

## ROLAND GRAEME, KNIGHT.\*

READERS of THE WEEK have from time to time been made aware of the fact that we have, or think we have, what might be called a Canadian literature. Many of our enthusiastic young writers have made an effort to prove that such is the case. However, the older heads have remained unconvinced and have been compelled to say that but for several poetic artists and a few fairly able prose writers, our *littérateurs* work at a dead level of commonplace.

Amid these discussions one pen has not been moved, being too busy striving to do good work for mankind to take part in such trivial and un consequential disputes—we mean the pen of Agnes Maule Machar. During the past three years articles and books have come from the pen of this our most gifted authoress with unusual rapidity, and each work has shown an advance upon the preceding one. "Roland Graeme, Knight,"—her last work—is far superior in story interest, in accurate portraiture, and in moral value to any previous work of hers. Her views and aims are already so familiar to readers of THE WEEK, where her thoughts find expression under the *nom de plume* "Fidelis," that we need hardly say that a treat, a rich treat, is in store for anyone who opens this, her latest book.

On reading the title we quite expected the hero to be a stately, dignified, cultured individual who went about the world with a Tennysonian grandeur redressing human wrongs. Such is not the case. The hero is decidedly a modern young man, an enthusiast, such as is to be found here and there in every centre of civilization, a character stamped with the impress of such men as Henry George and Karl Marx. He is a "Knight of Labour." He has joined the organization that he may learn the needs of the labourers, see with his own eyes their wrongs, and heart to heart with them to try to redress these wrongs. He is a dreamer and yet not a dreamer. His ideas are vague and unformulated, and yet definite enough to guide him as to how he should act at a critical moment. His keen sense of right gives him an insight into human error, whether that error is on the side of the labourer or the capitalist, and at the same time keeps him from running to the extreme that has done so much to place labour and capital at swords' points. The son of a clergyman, he has drifted away from the faith of his fathers, but the realization that the fundamental truths of Christianity are what the world needs, brings him back to a fuller and truer faith than his creed-bound father ever had.

The character next in importance to the hero, is the proud, intellectual, cultured Mr. Chillingworth. He is an extreme type of man, and does not seem real. We are made to detest him thoroughly, so much so that we are prepared to see him suffer anything without giving our pity, and when the writer at the close of the book would have us sympathize with him, we are not prepared to do so. Although not a piece of real life he answers a great artistic purpose in the story, serving to bring out strongly the indifference of the Church to the lot of the poor and oppressed, and to emphasize the truth that in many instances the real workers for the down-trodden are men who are averse to what is called orthodoxy, but who overflow with the love that Christ taught men was His religion.

We are not allowed to think that this is the author's conception of clergymen in general. Mr. Alden, a man the opposite of Mr. Chillingworth, gives the modern evangelical side of Christianity. He is an ideal clergyman, a man who is ready to sacrifice anything for his God, or for humanity. Broad in his sympathies, he is equally broad in his faith, without difficulty recognizing in Roland a brother worker in Christ.

His friend, Dr. Blanchard, is an exceptional man, but one such as Mr. Alden would grapple to his heart. About these two a circle of friends and fellow-workers is formed, impregnated with their spirit.

The humble life characters—Jim, Nellie, Lizzie—are well drawn; Jim and Nellie by external touches, Lizzie by the full drawing of her loyal, heroic heart. Next to Roland, Lizzie, the humble mill-girl, leaves the deepest impression on the feelings. She is one of those rare characters that give us an insight into the lives of those beneath us, and show us that there is a nobility of soul in the poorest classes of society that cannot be surpassed by any deeds of those in a higher station. Miss Machar is not a realist; she does not dwell on the haunts of sin and poverty, but she passes through them, and this picture of pure, humble love, this example of tender affection and sacrifice for a feeble mother and a brutal brother, this unselfish devotion for the poor dipsomaniac, all burn into our hearts, and we close the book with the feeling that the author in this character has succeeded in painting life as it is.

We cannot say as much for some of the other characters. Miss Blanchard is a young lady of another age; she is too great a moralist, and too little of a flesh-and-blood creature, such as common humanity is, to make a deep impression on the reader.

The other characters of the book need but a passing notice. Waldberg, Roland's German friend, seems foreign to the book, and his character is not worked into the warp and woof of it. Pretty butterfly Kitty Farrell, serves to

give a certain lightness and buoyancy to the otherwise too serious cast of the female characters. Pomeroy, the well-fed, shrewd, energetic business man, is a careful piece of work, and might stand for a picture of capital; his son Harold, a selfish, conceited ass, is a fitting picture of what might become of a man who has money but needs brains. Mr. Dunlop, the eccentric, garrulous disciple of Carlyle, is sketched by a hand that shows a mastery over Scotch character; and lastly Celia Chillingworth, the poor dipsomaniac, and her beautiful child, are treated with a depth and sympathy that show a wonderful insight into human suffering and human weakness.

Although the plot of the book is of sufficient intricacy to hold the interest of the reader from the first to the last page, it is evidently a matter of secondary consideration with the writer, and an analysis of it is unnecessary. Plot and character are both subsidiary to the humanistic intention. The motive of this book is evidently to stir Church and capitalist up to their duty towards the poor, to keep one from falling into luxurious sloth, engendered of riches, and to prevent the other from using his wealth—that should-be-awe-inspiring trust that he has from society—altogether for his own selfish ends. On the other hand it presents with great lucidity the self-seeking and arrogance of the workmen, and shows how they, too, need to have the devil of selfishness curbed before any bettering of their condition can be expected.

The teachings of the book are well laid down in Roland's prospectus of his paper, when he says: "It is designed to promote the brotherhood of man, to secure a better feeling between class and class, employer and employed. A fairer scale of wages and hours for the operative, fuller co-operation between employer and employees and mutual consideration for each other's interests; in short to propagate the spirit of Christian socialism."

Almost every chapter of the book deals with one or other of these questions, and many of the difficult problems that meet the humanitarian are solved by a practical illustration. The writer shows a wide reading in social questions of the times, and a masterly grasp of the leading principles of political economy. She believes that Free Trade must ultimately prevail, that trusts and combines are a curse to mankind; but let Roland give his estimate of them: "Those gigantic profit-sharing combinations, or so-called 'Trusts,' which to-day seriously threaten the public interests, but which are only the abuse by the few, in favour of monopoly, of the great and true principle of brotherly trust and co-operation."

It is to some extent in co-operation that Roland would find a solution for the difficulties surrounding the labour question, but he does not find what he really considers a complete solution till the close of the story: "And I know I've found that I needed, too, stronger mail than I once supposed. I, too, have been seeking for a 'Grail'—a panacea which is to be found only where I had stopped looking for it"—in Christian brotherhood.

This book comes at a very opportune time. Only a few weeks since, Principal Grant has, with the energy of an orator, been striving to awaken the members of the great Church to which he belongs to the need of paying more attention to the labour question. Examine his able effort before the Pan-Presbyterian Council, and it will be found that it is in the spirit of "Roland Graeme,"—in fact there is hardly a thought of that address but could be matched by a corresponding thought from this book. He, too, by careful reasoning, has come to the same conclusions with regard to existing evils and their remedies. This is a happy sign. When the novelist, the poet and the orator are at one, we must look for an awakening of the public.

"Roland Graeme" will do much, if read, to set the head thinking, and the heart feeling. It is the most considerable story published by a Canadian writer of late years, and is one that is bound to make a wide impression. Miss Machar has done honour to Canada by taking such a vigorous stand on a question of world-wide interest, and her book is sure to bring her name before a very large circle of readers, who will benefit by her careful thought and study, and her deep sympathy with the struggling masses.

## ART NOTES.

MR. G. BRUENECH's exhibition and sale of original watercolour paintings and sketches, to which we have already referred, was opened at J. Bain and Son's Art Room, 53 King Street East, on Thursday, the 24th inst., and will no doubt attract a good deal of attention. Two of his principal pictures, viz., "The North Cape, Norway," and "Summer Afternoon in Vermont," have been exhibited at the Royal Canadian Academy, where they were very favourably noticed. Several of Mr. Bruenech's subjects were obtained in Muskoka during the past summer and autumn, where he spent a couple of months. The collection, which is a varied one, comprises marine views on the coast of Maine and Lake Champlain, also scenes in New York State, Lower Canada, a couple of figure subjects and a few specimens of the beautiful scenery of Norway. The exhibition will remain open until the 3rd of December, and we hope that it will be well patronized by art lovers.

THE new naturalistic school of painting of our time has distinguished itself from its immediate predecessors during

the last one hundred years, by not only breaking with the latest ruling school, but with the entire past and its traditions. The French classicists of the times of the Revolution and the first Empire declared war to the school of the graceful painters of the old-time chivalry, and sought their teachers and models in the antique, the Greek-Roman art. The German idealists and romanticists, who in the first quarter of our century, endeavoured, in their turn, to break the heavy chains of the French classical school, turned partly to the early Italian renaissance, partly to the flourishing period of the old Flemish and Dutch school. The French romanticists of the first twenty years began their war against the classicists of the Academy by turning to the great old Venetian colourists. The German, as well as the French genre painters of the fortieth, fiftieth, and sixtieth decades, saw their great predecessors, whom they wished to follow on the road to Olympus, in the Netherland painters of the painters of the seventeenth century. Adolf Menzel, the most original artist soul of our century, who turned sternly from the ruling school of the Dusseldorf romanticists, which suited the public taste of that time, was filled with an almost idolatrous respect for the old Dutch and Netherland painters; and when he lost himself in the study of nature and real life and, unrestrained by tradition, observed them in order to reflect them in their true form and their thousand-fold changing appearances, he knew that he was only following the example of these predecessors. The modern naturalists and impressionists, however, regard themselves in a proud light similar to that of the Baccalaureate in the second part of "Faust." As for him, "there was no sun until he created it," so, according to their inward conviction, there was no painting before them which deserved the name; no art which, undaunted, had looked true nature in the face, none which had not been influenced, obstructed, limited and dazzled by convention and tradition. Before them every painter of nature had observed it through coloured and falsifying spectacles; none knew how to show its true aspect. He who belongs to no school, party or clique, thinks otherwise concerning their right to such a self-glorification, and the conviction and assertion that they now really depict nature as she is, as well as concerning that agreeable fact, that they were without predecessors in their entirely unrestrained and unconventional contemplation of nature. Mankind has often shown itself possessed of a surprisingly short memory. With a school that would throw away all the work of its predecessors as "old rags and iron," and, if their leaders could have their way, would most gladly see the entire collections of works of art from the great past locked up, in order that young artists may not be led astray by seeing them, nor become entangled in a conventional view, this forgetfulness of even their own fore-runners is entirely explicable. The sixth decade of our century will always be considered as one of the most significant and important in the history of modern German art. In Munich, as in Berlin, a great number of creative men of talent suddenly appeared, who, at the same time, showed an extraordinary technical ability and a new, fresh, strong life, particularly in painting. They forever shattered the belief in the previously celebrated and admired great artists of the day, and in those who had for so long been considered as the only priests of high art of the German abstract school, the worst faults of whose masters had been stamped as virtues by their disciples and followers. In the years 1853 and 1854, Karl Piloty appeared in Munich, that former nursery of abstract art, with his first great painting, which, entirely on account of its contrast to those faults, through the strength of its colouring and the splendid mastery manifested in its composition, made so powerful an impression on that painter's contemporaries. Soon a crowd of highly cultured, enthusiastic pupils assembled around him, and, under Piloty's leadership, developed a very different art and aim, and through their work spread anew the fame of the south German art town and the "Munich School of Painting" over all the cultured lands of the world. Berlin also experienced the same epoch-making events in the domain of painting during the same decade of the century. At the great art exposition of the year 1850, Adolf Menzel's picture "The Round Table of Frederic the Great at Sans Souci," was exhibited. Next to this was placed the painting of the young Dusseldorfer, Ludwig Knaus, "The Funeral in the Forest," which at one stroke made the entirely unknown twenty-year-old painter famous, and was the beginning of a long list of his wonderful, original and charming creations. In the next exposition of 1852, Gustav Richter displayed the full splendour of his talents, his colouring and technic, and the fineness of his conception of the grace and charm of womanhood as shown in the portrait of his sister. The exposition of 1854 was enriched by Adolf Menzel's "Concert at the Court of Sans Souci, in 1750"; in 1856 appeared Henneberg's "Wild Chase"; in 1858, Feuerbach's "Dante Among the Noble Ladies of Ravenna," and the first great oriental picture by Gentz; in 1860, Gustav Spangenberg's "Rat-catcher of Hamelin" was exhibited. In Oswald Achenbach of Dusseldorf and Riefstahl of Berlin, two of the most wonderfully talented painters of the Dutch school of landscape appeared. The first showed the entire witchery of colour, which the atmosphere and light of the South spread over land and sea. At this time, that is in the year 1857, Teutwart Schmitson first became known in Berlin, where they had heard of his wonderful, affecting pictures, but had seen nothing from his hand. The first picture which Schmitson painted in that city ap-

\* "Roland Graeme, Knight," a Novel of Our Time. By Agnes Maule Machar, New York: Fords, Howard and Hulbert; Montreal: Wm. Drysdale and Company. Cloth, \$1.00. Paper, 50c.