

moderate prices all the lumber required for buildings and fences in the western part of the country. Considerable quantities of timber for building purposes, and for fuel also, exist on the banks of all the rivers and creeks, and there are in addition groves of poplar all over the country. No difficulty will be found to exist as regards timber for building or fuel. Large deposits of coal have been discovered on the Saskatchewan River, and also on the Assiniboine. The former has already been worked to some extent, and the quality is pronounced by all who have used it as excellent. There will be ample fuel of both wood and coal to be distributed by the lines of railway now constructing, in addition to the timber which is found on the banks of all the rivers."

We have a very opportune corroboration of this from Professor Macoun, who has been on an expedition during the past summer. He says that "the great drawback to the country south of Battleford is that there is no timber, but this lack is compensated for by the undoubted existence of unlimited quantities of coal throughout that region."

In twenty-seven miles along the Assiniboine river, in 1877, over 400,000 bushels of wheat were harvested that averaged considerably over thirty bushels to the acre, and some yields have produced over 40 bushels; whilst in South Minnesota the average is twenty bushels, in Wisconsin only fourteen, in Pennsylvania and Ohio fifteen. In Prince Albert and other new settlements on the Saskatchewan, forty bushels of spring wheat, averaging 63 lbs. to the bushel, have been raised.

The extent of this enormous and rich territory is comparatively unknown. It is estimated at 2,984,000 square miles, whilst the whole of the United States contains 2,933,000 square miles. In its centre is Lake Winnipeg, 300 miles long, and 50 to 60 miles wide,—the future Black Sea of Canada. This Lake Winnipeg receives the drainage of the future wheat-field of the world.

In truth, the prospect of advancement in the good work of settling and developing the resources of the North-West grows brighter continually. The north-westward movement will next year probably proceed at a startling rate. The resources and capabilities of the country are being brought to the notice of millions, in the old world and the new, as never before. The conviction is being forced steadily on the minds of intelligent people that the world's great wheat-field lies in Canada's fertile belt, and this conviction must have the effect of greatly swelling the tide of immigrants already flowing towards that remarkable region. The means of reaching the country is steadily improving, and ere long will be of a very satisfactory character. Indeed we already speak of Winnipeg as within 72 hours journey from Montreal, and as an inducement to immigrants can announce it as within 14 days from Liverpool.

We begin our work in the North-West under favourable auspices, and although it may be prudent not to be over-sanguine, we may call to mind the glowing words of Principal Grant who accompanied Mr. Sandford Fleming's Expedition from "Ocean to Ocean" in 1872:—

"To construct is the duty that lies nearest to us, 'we therefore will rise up and build.' Our young Dominion in grappling with so great a work has resolutely considered it from a national and not a strictly financial point of view, knowing that whether it 'pays' directly or not, it is sure to pay indirectly. Other young countries have had to spend, through long years, their strength and substance to purchase freedom, or the right to exist. Our lot is a happier one. Protected 'against infection and the hand of war' by the might of Britain, we have but to go forward, to open up for our children and the world what God has given into our possession, bind it together, consolidate it, and lay the foundations of an enduring future."

THE 'OLD MASTERS' IN MONTREAL.

The owner of the *Old Masters*, referred to in the communication of "Juan Mahpop," I am informed did not submit his pictures to the Council of the Art Association for its decision upon their genuineness, that question having been already determined in London, Paris, and Antwerp by experts more competent to judge rightly than the members of the Council and its coadjutors; neither did he want their endorsement, which, if obtained, would neither enhance their value nor give them additional beauty. The history of the pictures, apart from their merit, is proof against their being worthless imitations of the Old Masters, and as the present possessor of them is fully aware of their quality, he has not requested the Council and its coadjutors to investigate and satisfy themselves that the pictures "are what they profess to be." I do not suppose that they would authoritatively pronounce an opinion upon the *Rubens* and the *Palma il Vecchio*, when such a distinguished and learned artist as Sir Charles Eastlake, P.R.A., is charged with buying for the National Gallery a "bogus" *Andrea Mantegna*, although they may not fear to enter the lists with the sharp-eyed critic Mrs. Montague, who discovered "Mahpop's" "marine sketch" to be a counterfeit. The important question, to my mind, is: Are the pictures worthy a place on the "beautifully tinted walls" of the Art Gallery in Phillip's Square? And, a second question is demanded:—Have the pictures a sufficiency of the characteristics of Rubens, Rembrandt, Palma il Vecchio, Corregio, and "Raffaello Sanzio"—such as warm and transparent colouring, imagination, expression, light and shade, composition, design, harmony, and grace—to advance the taste of the public, and to promote the education of students in the Fine Arts?

Taste in Art may vary as much as that of the Palate. The eye and the intellect of some people may be much moved by the productions of the Old Masters, and they may derive more inspiration from them than from those of the Modern School; whilst the works of the latter may, possibly, give to other people a more delicate sense to the eye, and an enlarged idea of the sublime and beautiful. One man may be charmed with *Rubens* and look coldly on *Verbeckhaven*, whilst another is charmed with *Sidney Percy*, and sees nothing in *Jacob Ruysdael*, after the manner that one man may prefer *Johannisberg* to Cider, whilst another revels in a plain Tommy-cod and cares naught about Saumons froids, sauce Ravigote.—*De gustibus not est disputandum.*

Painting being an art like poetry, requires sensibility, imagination, and genius, who will say that these qualities are not exhibited in the *Jupiter in Judgment*, attributed to Palma il Vecchio? "Mahpop" admits that it bears traces of originality. I say, to compare this picture with the copy of Raphael's *Madonna della Seggiola* in the lower lobby of the Gallery would be an insult to Art; and to compare it with some of the pictures in the "Gibb Collection" would be like comparing the lofty Vitellio to the "small-beer poet" Fitzgerald.

"Mahpop" says: "Palma il Vecchio is not a great painter"; so be it, but Vasari thinks otherwise; he says, in reference to one of this artist's pictures: "It seemed impossible for the power of colour or pencil to rise to a higher pitch of truth and perfection." Pilkington says: "The paintings of Palma are in great esteem for the noble taste of his composition, for an expression that is natural and pleasing, and for the union and harmony of his colours." Bryan says there are pictures by Palma attributed to Titian, and others erroneously attributed to Giorgione. Sir Charles Eastlake (perhaps, no authority for "Mahpop") says of Palma: "As a painter of female portraits, he rivals his great contemporaries Giorgione and Titian, and is occasionally concealed under their names." Sir Charles also alludes to a *Lucretia*, by Palma, as "a commanding figure of fine expression," and remarks that "other mythological subjects known to have been painted by him are missing." May not this identical picture be one of the missing? Judging from the style of this *Jupiter in Judgment*—of which there is positive external evidence that it is an "original"—I much doubt if any artist in Canada would consider it "comparatively easy of imitation," and still more, I doubt if any one of them would have the temerity to copy or counterfeit it, or that any logician would say that a picture which is not difficult to copy must of necessity be "very frequently copied." Again, is it any disparagement to Palma's ability that his works are to be found in almost every European Gallery? Are not the works of Rubens to be similarly found? France and England abound with the productions of his pencil, so that there is no necessity to go to the Pinakothek of Munich to see them; although I can understand the lover of "Religious Art" visiting the Cathedral of Antwerp to behold the grandest type, probably, of the Crucifixion, in its full dramatic sense, that Art ever produced.*

There are three of the works of Rubens in the Gallery, belonging to the Miles family at Leigh Court, near Bristol, which I have long remembered, having known them in my boyhood. One, *The Conversion of St. Paul*; another, *The Woman Taken in Adultery*, which is vividly impressed on my mind's eye from the circumstance that the two principal accusers are said to be portraits of Calvin and Luther; the third, a *Holy Family*, in which the Virgin Mary is attired in a Dutch robe, and her face is similar in character to that of Esther the Queen, in the *Rubens* (which "Mahpop" condemns), and the infants, Christ and St. John, have legs and arms suited for a baby-Hercules.

"Mahpop" cannot see the handicraft of Rubens in the *Ahasuerus and Esther*, because he has "committed inaccurate drawing," and "departed from his usual faultless drawing." His inaccurate drawing has been noted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who remarks that "the incorrectness of Rubens in regard to his outline oftener proceeds from haste and carelessness, than from inability," and whilst Sir Joshua gives the palm of excellence to Michael Angelo for his great correctness of design, and profound knowledge of anatomy; to Raphael for composition, expression and drawing; to Andrea del Sarto for correct drawing; he only extols Rubens for his admirable colouring, great magnificence and harmony of composition, and a gay and lightsome manner. I should have thought the effect on the spectator when beholding such a picture as the *Ahasuerus and Esther* would have checked the disposition to pick out and dwell on its defects.

I must return to the Gallery at Leigh Court to refer to a remarkable picture, *A Storm; the Calling of Abraham*, by Gaspar Poussin; it is said to be one of the finest specimens of this Master, and formerly belonged to the Colonna Palace at Rome, and was sold during the confiscations of the French Revolution; and yet to another, which to have once seen, would never be effaced from the mind's eye, the expression of the figure is so sublime and superhuman, and denotes such power and energy, the CREATOR MUNDI,† by Lionardo da Vinci, which was purchased about 1794 by Bryan, the author of the Dictionary of Painters and Engravers. *The Conversion of Saint Paul* was formerly the property of M. de Montesquieu, who was one of the victims of the French Revolution (1794), and after many changes in ownership, it was purchased for \$20,000 by Richard Hart Davis, M.P., Bristol, by whom it was subsequently transferred to the Miles family.

I allude to these changes in ownership, because there has been a good deal, or I ought rather to say, a bad share, upon the part of the credulous of pooh-poohing and sneering at these Old Masters. "How chances it they travel?" Their reputation, if they ever had any, ought to have kept them in England! Impossible!! Nonsense!!! Absurd!!!! How could such pictures, by any chance, come to Montreal? How could a private gentleman

* "Mahpop" has mixed in his description of the pictures by Rubens a scene from the Garden of Gethsemane and the Crucifixion.

† It has been called the *Salvator Mundi*. It represents Christ in His majesty and glory, holding a globe in one hand, in the centre of which a bright light is sparkling.