

last remark: "It's all such a drive," she said; and so I went back again, past the church, past the old houses, past the great gates, to the crowded noisy streets. Good Luck knocks at every one's door at least once in their lives declares the proverb; some time then to the ambitious maid of all work, who doubtless returned to the roof like a second "Sister Ann," and again fixed her eyes on St. Paul's, there will come her heart's desire in the shape of a situation where she will have a little peace. It isn't much to ask, one would think; and if a thing is really wanted, one gets it in time, I suppose, for the Danes always land. I wonder, what is your blue rose for which you have been striving all your days? . . . A few weeks back I read an admirable article in the *Daily News* on a certain sisterhood at Bayonne, called the Bernardines, who, taking vows of silence and solitude, speak but once a year, and then only with their father and mother: and they spend their empty days of summer and winter, autumn and spring, days which to you and me are as full as they can hold, in a whitewashed cell, in a dim chapel, in an utterly dreary garden, where the very flower-beds look like graves. These fifty women, one of whom is only twenty, wear hoods of coarse white flannel drawn over the head and eyes, and a cloak and skirt of the same material. If they have committed crimes, or what those crimes are, no one knows. "A story is told of the Empress Eugénie, who, having parted many years before from a school friend in Madrid, learnt that the girl had taken refuge among the Bernardines. People say she had been extremely beautiful, and it is added that she had, when both were young, crossed the Empress's path and become her rival. . . . The Empress obtained a dispensation from the Pope to speak to her friend face to face; but it is said that when the nun threw off her hood her royal visitor fainted at the sight that met her eyes. People hint that life-long scars and fearful mutilations lurk under these shroud-like veils, which are assumed as much in mercy to the passers-by as a mortification to the wearer." So runs the article; and I have seen photographs bought by the writer of this description from the convent itself, photographs of the awful figures at their meals, or sewing with their heads bent down in the sunshine and moving in single file, like prisoners exercising, along the gravel-walks flecked with shadow. Each of these poor women have deliberately chosen this terrible mockery of an existence: this is their ambition, their blue rose; of their own accord they drew on these dreadful grave-clothes, closing their lips to pleasant speech, their ears to pleasant sounds, their eyes to pleasant sights, forever; and this terrible state of things is in part imitated by some of us, who choose lives almost as profitless, almost as monotonous and dreary as ever as the ones lived in by the sisters in the Bernardine Convent. How madly, and of purpose, some of us destroy that soul possession, life, as if it were entirely worthless, or as if many more were in waiting for us when this one is broken and rendered useless; and the wires that made the harmony are snapped by our own hands, as a foolish child breaks in pieces its musical toy; and we cry "all is vanity."

In Fleet Street I met black-edged posters, and all the news in the evening papers was of the dead Emperor and the living one; from the shrine in the Charlottenburg mausoleum the special reporters hurry us to the palace rooms where, with Mackenzie by his side, Frederick III. is waiting. And from these events I recalled to mind a story Phillip was fond of telling. As a queen's small son was sitting one day for his portrait the artist was startled by the child remarking in a puzzled tone, "Did you know my uncle Leopold is dead?" "Yes, sir," answered Phillip. "It's odd," said the poor little baby prince; "for I always thought only street people died." How many times has the boy learnt since then that Pallida Mors visits both cottage and castle alike?

WALTER POWELL.

SOME CANADIAN LITERARY WOMEN.—II.

"FIDELIS."

ONE of the best known names among Canadian literary women is that of "Fidelis," a *nom de plume*, which, for many years, has failed to conceal the personality of Miss Agnes Maule Machar. This failure on its part seems almost unkind, when we consider that the lady to whom it belongs has so strong a distaste for everything approaching publicity, that, during the earlier part of her career, all her writings were anonymous, or signed by different assumed names. That of "Fidelis" was finally chosen, because, in her own words, "Faithfulness is the quality I most value, and care most to possess."

Every noteworthy sentiment is to some extent a revelation of the nature of its author, but the one just quoted seems to me the key-note to the character of "Fidelis." Faithfulness to an ideal of purity in the imaginary world, an ideal of duty in actual life, is the aim of her existence.

In 1873 there was published in Toronto the *Memorials* of the Rev. John Machar, D.D., late Minister of St. Andrew's Church, and sometime Principal of Queen's University, Kingston, edited, so the title page tells us, by members of his family. The particular members referred to were his wife, who made memoranda of his life and ministry, and his daughter, who prepared them for the press. From this book we learn that "Fidelis" is a descendant of the Scottish manse, her maternal grandfather, like her father, having been a Scotch minister. The latter when a child regarded himself as a murderer because he had struck and killed a leveret; and it is not strange that his distinguished daughter should be interested in every movement for the protection of animals, to the extent of being Vice-President of a Humane Society in Kingston, and a local secretary of the American Audubon Society for the defence of birds from the ravages of fashion. Nor is it to be wondered at that "Fidelis," being fathered and

mothered as she was, should have written many notable articles in the *Canadian Monthly*, *Andover Review*, and other periodicals, combating not only the false views of Christianity presented by modern anti-Christian writers, but the narrow views of it presented by some of its professed defenders.

Miss Machar also owes a great deal to her father's sensible views on the subject of the education of girls, at a time when the higher education of women was not recognized as a movement. With him she studied Latin and Greek before she was ten, and by the time she was fifteen she had made good progress in French, Italian, and German, besides mathematics, drawing, and music, for which last, however, she had no natural talents. "Fidelis" received her education from private teachers, among whom were Miss Douglas, a well-known teacher of Kingston, who thoroughly grounded her in English branches, and taught her the by no means unimportant feminine art of needlework; and Miss Lyman (afterwards Principal of Vassar College), under whose care and training "Fidelis" spent a pleasant year of boarding school life in Montreal. But her father always superintended her studies, and it was a proud day for his gifted child when about her twelfth year she presented him with a rhymed translation from Ovid, of the beautiful story of Cagy and Halcione, enclosed in an illuminated and illustrated cover of her own execution. It is pleasant to know that this zealous student had an equal love of outdoor exercise, and that, so far from suffering from over study, she has never spent a sick day in bed in her life.

With all this encouragement in her intellectual pursuits, "Fidelis" received very little recognition in her literary efforts. A great proportion of her essays and poems were published anonymously, and often without the knowledge of her family, from an instinctive dread and dislike of being known; and she was frequently amused by the comments, often of a complimentary character, made by her parents and others upon her unsigned articles. Her mother, a woman of great mental breadth and vigour, as well as calm and loving spirit, was somewhat inclined to discourage the ambition of her daughter, from a belief that a literary vocation was not likely to promote a woman's happiness, and also from a distaste of anything like notoriety. Another reason why Miss Machar's earlier writings were orphaned in print was, that she wrote chiefly to correct some abuse, or redress some wrong, which lay heavy on her sensitive soul till she had denounced it in type, and that she feared her words would be little heeded, if it were known that they owed their being to a mere girl. All through her life the activity of her conscience has kept pace with that of her intellect, and the movements of both have been equally spontaneous and strong.

"Fidelis" began to write verse as soon as she could write at all, and only a few years seem to have elapsed between the period of elegies on departed birds and rabbits, to the time when two poetical translations were begun, but never finished, of *Antigone* and *Electra*. Meantime she was drinking with enthusiasm deep draughts from the well of English undefiled. Of American poets she places Whittier far above Longfellow for original genius and spiritual insight. Is there not a slight reminiscence of the mood and manner of the Quaker poet in the fine art of these simple-sounding and beautiful lines from the *Century Magazine*?

TWO VISIONS.

Where close the curving mountains drew,
To clasp the stream in their embrace,
With every outline, curve, and hue
Reflected in its placid face—

The ploughman stopped his team to watch
The train, as swift it thundered by;
Some distant glimpse of life to catch,
He strains his eager, wistful eye.

The morning freshness lies on him,
Just wakened from his balmy dreams;
The travellers, begrimed and dim,
Think longingly of mountain streams.

Oh, for the joyous mountain air,
The fresh, delightful autumn day
Among the hills! The ploughman there
Must have perpetual holiday!

And he, as all day long he guides
His steady plough, with patient hand,
Thinks of the flying train that glides
Into some new, enchanted land.

Where, day by day, no plodding round
Wearies the frame and dulls the mind;
Where life thrills keen to sight and sound,
With ploughs and furrows left behind.

Even so, to each the untrod ways
Of life are touched by fancy's glow,
That ever sheds its brightest rays
Upon the path we do not know.

In this "Fidelis" is at her best. The power without effort, the absence of emphasis, exaggeration, and fever are all characteristic of her finest poetic work, and the mirror-like clearness with which "every outline, curve, and hue" of the two visions are reflected in the smooth flow of these pellucid lines is equal to the stream's veracious rendering of the close-drawing mountains.

This, I must repeat, is "Fidelis" at her best. It is not so easy to give an illustration of her worst, because it does not embody an enormous fault, and to many readers it would not seem a fault at all. It is simply that some of her poetry is produced by a collaboration of the artist and moralist within her, and that we are not so grateful for the moral as we