

length, been brought.

In Europe the great diversity of the different languages forms an effectual bar against any such coalition. In the case of Canada and the United States no such barrier exists. A confederation between the two would thus be among the possibilities, and we think among the probabilities of the near future. * * *

A VIEW OF REALISM.

The characteristic tendency of the present generation is realism. Human thought in every direction is straining after the truth. Men whose actions mark the footsteps of progression care more than ever before to learn and teach what actually *is*, and less than ever before to mourn for the illusions, however beautiful, which are daily becoming but memories of the past. Mountains of superstition that have proudly stood for ages,—walls of false theory, built long ago by careful hands and faithfully repaired and strengthened by following generations,—resist for a time by massive strength the wave of investigation which so mercilessly forces its way into their mighty hearts, but finally crumble and go down forever in the ruin of oblivion. Iconoclastic as we are, we often tremble to look upon the vastness of the destruction we have wrought;—but unceasingly, unerringly, the work goes on.

The very air is filled with realism. We can no more avoid coming under its almost instinctive influence than we can stop drawing breath. It is *here*, and in spite of ourselves we are infected with its spirit and carried along by the tide of the inevitable. The causes of this universal movement are explained very diversely and quite unsatisfactorily. They are, however, beyond the limits of this discussion;—we are chiefly concerned with its effects. Former eras of the world's history are respectively designated the age of chivalry, the age of intolerance, the age of romance and idealism and the age of great deeds. Ours has been styled the age of mediocrity; but a more exact, a truer name would be the realistic age. To demonstrate its propriety, let us glance for a moment into the principal departments of current human thought.

Science, being intrinsically a search for the actual, revels in its native element, and advances to unprecedented and un-dreamed-of triumphs. Endless are its discoveries of the truth in nature, and incalculable are the benefits derived from the utility that is made of them by invention.

The literature of the time is permeated with realism. The Theologian no longer affirms with serious exactness the number of angels that can comfortably dance on the point of a needle; he has ceased to argue concerning the authenticity of the Apocrypha, and we rarely even hear him insist on the inspiration of the Scriptures. In this day of practicality, mankind calls out to him for the kernel, not the chaff, of religion;—and he turns his attention to the demands and necessities of humanity,—to the more vital questions which concern the ultimate welfare and happiness of his fellow-men,—to the ugliness of sin, the beauty of righteousness, and the eternal mercy and love of God. The Poet, stirred by the general thrill, turns with fond reluctance from the luxurious fields of his imagination, and takes instead his inspiration from the existent domain of life about him. The Novelist runs his pen through a network of improbable plots and startling situations, and blots out unfeelingly his impossibly good heroes and impossibly wicked villains. Pausing and

looking out upon the busy world before him, he sees heroes of sufficient heroism, villains of sufficient villainy and excitement of sufficient intensity to justify him in becoming an exact delineator of life as it is,—in short, an historian in detail.

In the province of art,—the development of man's finest sensibilities and the satisfaction of his highest nature,—the influence of pure realism is scarcely less discernible. The Painter forsakes the weird and beautiful images of his ideality, and pictures on his canvas the simplest and most common of natural scenes,—a bit of ordinary woodland, an humble cottage, a view in every-day life. No object, if truly depicted, is too lowly or familiar to claim the attention of the school which acknowledges as its motto: "True art is fidelity to nature." The Sculptor turns his back upon the indefinable outlines of an angelic or mythological group, and leaves unfinished the work of bringing into life the ideal beauty of some heaven-born Venus or Apollo. Imbued with the surrounding atmosphere of exactness, he carves into enduring marble the physical faults as well as graces of living models, or by his magic touch shapes some homely, simple group in rural or domestic life. Even the Musician, the most ethereal of all artists, appreciates and follows the prevailing tendency. The operas of Wagner and the symphonies of Berlioz undertake to deal with fact more than with fancy. The underlying idea of the whole is to represent real action, real life, and real emotion.

And so we might go on indefinitely, finding as we proceeded that the entire range of present thought is marked by a devotion to *that which is*. The actual is discovered to be of far higher importance to mankind than the ideal and hence mankind is bending its energies to the exploration and comprehension of what lies before it. And in all this is implied a practical lesson to humanity. When complaint is made by lovers of the beautiful that beauty suffers loss by the indiscriminate sacrifice of the imagination to fact, they display at once the import of the warning given by this realistic age. There are but three possible classes of things within our knowledge,—those owing their existence to God, to man, and to both. In the first class, the beauty of the truth admits of no improvement;—in the second and third, the responsibility for the lack of beauty rests upon ourselves. Shall we sit by, in idle grief, to mourn the ashes of those false idols which we ourselves have reared; or shall we profit by the lesson, and, taking life just as it is, make it worthy of our admiration? The destruction of that which only pleased and flattered will not be in vain, if man will place the truth before his eyes and strive to make it beautiful. Then will the world have taken a mighty bound towards all that is higher,—grander,—nobler.

C. A. P.

The masher:

"What is that, mother?"

"A masher, dear;

You will always find it standing here

Posed on the corner of the street,

Proudly displaying its tiny feet,

Twirling its little ten-cent cane,

And stupefying its tender brain,

With the smoke of a paper cigarette.

Don't touch it, dear—it was raised a pet."

"Will it bite, mother?"

"Well, I should shout:

It will bite for all that's out."