

MONTREAL LETTER.

While the paupers' patronesses in their airy country houses are busy with needle and brush, and the concocting of "magnificently feminine" plans to secure Mr. C. P. R. Jones' bank notes at some prospective fancy fair, while "a friend of poor children, a most grateful mother, as proof that she deeply appreciates all the superior luxuries wealth gives her, sends the F. A. F. twenty-five cents, being the proceeds of three little hand-painted birch-bark canoes she has sold," come with us to visit the objects of so much solicitude, ere sweltering court-yards and vault-like habitations know them no more, ere they have at length drawn their allowance from silk purses and collection plates.

My friend was on the lookout for a model. Now the most picturesque of our community are undoubtedly poor French Canadians; but you might as well try to persuade these that vaccination makes far less havoc among men than persistent refusal to let warm water have its perfect work, as to conquer their holy horror of "posing." What would *le bon Dieu* and *Monsieur le Curé* do to them? The amateur artist had offered such substantial rewards as only amateur artists can; all in vain. Once he did persuade a timid old char-woman that being painted *en costume* was not really any worse than being photographed. She yielded, but her prayers and fears were very pathetic afterwards. Oh! provided the family never, never heard of it. Yet *had* she done wrong? Perhaps not, still there certainly seemed need of *Monsieur le Curé's* absolution. My friend must consequently search among the compatriots of Titian's beauties and Raphael's cherubs. So we went together with a charming Signorina as interpreter, to interview the smiling, lazy organ-grinder, the thin, sharp-voiced newspaper vendor in their dirty homes, You who have only seen Irish and English poor crowding our hideous lanes, cannot imagine what pretty bits of Rome, of Naples, even unpoetical Montreal boasts. Signorina seemed to know the Italian Canadians very intimately, yet not so intimately, however, as to be quite sure who might, and who might not have adopted our prejudices. It was all the better, for we got a glimpse of no less than four families, who had come respectively from Milan, from Rome, from Naples and from Sicily. Though my friend cared little about these facts, preferring indeed the Sicilians to all, emigration agents may be interested to learn the Milanese cabinet-makers and restaurateurs were by far the most prosperous and enterprising, as they are in their native land; that the Romans and Neapolitans piped and strummed for a living, while the poor Sicilians sold papers. Of an estimable French dame whose Italian *homme* working ten hours every day in *notre* "Meeson's" *à nous*, had secured three small rooms and a wife, we say nothing. She was blessed above the average; but let me show you the microscopic apartments of our mutual enemy, the street musician. Is it a pawn-shop, that all mentionable and unmentionable articles of clothing hang from ceiling, over screen, over chair? Ugh! how stifling! The tiny room has been subdivided by bedraggled curtains, leaving only a narrow space through which we can pass to a back kitchen. Three women, four men, and children *ad infinitum* infest this hovel. One quick, dark-browed *donna*, with white head dress, gaudy shawl, and doubtful jewels, will tell our fortunes. Then a cage is brought out where three little nerveless, green birds hop about languidly. They have had enough of the farce to-day, but no, they must come forth again and pick "a planet of fortune" from the bewildering row of multi-coloured papers.

"Is this how you gain your living?"

"Si, by tramping about de streets all day."

"And your husband, what does he do?"

"Ah! my husband! ha, ha, my husband iss vary good! Listen!"

Then we hear heavy snoring from the room above us.

"He drinks," she says, growing red and laughing coldly.

The other women seem to have their hands full with their *bimbi*, and the men, lazy reprobates, find organ-grinding in Canada as profitable as any other artistic profession!

"Models? you want us as models, do you say? No, no, grazia, Signor!"

The amateur had begun to despair, when Signorina finally bethought her of the Sicilians. Nobody but Italians could inhabit that bright pink house with the pale green shutters. At the end of a court it stands, where the sun beats fiercely down all day long. Blue sky, golden light, and vivid colouring, isn't this delightfully Neapolitan? And see, that is Neapolitan, too, that huge bunch of piled-up vegetables, the monotonous fare, month in and month out. Then tumbling, crawling, laughing on a rickety gallery, such exquisite little St. Johns, such bewitching "holy children." Their mother comes out and meets us with pretty apologies. We have come so unexpectedly, and, you understand, there being no ante-room, she has not had an opportunity to keep us waiting half an hour till she performed her toilette. We insist everything is infinitely better so—furiously hot kitchen, where some unsavoury vegetable soup simmers on the fire, chaotic bed-room, and unwashed imps. Since we are English, these Italians are Protestants, but methinks I spy through the chinks of a door a Madonna of the Sacred Heart. Never mind, surely the poor can afford to be eclectic in religious matters. Now Signor Amateur with candy and pennies strives to win the favour of the three-year-old coquette, who holds down her lovely curly head after a fashion an older Signorina might envy. But we are not obdurate. The large, timid eyes look up suddenly, and as suddenly they are hidden by the tiny hands. However, that glance has sufficed. Meanwhile I talk with the mother. She seems intelligent enough, and tells me how her husband gained sufficient to support them last year; but now, how he is dead, and the elder children must sell newspapers turn about on the streets. Yes, Italians when they are ordinary

labourers, and not lazy, can get on very well, "Only it is not good for de head-work here," adds our friend, Signorina. By this time, the artist having made his arrangements, little St. John and his sister agree to come and pose till—the promoters of fancy fairs, charity balls and impromptu collections shall have discovered what balance is due to the poor.

Apropos of Monsieur Beaugrand's *Mélanges*, and his interesting sketch of journalism contained therein, Monsieur Sault mentions a rather interesting way to study history. Having become thoroughly acquainted with facts through the *Chronicle* you must look for the roots of the flowers in the daily papers.

I glean from *La Minerve* some information concerning the Montreal branch of Laval University. In 1865, it appears, its foundation was prohibited. In 1878 Pius IX. revoked this decision, and with many compliments for the Holy See the institution was opened. Some five years ago Leo XIII. decreed no one should interfere with Laval's rights. Is Monsieur Mercier, he who holds the cross of the Order of St. Gregory, not braving this decree? Finally in 1886 Rome proclaims that only united to the Montreal branch will she give the name of Catholic to Laval University.

Mr. Aiken and not Aikin is the artist's name mentioned in my last letter.

LOUIS LLOYD.

LOVE'S PHASES.

Love has a thousand phases. Oftentimes
For very joy of her own life she weeps;
Or like a timid, wistful child she creeps
To sheltering arms; or like a spirit climbs
The white heights scaled by poets in their rhymes—
Imagination's lone and splendid steep—
Or drifts with idle oar upon the deeps
Of her own soul to undiscovered climes.

Hers is the rapture of the martyred saint,
The exaltation of the mother when
Upon her breast her baby softly stirs
For the first time; and every morn doth paint
On every rock, and tree, and stream, and glen,
Some inextinguishable look of hers.

A. ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

CANADA'S GREAT RESERVE.

Just one hundred years ago Sir Alexander Mackenzie discovered the great river of the north which now bears his name, and, strange as it may seem, the civilization of the nineteenth century has failed to follow up the discovery of this mighty river and add to our knowledge of the "great lone land" which it drains. While numerous discoverers have penetrated the jungles of Africa and every school-boy knows about the Congo, it is rather humiliating that our knowledge of our own great northern country is practically *nil*. Every school-boy is drilled on every river of any importance in Europe, Asia, and Africa, while in our own country we have a river greater than any river in these three Continents, but about which our average school-boy scarce knows the name. We have a grander river than the Mississippi, and the Amazon, of all the rivers of the world, is our only peer. So says the report of the Mackenzie Basin Committee of the Senate. To give an instance of the sad lack of information, even in our own school geographies, I may mention one of them states that the Canadian-American chain of lakes, that is the chain extending from Lake Superior to Lake Ontario, constitutes one-half of the entire fresh water lake area of the globe. The report to which I have just referred gives the lacustrine area of the Mackenzie Basin (and all within our own country) as probably exceeding that of the Canadian-American chain. This certainly betrays a woeful ignorance of our own country, and it can perhaps scarcely be wondered at if there is found a lack of national spirit in young Canadians when they are taught in our schools, where, above all things relating to our own country, a national spirit ought to be inculcated, to believe that the greater portion of our country is an uninhabitable, barren, icy-cold region.

I do not propose in this article to treat of the varied resources, present and prospective, of the Mackenzie River region; such a description would necessarily be brief and, therefore, uninteresting. It will be sufficient in this short article to single out one item of wealth which constitutes the present and only great article of commerce in that territory requiring no development.

Whatever may be said as to its future, as to its undeveloped resources, as to its suitability for an agricultural population, there can be no question as to the great wealth in the shape of fur-bearing animals of various species which find in that immense territory a congenial habitat. Nowhere in the world is there reputed to be such a large and valuable fur-bearing district, if indeed it is not the last remaining fur preserve of the world. By reason of the exclusiveness of the fur trade its extent and commercial importance is rather difficult to ascertain. Our fur clothing is a very important article of comfort, and yearly becoming more so in our severe winter climate and in other countries where the climate is similar; but few know where the furs come from, what kind of animal they are taken from, and as to their method of manufacture. Every Canadian ought to feel a just pride in the fact that the beaver coat and