

MONTREAL LETTER.

I do not know exactly what right we have to take pride in the fact that spring has at length conquered this stubborn Canadian nature of ours unless it is the crowd, like the enthusiastic urchins following some passing regiment, always feel ten times more victorious than the real victors. Everything "smells green," and the birds chatter and chirp fussily all day long as if a veritable ornithological parliament were in session. Looking over our city from the hill side during this luxurious season, one can hardly believe there lies below a single grimy street. The pale brick, sharp angled houses everywhere are now half hidden by tufts of green; and the spired churches and many winged convents with their metal roofs gain new beauty in the delicious, hazy atmosphere.

A "private view" when really such the privileged few are sure to enjoy infinitely more from the very fact that everybody has not similar advantages; and how much greater is the influence of what they see, in proportion as they are seen, it would be difficult to compute. "The members with their families," who attended the opening of the second exhibition of Black and White, seemed rather more pleased and contented than "members with their families" usually appear. It is quite a happy idea to open exhibitions by a sort of soirée; for artists, *litterati*, and essentially society individuals have thus an opportunity of meeting not always afforded in private entertainments.

Among the etchings now on view are specimens from the works of the greatest masters, from Rembrandt to Whistler. If I am not mistaken, this is the finest collection Montrealers have ever had the privilege of studying. Glancing at the pictures in something like chronological order, we find two by Claude Lorraine, six by Ostade, and some fifteen of Rembrandt's. The latter bear such dates as 1631, 1645, and though for the most part small, exhibit all the power of this virile old Dutchman.

Eugene Delacroix's "Arabes d'Oran" can interest us little when we remember the vivid colouring and passion in his paintings.

Millet is represented by "Les Bêcheurs," "La Grande Bergère," and copies of several other works. Yes, it is Millet, but Millet "shorn of his beams," without his silver and golden atmosphere.

Much as we may appreciate Corot's "Souvenir d'Italie" and "Environs de Rome" as poetical, still, if we would follow his maxim, "Above all, be true to your own instincts, your own method of seeing," they must not satisfy us.

"Le Mendiant," "La Tireuse de Cartes," "Un Arabe Veillant le Corps de Son Ami," are by Fortuny, the young, delicate-handed artist, "the Chopin of Art." Simple, fine, weird, expressive is the last; full of infinite feeling the second.

Seymour Haden seems at his best. River and garden, sunset and broad light, whatever his needle finds to do, it does with delicacy and strength.

"The Y near Amsterdam" is cold and breezy and full of atmosphere, and this, Gravesande, a Dutch gentleman, who ranks among the greatest of modern etchers, has succeeded in expressing with exquisite simplicity.

Josef Israel's has but only a commonplace story to tell, but his few lines are so clever and explicit that he quite delights us.

In strange contrast to this work stand the lace-like productions of Monsieur Adolphe Appiau, the daintiest things an artist could imagine.

James Whistler, etcher par excellence, is charming in his wharves and bits of river. Herkomer's portrait of Miss Grant dressed in an eminently artistic gown, does both himself and the lady credit.

Allan Edson's works are at present on view previous to their sale this week. His subject, with few exceptions, is either "the shady sadness of a vale," or a snow-covered road. The cool, damp greenness of the former he has succeeded at times in rendering very happily. All the subtle beauty of snow no painter has yet expressed. "Tree effects" are numerous, too numerous, for we have an ever-recurring Japanese curtain falling across a lurid sky. Perhaps the freshest, most sympathetic work is the oil painting, "Gray Day, Cernay, France."

Inspired by American papers, our Montreal sheets are beginning to give readers a glimpse into their neighbours' purses and tastes truly entertaining. Some time ago the hearts of all zealous but poor and sensitive philanthropists were made glad by the publishing of the respective fortunes of the good citizens of Montreal; to-day, it is not without a thrill of satisfaction. The female admirers of Kant learn from recent interviews with booksellers that there are as ever bright exceptions to the general rule followed by their novel-reading sex. The verdict pronounced upon Montrealers is severe—too severe let us hope. One witness only has declared in our favour. Taste for poetry, it appears, grows yearly less. Even the quarterly magazine must yield to the monthly, and the monthly in its turn to the daily papers. "Trash," the booksellers seem to dispose of with no difficulty; but there is, however, little demand for "sensational works of the Zola type." (I wonder what the great French naturalist would say to "sensational"?) The French Canadian public buy chiefly religious books. It is a pity. Hugo, Daudet and Georges Ohnet's earlier work would be infinitely beneficial. That there are no copies of so excellent a Parisian paper as *Le Temps* has often surprised me; but that only single numbers of the bi-weekly and daily *Figaro* are to be had seems incomprehensible. With no books, no theatre, no sprightly journals, what can we hope? Take away a Frenchman's wit and he might as well be—an Englishman!

But now don't go away with the idea Montrealers are on the whole of less literary taste than their neighbours. The trash-reading class with us is trash-reading the world over; and furthermore, in older towns, does it not comprise also those who, here, have long since abandoned "St. Elmo" for Browning?

LOUIS LLOYD.

THE TROOPER'S LAST RIDE.

OVER our heads the clouds were flying,
Clattered our horses' hoofs along,
Crushing the flowers beneath them lying,
Ringing in time to the birds' sweet song.

Bright gleamed the sun on each burnished rifle,
Gay came laughter on every breath,
Danger was less than a very trifle
Though some of us rode to certain death.

"Comrades," said Ned, "should an arrow quiver
Deep in my heart, and I die to-day,
Bury me close by the silver river
That runs through the green swamp out to the bay.

"Take my sword to my dear old mother,
Tell her to hang it over the door
Beside the other—you know the other
That throws its shadows across the floor."

"Charge," came the order—"lads, sit steady"—
Thundered the hoof beats loud and strong;
Death was before us, but, eager and ready,
We laughed in his teeth and spurred along.

Down through the valley we galloped flying,
Saddles were empty and blood flowed red;
And each as he saw a comrade dying
Felt for his dressing and rode ahead.

Backward, at sunset, we came in order,
Thinned were our ranks as leaves by a blast;
And down in the hollow across the border
Poor Ned had met with his doom at last.

Few were the words that night were spoken,
Scarred were our faces and ashen gray;
"Dismiss"—spurs clanked, and the ranks were broken
And swords put by for another day.

A. D. STEWART.

DRINK AND GAMBLING.

EVERY one knows the misery and the mischief wrought by drink. The drunkard himself knows it, and it is his chief misery that he must despise himself for his weakness. He knows that his excuses and apologies are insincere. He does not believe in them himself, and he knows perfectly well that no one else believes in them; and yet he goes on repeating them just as though they were expressive of the deepest and firmest conviction—just as if he were sure of their obtaining the readiest and fullest credence.

Every one, we say, knows the evil effects of drinking. Most people put down to this vice nearly all the other crimes which are committed upon the face of the earth. One ardent advocate of Prohibition has declared that murders are never committed by total abstainers—a very rash statement indeed. It is also a little rash to make out that drinking is the universal cause of crime, seeing that it is quite as often an effect as a cause.

But we are now in some danger of forgetting that, whether drunkenness is an effect or a cause, or whether it is more of the one than of the other, there are other evils, some of which are hardly noticed at all, while others receive quite insufficient recognition. For example, Sir Henry Thompson, a very distinguished English physician, has declared that the evil effects, physical and moral, of over-eating, are greater than those of excessive drinking—in short, that, on the whole, gluttony is more mischievous than drunkenness. Most of us will feel some difficulty in receiving this testimony; but, on the other hand, there is much to be said in support of it.

The evils of drunkenness are patent and they are immediate. Even if it takes a long time for the full effects of its ravages to be disclosed, yet we see the process as it goes on. It is hardly possible to mistake it. We do not see the evil effects of gluttony either immediately or progressively, or in their ultimate consequences; not even the physician always discovers them. But in many cases he does. There are whole families distinguished as gourmands, the members of which are commonly short-lived. Here is a tangible case; but many other cases may be as real without being tangible.

We wish Sir Henry Thompson could be present at some of the great public dinners at Toronto, and he would see large assemblies of men sitting and eating for an hour or two and drinking cold water, until it seems impossible that any vitality should remain in them. If that eminent man were allowed to express his sentiments at the close of the repast, he would probably bear testimony in something like the following manner:—"Mr. Chairman and gentleman, I have witnessed with great disgust the quantity of food which has been despatched by the present company. You probably think yourselves virtuous because you have no more cakes and ale? Believe me, you flatter yourselves. You would have been much kinder to your souls and bodies alike if you had eaten a great deal less, even if you had washed that little down with a glass or even two glasses of ale; and you would have made a much better preparation for your after-dinner speeches, the heaviness of which is quite intelligible when we remember what a quantity you have eaten."