

A CANADIAN IDYLL.

Our vast Dominion is to a great many of its inhabitants, as it is to the majority of foreigners, a *terra incognita*. We are popularly imagined to be possessed of miles of impenetrable virgin pine forest, of interminable leagues of snow and ice; and woe be unto the unfortunate denizen of our frozen shores, to the unhappy one whose mournful kismet destines him to lingering and agonizing exile on these barren wastes. How different these ideas are from the more pleasant than stern realities the readers of this magazine at all events know. But even among them there are few who do not, when our mighty domain is under discussion, depressingly remark,—that while Nature is in all its moods seen at its best in this country, while the inanimate beauties of our land are unsurpassed, the element of interesting human life and surroundings is lacking; that, owing to the youth of the country, the population is yet engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the ogres of practical business life, that they have not time to reach the mellow ripeness which distinguishes the people and the homes of European countries; that we are, in short, like our unequalled scenery, crude. Of this mistaken belief I was until recently a disciple, and longed for the unattainable wonders of the Old World, passing by with unobservant eyes the wonders of the New, and was consequently viewed by an enthusiastic Canadian relic-hunter as a Philistine and an alien to Israel. However, accident at last brought me to an ancient French village.

It was about seven o'clock on a still September evening, and from the quiet river running parallel with the straggling village streets the mists rose lightly up like incense to the far receding sky, a sickle moon hung motionless between the heaven and the earth, a lance-like reflection dipping like a golden bar into the silent depths of the stream. On the opposite shore the dying coals of a camp fire gleamed like a jewel on the hem of the dark robe of the forest, and from far up the little river came the voices of the campers, their stentorian notes softened by the distance. All noises were hushed, or seemed harmonized into one sweet vesper hymn. The quiet of the evening muffled the sounds that would otherwise have disturbed the almost silent music of the place, and all sounds seemed gathered into one blending harmony by the accompaniment of the reeds that fringed the banks, rustling as they moved obedient to the light commands of the wind and current.

From the upper end of the village I drifted slowly down the street, picking my way among children and dogs mingled in one nappy family, (by the way, there are so many dogs I firmly believe they are held on a communistic principle, which makes a fair and honourable average of three per family). Upon the steps of the little log houses, roofed with moss-grown shingles, in some rare instances with colour symphonies of thatch, sat groups of the older folk of the village—the men smoking at well-burnt clays, enjoying the rest so well earned; the women sitting at the close of day with quiet hands for the first time since early morn. And in the gathering twilight the little drama of Gabriel and Evangeline found many exponents, assured, let us hope, that the curtain will fall on the last act in the one romance in their hum-drum lives, with a happier, if less theatrical, "finis."

Suddenly, or rather softly and easily (for one could not endure the jar and discord of suddenness in that peaceful, sleepy hollow), came silence on all the groups—the children sought their parental steps, the men removed their pipes from their lips, the women froze into a state of rigid erectness, spread their voluminous skirts, or if possible, vain or anxious as regards their appearance (shame and disgrace be upon me did I say that such were probable), disappeared ignominiously. Glancing up from an engrossing study of the slow pace of a snail, without exception the slowest that I had met, I looked into the intellectual face and eyes of the village curé. For a moment the idea came upon me that I had encountered at last a jarring note in the music of the place. I thought

a figure more in keeping would have been an old priest, a father to his people, like the priest of the parish of Grand-Pré. But here was a young man, one whom you might expect to meet in the schools of theology, in the heat of polemic debate and not rusting in an obscure village. However, here he was and happy in his work, ministering to the many needs of his parish. With a kind word to the parents, and sundry pats on the heads of the children, to whom he was an object of reverential awe, he passed up the village street to his solitary home. Turning, I introduced myself, and he, glad to welcome one from the outside world, greeted me cordially and invited me into his parochial abode, the gate of which we had just reached.

Standing back from the road a distance of about fifty feet was an old square house, built in the time when the average architect held the idea that as the approach to the lines of the old Grecian temple became nearer, the beauty of the building increased. We, perhaps, of to-day have gone too far in the other direction, and bent all our energies on the one idea of divergence from simplicity and uniqueness. To such a building as the curé's house time and age alone could work the change that caused it to cease to be an eye-sore. And with a gentle hand he, whose hour-glass never ceases to run, had covered the nakedness and defects of the old house with a mantle of beauty. Here mossy walls and clinging ivy hid the ugly bareness of the lines, and drew the otherwise hideous building into the deep, slumbrous colour of the drowsy village.

The plot of ground in front was shadowed darkly by the intermingled branches of the many trees, by whose leafy arches

"A web is wov'n across the sky."

A gravelled, but weedy, path led to the steps, which, in a state of respectable decay, struggled up to the heavy oak door, the path looking for all the world as if held down by the stones, which at regular intervals bordered its narrow width. At the door of his solitary abode I left the curé, gazing out towards the glowing firs of sunset blazing in the west with the clouds, a glory of purple and gold, floating like smoke-wreaths above them. To his idyllic life I left him, living not in the life of to-day, but in the life of his beloved silver-tongued Virgil, and Homer of the golden speech. At last reaching the lower wharf of the village, where I found my boat moored, I left behind me the happy life of the little French village, and with vandal oars disturbing the even surface and brightly coloured reflections of the waters, I pulled back through the gathering twilight, back through the golden-tinted river mist to the heart-burnings and strivings of the hurried life of the city.

FOR COPYING DRAWINGS.

A new method of copying drawings which may be found of service in architects' offices, is given in the *Deutsches Baumgewerbes Blatt*. Any kind of opaque drawing paper in ordinary use may be employed for this purpose, stretched in the usual way over the drawing to be copied or traced. Then, by the aid of a cotton pad, the paper is soaked with benzine. The pad causes the benzine to enter the pores of the paper, rendering the latter more transparent than the finest tracing paper. The most delicate lines and tints show through the paper so treated, and may be copied with the greatest ease, for pencil, Indian ink, or water colours take equally well on the benzinated surface. The paper is neither creased nor torn, remaining whole and supple. Indeed, pencil marks and water colour tinting last better upon paper treated in this way than on any other kind of tracing paper, the former being rather difficult to remove by rubber. When large drawings are to be dealt with, the benzine treatment is only applied to parts at a time, thus keeping pace with the rapidity of advancement with the work. When the copy is completed the benzine rapidly evaporates and the paper resumes its original white and opaque appearance without betraying the faintest trace of the benzine. If it is desired to fix lead pencil marks on ordinary drawing or tracing paper, this may be done by wetting it with milk and drying in the air

the dock and it is urgent that her cargo be forwarded to its destination with despatch it can be reshipped by either rail or water without delay. The site is by far the best that could be selected in the city, being near the naval yard and if desirable can be connected without trouble with the dockyard by rail. The dock is of granite and concrete. The entire work is of the most substantial character, everything being first-class. The dock will be emptied by powerful engines, having two 60 centrifugal pumps, which discharge 40,000 gallons of water a minute, and are capable of entirely emptying the dock in three and a half hours. The cost of the site was settled by arbitration, the owners of the property, Messrs. Wm. Chisholm, David McPherson (his worship the mayor) and Joseph Kaye, being awarded \$70,000. The total cost of the entire works was in the vicinity of \$1,000,000. The dock can take in the largest warship without removing its guns or armament, or merchantman without discharging cargo. This is the only dock on this side of the ocean that can do so. There are 90,000 feet of quay space around the dock, ample for immense coal depots (which might be used in case of war) or storage room. The only place for repairing disabled vessels previously in existence here was the marine slip at Dartmouth, which cannot accommodate anything above 3,000 tons. The formal opening of the dock, which took place on the 19th ult., marked an important epoch in the commercial history of Halifax. Halifax is the third city on this side of the Atlantic as regards the number of ocean steamships entering its port during a year, New York being first and Boston second. The following table gives the number of arrivals at Halifax (ocean steamships only being referred to) for the years indicated:

Year.	Steamers.	Tonnage.
1886.....	351.....	463,057
1887.....	336.....	456,253
1888.....	367.....	480,204
1889 (to June).....	223.....	285,000

Halifax and Canada are to be congratulated on the possession of such a magnificent work.

HARVEST IN MANITOBA.—The two scenes which these engravings present to our readers interpret themselves. They are fair delineations of what may be seen in the harvest fields of the prairie province. The figures that give life to them are all fine specimens of manhood, personifications of health and prosperity. The crop is a heavy one. It is usual to put three hands on a binder in this country. Equally worthy of notice is the view of "Stacking Wheat." Hundreds, yes, thousands of such scenes as these may be seen in August. In some of the finest districts it is not very rare to see at one time six or eight at work, cutting the golden harvest.

CONSPIRATORS.—Whatever may be the plot that engages the thoughts of these ladies, we may be sure that it is not of a very harmful nature. The smiles that make their faces beam as with spiritual sunshine do not imply any deeply laid designs of evil. That they are up to some mild form of mischief is, however, equally evident from the air of mystery of the whisperer and the eager and amused attention of the listener. If we could only have a glimpse of the inside of that letter, of which even the address is artfully concealed, we should, doubtless, find some solution of the problem. Whatever is the theme of their confabulation, they make a pleasant picture, on which our readers may exercise their ingenuity very agreeably.

HOW HISTORY IS MADE.—A story is told of one who on a steamer one night was singing to a group upon the deck, "Jesus Lover of my Soul." A stranger in the company was attracted by some peculiar intonation of the singer, and suddenly springing up, said to him—Sir, were you in the army during the late war? Yes, replied he. Do you remember singing that hymn one night on the Pontomac? Yes, one night I was sadly depressed as I was out alone on picket duty, and to cheer myself I sang this sweet old hymn. I, said the stranger, was then in the Confederate army. The night was dark, and I came very near the Union lines, within easy range of a union soldier. I lifted my gun to fire, when I heard him sing, "Cover my defenceless head with the shadow of Thy wing." I dropped my gun and your life was saved.

The highest price that Wilkie Collins ever received for a novel was 5000 guineas, which was paid to him for "Armada" by George Smith before a line of the story, which originally appeared in The Cornhill Magazine, had been written. "Armada" has never been a favourite with the public, but it is a very powerful book, and a story of the most absorbing interest, and Dickens expressed a high opinion of it. Just after the bargain had been concluded between the author and the publisher, there was a discussion at the Athenæum one afternoon about book prices during which Hayward very acrimoniously maintained that George Smith couldn't possibly have paid such a sum to Wilkie Collins, and after he had ranted on the subject for some time, Dickens turned to a friend and whispered: "Can you wonder now that that man is so generally execrated?" Thackeray only a short time before his death congratulated Collins on the transaction, and told him that he had never himself made as much as £5000 by any of his books. The purchase of "Armada" was not a profitable transaction for Mr. Smith, but "Romola" proved a still worse bargain, as £7000 was paid for it, and of the first expensive edition only some 1700 copies were sold. The statement that Collins has left copious reminiscences and numerous stories is incorrect. During the last few years he received several proposals on the subject of reminiscences, but declined to entertain them.