

MONTREAL LETTER.

No sooner is there any likelihood that some suspicion of summer warmth and poesy and enthusiasm will insinuate themselves into our chilly temperaments than we fly towards the uttermost parts of the benighted Canadian coast line, thus frustrating Nature's penitential efforts to thaw out the minds and manners. She has been doing everything she could during seven months to congeal. Montreal seems already Pompeian in her desolation. Shuddering, we pass the mute, blind houses which lie like dead things beside the way. These first dark days of nothingness are horrible, yet ere spider locksmiths have doors and windows daintily riveted, and the back-yard has become demoralized as a clandestine rendezvous for feline "moonlighters," we begin to appreciate an existence untrammelled by society's "bitter sweet" exigencies, and leavened with "Letters from Hell," (the book à la mode) and "milk shakes." Then, again those dear illusions concerning our neighbours' moral, mental, and physical capabilities, which even a hundred yards proximity within city limits does nothing to dispel, the most innocent-minded of sea-side hunters whistle down the wind. There are, naturally, despairing exceptions among these latter, exceptions who would go to Timbuctoo with Browning under one arm, and a book of club rules under the other, you may make your choice.

The Dominion Illustrated, resplendent in old gold and agate red, has risen above our horizon. Mr. John Talon-Lesperance, that erudite genial writer is its director; but one must look within the magazine to be apprised of the fact, for he whose name figures so aggressively upon what some happily inspired artist might have made a very tempting cover, has no other connection with *The Dominion* than that of an advertiser. We all know how much *Punch* owes to an original, quaint envelope, while *Truth*, *The Century*, and many periodicals beside would allure us by their pretty dress alone. Fortunately the new magazine's literary and artistic productions are totally out of harmony with its shell. Mr. Talon-Lesperance opens a serial story whose interest will doubtless increase a pace. Mr. W. D. Lighthouse is as poetically patriotic as ever in "The Battle of Laprairie." Both these contributions are also historically instructive. Of course, everybody understands patriotism after his own fashion, but I don't think Mr. George Murray contributes anything less to our literary fame and wealth (*au contraire*), because he gives us delicious translations from the French, than if he hymned all the squaw coquettes that ever cast side glances from beneath their blanket *coiffure*. The knowledge of several languages is indeed to this exquisitely artistic scholar, the possession of several souls. His translations live by the very intangible essence which pervades the originals like some delicate aroma. He aspires, in them, to be a faithful, intelligent copyist, but do we not style such a great artist? Ergo, Mr. Murray, whose aspirations and success as translator are co-existent, we welcome with the warmest admiration, whether he appears in *The Dominion* or elsewhere. "A Week in a Boys' Life," from the French of Jacques Jasmin, is only one of countless lovely translations for whose appearance under gilded covers we look with impatience.

As for the new magazine's artistic attractions, they are many. But why place a hideous cartoon on its front page? The periodical has no pretensions to being "funny;" why, then, make what might eventually become a Canadian "Harper's" the *pot-pourri* one expects to find in railroad termini?

If educated people must reach middle life before they can sympathize with the crowd at their everyday occupations, they will have attained the age and patience of a Biblical hero before they can sympathize with the crowd on a picnic. The fête of St. Jean Baptiste was celebrated here last Monday by all the east-end population, who went *en masse* to St. Helen's Island. This pretty park has been charmingly laid out and forms an admirable resort for the people. Whimpering children, helpless papas, round-bodied old toppers and giggling damozels, behold them promenading, scolding, gossiping, disputing, by the rushing river or along the shady paths. Then they will rest in a great wooden café, strewn, so to speak, with tiny tables, and over ice-cream and lager beer perpetuate the naively inane holiday jokes their grandsires chuckled at under Normandy apple-boughs some two centuries ago.

After the band had played itself hoarse, the rustic platform opposite the grand café was occupied by Dr. Lachapelle, who spoke at interminable length, like an animated Canadian history; by Mr. L. O. David, very warm, very enthusiastic, very thirsty, unobtrusively witty and aggressively historical; by Judge Baby, genial, smiling, satisfactory and satisfied; by Dr. Desjardins; and, finally, by Prince Roland Bonaparte. The Prince came on to the stage with the two last-named gentlemen before Dr. Lachapelle had finished his speech. Do you think this inveterate orator would stop an instant and let the people cheer? Not at all. But I don't know whether that bovine crowd would have cheered unless some one had suggested it to them. A single little enthusiast cried out on seeing the Prince, "*Mais criez dono, c'est le Prince Roland.*" Nobody noticed the injunction, and Dr. Lachapelle continued his discourse until he saw fit to introduce the noble guest, when a few limping cheers went up.

Prince Bonaparte must have modified his French manners for the occasion, but what he lost in grace he gained in sincerity. Tall, rather stout, and boyishly heavy, he has all a boy's charm of frank speech and gesture. The thick, short black hair outlines a narrow, well developed forehead. The nose is long, finely cut, and sensitive, while a small moustache but half conceals the full lips. Prince Roland has been bronzed by the sun, while his dark, intelligent eyes are those of a student. Pass from the presence of western millionaires into that of well-bred Englishmen, and you will not experience greater satisfaction than we felt on Monday when Prince Roland opened his mouth after the French-Canadian orators

had ceased speaking. What he said seemed not very wonderful: He was surprised and pleased to find Canada as it was; had remained here much longer than he had intended; would often return to see us, etc., etc.; but all this he spoke so naively, with that deliciously rich accent of Parisian growth, that it was worth countless high-flown tirades in execrable French. Then he ended by crying "Vive le Canada!" when everybody shrieked as everybody might have shrieked before.

According to the recent comments of the press in the Ayer case, there is no more auspicious moment to attack an institution than when the public attack it. I was conversing some time ago with a Chinaman, who by the way, far surpassed in politeness and intelligence his Christian brothers of the same class, and apropos of his artistic wares, he told me that when they arrived here accompanied by an invoice written in Chinese, another written in English was demanded, while the former an authority declared useless.

"In what language," asked the Chinaman, "would you write your invoices were you sending goods to China?"

"Why in English, of course, but that isn't the same thing."

The goods were seized for undervaluation, but, after some parley, the Chinaman gained his case.

LOUIS LLOYD.

THE ARTIST'S PRAYER.*

HE IS, MORE JUSTLY, THE REALITY.

I know thee not, O Spirit fair!

O Life and flying Unity

Of Loveliness! Must man despair

Forever in his chase of thee?

When snowy clouds flash silver-gilt,

Then feel I that thou art on high!

When fire o'er all the west is spilt,

Flames at its heart thy majesty.

Thy beauty basks on far, blue hills;

It smiles in eve's wine-coloured sea:

Its jewelled flashes light the rills;

In calm Ideals it mocks at me.

Thy glances strike from many a lake

That lines through woodland 'scapes a sheen,

Yet to thine eyes I never wake,

They glance, but they remain unseen.

I know thee not, O Spirit fair!

Thou fillest heaven: the stars are thee:

Whatever fleets with beauty rare,

Fleets radiant from thy mystery.

Forever thou art near my grasp;

Thy touches pass in twilight air;

Yet still—thy shape elude my clasp:—

I know thee not, thou Spirit fair!

O Ether proud and vast and great

Above the legions of the stars!

To this thou art not adequate:—

Nor Rainbow's iris scimitars.

I know thee not, thou Spirit sweet!

I chained, pursue, while thou art free.

Sole by the smile I sometimes meet

I know thou, Vast One, knowest me.

In old religion hadst thou place:

Long, long, O Vision, our pursuit!

Yea, monad, fish and childlike brute

Through countless ages dreamt thy grace.

Grey nations felt thee o'er them tower,

Some clothed thee in fantastic dress;

Some thought thee as the Unknown Power;

I e'en the unknown Loveliness.

To all thou wert as harps of joy;

To bard and sage their fulgent sun;

To priests their mystic life's employ;

But unto me the Lovely One.

Veils clothed thy night: veils draped thy charm:

The might they tracked, but I the grace:

They learnt all forces were thine Arm:

I that all beauty was thy Face.

Night spares us little. Wanderers we,

Our rapt delights, our wisdoms rare,

But shape our darknesses of thee,—

We know thee not, thou Spirit fair.

Would that thine awful Peerlessness

An hour could shine o'er heaven and earth!

And I the archangel's power possess

To drink the cup:—O godlike birth!

All life impels me to thy search:

Without Thee yea to live were null:

Still must I make the Dawn thy Church,

And pray thee: "God the Beautiful."

Montreal.

ALCHEMIST.

* "God is the ideal of the perfectly beautiful."—VICTOR COUSIN.