The Canadian Historical Review

VOL. XVII TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1936 No. 3

# THE VISUAL RECONSTRUCTION OF HISTORY

HISTORICAL pictures, whether contemporary records or imaginative reconstructions, have aroused much controversy. Gérôme's "Pollice Verso", West's "Death of Wolfe", David's "Oath of the Tennis Court", and "Death of Marat", Velasquez's "Surrender of Breda", and innumerable other historical paintings have been discussed, more or less critically, by historians, and declared to be incorrect in detail, if not false in general plan and conception.

In this respect they have shared the fate of written history. The travellers' tales of Herodotus, the speeches of Thucydides, have not escaped censure. Grote, Gibbon, Macaulay, Michelet, and Lamartine are all alike suspect. A superficial acquaintance with the historical writing of to-day reveals the existence of antagonistic schools of thought on every period and every topic, and a resourceful ingenuity in special pleading peculiarly modern. We are led inevitably to the trite conclusion that there is no finality either in the written or the pictorial interpretation of history.

The critical examination of written history, the comparison of source-documents, are marked features of modern historical study. The pictorial reconstruction of history too frequently displays the lack of a corresponding degree and quality of discrimination. We are wholesomely distrustful of every written statement, we read between the lines of official communications and reports, we estimate the discount necessary in valuing the personal memoir or the familiar letter; yet only too often we are gullible or bewildered when we encounter a pictorial or a material document, a supposedly contemporary portrait or view of an incident, an implement, or a weapon.

The present paper aims at nothing beyond a suggestion of some of the many problems which confront the pictorial illustrator of history, whether he confines himself to the use of contemporary

records, or ventures into the more perilous region of imaginative reconstruction.

As to the use of the contemporary picture, which the purist historian regards as the only legitimate method of illustrating history, let us say at once that it is no more and no less reliable than the contemporary written or printed document. It also is subject to limitations, and these peculiar to itself; it also requires qualification, commentary, and exposition.

Let us indicate some of the questions aroused by the examination of an historical picture. What and where is the original: a painting, a drawing, an engraving, or a photograph? When, and in what circumstances was it made? At the time, on the spot, from memory, or from the description of another, and that other an eyewitness? If it is a print, some process of pictorial reproduction was employed: is it wood-cut, line metal engraving, stipple, mezzotint, aquatint, lithograph, *etc.*? Such questions, elementary though they may be, are yet frequently ignored.

Some knowledge of printing processes is required. Often the process used in reproducing a picture will give a clue as to its authenticity as a contemporary work. Processes date themselves as definitely as buildings or styles of furniture. A process may not have been in vogue, may not even have been invented at the time of the subject depicted—sure evidence that the print under examination is later in date than the event, though possibly derived from an earlier and contemporary drawing. Recently I was informed of the existence of an oil painting on canvas and stretcher, inscribed on its back, "View of the Island of Runnymede, painted at the time of the signing of Magna Charta". Truly, a precious antique, and decidedly disturbing to our orthodox ideas of the history of art, since we are given to understand that at that early period the practice of mixing pigments with oil was not followed, nor was canvas used as a surface on which to paint. In a Canadian local history of considerable merit I found a letter written by a militia captain to his colonel in 1805, referring to a "picture" of his company at parade, which he encloses. The word "picture" was a puzzle, but from the context it appeared that the captain probably meant "schedule" or "muster roll". This unusual application of the word led the author of the history to indulge in some reflections on the inestimable value of this old "photograph", if it could be unearthed. Inestimable indeed it would be, antedating considerably the inventions of Niepce and Daguerre.

Before the days of photographic reproduction there was often a great discrepancy between the original drawing or painting and the printed copy. This was due to several causes—to the engraver's ignorance of the subject depicted, to his inadequate skill, to the aesthetic conventions of his time. A few concrete examples taken from the pictorial history of North America will show this. Among the earliest known pictures of Indians by an eyewitness were those made about 1585 by John White, the governor of Ralegh's Virginia colony. The original drawings have been in the British Museum since 1865. Engravings from these drawings were made by Theodore de Bry, and published by him in 1590. Years later, in 1624, John Smith published his *Generall historie of Virginia.* It was illustrated by an unknown artist, who apparently made use of several of de Bry's engravings. A comparison of White's original drawings and their copies is instructive (see plates III, IV, V). White concerns himself with details of costume, physical character, and tattooing, matters of accurate observation and record. De Bry *improves* the drawing of the figures to conform to the classical academic conventions of his day, and mistakes or omits some of the character, such as gesture, texture of materials, tattooing, *etc.* The artist of Smith's history strays still farther from accuracy and introduces the figure of Smith himself.[1] De Bry in the main follows White's drawings faithfully; but he occasionally indulges in flights of artistic fancy, and in the hands of his sons who succeeded to his business, later de Bry engravings reveal curious misinterpretations. Thus more than once we see Indians bearing quivers, which, instead of being represented as made of skin or of wickerwork, as they must have been, are shown as classically designed metal quivers, which might have graced Trajan's column or the arch of Constantine (see plate VII).

More familiar specimens of artistic misrepresentation, due to the engraver's ignorance of the subject, are the views of Champlain's habitations of Quebec and Port Royal. We have not the original drawings; but some sort of drawing and description must have been supplied by Champlain. He *could* draw passably himself, as his original sketches for his *Brief discourse* in the John Carter Brown Library in Providence demonstrate. The habitations most probably were wooden constructions, with perhaps a little masonry for foundations, fireplaces, and chimneys,

[1]Admirable engravings of these pictures, and well-informed notes upon them, are given in *The pageant of America* I: *Adventurers in the wilderness* (New Haven, 1925-7).

surrounded by log palisades. Otherwise they could not have been erected in the short space of time spent upon them. The engravings, if they give any idea at all of the materials used, suggest massive masonry ramparts and houses. Champlain possibly had no opportunity of checking the plates while in progress, possibly he was indifferent about such minor details; and the engraver, acquainted only with solid European fortifications, depicted structures of stone much more substantial than those thrown up in the circumstances of building in the wilderness of New France.

Every period has its artistic conventions; even the most original artist can speak only in the idiom of his time. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the classic ideal guided the hand of the author and the artist alike. In painting we see its influence surviving well into the nineteenth century, despite the assaults of the romantic movement and the later disintegration of realism. Paul Kane's Indian pictures reveal this classical holdover. His drawing of the details of costume, of canoes, of wigwams, is accurate; his portraits of Indians are full of character, they are ethnological documents of great value. But his observation of Indian characteristics seems to stop at the neck. When he depicts the full-length figure, the pose, the action, the physical characteristics all remind us of the antique. The Indian chief suggests the statue of Apollo Belvedere, beau-ideal of the mid-nineteenth-century connoisseur. His horses are not Indian ponies, pintos, or cayuses, but Arab steeds careering with the outspread legs of the race-horse of the sporting prints of the period. For the buffalo he had no precedent, and consequently he gives some real construction and character to the animal, but its gallop is the same conventional *ventre-à-terre*. It is only within the last fifty years that the individual physical characteristics of the Indian have been really studied and depicted by artists such as Remington and De Forest Brush.

Benjamin West's "Death of Wolfe" marks a significant stage in the development of art in relation to history. It is a typical specimen of the "history picture" as conceived by the late eighteenth century. The circumstances of its production reveal the artistic conventions, as well as the professional ethics, of the period. When it was first exhibited, in 1771, it was considered a daring innovation, since it discarded the tradition that the "dignity of history" required that the figures should be nude, or draped in classical robes. West substituted for these antique mantles and togas some semblance of the costume and uniforms

of the time. Yet, though painted only twelve years after the date of the event which it depicts, when many of those who took part in it were still alive and able to give exact information, the picture is incorrect in many of its details, as well as in its general arrangement. Few of the personages shown in the picture were actually present at Wolfe's death, some were not even in the battle of the Plains, their duties lying elsewhere at the time. It is a revelation of the ethical standards of the age to learn that the painter exacted a fee from those whose figures were introduced into the picture, whether truly there or not. West is said to have defended his innovation in costume in these words: "The same truth which gives law to the historian should rule the painter. If instead of the facts I introduce fiction, shall I be understood by posterity?" Posterity understands him pretty well, and considers his picture valueless as an historical record; and happily, since West's time, the artistic conscience has become more enlightened and sensitive. Nevertheless, in justice to the picture, it must be admitted that it *does* convey, in a measure, the dramatic quality of the event, and to this imaginative vision is due the popularity that called for several replicas, and that gives the picture an interest for to-day.

In sculpture the classical tradition held with equal or greater tenacity. We had in Canada an example in the bas-relief of the death of Brock which was placed on the first monument which stood at Queenston from 1826 to 1840 (see plate VI). Here we see the dying hero with breast, shoulders, and arms nude or veiled with antique drapery; his legs are nondescript, the thighs suggesting the tight military breeches of 1812, the lower legs tangled in more drapery, terminated by a hint of the toe of a military top-boot. The kneeling soldier who supports him is clothed in uniform as to his body, but his leg, too, shows more of the classical ideal than of the prosaic realism of trousers and boots. The full-fleshed naked Indian completes the composition and allows the sculptor the unhampered expression of the Graeco-Roman tradition, which also transforms the reversed tomahawk into a ponderous battle-axe sort of weapon.

Portraits themselves are affected by changing artistic fashions. At the present time, the academic gown seems to be much the mode, especially if the sitter's degree is an honorary one; and in face of the prevailing sombre hue of masculine clothes, the painter eagerly welcomes the splash of a silken hood, even though at times the colour combination is not altogether harmonious. In

the eighteenth century the fashionable military portrait sometimes shows the general wearing armour. Thus the well-known portrait of Jeffery Amherst depicts him in plate armour of the sixteenth century or earlier, while a helmet with visor rests upon a map of Canada beside him. Oddly consorting with these medieval details are his sash and jewel of the order of the bath, his eighteenth-century wig, and, in the background, a view of his boats descending the rapids of the St. Lawrence. Certainly he did not encumber himself thus on this dangerous undertaking. We accept the convention; but such portraits cause confusion in the minds of youthful students and casual readers, unless accompanied by some commentary from those who know and can explain. In the case of the familiar half-length portrait of Montcalm, wearing a cuirass beneath his eighteenth-century velvet coat, however, it is probable that the artist is true to the facts. It is known that French officers wore the cuirass in battle until about 1775, long after the general use of armour had been abandoned. Several years ago Sir Arthur Doughty made known the existence of Montcalm's cuirass, showing bullet-marks, preserved by his descendants at the Château d'Avèze, in France. In the British army the last remnants of armour to survive were the crescent-shaped gorget worn below the cravat, and the chain-mail epaulets of some cavalry corps.

Observers of the portraits of the missionaries of New France, such as Jogues, Brébeuf, *etc.*, have been struck by the effect of protuberant, full-fleshed lips, which seem to contradict the known asceticism of their characters. On examination it is perceived that this effect is caused by the contrast with the beard and moustache by which the lips are surrounded. Ecclesiastical etiquette permitted missionary priests in the field to wear beards—as to-day our Oblate fathers in the north-west—but with the injunction to trim the hair carefully around the mouth, so that in partaking the Sacrament, none of the precious elements should be spilled. This detail of the draughtsmanship of a missionary portrait may perhaps be taken as a kind of internal evidence of its authenticity as a contemporary production.

And this leads us to the consideration of the artist's ability to seize character, a prime requisite for a portrait painter, whether his work be viewed as art or as history. A portrait by a great painter or draughtsman, such as Velasquez or Holbein, is an affidavit, before which we are ready to affirm that thus and so veritably must have appeared Henry VIII or Pope Innocent.

But such integrity of vision is rare. The artist's eye is seldom so penetrating, nor his hand so sure, and not always is the sitter content with the faithful record, "warts and all", such as Cromwell is said to have exacted. To the limited perception and halting execution of the mediocre artist must be added the vanity of the sitter; and thus many of our historic personages probably exist for us to-day more as they wished to look than as they really appeared.

So far as Canada is concerned, such early portraits as exist are nearly all of them nebulous or feeble in characterization. Romney's "Brant" is perhaps the most meritorious: it is almost our only work by a master, and even it seems deficient in Indian character. What would we give to have had an engraved portrait of Frontenac by Nanteuil, the artist of the superb Turenne portrait and a score of other eminent Frenchmen of his day? Or a full-length of Champlain by Philippe de Champaigne, the painter of Richelieu?

It should not be necessary at this day to mention the fact that the portraits that passed for likenesses of Cartier, of Frontenac, and of Champlain are neither authentic nor contemporary; but their reappearance from time to time in popular works compels the conscientious historian to a sort of continuous repudiation. Margry and Myrand[2] have shown the origin of the supposed portrait of Frontenac on his death-bed in that of a Swiss doctor of the next century; and the false effigies of Cartier and Champlain have been effectively demolished by Dr. H. P. Biggar.[3]

In the absence of genuine portraits from life, it is inevitable that some form of imaginative pictorial personification will come into existence. If these portraits are acknowledged to be ideal representations, the ethics of history are safeguarded; the criticism of such works must then change its approach, and the questions to be asked are whether the artist's version seems consonant with the known character of the person represented, with his occupation, and his environment. The familiar so-called portrait of Cartier *does* seem to satisfy tolerably our conception of the sturdy Breton sea-dog, and creates a type which reaches its highest artistic development in the spirited statue of him at St. Malo. So, too, the dramatic Frontenac of Philippe Hébert, on the facade of the Legislative Building at Quebec, is an adequate visualization of the fiery old governor. It is likely that the psychological soundness of these two conceptions will fix their types permanently in the

[2]Ernest Myrand, *Sir William Phips devant Québec* (Quebec, 1893), 384 *ff.*

[3]CANADIAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, VI (2), June, 1925; (3), Sept., 1935; I (4), Dec., 1920.

popular imagination, and it may be claimed for them that they are at least as illuminating as the verbal analyses of most historians. But the case of Champlain is different. He is our most conspicuous victim iconographically. The smug countenance that passed for his was always distrusted, if not detested, by discriminating observers. Professor Wrong discarded it in his school histories years ago, with the incisive comment that "the man with that face never discovered anything". The ill-fortune which originally foisted upon us this feeble conception seems to have affected some of the more ambitious artistic attempts to realize him. His statue at Ottawa perpetuates an error in the use of the astrolabe by showing him holding the instrument by the base. The sculptor evidently mistook the small projection at the bottom of the disc for a handle, instead of a mere weight to steady the astrolabe when suspended by the ring at the top, as it should be (sometimes from the thumb), so that it might hang perpendicularly. The statue at Orillia represents him wearing breast-plate and heavy boots reaching above the knee. Doubtless he wore boots on ship-board, and on horseback in France; but certainly a seasoned voyageur like Champlain never stepped into a birch-bark canoe, or climbed a slippery Georgian bay rock with such foot-gear. It is particularly unfortunate that a monument which commemorates his explorations in the interior of Ontario should be marred by so glaring an incongruity. It spoils what is otherwise a capable and satisfactory work, albeit perhaps somewhat lacking in the vigour and simplicity which we associate with the father of New France.

Other obstacles to the clear reading of many old drawings and engravings are faulty perspective and incorrect proportions. Champlain's drawing of the habitation of Quebec, or the engraver's version of it, which is all that we have, is a puzzle in perspective. It is difficult to determine its height, which seems excessive, whether it is square or obtuse-angled, and to understand the exact relations of the drawbridge and the entrance. In default of anything more precise, it is invaluable, but it leaves us still baffled as to its exact shape and many of its details. In the matter of proportions, conclusions have been drawn from the size of the animals depicted in old pictures, which, on reflection, are open to question or qualification. Early drawings and woodcuts of ploughing scenes, *etc.*, show the oxen undersized by comparison with the men. This has been cited as an additional proof that the cattle in the past were smaller than they are to-day. The

primitive artist was not strong on proportions, and one might as reasonably calculate the size of the buildings or the ships of the middle ages from the proportions which they bear to the human figures as depicted in the pages of illuminated missals. Existing suits of armour and articles of clothing indicate that the men and women were also smaller. The relative proportions of men and beasts were possibly about what they are to-day.

Nor, when we examine the objects themselves (preserved in museums and collections), are we on absolutely safe ground, or secure against erroneous deduction. Every museum contains certain articles whose pedigree is largely traditional, the legacies of earlier and less critical or less informed days. Even when authentically of their time, the specimens which have survived are not always typical. The exceptional piece is preserved, while "the run of the mill" disappears with use and time. The weapons, the armour, are often unique or "parade" pieces, or are treasured because of their associations with certain local families or famous personages. The arquebus, inlaid with ivory and gold, the masterpiece of some renowned gunsmith, executed for "his majesty" or "his grace", and which perhaps never fired a shot, survives in mint condition, while the weapon carried into battle by the rank and file at the same period has perished. To-day, for our technical and historical museums, these humbler but more universally characteristic objects are being carefully sought and preserved: a parallel movement to that which is going on in the domain of the written document, when account books and bills of lading are being studied as minutely as acts of parliament and royal edicts.

Much has disappeared forever. Two of the most characteristic articles connected with Canada are the birch-bark canoe and the snow-shoe. Is there anywhere an adequate collection of either, showing the local variations due to differing topographical conditions? I know of only one monograph on each of these subjects, which considers them thus comparatively. Sleighs survive in diminishing numbers, but for many of the styles of these vehicles in the past we must depend upon early views of Quebec, *etc.*, and the pictures of such artists as Krieghoff. We *read* of stoves in New France; the Simcoe canvas house was heated by stoves. How did they look? Where can we *see* any actual examples? Here and there genuine antique stoves from Three Rivers, the St. Maurice Forges, or the Normandale Furnace in Upper Canada, may be found; an authentic Franklin stove in Canada would be a discovery. The sawmill was the germ of

many a settlement: a few wheels, a few of the original buildings remain; but they are merely the shells; the primitive machinery, the perpendicular saws, have long since disappeared; and he who wishes for exact information is condemned to a long and almost fruitless search through technical handbooks of the time, themselves now almost extinct. The list of missing articles might be lengthened considerably.

Many pre-European objects, especially, have been lost. Articles of the more enduring materials, stone, clay, bone, are fairly numerous and have been studied with care and intelligence. But the more fragile articles are practically non-existent. For most of our knowledge of aboriginal garments, of baskets, of many implements, as they were before the influence of the white man, we are driven to the pictorial record; and bearing in mind the artistic limitations suggested earlier in this paper, it is unfortunate that we have no actual specimens by which to check the accuracy of the early draughtsmen of these articles of human hand-craft. How interesting it would be to be able to examine a canoe which had been cut out and put together with the copper or stone knife and the bone bodkin of the primitive Indian. For the tools used necessarily affect the shape and finish of the object. Perhaps the most striking example of the influence of European tools on native workmanship may be seen in the totem poles of the Pacific coast Indians. Webber, the artist of Cook's voyage, in his drawings made on the spot, shows totem poles only inside the houses; there is none *outside*, in his views of Nootka villages (see plates I, II). Specimens of these shorter interior poles in our museums indicate that they were carved by primitive tools of bone or stone. The taller exterior specimens are carved with a sharpness and finesse possible only with steel tools which were supplied by trade with the white man. To a working artist the comparison of these two types is most instructive as an evidence of the effect of implements upon the development of an art or a craft, upon its style no less than upon its technique. The European contact apparently came at the most favourable time for the Indian sculptor. He had reached the limit of his power of expression with the native implements at hand; but his original impulse had not yet spent itself, the symbolism of his art still had meaning and connection with his life, the style still pulsed with its creative force, and had not yet crystallized into formula, as do all styles eventually. The steel tool enabled him to push his art to a fuller expression. As a result, more elaboration and greater size followed. The domestic lar moved

outside the house, displayed itself, became ostentatious, heraldic—a sign of the distinction and wealth which the new commerce had brought. Perhaps we read too much into this; but some such course of development seems to be the general law throughout the history of the arts.

If any pre-European objects, such as bows, quivers, shields, quill- and wampum-embroidered garments still exist, is it possible that they may be found in Europe, rather than in America? We know that Cartier, Champlain, and others took back with them to France some of the hand-craft products of the new world. The traveller always brings home "curios" and "souvenirs". The explorer, the missionary, the managers and clerks of trading companies, officials, and soldiers returning from foreign service must have carried with them such things, as the British army officer brought home shields and assegais from Zululand, matchlocks from Afghanistan, to decorate his ancestral halls. Perhaps to-day in obscure châteaux in Normandy, in English manor-houses, in homes in the seaports of Brittany and the bay of Biscay, may still hang, unknown and unregarded, some of these aboriginal relics.

An open-air museum for Canada is a necessity. Such institutions as that at Stockholm and elsewhere would make possible the conservation of typical log houses, barns, rail and stone fences, vehicles, the equipment used in such industries as potash-making, weaving, and tanning, in their natural surroundings and with ample space. In the meantime, while awaiting the realization of this ideal, every local museum can do something towards the reconstruction of the domestic life of the past by grouping such articles as they possess in an appropriate way in a fitting interior. Gradually they may thus build up an actual room which will convey the social atmosphere, the *decor*, of the period. It is not yet too late to rescue from oblivion a typical Victorian "drawing-room", crowded with priceless antimacassars, whatnots, chandeliers, and lambrequins. Some still survive in actual use.

The articles in a room thus reconstructed need not be too rigidly circumscribed as to time. This way pedantry lies. The houses of the past themselves contained some family heirlooms, some relics of their householders' earlier days: everything in them was not of the latest fashion. Doubtless alongside the up-to-date furniture of 1790, let us say, occasionally would be found a Jacobean or a Queen Anne chair—literally a grandfather's chair. The essential point is that in titling a museum room the date given

shall be that of the latest article in the collection. Obvious though this precaution may seem, I have seen museum period rooms which included articles or styles which were not likely to have been in use until years after the date with which the room was labelled.

Several museums in the United States have reconstructed early interiors with excellent effect. Especially notable in this respect is the Essex Institute at Salem, Mass., where a seventeenth-century kitchen, and later parlours, bed-rooms, and dining-rooms have been arranged. Various American commercial corporations also have made collections of articles which illustrate the development of their industries. Thus the International Harvester Company has salvaged many of the early reapers; the United Shoe Machinery Corporation has reconstructed the progressive stages of shoe manufacture in a remarkable collection of boots and shoes, tools and machinery, including an authentic early shoe-maker's shop, equipped with all its furnishings.

In Canada, so far as I know, little has been done in this direction as yet. The Royal Ontario Museum has some excellent reconstructions of Indian life, and some interiors which illustrate the development of furniture. The Château de Ramesay, and the fort at Annapolis Royal, N.S., have arranged a few rooms; and here and there and elsewhere a start has been made. But lack of space and limited financial support cramp the efforts of many local societies which already possess sufficient material to make an attractive display in more favourable circumstances. The Hudson's Bay Company has shown a praiseworthy interest in its physical memorials by the creation of its museum in Winnipeg, and to its care we owe the preservation of surviving specimens of the York boat. The Canadian National and the Canadian Pacific Railways have kept a few of the early locomotives; and for the recent centenary of the first railway in Canada a scale model of the first locomotive has been constructed and placed on exhibition. It is to be hoped that other Canadian corporations will follow in this direction by conserving specimens of their equipment and products, characteristic of the various stages of their industries. Tangible objects such as these, or at least photographs and working drawings of them, are indispensable material for the future historian of the "Machine Age".

Perhaps a word might be said regarding the use of modelled and costumed figures in combination with such settings of furniture, *etc.* In my opinion, such figures perhaps better serve their educational and informative purpose when considered merely as

blocks on which to fit the costumes so as to show clearly the cut and hang of the garments, without too near an approach to realism in pose or action; and it is preferable to display them in glass cases. To fit them into their surroundings with easy and natural posture calls for trained artistic skill in modelling and pictorial composition which entails an expense beyond the resources of any but adequately endowed institutions. The results, in the hands of mediocrity, are artistically deplorable. For the small museum perhaps the most practical method would be to use the simplest kind of block figures such as the local clothing store uses for its window displays—if any can be procured without the simpering sub-human physiognomy and the mincing gesture which afflict us in so many of these objects to-day.

One of the most illuminating types of reconstruction is that connected with the preservation of historic places. Whenever the remains of the buildings are not in too ruinous a condition it adds enormously to the value and popular interest of an historic site if it presents in a measure the appearance it bore when occupied and in use. In this again the Americans have shown what can be done by intelligent and sympathetic utilization of the material at hand. A recent instance is the restoration of Fort Niagara, N.Y., which reveals vividly the life of the soldier exiled in this outpost of New France two hundred years ago. Canada has made a beginning in a few places, as at Louisbourg and Annapolis, N.S., and at the old fort in Toronto. But Canadians lack a programme and organization supported by that wide public interest which alone can make possible undertakings of this kind. Meanwhile such relics as the fortifications of Halifax, Quebec, and Kingston are barely saved from decay. It is strange that those to whom the picturesque and historical aspects of the situation have no appeal, the so-called practical business man, the efficient heads of municipalities, do not realize, in their consideration of the development of the tourist trade that such local features are a potential asset, which with some expenditure will become an immediate profitable investment. Municipal authorities and historic enthusiasts alike might very properly pay some attention to the "window-dressing" and "publicity" technique of modern business.

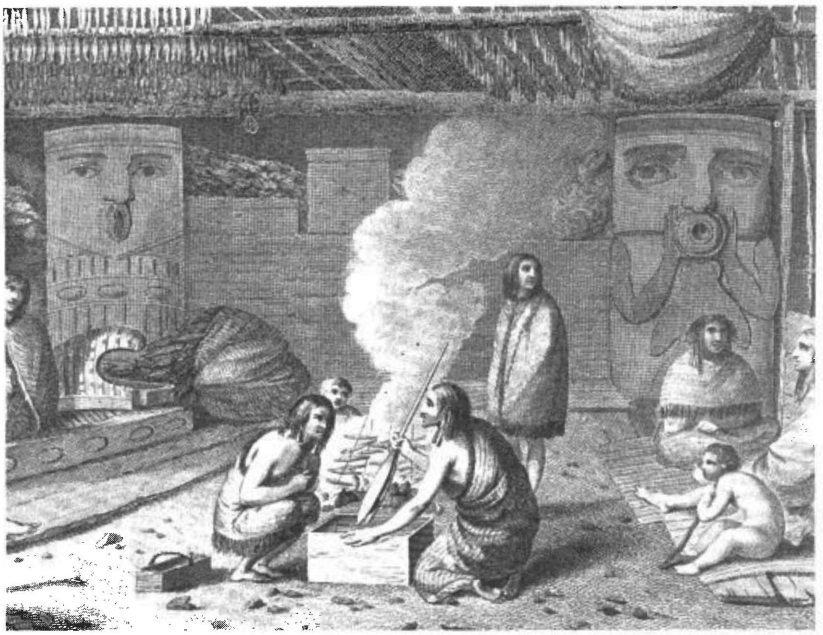
* * * * *

I have dwelt perhaps over long on our losses, on misinterpretations and errors, on the gaps in our sources of information. But if much has been lost and much remains to be done, much has been salvaged. It would be ungracious and unjust for one who like

myself owes an incalculable debt to the researches and the judgment of so many trained workers to omit a recognition of the value of their services to all who attempt to put into visual form the past life of Canada. The public collections, the Archives at Ottawa, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Quebec Provincial Museum, the New Brunswick Museum, the McCord Museum, the John Ross Robertson and the Manoir Richelieu collections, as well as many smaller local museums, are rich in undeveloped pictorial resources. The introduction in the *Catalogue of pictures in the Public Archives of Canada*, by Dr. James F. Kenney, is a model of its kind, especially valuable for its clear exposition of the technical processes of picture-printing. I know of no better introduction to the study of pictorial sources; condensed though it is, it covers the whole subject from the earliest methods to modern processes with admirable clarity and precision. We do not often meet with such well-informed and penetrating criticism of historical portraiture as Dr. J. Clarence Webster gives us in his *Wolfe and the artists*, his references to the likenesses of Jeffery Amherst, and similar studies. Much valuable information on details too often omitted, or vaguely presented, or scattered through numerous publications is clearly set forth in *The Indians of Canada* by Dr. Diamond Jenness, the lectures of Professor T. F. McIlwraith, and in the various works of Dr. Marius Barbeau. These scholars realize to the full the value of tangible objects, and of a knowledge of the technique of hand-crafts to the student who would understand the life of the past. MM. P.-G. Roy and E.-Z. Massicotte have given the historical artist priceless material in the notarial inventories which they have made public from time to time in the pages of the *Bulletin des recherches historiques* and elsewhere. From these lists it would be possible to furnish completely, from cellar to attic, typical Canadian houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Much information, more or less accurate, is to be found in the collections of local historical societies, in the numerous published histories of Quebec parishes, and in the county and district histories throughout Canada. The portraits of pioneer settlers, in particular, have more than a local interest. They give the illustrator data for the types of character, the clothing and the hairdressing, especially of the nineteenth century since the days of the daguerreotype. Most of these have been borrowed from family albums, and in these once indispensable household ornaments is to be found much useful material. But in the examination of all portraits,

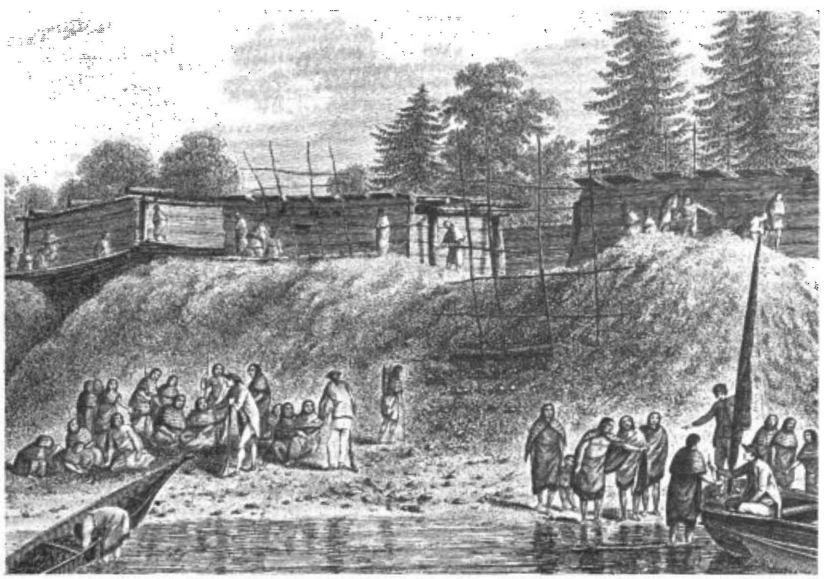
PLATE I



INTERIOR OF HOUSE AT NOOTKA

Part of engraving from drawing by John Webber, R.A., in Atlas to Cook's *Voyage to the Pacific ocean*, ed. 2, 1785.

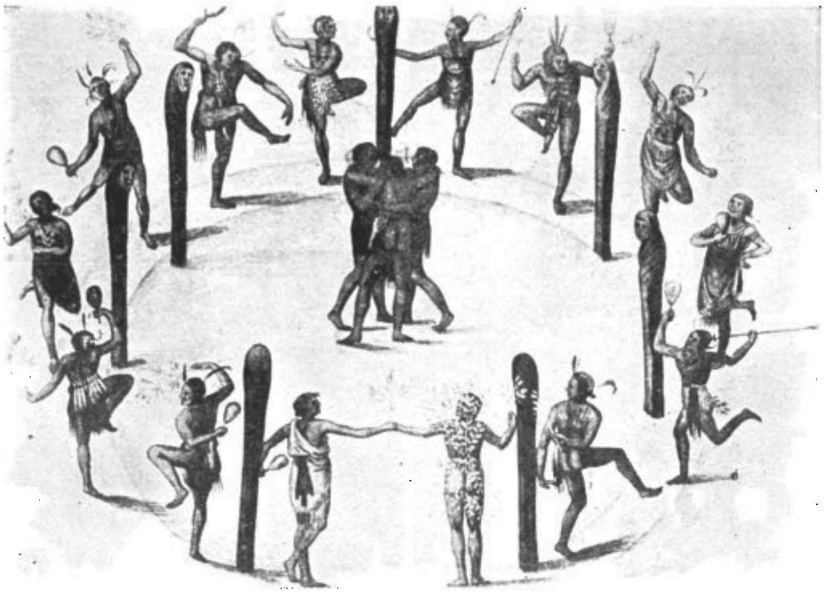
PLATE II



VILLAGE OF NOOTKA

Part of engraving from drawing by John Webber, R.A., in Atlas to Cook's *Voyage to the Pacific ocean*, ed. 2, 1785.

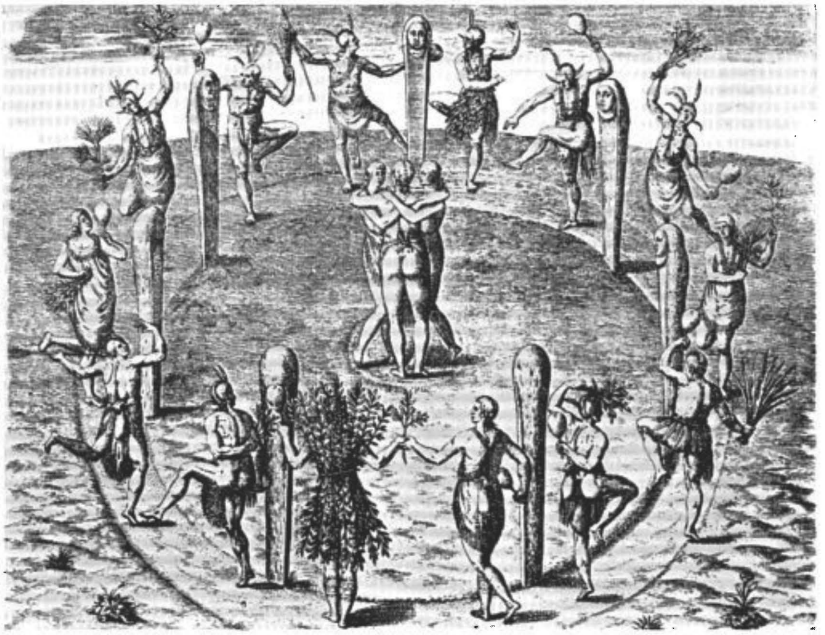
PLATE III



INDIAN DANCE

Original drawing by John White, *circa* 1585, in the British Museum.
Reproduced in *The pageant of America*, I.

PLATE IV



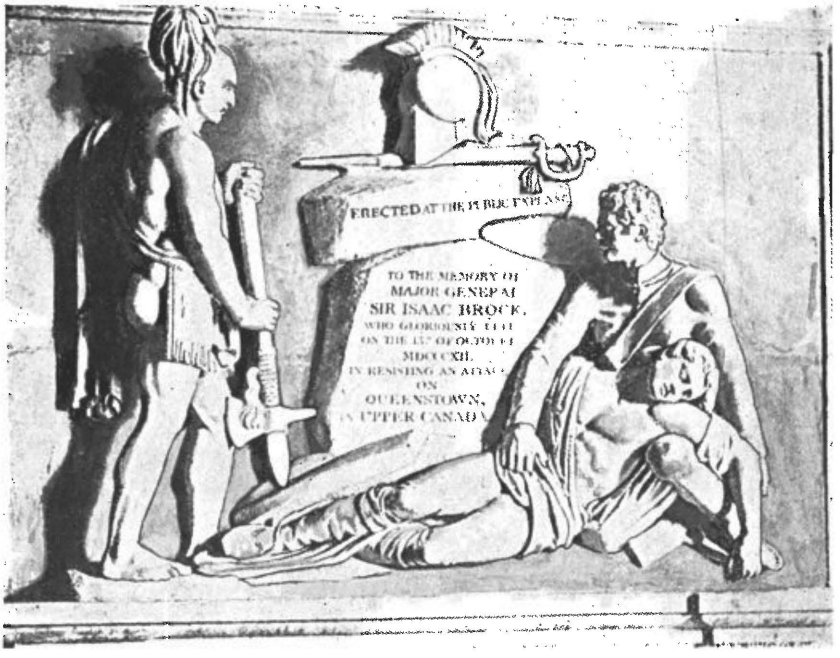
INDIAN DANCE

Engraving from Theodore de Bry, *Voyages*, part I, 1590

PLATE V


Engraving from John Smith, *Generall historie of Virginia*, 1624.

PLATE VI




BAS RELIEF ON THE FIRST BROCK MONUMENT AT QUEENSTON, 1826-40

PLATE VII

FIGURE WITH QUIVER
From engraving by
Theodore de Bry,
*Voyages*, 1619.

whether of the time of photography or earlier, consideration must be given to the fact that the sitters are generally in their best clothes, and that they are *posing*, more or less stiffly. It is only in recent years that we encounter the surreptitious snap-shot and the motion picture. And it must be remembered that the pioneer of a neighbourhood was not regarded as such until he was well on in years, and consequently in many cases was not photographed until late in life. The settlers were not perhaps all or always so time-worn and weather-beaten as their interesting portraits make them appear to be in the pages of the local histories. The pictorial illustrator must avoid the error of representing the people of a period always in fashionable clothes, the data for which are much more abundant than for work-a-day garb. In the pioneer days of Canada, especially, such fashionable society as existed was likely to be a little behind the mode. The Loyalists, for instance, doubtless, on gala or official occasions, wore such remnants of pre-revolutionary finery as they had saved; but what were their garments in the daily life of the field and the log-hut? Social status, occupation, and environment were modifying factors, and nowhere was this so decidedly the case as in a new country. Thus in New France there must have been a marked contrast between the habitant farmer or the poor seigneur, domiciled for some years on his backwoods domain, and the newly-arrived dandified captain of French regulars or the prim official of the intendant's bureau. La Salle did not wear the same clothes on the Illinois as he did at Versailles. We might as reasonably depict the mining prospector of to-day in northern Canada clad in the "tails" or dinner jacket and "boiled shirt" that he wears when entertaining a financial "prospect" in a New York or London hotel. It is true that the explorer frequently carried with him some articles of more sumptuous apparel with which to impress the Indians; but these were reserved for the arrival at a village or for the council meeting, and were not exposed to the vicissitudes of daily travel. We have but to remember, among numerous instances, the oriental robes which Nicolet carried in expectation of meeting the potentates of Cathay, or the account given by Alexander Mackenzie of how he and his ragged crew mended, cleaned, and shaved themselves before descending to the Bella Coola villages, or the manner in which Sir George Simpson, on his high-speed journeys, approached a Hudson's Bay Company post, dressed in beaver hat, cravat, and frill-bosomed shirt and attended by his piper in Highland garb and his canoe-men gaily bedecked for the occasion.

* * * * *

Opinions regarding the value of imaginative pictures inevitably will differ; but it may be claimed that they serve a useful, if minor, purpose in arousing popular interest in historical subjects. In any case we shall continue to have them with us, as we shall have historical novels, historical moving pictures, and popular biographies. We must trust that a wider and more precise knowledge of the facts will gradually mould these forms of art into richer shapes of truth and beauty. To-day the sources of information are so much more extensive that we have the right to demand a higher degree of exactitude, of adherence to known fact, than was possible for the illustrator of the past. The foundations of the historical imagination are broader and firmer. For the artist of real creative power and insight, the greater the number of essential facts known, the more clearly he sees their connection and significance, and the more intense generally is his visualization.

In this respect the motion picture of recent years has shown a remarkable improvement. Despite its many banalities, obvious and repellant as they are, it must be admitted that the motion picture to-day presents, especially in its visual features, an authentic and vivid re-creation of the past. Such admirable productions as *Scaramouche*, *The tale of two cities*, *The house of Rothschild*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and others, show a meticulous attention to detail, and a general atmosphere which have involved a vast amount of research and real scholarship. The effect of such productions upon the public taste and knowledge is incalculable; and it is encouraging to know that excellence of presentation (or otherwise) is reflected in the box-office receipts. The careless hit-or-miss productions of some years ago, full of anachronisms and false in historic atmosphere, are impossible to-day.

In arousing this popular curiosity and interest, the visual reconstructor of the past, whether painter, illustrator, movie producer, or museum curator, is also indirectly rendering some service to the cause of historical scholarship and research. Public support can be secured only by a wider public interest in the subject. If the popular imagination is touched and stirred, ultimately it will have some effect upon the public purse, with resultant benefit to higher historical studies. The pictorial mouse may help the scholastic lion.

Perhaps, too, the presentation of history in visible, tangible form may have even some direct bearing upon the work of the scholar, in directing his attention to those minor and apparently trivial details of weather, locality, time and place, tools, weapons,

clothes, and the fashions of physical adornment: all matters of prime importance to the illustrator, and not without significance to the student of social life, past or present. The influence of such things upon the course of human events is often much greater than we realize at a first or superficial glance. It has been well said that much more than breeches depends upon buttons. And it is a common experience for the historical worker to come upon a minor fact which acts upon his mind and his imagination as the lifting of a curtain before the window of the past in its revealing suggestiveness.

At its best, and, after all, the work of the historical reconstructor is only an approximation, writer and artist alike may well remember the motto, admirable in its modesty and self-respect, which Jan Van Eyck, the Flemish master of conscientious detail, signed upon his pictures: "Als Ich Kann."

CHARLES W. JEFFERYS