

able English, in the shape of our well-beloved *Spectator*, is laughingly read and commented upon over the breakfast-table, the leaves fresh from the printing-press; yesterday the proofsheets of *Frederick the Great*, written in the barbaric tongue Carlyle in his perversity insisted on using, is groaningly corrected by the discontented man, and wearily discussed by the tired woman. . . . Let us shut the clanging door and go back into the wholesome light. After all we had no right to know anything of Carlyle beyond what he chose to tell us in his books; the other side belonged to himself alone; and I think we have been punished for our curiosity.

Close by is the small cottage in which Leigh Hunt (that little "talking nightingale") and his belongings packed themselves; and, with a copy of the well-known *Mercury*, by John of Bologna, a tip-toe on the roof, there stands near to the river the country villa, on the balcony of which, still decorated with her crown and initials in fine wrought iron, Catharine of Braganza used to lounge; and there are the trees of Ranelagh Gardens enclosed for the use of the Chelsea pensioners. And now we come to Tite Street, where Oscar Wilde and Whistler have their dwellings, and so to the house of Mrs. Merritt, the painter, of whom America is justly proud.

To be an artist, and have your hand well in, can you imagine a happier fate? "My life has been a long, sunshiny holiday," were Etty's last words. How many of us can say that? And think of Leslie, roses and honeysuckle on his mantelpiece, softly whistling over his beloved art; and Landseer's delightful days spent at work in Scotland, in St. John's Wood, in English country places, made as much of as if he were an Immortal wherever he went; and Collins, Mulready, Webster, Creswick, Ansdell, with their long, long, contented lives. You literary people are not to be envied in comparison with the painters; never think it, for with a true artist there is no drudgery, everything, down to the smallest detail, being an acute delight. There can be nothing mechanical and tiresome—as in the correcting of proofs, copying, and so forth—when every stroke makes such perceptible difference. There can be no tired hands and brains when under one's eyes, under one's fingers, the story completes itself in all its bravery, needing no intervention of publisher or compositor.

What a contrast is there between the glow and warmth of this house so full of life, and hope, and love, and work, and those forsaken empty rooms yonder, on which a veritable curse seems to have fallen. The fire burns, and the pictures start from their frames as the light falls on them. Here is a sad-faced lady with a necklace, there a gallant soldier all in scarlet and gold: in that corner Boxall (do you in Canada know of this admirable portrait-painter, long since dead?) is resting with his hands on his stick, and his dog by his side, as I remember him years ago in Queen Anne Street; and close by Lowell, in red robe, looks keenly at us. In the midst, in trailing velvet gown, sits the artist. She speaks of her child-sitters as their mothers might. She listens with modest patient kindness to the foolish talk of we outsiders, who knowing nothing, doing nothing, dare to criticise: she tells of youthful days of longing after art, of student years passed in Florence and Paris, of happy hard-working days in London; and then, why then there is tea to be given, and the painter (and etcher) of "Eve," and "St. Cecilia," of dozens of fine masculine portraits of men, women, and children, condescends to see that the kettle boils and the cakes are just what they should be. Think of Carlyle, contrasted with this busy whole-hearted woman, her sympathy extended toward all, wise and simple alike, owning friends, as a consequence, by the score, boasting of days filled with the joy of succeeding at an art she loves. I think it is from example we learn best how to manage that which we call our Life, and not from books at all. One goes to the library for amusement, for many a reason, but that the people about us are our real instructors, there can be no doubt.

WALTER POWELL.

MONTREAL LETTER.

A SHORT time ago there was some talk of starting a new monthly magazine here, and the project, "Laclede" tells us, has not been abandoned. He further remarks that many will ask what there is to write about in such a periodical. "My dear sir, you need not go out of your own country for all the material you want, . . . we can get the romance, serials, and short stories, verses, sketches of Canadian character, etc., etc." I have often wondered if an artistic soul could not reveal those sources in our land promising most inspiration. This savours rather of dictionaries of rhymes, doesn't it? But you see even Byron did not think it beneath his poetical dignity to consult such works when hard pressed; would Canadian poets then consider some suggestions made by a competent and wise art-critic unworthy their notice? Of course we all know the true singer waits for no one to tell him what his subject should be, and where-withal he must clothe it. Yet, as has often been repeated, we are young, very young, and the question "Laclede" quotes seems to imply the embryo *littérateurs*, here imagine "foreign parts," far more fertile in all themes artistic than Canada. Surely a clever practitioner could cure this mental presbyopia, for even the myopia of older lands is a much less dangerous affliction. Then we would have work not only Canadian in matter but in manner. Our art, like our accent, recalls now the Englishman, now the American. We want some inspired creature to make us feel our individuality, to give to the world prose or picture or poem, that might not have been produced by an individual of any nationality. I feel sure there are countless glorious "effects" in the exquisitely lovely scenes constantly passing before—alas! our unconscious and unheeding eyes. There is a divine beauty in these moon-lit winter nights of ours, a strange and original beauty quite as worthy to be sung as that of the mu-chau-vaunted

ones of Venice, and if we paint these pictures with pen or with brush, let it be à la *Canadienne*.

A FLOW of soul truly has been manifested in the windows of our book shops that are simply inundated by neatly bound little volumes. No less than three bright and shining lights have risen above our horizon during the past month. With scriptural justice, "the last shall be first," Mr. W. D. Lighthall's effusions make their appearance in a spotless robe of white and gold, which is unlikely to be either tarnished or soiled by too rough handling, inasmuch as fair feminine fingers and tried friends are alone permitted to touch it. If this mode of making one's *début* lacks boldness and a certain *cranerie*—which Mr. Lighthall, by the way, would be quite justified in possessing—it shows excessive modesty really delightful. Fine poetry, like true love, cannot be analyzed. We don't worship a woman because she has large eyes, or red lips, or golden hair, any more than we admire verses and call them poetical because they have transgressed no laws, and contain a goodly number of similes expressed in pretty language. Why is such and such a thing poetical? We must answer woman-like, "because it is." Having been printed for private circulation only, I am not at liberty to quote from the volume other verses than such as have made their appearance in the papers here. It is scarcely to be expected that all are of equal worth. Indeed even among those presented by an appreciative, a very appreciative critic, there seems no small discrepancy. This from *The Confused Dawn*, the opening poem in the book, is very charming.

"The Vision, mortal, it is this—
Dead mountain, forest, knoll and tree
Awaken all endued with bliss.
A native land—O think!—to be
Thy native land—and ne'er amiss;
Its smile shall like a lover's kiss
From henceforth seem to thee."

But then comes the "National Hymn," that breathes the sort of cold-blooded conventionality which reminds us by far too forcibly of stiff, merciless silk gowns, highly starched collars, and novelless Sundays. I can't imagine any youthful hearts praying with the least enthusiasm that their fathers should be made stern, nor yet the following lines:

"Crush out the jest of idle minds,
That know not, jesting, when to hush;
Keep on our lips the word that binds,
And teach our children when to blush."

Alas! I thought all such disagreeable requests were left to the princes of the Church. This is a Clearyism unworthy a poet of Mr. Lighthall's calibre. Would there were space to give you the gem of the collection, but you will doubtless wait only a short time ere the volume in its entirety is put into your hands. "Our new poet's" light seems destined to lighten a larger portion of the globe than that over which its effulgence at present is cast.

LOUIS LLOYD.

THE EARTH-SPIRIT.

IN sunbright raiment in the spring,
When buds were full, and brooks were free,
And violets brake o'er the lea,
And song-birds 'gan their carolling,
I saw her poised on silver wing
Above a vivid beechen tree:
Beneath two lovers laughed in glee,
And sang to hear the thrushes sing.
Again I passed her where she stood
With drooping head and saddened mien
Beside a grave. The dim, gray wood
Was leafless now. The mead, so green
Erewhile, was dun. Sighing she viewed
The mound and wept for what had been.

J. H. BROWN.

DR. CHARLES MACKAY has finished his *Dictionary of Lowland Scotch*, containing, it is claimed, "the pith and point of the language," with explanations and etymological derivations.

EX-PRESIDENT GRÉVY will ere long place in a publisher's hands the voluminous diary which he kept during his term of office, and in which he faithfully recorded, not only his own impressions, but also the favours asked by public men.

AFTER all, blame lends itself to wit so much more readily than praise does, and to praise with self-respect and without gush, and with a certainty that the praise is not all a mistake, is so difficult, that the critic suspends his pen on its way from the inkstand to the paper, and hesitates. Blame is always safe, for nothing in the way of human thought or conception ever was or ever can be perfect. And the more nearly good in itself is the thing that the critic blames, why, of course, so much the loftier must be the critical standard. Nevertheless, indiscriminate eulogy is vapid and valueless. Even the person eulogized does not, in the bottom of his soul, believe in what is said of him. At the best (if there be any true stuff in him) he will feel that you have divined his intention, and have praised, not his achievement, but that. If, on the other hand, he have no true stuff in him, he is led to fancy that his bad work is good enough, and does not try to make it better. Between indiscriminate eulogy and sweeping condemnation there is a golden mean, but how hard it is to hit it!—*Julian Hawthorne*.