



TORONTO, May, 1891.

The modest exhibition of the Art Students' League, held in their rooms in the Imperial Bank buildings, was a surprise as well as a pleasure to me. A surprise, because it showed in unmistakable terms that Art has devoted servants among us, and that the notable scarcity of figures from Canadian canvasses would ere long become a thing of the past. The league was established mainly through the influence of Mr. W. D. Blatchley, an Englishman, who came to live in Canada only a few years ago, who is engaged in "commercial work" here as in England, but who has received the art training so possible to the Londoner, so impossible just yet to the Canadian. Seeing the lack, and willing and able to give practical suggestions, Mr. Blatchley prevailed upon a number of earnest young art workers to form a league among themselves and to study from life. This was done, and Mr. Blatchley made its first president, a position he held four years. The result of the league is seen in the impetus given to abstract art study, in the earnestness of the members, and the very excellent results already attained.

Modestly tacked upon the walls of their two rooms were some three hundred studies in crayon, water and oil. The centre of attraction consisted in a monochrome, by W. Bengough, of the league at work. The position of the workers prevented full portraits in every instance, but the personell of each individual was easily recognized, and the attitudes and grouping were natural and full of grace.

For the rest, the exhibition meant study. The model, from every point of view, and by numerous hands, showed conscientious study; and the notes attached, "one hour study," "two hour study," "fifteen minute study," manifested the industry insisted upon by the league. A by-law of the league constituting a section under the heading "*Nulla dies sine linea*," furnished a very important set of small studies, each, as was intended by the motto, necessarily exhibiting the characteristics of the individual worker.

The league does not confine itself to the masculine sex, ladies are admitted, and several belong to it. Moreover, artists proper are not excluded, and among the members are Reid, Manly, Holmes and Howard. A general complaint among our artists is the indifference of the public, but the Art Students' League have no cause of complaint, visitors having been numerous.

Canada, however, suffers for the want of a proper critic, who shall come between the artist and the public, informing both.

The *Edmonton Bulletin* is a well-edited, neatly got up four page sheet, apparently in the Reform interest, but not hopelessly so. It indicts the North-West M.P.'s for breaking their promises in 1887 in the matter of half-breed rights.

Two new volumes of poems from the same press have just reached me, that of Imrie and Graham.

The larger volume is an enlarged edition of Mr. Imrie's Poems, published some years ago. Many of them are accompanied by music written by the late Dr. Strathy, professor of music at Trinity College, and Professor Johnston, and thus form spirit-stirring songs, several of which are already popular. These poems are simple, homely lyrics of home and country, often rising into pathos, always sound and true in sentiment, and not seldom touched with the charm of folk-lore. Mr. Imrie is a Scotchman of "Glasca," and often uses the vernacular of the Broomielaw as a vehicle of tender memories.

The second volume is a collection of lyrics by Albert E. S. Smythe, a name become familiar to readers of *The Week*. Toronto is the happier and Canada the richer for the advent of another poet, worthy of the worthy title, in Mr. Smythe. His poems show him a man of rare insight, high thought, pure taste and good education. He is also a humourist, as he shows in many places beside his "Peanut

Ballads," as he has dubbed one section of his volume, and it is humour of the merry, delicate, Irish type, something akin to French, the blending of "the smile and the tear," that is at once so charming and so clever.

The limits of my letter forbid quotation, but a stanza from *Flowers* will not be out of place:

Ah! would it were the only grave where fondest flowers were rooted;

Ah! would it were the only spot where love in anguish cries;

How bitter-sweet the token of the claim that death disputed,

This solace of a snow-drop shining where our baby lies. But the flowers return in spring-time bearing all the self-same sweetness,

And the spirits that we sorrow for, may they not come once more.

With all the old-world's wisdom, and with purer souled completeness,

Till the garden of humanity grows fairer than before!

I may also mention "*Primrose Day, 1883*," to the memory of "the great Earl."

The death of Mr. George M. Evans, brother of Archdeacon Evans of your city, was a shock to this community, to whom, as alderman of the city for several years, as peoples' churchwarden of St. Philip's church, and superintendent of its Sunday school for the last eleven years, as a partner in one of the oldest law-firms of the city, and as examiner in chancery at Osgoode Hall, he was well known and highly respected. Whole souled, genial and generous, Mr. Evans endeared himself to all, and his widow and three sons have the deep sympathy of those who knew him.

Mr. Evans was a scholar, and from time to time contributed papers to the meetings of improvement societies for the young, that dealt with phases of our history and literature; a remarkably fine paper on Mairs' "*Tecumseh*" was read before St. Philip's Young People's Association in 1887. He is still remembered as one of the best classical masters of Upper Canada College. Mr. Evans' death was the result of a severe attack of *la grippe* a year ago last February.

June, 6th, 1891.

The foremost topic of the week in this, as in all other cities and centres of population throughout the Dominion, is the illness of the Premier. The utmost sympathy is expressed for Lady Macdonald, whom everybody recognizes as not only the devoted wife and mother, but as the faithful adviser and ally of the great statesman who has inscribed his name forever upon the proud annals of Canada. While it is imperative that business go on as usual, there is a very conscious hush in the city; the thoughts of all being at the bedside of the dying, not knowing when the dread message may come, nor sure that it will arrive very instantly, but aware, nevertheless, that for Canada Sir John A. Macdonald's labors are ended. "Peace with Honour," will be the inscription upon our Premier's monument, whenever it shall be written, as it is upon that of England's 'great Earl' Beaconsfield, with whom he has not unfrequently nor inaptly been compared; for we are, as one of our poets has recently written in memoriam of the English statesman:

Proud of his life,
Proud of the upward toil, the noble strife,
The honoured place where that great heart reposes."

The celebration of what is rather inaptly called the *Battle of Ridgeway*—the rout of the Fenian invaders at Fort Erie, in '66, on the 2nd of June, was rather a fine affair. The statue erected by the city to the memory of those of the city corps who fell in the fight, in the Queen's Park was beautifully decorated with wreaths of the finest flowers sent from the city conservatories, and every coign of vantage on the monument was occupied by splendid flowering plants and palms. Mr. Chambers, Superintendent of Parks and Gardens; Mr. Watkins, of the Horticultural Gardens, and Mr. Carlton, of the Queen's Park, jointly undertook the floral arrangements, and the result was a splendid and appropriate piece of decoration. Mr. Reeves, of the Rosehill Reservoir Park, sent a handsome contribution of flowers and plants from his greenhouses, and numbers of private citizens, some of them the relatives of the youths to whose honour the day was devoted, sent or carried their tender memorials to be added to the beautiful holocaust that lay at the foot of the monument.

Long before the hour appointed for the commemoration ceremonies thousands of citizens were assembled around the great centre of attraction, and when the soldiers arrived they had to pass through a dense mass of interested and sympathetic people. All the corps in the city took part, the Royal Grenadiers, the Queen's Own, the Infantry School, the Governor General's Body Guard, the Veterans, and a large squad of the boys of the public schools of the city. These last receive regular drill from Capt. Thomson, as part of their physical training, and are always well able to take a handsome part on occasions of public interest. Many very interesting circumstances marked the proceedings of the day, notably the presence of the mother of Ensign McEachren, the first man killed at Ridgeway, a young man full of promise, and whose memory is still cherished by the company to which he belonged, E. Co., which sent a wreath inscribed 'McEachren.' The University Company, K. Co., Q.O.R., were the greatest sufferers at Ridgeway; seven of the gallant youths were killed or died of wounds, and others recovered only maimed for life. A splendid memorial window, inscribed with the heroes' names, was placed in Convocation Hall of Toronto University, but was destroyed by the fire. K. Co. keeps up its old reputation, as was abundantly proved in the North West campaign. The city on this occasion was represented by Ald. McDougall, the Mayor having just lost a little daughter. Speeches were made after His Honour the Lieutenant Governor had declared the proceedings open by placing a magnificent bouquet on the monument. Lieut.-Col. Oter, as President of the Veterans Association, and an officer of the Queen's Own at Ridgeway, spoke, as did also Lieut.-Col. Gibson, of the 13th, Ald. McDougall and Lieut.-Col. G. T. Denison. The speech of the latter gentleman was greatly praised, and his peroration from Robert Grant Haliburton has been generally commented on as most happy. "When we lose those we love into the grave we entrust them to the bosom of our country as sacred pledges that the soil that is thus consecrated by their dust shall never be violated by a foreign flag or the foot of a foe. Whenever the voice of disloyalty whispers in our ear, or passing discord tempts us to forget those who are to come after us, and those who have gone before, the real, and true, and good, who have cleared our forests and made the land they love a heritage of plenty and peace to us and our children, a stern voice comes echoing on through thirty centuries from a mighty nation of the past that long ages has slumbered on the banks of the Nile. 'Accursed be he who holds not the ashes of his father sacred and forgets what is due from the living to the dead.'"

Mr. Mair has at length, having reached his home, at Prince Albert, after a prolonged absence, answered "Historicus" and his other critics in the matter of Col. Proctor, in the columns of the *Mail*, of the 30th May. It would, however, seem from his rejoinder in the *Mail* of the 1st instant, that "Historicus" was careful to put his demand into an unanswerable form and stands on it.

The increase of Historical Societies throughout the province is a welcome fact. A new society has lately been formed at St. Thomas, for Elgin County, and another at Prescott for Grenville County. The Pioneer and Historical Association of the Province of Ontario held its second annual meeting on Wednesday, at Brampton, when Dr. Scadding, the venerable president of the York Pioneer and Historical Society, was elected president, with Rev. Canon Bull, President of Lundy's Lane Historical Society, as vice-president, and Wm. Rennie, Esq., the secretary-treasurer, re-elected. Dr. Canniff and Canon Bull urged the necessity of approaching the Government of the Province on behalf of a suitable building for a Provincial Pioneer Museum, a vast quantity of relics being already collected, and the latter a grant towards the publication of documents and the engagement of a Provincial Historian. A paper on "History in an Odd Corner" was also read by Mrs. Curzon, who was lately elected the first woman member of the York Pioneer and Historical Association. It is hoped that the ladies of the Province will come forward as members of the local societies, most of which admit them by their rules, and thus aid in gathering up the history, social and general, that is at present lying scattered about the Dominion uselessly. The meeting ordered a message of sympathy to be forwarded to Lady Macdonald in her deep affliction.

S. A. CURZON