

Art Notes.

Montreal Affairs.

THE nation showed a wise discretion when they chose Sir Fredrick Leighton as the decorator of those two large semi-circular panels in the picture galleries of South Kensington Museum. The President was not only to be depended upon to execute fine designs, but he was known to be about as learned on the subject of frescoes—the various processes, and the modes of preparing the wall—as any man in England. The process used in the execution of the South Kensington frescoes is rather peculiar. I think it is a spirit fresco; certainly it is something new. The surfaces of the two pictures are very deeply granulated; and this, I should say, must have presented a difficulty to the artist. But Leighton's performance shows him to be as much at home in mural decoration as he is in painting an easel picture. Indeed these panels are only another evidence of the versatility of this many sided man to whom one art seems to be as natural a means of expression as another.

The subjects of the two frescoes in the Kensington Museum are, respectively, The Arts of Peace and The Arts of War. In the former the architectural features of the scene are made to conform to the requirements of the composition; and it is difficult to decide what Leighton meant to represent by the semi-circular *loggia* which forms the background of the picture. But this is only another instance of artists' independence of the trammels of realism, and the design is all the nobler because Leighton had a free hand in planning what is, I suppose, a very first rate Grecian wharf in precisely what manner he pleased. In the front of the composition is a boat manned by a stalwart oarsman and laden with fruit and all manner of merchandise that lent itself to pretty colouring. On the marble gray are groups of people of beautiful form and feature who are attending to their trades—fruit selling and the pottery business—and they are doing it in a leisurely and graceful way. Some of the women have neglected to braid their hair indoors and are attending to this important rite in the full blaze of day. One is particularly careful to appear at her best and has enlisted the services of a sweet little maiden who holds up a metal mirror in which the vain goddess sees her face and hair (all her own) reflected. Nothing could be more charming than the disposition of the groups, the colour, and, in fact, the whole sentiment of the picture; but I could imagine nothing more irritating to the pedant.

The dramatic quality, as was natural, is much more intense in the Arts of War than in the picture we have just discussed. The whole tone is darker. The composition is cut in twain by an ominous shadow. In the centre outside the portcullis, the herald, who has announced the challenge of the foe, or who is to carry it to the foe, is reining in his mettlesome charger. On the left of the foreground a group of beautiful women is seen, seated on the ground, and, with thread and needle in hand, they are performing their last good offices for sweethearts and husbands. These latter are thronging to the right and centre of the composition; and, utterly regardless of the tender-hearted pliers of the needle, they busy themselves with trying the temper of their steel. And one handsome young voluptuary who had not long since been dying of the *ennui* of peace, now takes a languid interest in the beauty and fit of a very handsome suit of armour which a begrimed and sturdy little smith is rivetting to his lordships back and thighs. An unconscious two-year-old crawls up a short flight of steps with hand outstretched to reach a cat that is arranging its toilet regardless of the bustle of the scene around it. Every corner of the picture is alive with interest which never for a moment is heightened at a sacrifice of beauty and harmony of composition and colour.

E. WYLY GRIER.

A paper on the necessity of encouraging art by legislatures was read before the Canadian Institute by Mr. T. Mower-Martin, R.C.A. It was pointed out that the legislatures of Canada had chiefly encouraged the art of architecture and sculpture, and it was claimed that an amount of money in fair proportion to the sums spent on external decorations should be spent on works of arts to place on the walls within. Mr. Martin showed that this would be a good investment from a commercial point of view, as in every instance the works of deceased Canadian artists have increased in value.

SOME interest is beginning to be taken in the municipal elections which take place the first of next February. Our council, by the law passed in 1893, is elected every two years. Previous to that date aldermen were elected for three years and a third of the council retired every year. This was not satisfactory to the people since it lent itself readily to the perpetuation of ring rule; and the Legislature was urged to fix the term of the council for one year and have an annual election. This the Legislature would not do, but fixed upon the two years term as a compromise, at the same time reducing the representation of each ward from three to two. The Mayor's term, which had previously been for one year only, was made synchronous with that of the council. The present Council is the first under these regulations, and in two months time all its members will have to face their constituents at the same time, and if the people are dissatisfied with them, as they certainly should be in a majority of cases, they will have a chance to make a change.

The successor to Mayor Villeneuve should be English-speaking, and a Protestant at that, by virtue of what is known as "the compact" of 1885. This has no force, however, except as its reasonableness appeals to the electors; and as, with one exception, it has never been loyally obeyed by all parties to it there is no certainty that it will this time command enough support to put a member of the minority in the Mayor's chair. The understanding was that the office should be held alternately by English and French, two years at a time being given to each nationality. In 1887 when Sir John Abbott was chosen by the English he was opposed by Mr. Rainville, but was elected. To him, after his two years term, succeeded Mr. Grenier, who, however, after serving two years declined to retire. The French, however, again showed their loyalty to the understanding and Mr. Grenier was beaten by James McShane by something like five thousand majority. But that weakness which comes to men in office of regarding themselves as indispensable to the public overtook Mr. McShane and at the close of his two years service he had himself put in nomination again. He was opposed by Senator Desjardins, and, it is the best proof of Mr. McShane's extraordinary popularity with the masses, that though his candidacy was in defiance of this understanding and being such was opposed by every news paper in the city he was beaten by about only one hundred and fifty votes. Mr. Desjardins not offering for re-election. Mr. Villeneuve became the French candidate in the following year and was opposed by Mr. McShane who was again barely defeated. In both cases Mr. McShane owed his defeat to the large majorities rolled up against him in the English wards. The English, indeed, resented his candidacy much more than did the French, for they felt that if the compact were once broken by the election of an English-speaking Mayor, out of his turn, they would be certain to pay dearly for it in the near future by being entirely excluded from participation in this honor.

Both French and English have, therefore, shown their wish to have this unwritten law obeyed, and if the English Protestants put forward a man personally acceptable to the better-class of the French he will probably be elected though he is certain to be opposed by some representative of the "grab-all" French-Canadian element.

The probable English candidate is Ald. Wilson Smith, proprietor of the Insurance Chronicle, who has all the qualifications for the position except that he is not equally at home on both languages as the Mayor of Montreal should be. Mr. Smith has been in the Council for three years, and has been conspicuous in his championship of good causes in that time. He has been the leader of the Reform forces in the Council, and if assiduity to the public interests and valuable services go for anything he will be chosen. But these are good and sufficient reasons why he will meet with opposition from certain quarters. A French paper gives currency to the report that H. Montague Allan, the present head of the Sir Hugh branch of the Allan family will be the English candidate. Mr. Allan's high social position, great wealth, and fine executive ability would make him a worthy Mayor were he to be chosen to the position.