

the seals of the various families through whose hands they had passed; and sometimes a parchment attached by a cord to a seal, giving the history of the picture from the time it had left the painter's easel.

When, therefore, a collection, professedly of the Old Masters is presented without any documentary pedigree, it would appear not unreasonable to suppose that it would be received by connoisseurs with considerable caution.

As there are at the time of our writing, around the walls of our Art Gallery and for exhibition, several paintings claimed for the old masters, and among them the alleged productions of Raphael, Rubens, Rembrandt, Correggio, Palma il Vecchio, and others, it may reasonably be inferred that as their genuineness is thus endorsed by the Art Association, the Council has investigated and satisfied itself that they are what they profess to be—at least, we submit, the members and the public are entitled to expect as much at their hands. For it can scarcely be supposed they would for one moment permit pictures to be exhibited on the beautifully-tinted walls of their building as genuine of which they had any doubt.

It was therefore with anticipated delight we last week wended our way to the Gallery to see these treasures. We cannot say the anticipation was completely realized. The effect they produced was not unlike that upon the Devonshire boy after his unexpected elevation by an angry bovine—he was, he said, “awfully taken aback”!

We are fond of Rubens, although he is charged with representing most of the women, in his pictures, like bawds. Whatever may be his faults, he should be forgiven, if it were only for those two immortal works in the Cathedral of Antwerp. Who that has studied art, has not felt how far below their conception of Christ crucified, are nearly all the representations of the great Masters? But who that has seen the Raising and the Descent from the Cross, by Rubens, has not felt that in these, and these only perhaps, have been realized the divine expression, uttered amid “His agony and bloody sweat,”—“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In our four or five rambles among European Galleries, it has therefore been to us a source of pleasure to give especial study to his works, especially those in the Louvre and the Pinakothek of Munich. We are therefore under the impression we could at any time recognize his work; but, the *Ahasuerus and Esther*, in the Montreal Art Gallery, does not enable us to see his handicraft therein. If it be a Rubens, how is it he has committed inaccurate drawing of the hand of the King which holds the sceptre? Why does he here depart from his usual faultless drawing in the disproportionate size of the calf of the leg to the kneeling page? And why are the colours destitute of the richness and mellowness which time has left on all his other works? We humbly submit these questions for the solution of the Art Council. It may be added, that we have seen in Europe (where, we cannot at present recollect, as our books are not at present accessible) another painting, of the same subject, claimed for Rubens; and as he is not known to have duplicated any of his works, we may say, with the canny Scotch Laird, when requested to toast his loyalty to King George, in 1745* :—

“Who’s the Pretender, or, who’s the King,
God bless us all, that’s quite another thing.”

Our attention was next directed to a picture claimed for Rembrandt. In a letter which has appeared in the *Gazette* from a distinguished Art Critic, we notice that he calls it—“*Isaac blessing Jacob*”—and he praises it with his usual eloquence. But it will be news to the Art-world to learn, that Rembrandt ever painted that subject. He left, at his death, a list of all his works. That list may be found in any of the standard biographies of his life. In the most recent, that by John W. Mollett, we have searched in vain for a painting in which Isaac and Jacob are represented together. Further criticism of this picture may be therefore deemed superfluous.

The picture which most deserves attention is that claimed for Palma il Vecchio, *Jupiter in Judgment*. It bears traces of originality. Palma the elder, like Palma il Giovine, belonged to the Venetian school, where they occupy a secondary rank. Palma il Vecchio is not a great painter; he is not to be compared with the maestri of Venice, Titian or Veronese, but his works are distinguished by warmth of colour, delicacy of outline, and graceful composition. They lack, however, both strength and originality. He painted with great facility, and his works are to be found in almost every European Gallery. His style is comparatively easy of imitation, and his pictures have therefore been very frequently copied.

We also saw a landscape claimed for Ruysdael. The scene is a familiar acquaintance. We have even met it more than once in the windows of some of the well known establishments of the Messrs. Attenborough in London.

There is also a Teniers, *The Bowlers*, which has been copied, we may say, a hundred times; and a Cherub, by “Raphael”—so the frame states. This Raphael is painted on a worm-eaten panel, and sundry seals thereon, of attesta-

tion we suppose, have been almost wholly removed. Who, it may be asked, is this Mr. Raphael? Can it be meant for him who is known to the world as Raffaele Sanzio? If it be so, then the contrast of “Hyperion to a Satyr” is not greater than it is to the cherubs at the base of his greatest work, which occupies a room by itself in the Dresden Gallery, *The Madonna di San Sisto*. The group of cattle by Jordaens has an engraving resting above it, placed there, we presume, to show that, though crude in execution, the drawing is much superior to that in the painting of which it is professed to be a copy. There are about a dozen others; it is unnecessary to describe them, for they all, so to speak, speak for themselves.

A “happy thought” has just suggested itself. There are many original pictures by the Old Masters in this city. We have unfortunately incurred the undying hatred of some of the fortunate owners because of our lack of appreciation; we have even had an angry fist flourished in our face because we declined to recommend some of them for exhibition. They comprise Nicholas Berghems, Claude Lorraines, Sir Godfrey Knellers, Sir Peter Lelys, and Gainsboroughs! Now we respectfully suggest that the Council should collect and exhibit them, together with the collection they have now on hand, and they might add that Verbeekhoeven on their walls, but *not* the excellent example of that master bequeathed by Mr. Gibb. The collection would surely claim the merit of novelty; it would draw large crowds, and the price of admission should be doubled. We trust they will be duly grateful to us for this suggestion. And if some doubting Thomas among the spectators should have the temerity to question the originality of any picture, let him be soothed with the following maxim from Goethe: “We know accurately only when we know little; with knowledge, doubt increases.”

Juan Mahpop.

THE FINE ARTS IN MONTREAL.

It is not only a rare, but a fortunate occurrence, that the lovers of art, and those interested in the fine arts, in all their branches, will shortly have the opportunity of examining some of the works of the Italian and Dutch masters of the sixteenth century in the City of Montreal. The names of Raphael, Correggio, Palma il Vecchio, Rembrandt and Rubens being associated with pictures and paintings at the Gallery in Phillip's Square brings on a fit of *Risus Sardonicus* with the ignorant and credulous art critics, and with a class of skeptics who must have either ocular proof or written testimony that the picture exhibited was painted by the artist whose name is attached to it. There are others again to whom Nature has given entire inability to conceive any beauty in the works of Rembrandt and Rubens, though their talents have left them without rivals, because in the one artist, his heads and fingers are seldom of elevated form and refined feeling, and too often harsh and coarse; and in the other, there is an absence of those gaudy and harsh colours which dazzle the eye. Then there are others who may be called doubters, unbelievers, detractors, who think that Bacon wrote *Shakspeare*; Prince Rupert wrote *Milton*; William Cobbett, or Thomas Paine wrote *Burke*; or, “Magnis Componere Parva,” that Lord Derby wrote Earl Beaconsfield's wondrous tale of *Alroy*.

These two classes had better not look at the exhibition of the works of the masters of the sixteenth century alluded to, but content themselves with gazing at the *mediocre* of the “loan collection,” and with the faculty of allusion imagine that they possess genius and soul, colour and harmony, light and shadow, truth and precision, and all the higher excellencies which are to be found in the pictures in the galleries of the Stadthouse and Dusseldorp.

Without authoritatively pronouncing that these pictures by the Italian and Dutch masters are genuine, yet I am seriously inclined to think they are so; and, by comparing them with the known copies in the lower lobby of the Art Gallery, I do not see any reason to doubt their originality. From all internal and external evidence, and despite the doubt that has been so freely thrown by some connoisseurs upon their authenticity, and their absence from catalogues, which are rarely, if ever complete, I iterate my belief in their genuineness, though I may not be willing to class them with the *chef d'œuvres* of the European Galleries. But, whether copies, or paintings in imitation or after the style of the artists to whom they are accredited—or original pictures by other artists—the fact remains that they are meritorious works of art, and demand the suffrage of people of taste.

In this communication I shall not attempt to convey to the reader any idea of that excellence, the sight of which afforded me so much pleasure; again, I do not wish to anticipate the verdict of the Council of the Art Association of Montreal, to whom the pictures are entrusted.

I can only say that our Art students ought to have the opportunity of studying these pictures, because in them they may learn the art of colouring and composition, and a skilful management of light and shade. I also believe that the proper study of them will be as profitable to the young artist as the going to a grammar school would be to a boy who wants to learn the English or Latin languages.

To write all that may with truth be written upon the clearness and brilliancy of colour in the *Ahasuerus holding out the golden sceptre to Queen Esther*; the force and freshness in the landscape by Ruysdael; the peculiarity

* His speech was thus paraphrased :—

“God save the King, God save our faith's protector,
I see no harm in blessing the Pretender;
But who's the Pretender, or, who's the King,
God bless us all, that's quite another thing.”