



THE "LITTLE MAN" WAS SOMETHING OF
A BOY, TOO.

MAMMA—"I'm sure my little man likes going to school better than having holidays, after all."

BOBBY—"I wouldn't be too sure, if I was you, mamma."

P.S.—I beg to enclose the following letter which speaks for itself:

MR. J. BUTTER WORTH,

DEAR SIR,—I beg to state that I am in full accord with your sentiments on *Imp. Fed.*, as you may have noticed by my speeches in a number of *American* cities.

E. RASTUS WIMAN,

Time will not permit me to give many more such convincing examples.

CONFESSIONS OF AN ART CRITIC.

TO begin with I know nothing about Art. That is, properly speaking. Of course when a man has been writing upon any subject off and on for some time he cannot help acquiring a kind of glimmering perception of the matter, even if it were as abstruse as the reason for existence of the Grit and Tory parties or the Esplanade question. Let a writer be ever so great an ignoramus at the start he generally finishes by picking up a smattering of the subject and getting to know the meaning of a few, at least, of the phrases which flow so glibly from his pen. But with this qualification I can truly say that I know nothing of Art, of the technical rules governing painting and drawing, or the canons of criticism. However, that has never stood in the way of my being considered a pretty fair critic and getting special appointments to "do" art exhibitions from papers with which I was not regularly connected. What would become of us writers if a man was required to know something about a question before writing upon it?

At a comparatively early stage of my reportorial career city editors got into the way of assigning me to do any art criticisms that required to be done. Why, I never could tell, except that I have a pretty vigorous imagination,

a good command of language and sufficient knowledge of literature to work in an appropriate poetical quotation here and there, which helps out an art criticism wonderfully when you don't know what else to say. It was in vain I protested that I knew nothing whatever about Art. "What of that?" was the answer, "none of the staff know any more than you do. Somebody has to do this thing and you're the man." So I made my *debut* as Art critic.

How did I manage? Oh it's easy enough when you get the hang of it, as the executioner said. If I am ignorant of artistic rules I know when a picture pleases me and when it doesn't. I took in the collection and selected subjects for praise or censure according as they struck my untutored idea of what a picture ought to be. Of course I was more lavish with commendation than with blame, after the fashion of Canadian "art-critics" generally, and always gave the mediocrities—or what appeared such to me—the benefit of the doubt. Only in very pronounced cases of botch work did I wither the unfortunate artist with sarcasm.

The ordinary terms of commendation such as "excellent" "admirable" etc., were soon exhausted, and my greatest difficulty was to avoid repetition. I would extend my vocabulary by listening to the talk of groups of artists and their friends, and whenever they let slip a professional phrase I jotted it down. Sometimes I would get an artist to give me pointers. It wasn't always safe to use them, because artists are a jealous set and apt to be prejudiced against each other, so I didn't let their estimates of particular paintings bias my judgment. What I hankered after was vocabulary—the lingo of the studio, and I treasured in my note-book and memory such words as "crisp," "breadth of handling," mellow in tone," "warmth," etc. If I didn't see fit to apply them to that picture they would do to work in the notice of some other that pleased me. See?

So I got along famously. I soon acquired a fairly extensive command of the dictionary of art criticism, though precisely what half the words mean I swear I don't know to this day. When I couldn't think of anything else to say about a picture I always fell back on "conscientious handling," "careful fidelity to detail," or "pains-taking elaboration of *minutiae*." I had a lot of phrases expressing this idea in different ways, and it always used to be a standby of mine when there was a good deal of ground to cover.

One time when I had a special engagement for a leading daily to report an exhibition, and I wanted to do it in extra good style, I spent several hours beforehand looking over one of Ruskin's works. I set down all the choice phrases and art expressions I could find in it in reference to old masters and such and enriched my report therewith. I didn't plagiarize understand—there's no copyright on detached words and I was careful to separate them from their context and work them in one by one. The report really read very well, and gave general satisfaction.

Now I suppose some pernicky people will think this a record of literary unscrupulousness and depravity, but I honestly tried to do justice to everybody—to say something pleasant and commendatory about those who, in my judgment, deserved it and only to slate those whose efforts were obviously below mediocrity. Can an all-round newspaper man at a salary of \$20 per week be supposed to know much about Art as a part of his regular duties? Or can a Canadian newspaper afford to retain a specialist at a high salary whose services will perhaps be called into requisition two or three times during the year? P. T.