

Wood Engraving in Canada.

To Mr. J. H. Walker, of Montreal, we believe, belongs the honor of being the first to practice the art of wood engraving in Canada. He it was who made the cuts for the first illustrated paper published in this country—*Punch in Canada*—a comic paper printed at Montreal in the year 1850. Nothing in the way of illustrating books or papers, by means of wood engraving, had been done previous to that date, unless it was that of the small cuts in "Starke's Almanac." These latter were made by Mr. Cyrus Swett, a steel-plate engraver, with whom Mr. Walker served his time as a seal and copper-plate engraver. That class of work, not affording full scope for originality of design, was abandoned by Mr. W. for wood engraving, and being of an artistic, rather than mechanical, disposition, he produced many works showing the feelings of an artist. Among his other works might be mentioned all of the wood cuts for the Geological Survey of Canada, under the late Sir William Logan and Mr. Billings. They expressed great satisfaction with the work (some thousands of dollars worth), and pronounced it equal to anything that could be done in London, England. He made nearly all of the wood engravings contained in Dr. Dawson's works—these latter were made in Montreal and printed in Scotland. He drew and engraved the greater number of the cuts in "Lovell's Geography"—not of so high a class, to be sure, as the survey work, but good cuts, although they were badly electrotyped and printed too grey in color. He made numerous illustrations for the illustrated edition of the *Montreal Herald*, issued by the proprietors on New Year's day for several years. All of the views in the illustrated supplement to the *Montreal Gazette*, under Messrs. Lowe & Chamberlin, published in book form. Latterly, all the cartoons and minor cuts for *Diogenes*, a comic paper, from drawings of his own. Another comic paper called *Grinchuckle*, being started by a prominent public man of Montreal, Mr. Walker was engaged to make the drawings and cuts for it—furnishing the printer, week after week, with entirely original subjects. The cartoons were, at the time, very much praised by the press of both provinces. This publication having served the purpose for which it was started, the promoter of it repudiated any responsibility for its debts, refusing to pay the artist. This brought about a harrassing law suit,

ending in favor of the wealthy man, and Mr. Walker not only got nothing for his work and was condemned to pay costs, but had to pay back the money he had received on account, with interest. The greater number of the portraits printed in the *Daily Witness*, of Montreal, for several years, were engraved by him from photographs. (The late portraits in the above paper were not of his cutting. The *Witness* has its own engravers, but it has the honesty not to advertise, as others do, for *first-class work, superior work*, or anything of the kind). The wood engravings in *Tuttle's Illustrated History of the Dominion* were cut by Mr. Walker from his own drawings, which were entirely original. Nothing had hitherto been done to illustrate events in the history of this country other than views of its scenery.

Another class of work now sprung up (not at all congenial to a man of genius) called, by engravers, transfer work, re-engraving cuts that had been already printed. The great rush of business forced him to seek for assistance, and, amongst others, he brought from New York a Mr. Cramer. Too many apprentices were taken at that time—many of them are now scattered throughout the Dominion, but, so far, the standard of their art has not been very elevated. Newspaper and job offices now have their "wood cutters," as they call them, and they are not ashamed to advertise for *first-class work*. A first-class artist, it is needless to say, could not be induced to do this work, were his services indeed necessary. There are others, again, without artistic knowledge, who advertise themselves as *designers*, and will promise to do almost anything—quacks there are in the arts as well as the medical profession.

In the city directories all engravers are merely classified as *designers* and engravers. The mistake has arisen, evidently, through the ignorance of the compilers, and every man that can cut a transfer is now called a "designer." Look at the gross violation of all rules of art, not to speak of good taste, often seen in our newspapers and on circulars, etc.—men will play upon the ignorance of the great body of the public in this respect. There are no first-class engravers in the province of Quebec—there is nothing to sustain them. Ontario has some good ones, but in Quebec all sorts of people constantly advertise for the very best work, lowest prices, etc. From long experience and natural talent the subject of this notice has well earned his