



## AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

### A Young Canadian Pianist.

By SYDNEY DALTON.

THE list of Canadians who have achieved international fame in the art of music is not one that requires much time to recite. There are a few names recognised the world over, first and foremost that of Mme. Albani, one of the greatest sopranos the world has known.



Ellen Ballon.

Mme. Pauline Donalda and Mr. Edmund Burke are heard to-day, and recently Europe has sung the praises of Kathleen Parlow, a little Canadian girl who promises to rank among the great violinists. There are others, but at best they are few. Of course, considering the extreme youth of Canada and its inartistic environment it is not a half-bad showing. In literature, painting and sculpture Canadians have done quite as much as in music, even more, and there is no reason to hasten to the conclusion that the people of the Dominion are not artistically gifted. Art, like a taste for olives, is largely acquired. We

must first of all pass through the early stages of transcontinental railway building, of wheat growing and general pioneer work, and *per interim*, let us be thankful if the infinitesimal spark of artistic achievement is fanned into the smallest flame, or even saved from extinction.

And it would seem that the spark is being fanned. If Canadians have taken time lately to read the meagre notices about a few artistic fellow-countrymen they have possibly seen something about a recital given lately in New York by a little Montreal girl who has been studying there with the famous pianist Rafael Joseffy. Her name is Ellen Ballon. Three years ago she was studying in Montreal, with Miss Clara Lichtenstein, and she was considered a very unusual little genius. She played the works of Bach particularly well, and anyone who knows Bach knows that he requires fleet fingers and much delicacy and finish.

At this time Ellen Ballon was a little girl of eight. Long black curls hung down her back, and her pretty little face and large dark eyes lent added attractiveness to her remarkable playing. She was born in Montreal, but is descended from a race which is conceded to have the greatest amount of instrumental talent—the Russian Jew. The Jews of Poland and Russia have probably produced more eminent pianists than any other race. One readily recalls such names as Chopin, de Pachmann, Godowsky, Lhevinne and Hambourg, and the list is much longer, so this little Canadian girl has a pianistic lineage of undeniable excellence.

Three years ago she was placed under the great Hungarian pianist and teacher, Rafael Joseffy, in New York. A better choice of a teacher could not have been made, for not only has he imparted to her much of the knowledge of his great art, but he has been a loyal friend and wise guide to the little girl in this critical stage of her career. After three years study she has made her initial appearance in New York, and on March 7th she played in Mendelssohn Hall, with the assistance of the Damrosch Orchestra, before a large audience that contained an unusual number of musical connoisseurs. The happy influence of her teacher was apparent in the programme which was chosen for the occasion. Two concertos with orchestra, the Beethoven in C major and the Mendelssohn G minor, were followed by a group of Bach numbers, a Prelude in G minor, from an English suite, the Fantasia in C minor and a prelude and fugue. This was a programme of admirable selection for a young girl of such tender years. The habit is unfortunately prevalent of allowing young children to attempt grown up programmes. I mean that prodigies who have

a remarkable technical proficiency and a mature sense of artistic proportion and insight are too often allowed to essay works which not only demand these qualities but also a thoroughly matured emotional and intellectual equipment, which no child possesses, no matter how talented. Neither the Beethoven nor the Mendelssohn concertos, however, demand these qualities impossible to childhood. They require considerable technique, a smooth, legato touch, great artistic perception in detail, such as phrasing, pedaling nuance, etc.—in short, all the requirements of thorough musical talent. And these Ellen Ballon possesses in a very remarkable degree. She played these works as well as any mature pianist could play them and a great deal better than they are often played by artists of international reputation. She has a beautiful tone and an unusually smooth legato—features of her playing which bear the impress of Mr. Joseffy, for he is noted among pianists for these same qualities.

The future is bright with possibilities for this young artist. Away from the piano she is still just a charming little girl, entirely unspoiled, and without a grain of conceit. She is strong and healthy, mentally and physically, and she is not allowed to overwork at her music.

Remember that name—Ellen Ballon—for she should one day be famous, and Canadians will take time from their great task of Empire building to speak of her with pride.

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### The Woman's Art Association of Canada.

By "SERANUS."

THIS organisation, known familiarly to Torontonians at least as the "W. A. A.," has probably received plenty of criticism in the days of its youth and has now, one thinks, pretty well established itself in public opinion as something the community cannot do without. The natural question was asked at its inception—why a "woman's" art association? However, the foresight and enthusiasm of Mrs. Mary Dignam, the originator of the movement, has been rewarded by an ever increasing membership and a revival of interest in old Canadian loom work, and there is no doubt that the establishment of a general bureau where women who are working at embroideries, lace-making, enamelling, wood carving, modelling and painting, book-binding and illustrating, may exhibit their wares in comfort and exploit such an art product to the best advantage, is a good thing. The best answer to that question would be in the form of another question: if we had no Art Association among us similar to what we take to be an excellent organisation in every way, where else could women workers find a suitable depot for their wares? The latter cannot be taken around from house to house like china-cement, or cheap rugs, or work-aprons, or Swiss waists carried in a black valise by Armenians. If put in random windows on busy streets they immediately take on another aspect and are sure to be "downed" by the glitter of jewellers' shops or the rival claims of Oriental bazaars. They look their best when shown alto-

gether and here the Association scores by providing the necessary atmosphere or background for the many wares quite varied enough in themselves, which is also centrally situated in a quiet and refined locality. Mrs. Dignam is widely and favourably known as the president of this society; a woman of much executive ability, easy, affable, and capable; of domestic tastes and virtues; a good teacher of drawing and painting, tactful and considerate as speaker and hostess; an excellent artist herself. She inaugurated the practice of importing valuable foreign pictures, notably from the Hague, where she has long had family interests and has been criticised for so doing. Naturally, local art



Miss Jessie Chadwick,

A very talented English Singer and Dancer, who is extremely popular in Germany, where her particular type of beauty is much admired.—*The Bystander*.

may have suffered a little thereby, but if so, Mrs. Dignam's own output would be affected. We are old enough now to drop all such narrow, provincial ways of looking at art and probably hostile voices are nearly all silenced by this time. What has really been done by a continuous presentment of fine Dutch pictures is that the public have been made thoroughly acquainted with the work of Israels, Maris, and others of a famous school, and such familiarity counts for a good deal of increased pleasure and culture among hundreds who cannot travel and see Holland in person.

The Dutch pictures are, however, not so interesting as our own French-Canadian homespuns, of which so many were sold at the Congress last year. They arrive in bales of splendid colouring: topaz, copper, and Indian red; reseda, olive, and amethyst; pearl, tan, rose, and tourmaline blue. They may be a trifle rough to the touch but they give phenomenal wear. They arrive also in stripes, and for men and boys in suitable greys, both light and dark.

Far from being "narrow" in themselves, the members of the Art Association are eager and anxious to interest all classes of people, from the lace-maker or artisan woman who may be ignorant of ballades and blue china, to the distinguished visitor from Washington or the Capital. They have maintained excellent lecture courses at different times and they still have attractive musicales once a week in the winter season, in which the keenest interest is taken, as is displayed by the excellent attendance. They have established branches in a good many other towns, but, as it is with music, it is not always possible to say just which town is going to take up the art question and develop it successfully. Knowledge comes but art still lingers, to paraphrase Tennyson, in many otherwise fast-growing and thriving communities. as is surely the case with our Canadian towns. There is no hurry. Canadians are getting and producing all the art they require, for art can wait while the sons, and daughters too, go out to the prairie and found new homes and make new ties. We are not yet and never want to be, a nation of Sybarites.



A POSED GROUP

Earl Grey and Lady Grey, with Lady Roberts and Lady Sybil Grey, being photographed on the Lawn of the Strathcona Residence

Photograph by A. A. Gleason.