

forgotten to-day. Art is a field which does not present a very inviting aspect to votaries of fashion or the slaves of change, still, it would be a great mistake to suppose that her precincts were sacred and free from invasion. Bound as the true student must ever be by nature's unchanging laws, baffled though he be by her varying moods, and hopelessly distanced by her vast power over form and tint, and still more by the subtlety of her moods, he will yet find ever now and again some brilliant light in art literature inviting him from the toilsome but safe path which he is steadily pursuing to some short and easy mode of which fame and public appreciation may be won.

The latest guise which this temptation has assumed is that of "impressionism," and our neighbors of the Great Republic have with characteristic impulsiveness eagerly jumped at the bait. It is now by no means uncommon to find artists and students in the Great American cities, who so far as real progress is concerned would be far better employed in attempting to draw simple lines, and to master the very elements of plain matter of fact drawing, singularly misemployed in attempting what they call suggestive art or impressionism.

They, or any such of our younger Canadian Artists as may be inclined to follow them could scarcely make a greater mistake. It is a step which must end in failure and its chief consoling phrase is that the failure is sure to come quickly.

It were well, however, did they know before hand that a poet might as well attempt to write deep and mysterious tragedy without knowing the Alphabet as that any painter should be able to suggest that of which he knows nothing.

Again, allowing that the student has acquired a considerable power over his materials and processes a fair knowledge and facility in drawing and color, the absurdity must be self-evident of every one fancying himself either a dreamer or a poet.

By physical organization as well as by mental bias some painters must be matter of fact, some strong, some public, some sentimental and others of a dreamy and contemplative character.

And what applies to the painter will be found equally to belong to the public for which he labors.

It is at once apparent that were all works of art suggestive merely, their power and influence would be utterly lost on a very large proportion of the on-looking public who could neither understand their mysteries nor supply the thoughts intended to be called up by the inking pencil of the artist, who perhaps might himself feel the utmost repugnance to what he would probably term grossly material and utterly soulless labor. While on the other hand, it would certainly be an immense loss to art and all who love her for her more ethereal and poetic side, were all works to be of the pre-Raphaelite or reallistic order.

Many indeed believe in a medium course and attempt with more or less success a blending of these utterly different trains of thought. Be this wise and legitimate or no, it seems to us that the expurgation of either style could hardly fail to be a great and irreparable loss.

The question of supremacy and importance of each style must ever remain unanswered, and there is little doubt, but

that the battle of the schools will be fought on while the art is practised or the human love for the æsthetic remains. And here let us glance at the main argument used by the advocates of either party, the impressionist will tell you that the only true way to represent a scene or incident is on the focus principle, and that a picture should represent a mere *coup d'oeil*, or should be an instantaneous glance, and that the work of the artist must be concentrated on one point of the canvass while the remainder of the scene is left indefinite, in distrust and merely suggested. He will claim that the eye can only fix itself on one point at a time and laugh at the folly of the painter who attempts to make out more.

"But" says the reallist, "If you claim that the eye can only rest on one point (and I admit it in principle), does not that remark also apply to the vital visible powers when directed upon the picture itself as well as when employed in viewing the object or model which the picture is supposed to represent. And can the eye simultaneously examine the whole surface of the canvass?"

For ourselves much as we have been delighted by the "symphonies," reveries etc. Strong and startling as we admit the "impressions" rendered by the School now struggling vigorously for the mastery, and struggling also to tread its opponent under, we cannot help thinking that the reallist has the best of the argument, and we think it likely that he must ever retain the advantage as he will in the nature of things possess far greater power of demonstration than his more indefinite opponent can hope for. Again, of course, it is always possible in dispute to take refuge in generalities and vagueness and it is certain that the number of those qualified to express a critical opinion upon the poetic or visionary work of the impressionist must always be much smaller than those who can appreciate the minute renderings of the reallist, who if content with representing only that which he can see and not that which he supposes, he ought to see will not be likely to shock the sensibilities of the great majority of the art loving world. And at the same time he will find so much poetry and delicacy of feeling in the actual truths of nature as will go far to supply the place of what are often mere eccentricities of individuals, impudently disguised under pretensions, titles and high sounding names, sometimes indeed boldly flaunting the opinion of the author that he is so far superior to nature, that he does not deign to stoop to her small things.

ROSSINI.

CHAPTER V.—*Continued.*

Moscheles, the celebrated pianist, gives us some charming pictures of Rossini in his home at Passy, in his diary of 1860. He writes: "Felix (his son) had been made quite at home in the villa at former occasions. To me the *parterre salon*, with its rich furniture, was quite new, and before the *maestro* himself appeared we looked at his photograph in a circular porcelain frame, on the sides of which were inscribed the names of his works. The ceiling is covered with pictures illustrating scenes out of Palestrina's and Mozart's lives; in the middle of the room stands a Pleyel