

## CORRESPONDENCE.

Letters should be brief, and written on one side of the paper only. Those intended for insertion should be addressed to the Editor, 162 St. James Street, Montreal; those on matters of business to the Manager, at the same address.

## CRITICISM IN FETTERS.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR.

SIR,—Your timely and pertinent remarks in regard to musical and dramatic criticism by the various daily papers of this city, are indeed lamentably true. You have moreover traced the cause of much of the puerility and incompetency to its chiefest source—placing the blame where it justly belongs; but there yet remain a few words to be said.

The persons whose province it is to notice art matters—I refrain with you from saying *criticise* them—are too often “muzzled” in the most effectual manner, by the very hands that ought to free them from any hindrance to fair and impartial reports. Allowing, for the sake of argument, that a writer were competent, by reason of special study, moderate experience and possession of the critical faculty and acumen—which, nine times out of ten, he is not—accurately and fairly to weigh merits and demerits, it is made exceedingly unpleasant for him to speak out his whole mind; in fact, should he wish to retain position on the journal he represents, well-nigh impossible. Of course, Art thus goes for next to nothing, the public are misled, and the Press prostitutes its position as an educator. The average reporter, however, is but human, and cannot see any particular glory in quarrelling with his bread and butter, that a community may thereby be benefitted,—which at the best treats him, and indeed Art herself, but scurvily.

The methods of “putting the muzzle on” are various. I will briefly illustrate. An editor-in-chief has a family “whom he reckons up by dozens” that all the press tickets which come to the office should be required by Tom, Dick and Harry is so much the usual thing that it has come to be looked upon as a matter of course. The man whose province it is to write up the performance, and for whom the courtesy of the *entrée* is intended, is allowed to manage as best he may—at the ticket-office. Should he deem it fitting to express dissatisfaction with what he may either see or hear at any performance, on the next occasion he is made unpleasantly aware that he is placed in a position which is neither independent, honourable, nor manly. Tickets he must have—he cannot afford to buy; to beg he is ashamed.

Again, it is not alone that advertisers must be “wooed as gently as a sucking dove,” but it is more than hinted that it is very impolitic to cost any impediment in the way of the all-important and profitable *job work*!

The printing of programmes, posters, hand-bills, tickets, libretti, &c., means dollars, and to prevent the flow of these into the proprietor's coffers—to bar the patronage of *our* paper—for the sake of passing criticism would be most injudicious.

What incentive has any writer to do his best, or what pride can he take in his handiwork when it is mangled and made to fit, or when the freedom of the columns is accorded to the theatrical or musical manager to write up his own notices? A scene not unusual in newspaper offices in this city is the invasion of the sanctum about midnight by a gentleman bearing carte-blanche from the editor up-town. “Let A have a good notice,” or, “Give B all the space you can,” form the tenor of many a little billet; and A and B, finding out whether they can have a quarter column, or possibly a half, forthwith proceed to write up for the public the delights of their own “show,” from the critic's stand-point, and in the necessary number of “sticks” needed to fill up.

Able *critiques* can be made the subject of no inconsiderable amount of information, and they certainly help greatly in forming and refining correct æsthetic taste; but loose scribbling from anybody and everybody, upon matters demanding serious, well-directed thought and arduous study, is alike baneful to the public and unjust to artists of the slightest pretension to merit.

Montreal, Nov. 24th, 1879.

Junius.

## A TORONTO AMATEUR CONCERT.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN SPECTATOR:

SIR,—Deprecating all pretension to artistic musical criticism, may I yet be permitted to remark, that in our Canadian vocal music there is a sad lack either of that depth of emotion which can only find full expression in song, or else, if it does exist, there have been few guides fit to train the powers by which it can be expressed. Song is the faculty of utterance for the longings of the heart, in which these can be best conveyed to, and shared by others; speech is the vehicle for the communication of thought. The blending of both powers,—will and thought,—is possible to either form of utterance; which only attain perfection when thus blended. At length, it seems we have a teacher here (in Toronto) who sees, and can practically illustrate, these root principles. Mr. Barton Browne's concert, given by his pupils on 20th inst, was a rare treat. I forbear to mention names; for fame beyond a limited circle is not always desired by amateurs. The vocalization throughout showed a most careful study of “expression”; while Mr. Barton Browne possesses the true art of a solo accompanist. He does not force upon the singer a rigid adherence to his “time,” but follows that dictated by the necessities of full and free “expression.”

He held a delicious surprise in store for us, however. He has among his pupils a young—a very young—*prima donna*, whose voice is already so liquid, powerful, and sweet, on every

note of a very full compass, as to justify the descriptive title I have just used. She opened with Donizetti's “O luce di quest'anima,” and sang it throughout *perfectly*, as I have seldom heard it rendered on any stage. Every note thrilled with a genuine simplicity of expression, which told alike of heart to feel and genius to express. A rapturous *encore* was answered by “Robin Adair,”—a song rendered quite as perfectly. Should fickle fortune ever place the remarkable talents of this young cantatrice at the service of the public, these remarks will be fully justified. One is almost tempted to wish it might be so.

Mr. Barton Browne deserves great credit for all his pupils, nor did they fail in *any* instance to do him credit.

“One who was present.”

Toronto, 21st November, 1879.

## PRIZE QUESTIONS IN CANADIAN HISTORY.

92. When and where was the first newspaper published in Upper Canada?

Ans.—On Thursday, April 18, 1793, the first number of the *Upper Canada Gazette, or American Oracle*, (Gideon Tiffany, Editor) was published at Newark, now Niagara, and afterwards removed to York (Toronto) in 1800. Dr. Scadding's “Toronto of Old.”

The *Niagara Constellation* was also established at the same place in 1799.

93. Whence does Isle aux Noix, on the River Richelieu, derive its name, and by what other name has it been called?

Ans.—So called from the abundance of hazel bushes and walnut woods found there by the French when they first occupied and fortified it.

As a military station it has been known as “Fort Lennox,” after Lord Lennox, which name is still to be seen above the gateway, on the north face of the fort.

It has also been called “Christie's Island,” as it once belonged to General Christie. See Bouchette's Topography of Lower Canada.

Erroneously spoken of as “Illinois, not Isle-aux-Noix,” in Sanson's “Travels in Canada.”

94. Is there any record of mercury having frozen in the bulb of a thermometer in Montreal? if so, give the date.

Ans.—On January 28th, 1823, observed by Dr. Skakel of the Montreal Grammar School, who called the attention of three of his teachers to the fact, broke the bulb of his thermometer, handled the solid mercury, and suffered it to roll on the floor like a marble. The temperature at the time by the spirit thermometer was 42 degrees below zero. See *Canadian Antiquarian*, vol. i, p. 165.

Mercury froze very generally through Lower Canada, January 10th, 1859. Dr. Smallwood's Observations; *Canadian Naturalist*, vol. iv.

95. Give the date of the first capture of Quebec by the English, and what led to its being again surrendered to France?

Ans.—January 20th-22nd, 1629, by Lewis and Thomas Kerk (Kirk). It was captured after peace had been concluded, and upon representations of Richelieu, the French Minister, it was surrendered under the Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, March 29th, 1632.

Peace had been concluded between France and England, at the Convention of Susa, April 24th, 1629, so that the capture of Quebec by Kerk was an act of piracy, and not of war. But the Royal Council was little disposed at first to demand its restitution. There was a party strongly prejudiced against the country, who held that Canada was no acquisition to France. It required all Champlain's influence and most vigorous representations of the immense value of its furs, its fisheries, and its forests, to meet the objection. He fortified his material arguments by showing that Canada was a wide field for proselytism; and that if England were allowed to occupy both banks of the St. Lawrence, she would become all-powerful in America. Considerations of religion and national honour turned the scale. Louis XIII. demanded restitution of all places captured by the English subsequently to the date of the Convention of Susa. It appeared that England set little value upon Canada, and out of the negotiations that ensued grew the Treaty that was signed at St. Germain-en-Laye on 29th March, 1632, by which Charles I. restored Quebec, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton to France. Faillon, vol. i, p. 244; Archer's History of Canada, p. 81.

96. Who laid the first stone of the Rideau Canal?

Ans.—Captain (afterwards Sir) John Franklin, the Arctic navigator, August 16th, 1827. The work was commenced by Lieut.-Colonel By, Sept. 21st, 1826, and was completed in 1832. Eighty Years' Progress in B. N. A.; *Canadian Antiquarian*; Belford's Magazine, vol. i., p. 527.

97. Give the date of the first lighting of the streets of Montreal by lamps.

Ans.—Saturday, November 8th, 1815. Through the exertion of Mr. Samuel Dawson and other gentlemen, a portion of St. Paul Street, west of Custom House Square, was lighted by twenty-two oil lamps at a distance of fifty-four feet from each other. The lamps cost \$7 each. Soon afterwards Notre Dame and other streets were similarly lighted. An Act was passed in April 1818 providing for the establishment of night watches and the erection of street lamps. The number of men appointed was 24, their duties being to attend to the trimming and lighting of the lamps and to act as guardians of the city. Sandham's Montreal Past and Present.

98. Where was the first printing press set up in Montreal, by whom, and under what circumstances?

Ans.—In 1775, by Charles Berger and Fleury Mesplet.

Mesplet came from Philadelphia to Montreal with the American Commissioners, agents of the Continental Congress, to establish a printing-house and publish a newspaper in the cause of American liberty. The press was brought from Philadelphia, and was set up in the then market-place, now known as Custom House Square. When the Americans withdrew Mesplet remained and commenced business.

The Commissioners held their councils at the old Government House (le vieux Chateau de Ramezay) and issued their proclamations therefrom.

In 1806 several prominent merchants of the city sent to Mr. Nahum Mower, of Worcester, Mass., inviting him to come to Montreal and start a weekly newspaper (*The Canadian Courier*), which first appeared in 1807.