

THE BORDER WAR. WHEN? WHERE?

THE CONSERVATIVE has in hand a very interesting and unique contribution, with the above title, from the facile and pleasant pen of Mr. H. E. Palmer formerly a captain in Co. A, 11th Kansas cavalry and now a citizen of Omaha where he stands very high as an insurance expert, agent and adjuster.

In a future issue of THE CONSERVATIVE and, possibly, illustrated with portraits of John Brown, Col. Jennison, Quantrell, Gen. Jim Lane and other noted characters of the border, this very attractive and valuable contribution to the history of Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska will be given to the public.

CURRENT COMMENT.

An Interesting Experiment.

The recent plebiscite in Canada on the question of "prohibition" sustained that cause by a vote somewhat smaller than was expected, but still sufficient as an indication of public sentiment. The experiment of intrusting to the direct action of the people at the polls initiative for legislation is a novel one on this side of the Atlantic and shows a step toward the fundamental principles of socialism. There is no reason in itself why such a method of determining public action should not work happily. The "referendum" policy as practiced in Switzerland has always been that of submission of laws actually passed to the popular vote for a final indorsement. The Canadian measure reverses this, and we perceive a policy sought to be enforced on the lawmaking powers by the constitutional will of the people expressed in advance. The Dominion government, after sanctioning this initiative, should be deemed bound to carry out the expressed popular desire of the people. But it is intimated that there will be an attempt to evade it on account of the peculiar position of the premier, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who was elected from Quebec, a province very hostile to the prohibition policy. The compromise hinted at is that the question shall be relegated to separate provincial action, and not be treated by Dominion legislation. Should this be true it will suggest the absurd and dangerous attitude which looks at a method of political reform as a thing which can be put on and taken off like a coat according to the weather or evaded by shrewd trickery.

Romance in Modern Life.

Prosaic as the world seems to have become in so many particulars, the passion for the romantic and unusual experience of things is always aglow at the bottom of men's thoughts. One of the curious literary phenomena of recent years is the extraordinary revival of the

taste for tales of adventure. Publishers can scarcely print clean books of this kind fast enough to satisfy the public taste. The modern world, too, not only craves to read of strange adventure, fictitious or otherwise, but furnishes an ample stock of hardy and venturesome souls eager to undergo adventure, be it never so dangerous. At no time, for example, has the passion for exploration been so venturesome and assumed so many phases of experiment as in the present. The imaginative element as a factor in human experience is securing ample recognition as a dominant impulse.

No revelation of personal experience has ever more thoroughly fascinated the curiosity of English society than the alleged adventures of M. Louis de Rougemont. Even the grave and reverend seigniors of the British association have listened with enchanted interest to the story of the eloquent Frenchman, who has been called the modern Robinson Crusoe. There are skeptics, however, who insist that he should be rather designated the French Ananias. It is the saving fact that no imagination, however daring, would ever have devised so extraordinary a story, for fear that it would at once be disbelieved and the inventor ejected from society as a veritable Munchausen in flesh and blood. This is indeed the attitude of cold blooded critics, but the majority of judges find in Rougemont's coherence and intelligent grasp of the fitness of things something which baffles all attempts at doubting cross examination. De Foe's hero pales before this living narrator of castaway experiences on Pacific coral reefs and among tribes of Australian cannibals. It is fair to say that so far as investigation can vouch for the truth of M. de Rougemont's adventures it is in his favor.

The point of interest in the present connection is the bearing of the adventurer's story as an object lesson in the passion for romanticism, which kindles so easily and surely. It is what men do and dare and suffer, whether in a great cause or in pure love of adventure, which takes a more strenuous clutch on human interest than what they think. This is the common ground where men and women of every grade of intelligence meet and understand each other. It is not necessary to assume that action is the higher function of life, but all appreciate its modes in that thrill of flesh and blood which so instantly quivers delightfully. So we see a man like Lord Kelvin or Haeckel, fresh from abstract and erudite investigation, stand open mouthed before the daredevil adventurer Rougemont, listening with as much absorption as Desdemona listened to her sooty charmer. Even science and philosophy love the romantic. Darwin's greatest enjoyment was novel reading, and the most sensational sort of fiction at that.

Europe Versus America.

The two most important financial weeklies of Paris—L'Economiste Francais and L'Economiste European—edited respectively by MM. Leroy Beaulieu and Thiery, highly respectable names in economic science abroad, published articles last month concerning the United States of curious interest. Both these gentlemen recognized anxiously the growing political importance of this country and compared our status with that of continental peoples. Professor Leroy Beaulieu seems to believe that there is imminent danger of our attacking Europe at some not distant day and advocates a federation of the imperiled nations to enforce a Monroe doctrine on the other side of the Atlantic. He points to the proposed sailing of an American fleet to the coast of Spain during the late war as one of the evidences of an irrepressible ambition, which, if carried out, ought to be met with armed resistance from all Europe. He goes on to say that "the continental powers ought to prevent, even by recourse to war if need be, any establishment by the Americans in Africa or in the part of Asia bordering upon the Mediterranean or the Red sea."

The earnestness with which the French economist charges on this windmill of his own creation would be ludicrous if it were not for a serious side suggested. This is a profound jealousy lately risen toward us in continental Europe, which has marched equally with an augmented respect. It is totally different from the old dislike for America and American institutions. That had in it an element of condescending tolerance. This strikes the keynote of fear, and it is the result of a war, too, the end of which should have been a for-gone conclusion in the mind of an observer capable of an algebraic equation.

This French alarmist need have no fear that there will be any American invasion of European shores except through the agencies of a rapidly growing commerce, making yearly strides of a conquering progress. Perhaps at heart this is the path which he really dreads. It is enough to cause uneasiness among nations which regard their markets as sacred to themselves, whether at their hearthstones or in foreign regions, where they attempt to hedge in a jealously guarded monopoly. The only armament of the Americans will be superior ingenuity, enterprise and quality of the products which they wish to sell; the field of campaign in which they will use their strategy—the free field of open competition. Another bigger specter, too, haunts M. Leroy Beaulieu's fevered vision. This is the grim apparition of a federation which in 1950 will give the United States 130,000,000 inhabitants and England, Canada and Australia enough more to make 250,000,000 in aggregate of Anglo-Saxons.