

soft, bright day, the fields and hills lay turned to the sky as if every leaf and blade of grass were nerves, bared to the touch of the sun. I almost felt the ground warm under my feet. The meadows waved and glittered, the lights and shadows were exquisite, and the distant hills seemed only to remove the horizon further away. As we strolled along, picking wild flowers, for it was summer, Titbottom suddenly exclaimed :—

"Thank God ! I own this landscape."

"You !" returned I.

"Certainly," said he.

"Why," I answered, "I thought this was part of Bourne's property?"

Titbottom smiled.

"Does Bourne own the sun and sky? Does Bourne own that sailing shadow yonder? Does Bourne own the golden lustre of the grain, or the motion of the wood, or those ghosts of hills, that glide pallid along the horizon? Bourne owns the dirt and fences; I own the beauty that makes the landscape."

That was very true. I respected Titbottom more than ever. This was a marvellous book-keeper of more than sixty!—From *Prue and I*, by GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS.

Communications.

ACOUSTICS OF CONVOCATION HALL.

To the Editor of the VARSITY :

SIR :—In view of the large expenditure which as usual will be made this year for a musical entertainment at our annual conversazione, I think something should be done towards improving the acoustic properties of Convocation Hall, in order that our labor and money may lead to a satisfactory result. As it is at present, a musical or literary programme nearly amounts to a farce, owing to the echoes from the many peaks and corners. I should like to draw the attention of the Conversazione Committee to the following plan for improvement in this respect. I owe my information to a distinguished graduate in mathematics, who informs me that not only is the scheme borne out in theory, but it has been tried with perfect success. All that is necessary is to drape the upper end of the hall in the form of a paraboloid of revolution, having its focus in the centre of the platform, and its axis a straight line from this point to the centre of the hall; the *latus rectum* of the generating curve being chosen with a view to appearances only. By a well-known property of this surface, all sounds incident from the focus (singer or speaker) would be reflected parallel to the axis, thus obviating the possibility of an echo. It is confidently asserted that if this were done the slightest whisper on the platform would be distinctly heard in the gallery.

I do not speak of the details. They could not cause any difficulty. The draping need not be unsightly. A little care would render it artistic. Nor need the expense be large. Perhaps the Mathematical and Physical Society might take this up, and show the triumph of science when applied to art.

GORDON WALDRON.

THE CANADIAN WINTER.

To the Editor of the VARSITY :

SIR,—In a late number of the *Brooklyn Eagle* the gifted writer who lectured in this city last week recounts his recent experiences in Toronto with all the clever Burdettesque humor peculiar to himself. While we thoroughly enjoy what he says, I think that Canadians should begin to protest against being spoken of always as shivering dwellers in the frozen North. I have, until now, believed that Mark Twain is, as he proudly boasts himself to be, the greatest of liars; but when Burdette says that he was the only man

in Ontario without a fur cap, fur overcoat and fur boots, I begin to have faith in him too, for I can solemnly assure you, sir, that on the night of the lecture I had no more fur about me than a brindle cat brings home with her after a hard-fought night-long battle on the wood-shed.

With regard to tobogganning, on which Burdette expatiates at great length, I beg to submit that it has no more claim to be considered the peculiar national sport of Canadians, than draw poker has; personally, I prefer poker, in my hours of ease, to whizzing down the toboggan slide. Moreover, I wish to remark that, outside the lithographs which go with the holiday numbers of our enterprising journals, the Canadian girl, so far as I have observed, is not overmuch given to arranging herself in the barbaric grandeur of Hudson Bay blankets and snowshoes; nor, unless, of course, there is some one by to admire the "effect," is she fond of posing on a hill-side, a flushed beauty in the midst of a blinding snow-storm, with toboggans in the back-ground.

It is an unfortunate peculiarity of the Canadian winter that on the coming of a literary man, note-book in hand, it puts itself about to give him due welcome with a hyperborean tornado of snow and hail. We trust that Bob Burdette will visit again these "desolate regions of thick-ribbed ice." Let him come unexpectedly and without his note-book; so timing his flight from the eyry of the *Brooklyn Eagle* as to reach Toronto in July or August. He will wish devoutly that it did not offend against the prophesies to strut around like that blameless Ethiopian whose apparel was made up of a high hat and the pair of gaiters which a good and zealous missionary had given him for learning to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

AMERICUS.

THE CONVERSAZIONE.

To the Editor of the VARSITY :

The only circumstance which has hitherto detracted from the complete success of our Conversazione is the excessive greatness of the number of persons in attendance. Of course I speak of excessive greatness in a relative sense, referring to the extent of the accommodation which we can offer our guests. In Convocation Hall the crowd is so dense that it becomes positively disagreeable to those who are fortunate or unfortunate enough to gain admittance to that part of the building at all. For I suppose that fully one-fourth of those who attend the Conversazione are crowded out of the hall entirely, and hear nothing of either of the two concerts there. All this is a very serious drawback on the character of our great annual entertainment, and it is a matter which is worthy of the earnest consideration of the committee. May I be permitted to suggest that the evil can be prevented in future without any financial loss to the Society—if the complimentary list be thoroughly revised and very much abbreviated. I can see no reason for treating the general aristocratic public to a free entertainment at the cost of great discomfort to our intimate friends. As an old member of the Society I protest against such an absurd and irrational custom.

Here is another matter. I think that those members of the committee who advocate a recognition at our Conversazione of the claims of Canadian talent, are to be commended. I differ entirely from the statement of Mr. Hodgins, that the only objection that has been raised to foreign singers was on the ground of expense. That is not it at all. The great objection is to this provincial habit of running off to some foreign land for bepudded and over-advertised performers, while we lack the self-reliance and discrimination to seek out and appreciate the talent of our own country. It is the old story of a prophet and his country; but it is to be hoped that in our new Dominion we shall soon outgrow that puerility. Let us cultivate a little more national self-respect. So long as we distrust and belittle ourselves in this way we cannot expect any different treatment from other nations.

SIGMA.