

of good paper and print! Now, were this deliverance dictated by malice towards a fellow-writer and published with the motive of personal detraction, it need hardly be said that it would not be noticed. But the literary judgment is apparently not a mere bit of spleen: it is a deliberate denial, without qualification, of the existence of a native literature, and a gratuitous reflection on every Canadian who has contributed brains and culture to the writing of a book.

Under ordinary circumstances the fit answer to such invincible folly and ignorance would be silence. But silence, unfortunately, is apt to be misunderstood; and the native literature has, in indifference, sufficient to contend with, without one's allowing a gross perversion of truth to obtain unchecked currency, to its further repression and detriment. Hence the present reference to the Toronto journal's supercilious dismissal of Canadian literature and its libel on the patriotism and intelligence of its readers. Not long ago, in these columns, we had also to combat another depreciator of native letters, whose offence was the greater in publishing his untruths where the facts were not known—in the Motherland. Authors in general may laugh at the scoffing spirit, and the individual writer who ventures to put his literary wares before the public may be as philosophical as he pleases when he has to meet sharp and pungent, though not malicious and untruthful, criticism. But the cases we have referred to have not the merit of being helpful to literature; nor have they an iota of justification for being written, either on the ground of truth, or in the interest of native authors. They are simply pieces of senseless journalistic atheism, happily rare—wicked and unscrupulous denials that any literary good has come out of the Canadian Nazareth.

We have said that we are as yet a young and immature people; and it is not asserted that the Canadian mind has come prematurely into intellectual flower, or shown, in literary paths, more than the normal tendency to manifest industry and occasionally some degree of genius. To say that these qualities are not occasionally manifested in the literary product of Canada is to impugn facts and to controvert the dictum of sound literary discernment and cultivated taste. It is true that qualities less meritorious not infrequently reveal themselves in our home literature, and that it is unwise to fail either to point them out or to call them by another and undeserved name. But this is wholly another matter. We are here not arguing against the action of competent, or even stringent, criticism in dealing with the works of native authors. We are concerned only to defend Canadian literature from the attacks of supercilious ignorance, and to enter a protest against the cheap attitude of an essentially ignoble journalism which, whether from envy or from the levelling spirit of the time, has not a single good word to say for the native author or his work. Much harm, we know, may be done by overpraise; and, as a rule, only a sickly literature can come of coddling. No less pernicious is that pursuit of weak minds known by the modern phrase, "literary log-rolling," though not a little might be said in its favour in an overstocked book-market and among a people, in the main, indifferent to literature. But may not equal harm be done by the "ferocious manner" in journalism, which esteems an author as a glorified being whom it is necessary to keep on the low diet of public disfavour, to prevent him from losing his head by success? Is the native author, however, in need of rebuffs of this kind? Is there one who has adopted literature as a profession who has not often to eat the bread of humiliation, and whose powers of mind are not largely dissipated by sordid care? Is it not true, moreover, that there are many easier paths to distinction than Canada offers to her literary men? Why then—save that they love their country and their art, not wisely but too well—should they work on in the face of almost uniform neglect and within hearing of the frequent gibe of the scoffer? Only that a day must soon dawn, if the hour is not yet, when it will be felt that something is wanting in the life of our young nation which material energy alone must fail to supply. Unless there is a greater sympathy with literary aims, it is to be feared, however, that this something will long be lacking, and that the day will remain distant when Canada intellectually shall rise to her fit place among the nations.

But happily there are already evidences of a recoil from such methods of greeting native literature as we have of late seen specimens of in some notable quarters in the press. Philistinism of this kind, it is almost trite to say, never pays; and the public are too honest in the mass to applaud, or even to tolerate, literary or other injustice. In time even journalists, who ply the trade of the mocker of anything more intellectual than the daily press aspires to, will see that it is impolitic to depreciate what may be on a higher plane than its own; for to hold in light esteem that which is above it is to encourage the application of the cheapening process in due course to itself. Besides, is not the Press but a branch of literature; and if our ideals are not wholly to perish, is it not the duty, as well as the honour, of the journalist to respect and uphold his own calling?

G. MERCER ADAM.

MONTREAL LETTER.

DAY after day exposed to the curious, not to say quizzical, gaze of some fifty visitors, under a searching electric light, I imagine the quaint old faces that have haunted an upper chamber in the Natural History Society's building for two weeks past will be glad enough to return to the bosom of their families, even though these should consider musty, mysterious attics, or dim dark cellars worthy apartments for them. Indeed there seems always something uncanny and morgue-like about portrait galleries in general, and about those in particular that can't boast many inspirations of Reynolds, or Gainsborough, or Romney. However, I must confess on the whole the vulgar crowd have spared the unfortunate victims of rising limners in a most laudable fashion. Stained-glass attitudes, facial

expression, and colouring only cisatlantic artists could imagine, and such, of the last century, have been overlooked with a delicacy of feeling one might desire for Parisians when they take a peep at their most popular gallery—the Morgue.

Judging from the neat little notice that follows each name in the Catalogue, I feel as if justice could scarcely be done these Canadians in twenty letters; but after all we must not ignore the thousand grateful sentiments that will inevitably fill the heart of a hitherto obscure individual, when he awakes to find himself famous through the possession of that most enviable of objects a great-grandfather.

The Honourable Joseph Legaré, may, I think, be ranked next to the Vicomte de Léry in point of personal charms. He was a much esteemed painter, though apart from his own portrait, which if I remember rightly he painted himself, little or nothing of his appears in the collection. However this can scarcely count against him. Zacharée Thelariolin, Chief of the Huron Indians, and what is more "an artist entirely through the force of natural talent," evidently shared Cromwell's scruples with regard to portraiture, for he has not hesitated to send down to posterity a face puckered up with as many wrinkles as the classic robes of Sir Frederick Leighton.

Fair "femininity" will certainly denounce the lack of gallantry that places a notice of the flimsier portion of humanity last. Believe me, I have reserved any word about these more or less bewitching creatures as *une bonne bouche*. With all due respect to Mr. Henry Blackburn, who lately sang to us our grandmothers' paises, we must beg to differ from him in his admiration for the hideous, not to say anything else, Directoire dress, and there are not a few dames that this gown disfigures. Fortunately when Theresa Charlotta, daughter of the Emperor of Germany, was painted in Canada in 1794, the outlandish fashion had not yet come to light. So the pretty Princess sits with her shapely figure, and mountains of powdered hair, quite charming in her way. Among the curios are two flags she gave to the Twenty-first Regiment of Militia.

There is a certain meek-faced, cherry-mouthed creature who would hardly attract our attention were it not for the fact that her dress is finished with *real* lace. A curious, a very curious "effect," doubtless imagined by that class of individuals who would fain have Apollo appear in great coat, and the Venus of Milo in a morning wrapper.

One or two reverend ladies deign to grace the walls. One in particular deserves an honourable mention for her expression of superhuman patience as she vainly strives to write in the over-exhilarating presence of two questioning, chubby-faced cherubs.

Perhaps the most interesting objects the glass cases contain are some charming miniatures, swords and firearms of '37, silver plate, and several wonderful pieces of old lace belonging to the de Lotbinières. Among the first the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Hallowell certainly surpass anything of the kind in the exhibition. A silver cup destined by John Jacob Astor for one Alexander Mackay is famous through Washington Irving's "Astoria."

In an inner room we find the curious genealogical tree of the Damours family, a truly elaborate affair, and quite worthy to compare with the "tree" I came across in an old English cathedral. This one attempted to trace some distinguished individual's descent back to Adam. The Damours table is less ambitious with a result consequently more flattering.

And now rest in peace, dear old people, shall any of us be worthy to "hang" beside you in 1988?

ONE word about the Philharmonic Concert. This society's performances afford an excellent opportunity of ascertaining how much or how little musical talent exists in the city. There is still a great deal left for us to do. Prof. Couture, a clever conductor, works hard and conscientiously, but he is not orchestra, and pianist, and singer, and of these three indispensable factors in a good concert we are sorely in need. Amateurs, though they may mean well, prove utter failures on the stage. Of all abused arts music is the most so, and singing that branch of it least understood. I would speak longer about this, but space forbids.

GADE'S *Christmas Eve* was given for the first time in Montreal. It is a pleasing cantata, but not very impressive. The beauty of Barnby's *Rebekah* was much enhanced by Miss Landes' charming voice. She is, of course, an exotic flower. Mr. Jehin-Prume's delicious rendering of Mendelssohn's concerto quite entranced us. He is a bright star that has wandered by mistake into our firmament. We must beware not to lose him.

Montreal.

LOUIS LLOYD.

NATURE.

NATURE is like a sister to my eyes,
A maiden playful, petulant and shy.
Deep in her face sweet meanings I espy
Which now she fain would hide, as the far skies
Hide their blue souls by some thin cloud that flies,
Rendering concealment lovelier. I sigh
When gazing on her charms, so quietly
Expressed, and learn her soul by its fair guise.

Sometimes, with folded hands upon her breast,
Alone, apart, like some sweet nun, I hear
Her pray. Sometimes she sings to me, and fear
And joy alternate rob my mind of rest.
Her dullest ways are full of winsomeness:
Her saddest moods are rich with hopes that bless.

—Spectator.