



TORONTO, March, 1891.

How interesting a page of chronology can be! Here is one from an old "History and Geography. By a Lady for the Use of Her Children. 1831," that tells us that by "The Peace of Utrecht, 1713, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Britain and Hudson's Bay, in North America, were yielded to Great Britain," and that "Gibraltar and Minorca were also confirmed to the said Crown by this treaty." So that Newfoundland has belonged to England nearly two centuries, enjoying, however, that large liberty which has put it in her power to choose or leave alone confederation with the other British colonies so near her. Let us hope that in the present juncture she will use her liberty wisely, refusing alike the isolation she has so long hugged with jealous hands, and that annexation which would result in a complete loss of her autonomy.

The same chapter of chronology, under 1763, tells us that "The definitive treaty of peace between Great Britain, France, Spain and Portugal, concluded at Paris February 10, confirms to Great Britain the extensive provinces of Canada, East and West Florida and part of Louisiana in North America; also the islands of Grenada, St. Vincent's, Dominica, and Tobago in the West Indies." One cannot help thinking how unwise were the counsels that prevailed in the British Parliament and lost to the Crown so wide an extent of territories won by such an outpouring of blood and treasure as secured for it the Treaties of Utrecht and Paris. Or was it Providence that thus shaped their ends, notwithstanding the "rough-hewing" of cool heads and clear judgments.

The Chief Librarian issued invitations to the Corporation of the city, their wives and families to an "At Home" at the Public Library lately. I know that our Public Library has many treasures, and I hear that Mr. Bain's guests were astonished at the rarity and beauty of the display so politely set before them; but I must defer any description of it that I may be able to give until my turn comes to be one of the invited, as these are not occasions to be dealt with at second hand.

Hunter, Rose & Co. have just issued a volume which has a peculiar value. It is a memorial volume of W. A. Foster, Q.C., the originator of the Canada First party, of which Charles Mair, Geo. T. Denison, Lieut. Governor Schultz and, I think, Goldwin Smith formed the other active members. The volume is called "Canada First," and contains Mr. Foster's address on the organization of his idea into a concrete form. This alone would constitute a sufficient reason for the publication of the book, which has a mournful value by reason of Mr. Foster's untimely death, hastened, if not, as is said in some quarters, caused, by his herculean exertion in the affairs of the Central Bank; but it also contains other monographs on national subjects, and a charming sketch, "Down the St. Lawrence on a Raft."

Williamson introduces to us Margaret Vere Farrington's Romance, "Fra Lippo Lippi," of whom Browning wrote:

"I am poor Brother Lippo,
I was a baby when my mother died,
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two.

Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand
By the straight cut to the convent, Six words there
While I stood munching my first bread that month.
Will you renounce?—the mouthful of bread, thought I—
By no means. Brief: they made a monk of me.

Let's see what the urchin's fit for? that came next.
Not overmuch their way I must confess.
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is "Amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starving in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folks' faces to know which will fling

The bit of half-stripped grape bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains—
Which gentleman, processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the sacrament
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped—
How say I?—nay, which dog-bites; which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street—
Why soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition of the hunger pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphony's marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's.

The monks looked black,
'Nay,' quoth the Prior, "turn him out d'ye say!
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he made me daub away."

There was some very fine "daubing" at the Royal Academy of Art exhibition. Our "Rockies," in the hands of F. M. Bell-Smith and Lucius O'Brien, are almost making a "school" of Canadian painting themselves. Glaciers, peaks, valleys, streams, mists—the cold, stony glare of the never-ceasing snow-fields of the peaks, and the warm, inviting smiles of the vales come to us on the canvases of these masters bearing a momentous message to which we are not yet fully awakened. "Yours. Yours. Yours. Ye Canadians." "Mont Blanc and the Col du Midi we know, but who are ye?" Is not this what our rejoinder would be were our thoughts given speech. Mr. O'Brien's "Windsor" and "The Stone and West Gate of Canterbury," show the artist in less familiar themes than his "Rockies," but are no less delightful and, being perhaps a trifle softer in treatment, gain in value. In his "Break, Break, on Thy Cold Grey Stones, O Sea" Mr. Bell-Smith shows us another phase of his genius. A cold subject, the picture is not cold, and while it impresses the beholder with its power, attracts instead of repelling him by a negation, as we might expect. Mr. Matthews had a fine canvas, "A Vancouver Island Stream" From somewhere amid the hills, at the back of the tall and solemn pines, comes a foaming and full stream, and on its left bank stands in lonely musing a solitary heron, type of the primeval quiet that reigns around him. The bit of animal life thus introduced by Mr. Matthews makes more apparent the absence of such accessories, as a rule, from the work of other of our artists. Such addition would, however, take from their pictures a boldness that presses itself upon one. Surely a mountain goat, a most picturesque creature; or an ibex, for the Rockies have them; or an eagle in full swoop, might not inaptly find a place and give a vim to the magnificent views with which our mountains furnish us. In the work of the Reids, husband and wife, Canadian art may boast itself. Mr. Reid's last picture, "Family Prayer," is a poem. It tells a story that touches all hearts. The homely kitchen with the breakfast table set, the aged grandfather seated, being too feeble to kneel, and alone; the father kneeling by his chair, his outstretched arm, with its torn shirt, telling of an overtaken existence to both husband and wife, the head thrown slightly back, the face being raised to that Heaven whose blessing is being implored with an earnestness that almost puts words into the gazer's mouth, seeming to deal with the mysteries of the unseen world and the pious remembrance of those "departed in Thy faith and fear," is very wonderful. The two little whispering children do not bear the attitude of childish gossiping, but rather of an awed communication from the one to the other of who it is that father is "praying about." The figure of the mother, an arm around her youngest, suggests another loss than that of the aged grandmother—her baby, perhaps, or her only son, for the little figures are all of girls. There is not a garish spot in the picture; yet, while its tone is, as befits the subject, grave, it is not dull. Mrs. Reid has a pretty landscape and several flower pieces, the deep crimson roses in a blue enamel jar excelling the rest. Mrs. Dignam, president of the women's Art League has also

several flower pieces, of which her "White Peonies" are the gem. "Marguerites and Buttercups" and "A Basket of Flowers," by Miss Rose Auerbach, are worthy of all praise. The buttercups are, however, king-cups, the earliest of the ranunculus tribe that lady spring blesses. Two Toronto landscapes, "The Vale of Avoca" (Rose-dale), by W. D. Blatchley, who also has a pretty picture from the same ravine, "Sunset," and Carl Ahren's "Breaking Wave," are good. John A. Fraser has not forgotten his native place, but has sent several fine Highland scenes; and J. T. Rolph contributes a pretty bit from Howard; or, as we know it best, High Park. In shore pieces are several excellent canvases. "Low Tide, Baie St. Paul," by W. Brymner, and "Schooner at Low Tide, Baie St. Paul," are perhaps the best of these. This artist has also several other pictures: "Sad Memories," a study in grave tones, yet full of force and meaning, and a "Blackfoot Indian Ready for the Sun Dance," which exhibits the artist's acquaintance with the use of strong colours. Percy Woodcock's "Snowed Up" and "Italian Street Singer" are two among this artist's excellent exhibits of several good pictures. W. Raphael has a fine picture with a mistaken title—there is nothing so hard as appropriately naming one's work. "The Tramp" as an accessory to a fine landscape is of use, but would have come out more effectively had he been crossing the stream that flows turbid and forsaken among the stones at the foot of the hill on which the deserted farm-house stands; or is it another development of the mortgaged homestead idea, and was the tramp once master there? Homer Watson sends several of his strong and true landscapes. This artist is more faithful in his greens than the general, and he is not afraid of them. His grass is grass, and you know it; and his sedges are sedges, and you know it. The sickly greeny-gallery, or yal ery-greeny, affected by some otherwise good painters, is neither true to nature nor art. Mr. Watson's "Fifeshire Pasture" and "Evening on the Thames" are worthy of his brush. J. C. Forbes has several excellent landscapes. "Willows at Cushing's Island" and "A Coming Storm" deserve particular notice. In portraits Mr. Forbes stands first in Canada, and his full length of A. M. Cosby, Esq., sustains his reputation. All the other portraits are very good, particularly that of Miss Marjorie Campbell. Mr. Ede had the only simply cattle pieces, and they are excellent, but his pasture is rough and unreal. C. Macdonald Manly's pictures show result of his careful study of nature as well as of the canons of art. In "Clearness After Rain" fine atmospheric conditions are reached, and "The Last of the Leaves" is a lovely bit of English landscape. Mr. Harris has some good things; of course, the best being "The Prelude." Miss Gertrude E. Spurr, an English lady lately arrived in Canada, has some carefully painted subjects—"Wild Flower," a large canvas, and "The Kingfisher," the English bird, introducing her work honourably. A very fine picture by Arthur Cox, "The Siberian Gates of Elora," has been very unfairly dealt with by some critics. It is a large canvas of a natural and beautiful scene. The drawing is good, the colouring true and the composition well thought out. The sky is perhaps too low down and fuller than need be of cloud; but this is a point not to be insisted upon, for nothing is so kaleidoscopic and hard to generalize as clouds and sky. Of sculpture there was little shown. A bust of L. R. O'Brien and one of a lady, both by Hamilton McCarthy, were about all. Mr. McCarthy's work is always life-like and spirited, but we should like to see more of it. Mr. F. A. Dunbar ought to let an exhibition of the Academy have something of his also, especially when we know what he can do of high artistic work.

It is impossible to do justice to an exhibition of paintings, even by mentioning all deserving names, in a mere weekly letter; but omission cannot mean condemnation, and when a collection is praised, as that just over has been, and deserved to be, no one need feel overlooked. Your correspondent is proud of Canada's art work, and glad to know that many of the pictures were sold very early. A splendid gift has just been accepted by the Canadian Institute, namely, "The Nests and Eggs of the Birds of Ohio," presented by the Rev. Vincent Clementi, of Peterborough.

S. A. CURZON.