

## ON THE OTTAWA.

## III.

## PRIMITIVE HABITANT.

From Oka we cross to Como, one of the most beautiful spots on the Ottawa. The wharf is a platform in the midst of all the greenery, for groups of pretty children and young people to whom the chief event of the day is watching the boat's arrival, and many are the nods and smiles as we steam off.

Up here on deck the peasant *gucule* may be seen in full play. Its appreciative smack over the torrent of nasal utterances issuing therefrom is accompanied by a concurrent elevation of the eyebrows and much appropriate action of the hands. To an alien ear there is a very distinct sounding of the various notes in the gamut, the final one being sustained; thus the query, "What does he say?" becomes in the patois: *Qu'est qu'y dit la* (pronounced law.)

Where is the country bloom one naturally expects to see on these Arcadians? Why should that unhealthy sallowness usurp the lily and the rose on the faces of these rustics?

One small experience may assist in solving the riddle. A friend of mine having first procured the services of a French Canadian nurse, walked into her nursery one morning and found her off-spring breakfasting on bread and cheese and *eau sucrée*. Her amazement and horror-smitten expostulations only met with a shrug of the shoulder from Delima at such unreasonable fastidiousness. "It was good food; all Canadian children thrive on the like." Perhaps also a habit of giving the masticatory and digestive organs a very broken rest, and constant chores besides their regular work, may have something to do with it. Every Frenchman, woman or child, appears to have something to munch; here it is a bag of nuts or green plums, there sodden dough-nuts or gum or tobacco; pretext, opportunity and material are never lacking.

Joseph Roux, the pensive priest of Saint Hilaire le Peyron, whose estimation of the peasant is the opposite to that held by his fellow countryman, Max O'Rell, says: "Peasants are caught by the mouth like fish." Probably the ruminative habit engenders reflection.

We have been told that a morbid introspection argues a degenerate condition resultant on dyspepsia. Who knows if, at a certain less advanced stage, indigestion may not bring just that pressure to bear on the brain as shall induce a mild indulgence in philosophizing. Here is one old fellow, with his quid in gentle motion, stating at great length the reasons why we may expect good weather next week. He makes the great weather prophets of no account, but collects his data from vicissitudes of past seasons, the occurrence and nature of certain grasses. The operations of the moon enter largely into his calculations, and here he will digress to impress upon you how powerfully liquids are affected by lunar rays. All the world, he says, knows how the tides are governed; well then, by the same law meat that is killed in the wane of the moon will be tough, the animal's prices being at low ebb. Homespun dyed in the last quarter will quickly fade; the dye cannot retain its hold on the wool. Butter comes with great difficulty at the time of the moon's decline, "et c'est la même chose, partout, partout." A budget full of strange lore is he; always ready with a dozen reasons for every simple, beloved superstition.

Undoubtedly they are of a scientific turn of mind these *habitants*. I am reminded of a case in point. We once owned a grey horse. Several times under the care of a French Canadian, Antoine by name, "Daisy" appeared in harness with a distinctly *écru* tint pervading his person. When spoken to, Antoine declared it to be merely the reflection of the sun." Further remembrance decided him on adopting preventive measures against this phenomenon. Accordingly one morning "Daisy" came round beautifully white and set out on a drive to town. On reaching the principal streets the driver became aware

of the attentive regard of passers-by and a large following of small boys. Cries of "Why don't you send him to Barnum?" and "What'll ye take for the blue zebra, guv'nor?" evoked the discovery that the horse now reflected in streaks of rival intensity heaven's own blue. Antoine had borrowed both the idea and the blue-bag from the washerwoman for the furtherance of a transcendental purity, and heat and exercise brought the mysterious agent to light.

K. A. C.

## CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS.

That there has been a steady and encouraging progress in the quality of Canadian newspapers during the last ten years will hardly be denied by anybody whose interest in the subject has been strong enough to lead to close observation. The improvement is noticeable in the matter of journalistic enterprise; and it is noticeable in the growth of a spirit of independence. This spirit is not only manifested in the professedly independent journals to some extent, but it peeps to the surface quite often in some of the leading party organs. A great deal of virulence has passed away and personal journalism—using the phrase in its offensive sense—is becoming extinct.

This is encouraging; and it speaks well for the people, whose demands are respected by the newspaper proprietors in those reforms. The newspaper proprietors receive much advice in the course of the year, and why, therefore, should they not be learned? They do, in fact, understand their business very well. They know that their real dependence is upon the people, and they know that the most powerful advocacy of an untruthful party measure is helpless against the judgment of the people. The newspaper proprietor is but mortal, after all, and even if he should happen to own a party organ, he is aware that he does not live to himself alone. He recognizes the fact that his readers influence him quite as much as he influences his readers. The growth of independent journalism, therefore, while reflecting credit on the far-sightedness of publishers, at the same time speaks well for the people whose wants the publishers endeavour to supply.

But if it is possible to say that Canadian newspapers are advancing in a hopeful and encouraging way, it is not possible to add that they have reached the highest perfection—that they have attained the popular ideal. There is still much to be done. The city daily and the country town weekly still afford vast room for improvement. I propose to discuss briefly in this article some of the lines along which improvement might be effected in our dailies.

1. There is needed more careful workmanship in the matter of editorial writing. A well-written editorial which seizes the main points of a subject and treats them in a popular manner is sure to be read, but an editorial that is wanting in clearness and definiteness of expression is as certain to be passed over, and is calculated to weaken respect for the editorial columns. In some of our dailies there is a fair proportion of good editorial work—timely, careful and popularly presented—but, on the other hand, there is a great deal which falls below the standard. This is probably due not so much to the want of good writers as to the hesitation of publishers about incurring the expense of a varied staff. The English custom of employing outside writers on special subjects is only slightly in vogue, and the little that is done in that line is not systematized.

2. Our newspapers are suffering in what Matthew Arnold called the matter of beauty and distinction, by their proximity to the American journals. Some of the glaring faults of the American journals, the sensational headings, the paragraphic editorials and the reporter's freedom of fancy, are making more headway than they should in Canadian newspapers. In these matters the publishers may understand the wants of their readers best, but it is unquestionable that there is a very general spirit of dissatisfaction amongst readers on those particulars.

3. Canadian newspapers can still afford to develop a larger spirit of political independence if they would keep pace with the demands of the people. There is a pressing need for *reliable* journalism in political matters—reliable, that is, from the people's, and not from the politician's, point of view.

These are a few of the lines along which progress might be made in the Canadian newspaper. The advancement of the newspaper is an indication of the advancement of a people and each have their influence upon the other. If our newspapers could attain to a larger measure of "beauty and distinction" in their method and their spirit, the effect would not be lost upon the people.

Richmond, P.Q.

J. C. SUTHERLAND.

A committee has been named to determine the rewards and distinctions to be distributed in connection with the Vatican Exhibition; this committee is sub-divided into several sections, each of which will adjudge within its respective speciality the honorary diplomas, the gold, silver, and bronze medals, and the honourable mention to be conferred on the exhibitors. The medal to be struck will bear on the face the effigy of the Pope, and on the reverse, Religion, her arms open and extended in the act of crowning, on one side the allegorical figures of Painting and Sculpture, on the other that of Architecture. Around is the inscription: *Dona oblata Parenti optimo in aedibus Vaticanis publice exposita*, and on the reverse will be graven the words: *Ob exuntem an. L. Sacerdotii ejus*.

## THE NEREIDS' WAIL.

FROM THE "PROMETHEUS BOUND" OF AESCHYLUS,  
CHORUS 405-444.

I pity thy disastrous fate,  
O my Prometheus!  
And from these eyelids delicate  
The large and plenteous tear-drops pour,  
Bathing my white cheeks o'er  
With lukewarm dew.  
Direful are thy woes, for o'er the Heavenly powers  
Zeus, with arbitrary laws and arrogance, towers.  
All the land resounds  
With dismal sounds,  
And, mourning, weeps for thee,  
Weeps o'er thy cruel penalty,  
Large-limbed, time-honoured Deity!  
All they who dwell in Asia's hallowed meads,  
And valiant girls of Colchis, bold in war,  
The clans of Scythia, who refresh their steeds  
Near the Maeotian lake—earth's utmost bound afar;  
The savage tribes that pitch their shifting tents  
Here on the beetling crags of Caucasus, and start  
Its echoes with the clash of levelled dart,  
All, all bewail thy intolerable punishment.  
Never before thee did a god  
Thus cringe beneath the rod,  
Or, pining in rough iron chains,  
Endure such cruel pains,  
Save only Titan Atlas, bent—  
By inexorable Fate—  
Beneath the weight  
Of the aerial firmament.  
And now for thee the ocean waves  
Ebbing, bemoan—the deeps respond;  
The nether-earth, from out its gloomy caves,  
Repeats the wailing sound,  
In accents grave and low.  
Up from their mountain spring  
The clear, clean waters surge,  
And surging, sing  
The dirge,  
Prometheus, of thy piteous woe!

JOHN TALON-LESPEANCE.

## MEMORIES.

Summers come, and summers go.  
Even's gold and ruby glow  
Deepens into rayless shade.  
Blossoms bloom, and blossoms fade;  
Though the flower, flowering fair,  
Honeys all the fragrant air;  
And the sunset's golden dyes  
Bright illumine all the skies,

Yet, as music died-away  
Lingering in the mind will stay,—  
Though but briefly they abide,  
They will bless the aftertide.

Ottawa.

WILLIAM H. P. WATSON.