



Through A Monocle

THE JOY OF LIVING

THE other morning at breakfast, the Lady Who Does Not Look Her Age and the Gentleman Who Does Not Feel His, fell into a discussion as to whether our enjoyments are as keen when we have reached the age we do not look or feel, as they were when we were boys and girls—or, indeed, when we were young married people. As is common in discussions, one of them took one view of the matter, and the other took the other—but I shall not tell which took which. One insisted that there was now a slackened keenness, both of disappointment and enjoyment, in the matter of pleasures. The other replied that this might well be due to the fact that we had now more pleasures, and that consequently the individual pleasure did not seem so important, either in the tasting or the losing. The one remarked that giving a reason why a thing was so, was hardly a proof that it did not exist; to which the other answered that the real question at issue was not whether our enjoyments were less keen, but whether this lessened keenness was due to the Age We Did Not Feel or Look. Had our pleasures been multiplied when younger, the same effect would have followed.

THE discussion was neither won nor lost. Both camped on the field with all the honours of war. If I were the editor of this mighty journal, however—which is now quoted in Parliament with all the dignity of a blue book—I would ask that section of my readers who have reached the height of that Age None of Us Look or Feel what they think about this subject. Do they enjoy things as much as they did; and, if not, why not? It is customary to tell an elderly gentleman like myself, when he fails to find the sort of pumpkin-pie which delighted his youth, that he has grown older and that his taste is not so keen. There is not much reply to this, even if you do not believe it. But your skepticism is strengthened from time to time by finding dishes that you enjoy quite as much as you did—that is, when you get the same dish. For example, for a long time, I was persuaded that my taste for sardines—to take a simple thing—had fallen off. I liked sardines as a boy; but I could not get the same effect now. In fact, I took to eating anchovies in order to approach it; but—to use a golfing phrase—these rather over-approached it. They were too vivid, too spicy, too wickedly titillating. I said that the reason was that the dealers no longer sold real sardines, but merely young fish of other varieties done up in oil like sardines. I was told—well, you know what I was told. I was referred to the passing years. But the other day I discovered a brand of true sardines; and I liked them quite as much as ever. They were the real thing with the real taste; and I ate them with the same old relish. Years had nothing to do with it. I was not changed. The dishonest dealers had merely changed the fish in the can.

HOW are you on oysters? I do not seem to be able to get the oysters now that Father used to dig out of a can. Certainly bulk oysters are nothing like it. Sometimes oysters taken from half-shells and cooked immediately, seem to approach it. What is the matter? Is it old age? Or is it the pleasing custom oyster-dealers have to-day of swelling their bivalves with fresh water—and often none too pure water at that? In any case, I positively deny that it is old age. However, let us not dwell too long on gastronomic pleasures. Envious and dyspeptic people might begin to say "nasty" things. Turn to the delight of the eyes. Do you like looking at beautiful things as much as you did when young? As for me, I like it much more. Nor is this all due to the fact that my eye has probably been educated to new appreciations through the years. Much of it, I think, is due to the more intimate fact that youth is disturbed in its enjoyments by all sorts of interruptions and distractions. Youth is so apt to be thinking of something else—say, whether it will get to the foot-ball field in time, or if a certain young lady (or man) will be at So-and-So's to-night—that its eye cannot dwell upon the natural or architectural beauty before it with that same satisfied, wholly absorbed appreciation and enjoyment which is possible to the "arrived."

THE "arrived"! There is an inspiring word. That, I think, has much to do with the difference between youth and—well, Age that is not Felt. Youth is always looking forward so eagerly that it cannot see what is immediately in front of it. The ripper in years do not look forward so constantly—they look about them—they "carpe" the "diem," as Dr. Colquhoun would say. Not that Dr. Colquhoun would have any need to say so—he is still in the first bud of youth. Even the "Dr." cannot disguise that. To hark back, I was always conscious as a boy that my elders were getting more quiet enjoyment out of what was going on, or what was appealing to the senses of all of us, than I was myself. They seemed to taste it more slowly and more fully. I hardly had the patience to taste it at all—I was hurrying forward to what I confidently believed to be matters of greater importance ahead. They were not always pleasures by any means—not often pleasures, perhaps. But they were mightily important—until I had got to them.

IF you gave Youth a rose, there might be a more instant impact of keen pleasure in its perfect beauty than Age could quite rise to; but Youth would quickly pull it into its button-hole and forget all about it. Roses forsooth! There was a grim "redoubt" to be stormed just ahead. But Age would fondle the rose longer, drink deeper of its fragrance, and return to it again. It had stormed so many "redoubts" that it had learned that they were nothing but extinct lime-kilns. Then Age has so much wider a range of enjoyments. Enjoyments must be vivid, simple, primitive, to attract Youth. What does Youth commonly see in the facade of a Gothic Cathedral—hear in the "boom" of a Wagner opera—find in a "memoir" which it needs much history to appreciate, or get from the music of names that come to Age, laden with memories? Of course, specific youths can be trained to appreciate these things with the swift, touch-and-go recognition of youth. They can "know" a good facade, and they can tell Age all about a German opera; and I shall not say they do not enjoy it. But I believe that those same Youths, when they reached the slower years of Middle Age, will get far more enjoyment out of these very things. I think that if a wise man had the power of prolonging his life indefinitely from any particular age, he should not dream of trying to be young again—he should wait until he had reached the greatest age possible just before his physical decadence began to afflict him, and then live on forever at that altitude.

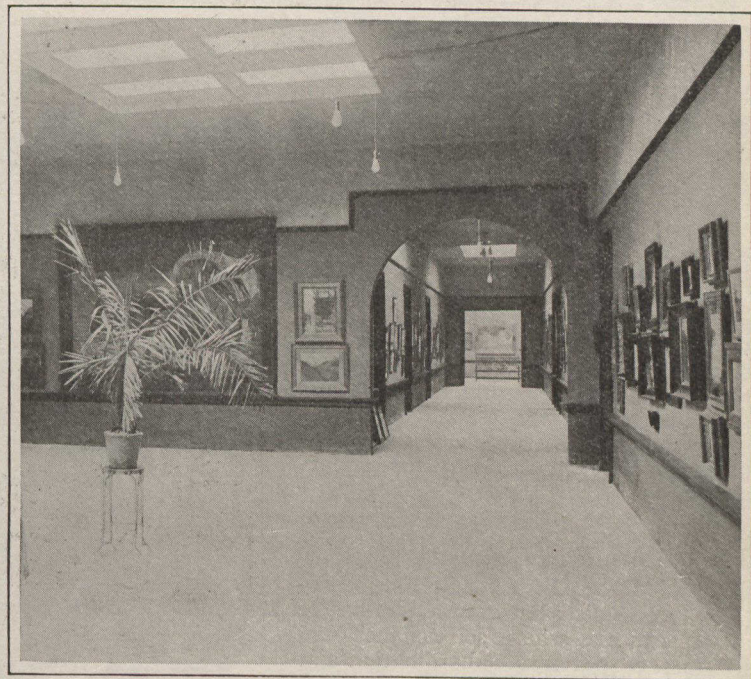
THE MONOCLE MAN.

First Civic Art Gallery in Canada

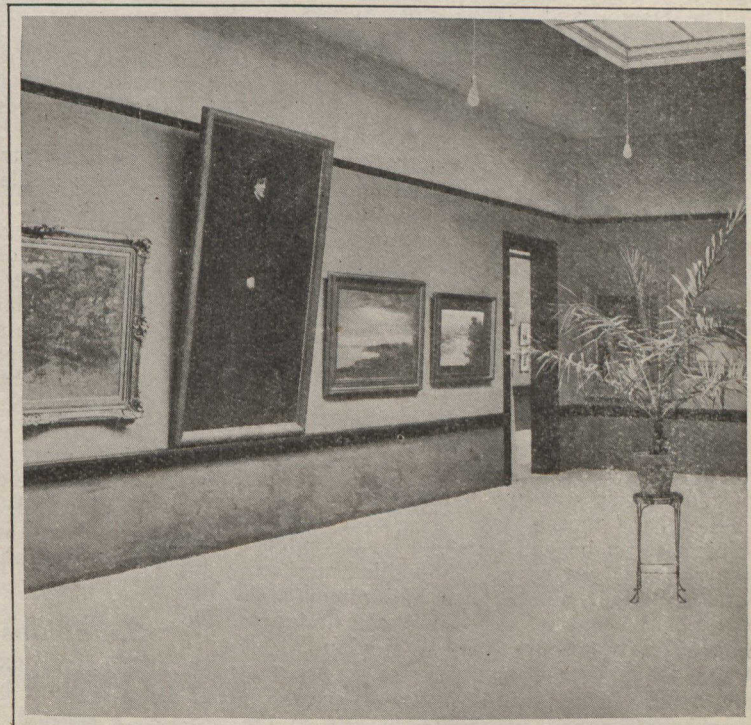
Opened Recently in Winnipeg



General View Corridor.



Reception Room and One of the Corridors.



What Appears to be a Well-lighted Room.