

derably less than heretofore, to select a fresh set of men, men of strong financial abilities, and those who, when occasion offers, have intelligence enough to express sound and enlightened views for or against an important or unimportant, and perhaps at the same time a very expensive, measure? Surely we have had enough of mere figure-heads who can only vote, and often then not in accordance with their previously expressed views.

There are a number of very important matters that will have to be dealt with soon, and that will require shrewd, capable business men to grapple with them—that is, if the city is to get even an approach to justice. The medical health officers must be encouraged in the good work begun by them, in causing the cleaning, and, if need be, the abolition of privy-pits, or the citizens will be put to the expense of extra hospital accommodation, as all available space now is reported occupied.

For years past we have heard a great deal of talk about a viaduct scheme, a trunk sewer, the removal of the butts, etc. These matters have cost the city a considerable sum already in preliminaries, and we may look for more action and expense in these matters.

A great deal of money is constantly being spent in legal expenses, paying damages, arbitration fees, etc., and what do the citizens get for this? To my mind the greater portion of this expense might be saved the city if men of ability could be induced to enter the municipal arena. The city council is not, or should not be, made an office for speculators who have little or no object in view other than the advancement of some pet scheme of their own, or perhaps of others, that will indirectly benefit them in time. So anxious am I, sir, to see a thorough change in municipal affairs that I would not personally approve of ever seeing an outgoing alderman fill the mayor's chair next year.

A. H. TOILER.

Toronto, Nov. 27, 1891.

### HIS OWN GIFT.

WHEN a new poet comes he finds his way  
Beset with rules and canons of the past:  
With grip of triple steel they hold him fast,  
And give his soul nor leave nor room to play.  
Happy is he who will not be a prey  
To custom, gathering his strength doth cast  
These fetters from him, nails to his ship's mast  
His own gifts' colours, and lets that have sway!

Homeric or Dantesque he may not be,  
Horatian, Emersonian, shade of Pope:  
He has no ancestors, nor can you see  
Them in his face; and in his horoscope  
Is but one star, and to his destiny  
That leads him, smiling; 'tis the star of Hope.

MATTHEW RICHEY KNIGHT.

Benton, N.B.

### ON SPURIOUS WORKS OF ART.

THE story of Giovanni Freppa and the Capitano Andreini, which I shall relate, will show the innate superiority of Italian genius and methods. This adventure was *à propos* of the earliest forgeries of majolica ware. Its place was Florence, and the time about 1856. By that time, although the little towns and villages of the Romagna had been searched through and through, and it was no longer possible to ferret out majolica plates and drug-pots, or Hispano-Moro dishes by the dozen, there still remained a considerable treasure *in situ*. The owners had, however, become aware that a *régime* of high prices had commenced, and a veritable majolica fever set in in the neighbourhood of its original production. For the fine specimens which remained two or three hundred "lire italiane" were no uncommon demand. Needless to say, these "lire" have now become pounds sterling, but the sums were thought fabulous in those days. The most coveted pieces were then, as now, the lusted wares, the Maestro Giorgios and Xantos. Fraudulent imitations of the ordinary painted specimens had already made their appearance, produced nobody knew where; but the secret of the lustre, notably of the famous ruby tint, was a forgotten mystery. It is more than probable that Giovanni Freppa was the author of these earliest frauds. He was a notable curiosity dealer in Florence, a Neapolitan of gentlemanly manners and presence, with a singularly mellifluous tongue. Ser Giovanni, in short, was a very popular personage, and he was the friend and Mentor of every impecunious Conte and Marchese in Florence, most of whom, after the fashion of Italy, had, from time to time, something or other to sell. Whether instigated by Freppa, or on his own motive, a young chemist of Pesaro, after long endeavours, about this time finally succeeded in reproducing that great desideratum, the famous ruby lustre of his renowned fellow-countryman, Maestro Giorgio.

Freppa, at all events, was the astute undertaker in regard to giving commercial value to this discovery.

Silently and secretly, in conjunction with his ally at Pesaro, Freppa caused a number of spurious Giorgios to be manufactured, and they were forthwith dexterously "planted"—i.e., entrusted for sale to local dealers, farmers, peasants and other apt, unsuspecting agents in the little towns and villages in the Pesaro and Urbino districts, where they were soon bought up, mostly by the peripatetic dealers—Italian and foreign—who were either

travelling in the country or in relation with local agents on the look-out for them. One of the former worthies was no less a personage than Il Capitano Andreini, a retired officer in Florence—a man as well known and popular in the art-collecting line as Freppa himself, and heretofore his frequent ally and coadjutor in research. Freppa, however, was not the man to let his left hand know more of his right hand's doings than was strictly prudent, and the Capitano was not let into the great Giorgio secret. The latter was a notorious gossip and talker, a vainglorious "pettiegolo," prone to dilate upon his exploits in the antiquarian line, and, above all, proud of his knowledge and critical acumen in that field. Unluckily for all parties, nevertheless, he became one of the earliest victims of the newly-hatched fraud. Giovanni Freppa's intense disgust may be easily imagined when the Captain, with a more than ordinary flourish of trumpets, brought him a splendid Giorgio salver just hunted out for him by a correspondent in a little mountain village of the Romagna. It was a prize of the first water in the eyes of the unsuspecting Captain, and the price he expected for it was commensurate, not a penny less than a thousand francs, even to his dear friend Giovanni himself. To the Captain's utter disappointment and surprise, however, Freppa not only did not rise to the occasion, but even displayed an inexplicable coldness—the very reverse of his usual style and conduct. Giovanni, in fact, had immediately recognized one of his own children, so to speak; and he was so taken aback and annoyed at the *contretemps* that his usual *sangfroid* deserted him in this emergency. Determined not to re-purchase his own property at an exorbitant price (which, after all, would have been his best policy), he unwisely depreciated the precious *trouvaille*, and in the heat of discussion unwittingly let it appear that he even doubted its authenticity. This was touching the Captain in his tenderest point. He, Capitano Andreini, taken in by a false majolica plate!—the thing was absurd and impossible! if ever there was a veritable and most overwhelming "Giorgio," there it lay in all its gleaming lustre before them. The Captain, in short, lost his temper, and, snatching up his treasure, in spite of Freppa's tardy attempts to pacify him, sallied out with it to the nearest café, where, amidst a ring of *cognoscenti*, dilating magniloquently on his own critical knowledge, he related his controversy with Freppa—that mere soulless *mercante* (as he said), fit only to be a vendor of tin pots and old boots in the Mercato Vecchio!

The Captain's wrath, in short, was unappeasable; all the attempts of mutual friends to effect a reconciliation were in vain, and the quarrel became the universal theme in every café, curiosity shop and salon in Florence.

The Captain, although on reflection not altogether easy in his mind, had in any case gone too far to retreat. The quarrel was a deadly one, and could only be settled by the obtaining conclusive evidence of the previous history and pedigree of the Giorgio, in the country where it had been brought to light, and consequently the Captain went off to Pesaro on that errand. There disappointment awaited him; very little could be made out as to the real *provenance* of the plate, and that little was not satisfactory. In short, the Captain only succeeded in tracing its possession and that of several others, which, it seems, had about the same time appeared in the district, to the young chemist at Pesaro before alluded to. This worthy, when brought to book on the subject, wrapt himself up in mystery, made vague and contradictory intimations, but either could not or would not give any clear account of how he had come by the Giorgios he had put in circulation.

The upshot of the matter was that little by little the fraud leaked out. Now came the Captain's opportunity to retreat, but it was too late; he had made too much noise about the affair, and it only rested with him now to expose the conspiracy, even at the expense of his own reputation as a connoisseur. This he did by means of an action at law against Freppa and his coadjutor. The ultimate result was, I think, a compromise, and Freppa and the Capitano ultimately became friends again. They were too useful to each other to remain permanently estranged. The Italian public was, nevertheless, duly enlightened; it laughed a great deal at Giovanni and the Captain, but probably did not think much the worse of either of them in the long run.

Although this affair was a failure, Freppa's next exploit was a triumph. It came about as follows: He had always had a laudable penchant for the discovery and encouragement of rising talent, and he had bestowed his patronage upon a young sculptor to whom he suggested the imitation of the works of the early Florentine masters, for about this time a demand arose in the art world for the rare and beautiful terra-cotta portrait busts of the old Florentine masters, the exquisite works of Donatello, Mino, and Verrochio. Bastianini, that was the young man's name, and it afterwards became famous, was set to work to produce a modern antique example. The result was an admirable masterpiece, full of life and individuality, worthy, in fact, of Donatello himself, whose style was, indeed, copied with wonderful verisimilitude.

The bust was consigned as the latest and most precious *trouvaille* from an old Tuscan palazzo to an eminent curiosity dealer in Paris. It created quite a *furor* amongst the keenest and most experienced connoisseurs of that enlightened art centre, and it was unanimously voted to be one of the finest Italian *quattro-cento* portrait busts in existence. Finally it was purchased for the Museum of the Louvre at a very considerable price, and duly installed as one of the most precious gems of the collection.

The lustre and completeness of this success were, however, somewhat embarrassing. Bastianini had modelled his bust from the life, the original being a well-known old man who combined the vocation of an artist's model and a tobaccoconist. Amongst the Florentine *quasi-dealers* of the time was one Dr. Foresi, notorious for his eccentricities and his enmities and quarrels with his townsmen of the like occupation, and notably with Freppa. When Foresi went to Paris shortly after he did not fail to inspect the famous bust which had made so much noise, and he was immediately struck with its marvellous resemblance to the tobaccoconist model whom everybody knew, and on his return to Florence he found little difficulty in getting at the truth of the matter.

Foresi thereupon boldly denounced the imposition to the authorities of the Louvre, but no attention was paid to his representations; the man's well-known envious and unscrupulous character prevented any weight being attached to them. He persisted, however, wrote letters to the Florentine newspapers, and sent them to most of the principal connoisseurs and directors of museums in Europe, and finally it became necessary to take serious notice of his proceedings. The authorities of the Louvre thereupon laid the matter before a select assemblage of the most competent and highly placed art connoisseurs and critics of Paris, one and all men whose names were of European celebrity and whose judgment was received as gospel truth. After a most searching scrutiny of the bust, these high authorities unanimously agreed that it was a perfectly genuine work of the Italian *quattro-cento* period, and that Foresi's representations were malicious and baseless calumnies. The latter, however, stood to his guns. He had shortly before issued a scurrilous newspaper of his own in Florence, dedicated mainly to the abuse of his rivals and the showing up of the foreign art critics and collectors who disagreed with him. In this paper he returned to the charge week after week, accumulating his proofs in an overwhelming manner.

At that time France was politically most unpopular in Italy, and the affair soon assumed quite the proportion of an international art duel. The Louvre authorities caused the bust to be photographed, and promptly Foresi photographed his tobaccoconist in the same attitude. The resemblance was absurdly convincing. Finally, Giovanni Freppa himself shifted his ground, and, making friends with Foresi, adroitly announced that he had caused the bust to be executed and sent to Paris as an artistic trap for the express purpose of humbling French pride. The proofs were now overwhelming; it was a bitter pill for the French *cognoscenti*, and Foresi gave them the full benefit of it. The Italian public on the other hand were in ecstasies. Foresi, Freppa and the sculptor became for a time almost national heroes. That all three were unscrupulous scoundrels mattered nothing. Italian astuteness had humbled and outwitted French cocksureness, and in arts, if not in arms, their country had shown herself again supreme.

Ser Giovanni became more popular and considerable than ever, the sculptor rose immediately to fame and fortune, whilst to the half-crazy Foresi was accorded unlimited license to insult and crow over everybody, until fortunately death put a stop to his proceedings shortly after.—*Sir Charles Robinson, in the Nineteenth Century for November.*

### ART NOTES.

MR. L. R. O'BRIEN may fairly claim a very prominent if not the foremost place among those artists who in face of most discouraging difficulties have laid the foundation for an art circle in this Dominion which might serve for a rallying point for native and resident talent. True it yet remains to be seen how far success will follow. We might even say, whether it will do so at all; perhaps there is nothing more peculiar to Canadians than a tendency to belittle and apologize for any attempt of their compatriots to compete with foreign ability or power. It needs no keen insight to perceive the formidable odds this failing always creates against our local men when they come before them in any art or craft requiring special excellence. In the case of the artist above named, however, even this obstacle to the requisition of public favour and appreciation should count for little, as he has repeatedly distinguished himself among the shining lights of the world's metropolis, having often exhibited on the walls of London exhibitions every inch of whose space is eagerly and jealously striven for by the strongest and brightest of English artists. The success attending Mr. O'Brien's exhibition last year seems to have encouraged him to repeat it, and there are now some fifty of his watercolours displayed in the gallery of Messrs. Matthews Bros., on Yonge Street, which will be sure to find cheerful purchasers among those who are qualified to appreciate them. Many of the paintings are the result of the late summer out-of-door work by river, lake and woodland side, which prove that it is not necessary to travel beyond Ontario to find nature in her loveliest guise. Among those now before the public are several old friends which may have remained in the painter's possession thus long from the reluctance so generally felt by artists to part with their best efforts, and consequently they are less liable to be tempted by offers from such parties as are ever on the watch for bargains and prone to take the artist at his weaker or more needy moments. It is, therefore, no sign of inferiority that a picture remains in the painter's possession.