period longer. The old Peroo had been buried from seed-time till harvest, and the younger man had no reason to doubt that his powers were inferior to those of his ancestor. But the Commissioner willed it otherwise. He said that he would be content to have the corn in the green blade—so goes the story. Nellama was counting the days to her husband's release. She had chosen the fowl which was to make his first dish of nourishing mallagatawny. She promised herself that the broth should be strong and good, and enriched with stimulating herb and seed.

On the morning of the appointed day, Runga chanced to pass her in the village street; there was a grim and evil smile upon his face which she did not understand. Why should he smile as his successful rival's hour of triumph drew near? A large crowd gathered to see the opening of the grave. Men with shovels stood ready to remove the earth at the bidding of the Commissioner. But before the order was given, he and his friends fully satisfied themselves that there had been no trickery.

"Neither food nor air can possibly have been introduced, as far as I can see. By all the laws of nature the man ought to be as dead as a red herring," said one of the scientific men.

But the Commissioner did not look at all anxious.

"We shall find him alive all right, but rather exhausted, probably. These Hindus, undoubtedly, know something about this mysterious state called suspended animation," he replied.

At the given signal the coolies set to work; the stone was hauled, the mortar was chipped away, and the heavy slab levered up. The Commissioner himself was the first to descend into the grave, followed quickly by Peroo's father. Nellama, prompted by love and curiosity, pressed forward through the throng, and leaned over to look into her husband's tomb. The air was rent by a terrible shriek, there was a cry of consternation from the Englishmen, and a groan of despair from Peroo's father.

A white skeleton lay at their feet. Peroo had met with the

one dread fate that is so much feared by all who practise his art. He had been eaten by ants. No call, save the last Great Call on the Judgment Day, could ever reclothe his departed soul with flesh.

Bitterly did his young wife blame herself that her eyes had failed to detect the hole so cunningly bored. But detection was impossible, for the fiend who had made it had plugged it with sweetened rice flour, knowing well that no creature on earth but an ant would discover it, and that the discovery would be swift and sure.



#### MUSICAL NOTES.

AT the first annual meeting of the Musicians' Benevolent Society the following were elected officers for the year: R. Gruenwald, Mus. Dir., president; Professor von Konigsberg, vice-president; M. J. B. Roy, secretary; J. O'Donnell, treasurer; Messrs. P. Cameron, Geo. Marshall and Chas. Murphy, finance committee, and J. Ratto and Wm. Sullivan, trustees. After the secretary's and treasurer's reports were read, the president congratulated the society upon the progress made since its foundation, and the steady increase of members, including now the foremost of Montreal's teachers and musicians. Some entertainments will shortly be given for the benefit of the society, which will, no doubt, receive the encouragement such a society deserves at the hands of the public.

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A NEW patriotic song has been published by Whaley, Royce & Co., the words of which are by a young Montrealer, Mr. Norman S. Rankin, the music being by Mr. J. S. Doolittle. The song is entitled "For Canada and Empire," and is dedicated to the members of the Canadian contingents to South Africa. Both words and music are pleasing and the song should become quite popular.

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THE choral event of the season in Montreal will be the concert of the Motet Choir, which is announced for January 30, in the Windsor Hall, with the great Bispham as soloist. This will be Mr. Bispham's first visit to Montreal, and his singing will be a revelation to those who are fortunate to hear him. It is an education in itself to hear artists of the stamp of Mr. Bispham, and the hall should be crowded to hear this great singer. He will sing "Erkoning" (Schubert), "Widmung" (Schumann), "Die Ehre Gottes" (Beethoven) and other selections. The Motet Choir will also sing a splendid programme of psalms, part songs, etc., by the following composers, Mendelssohn, Sir Geo. Martin, Sir Frederick Bridge, Henry Leslie, Henry Smart, J. L. Hatton, Sir Alexander Mackenzie.

#### LITERARY WOMEN OF MONTREAL.

NEXT WEEK'S LIFE will be of unusual interest. A brilliantly written and profusely illustrated article on "The Literary Women of Montreal," will occupy several pages. This sketch of a number of the most gifted of Canada's daughters is certain to attract a great deal of attention, and cannot but add to the steadily growing reputation of "the illustrated home paper of the best people in the Dominion." The regular departments will be fully up to the standard in interest.

As an evidence of the growth of MONTREAL LIFE'S reputation, the following sample instance may be mentioned: Last week a letter was received from the editor of Blanco y Negro, the great comic paper and illustrated review of Madrid, Spain, requesting that MONTREAL LIFE should exchange with that publication. This is only one out of many such occurrences that might be cited. Inquiries are being received almost daily from Canadians residing abroad, who want LIFE in order that they may keep in touch with Canadian events.