

THE WEEK.

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The Week,

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C. BLACKETT ROBINSON, Publisher.

TOPICS OF THE WEEK.

Our people in these times are so much under the dominion of material interests, and above all, are so engrossed in the traffic of politics, that anything that appeals to the higher nature of man or contributes in any degree to the elevation and refinement of the popular taste is apt to be coldly received, if not utterly disregarded. How large, or rather how small, a proportion of the hundred thousand citizens of Toronto, for instance, will turn in this week to the exhibition rooms of the Ontario Society of Artists to give themselves the intellectual treat of an inspection of the paintings of the year, and, patriotically, to note the advance of art in our midst, and at the same time encourage by their presence those who have adopted art as a profession? If the exhibition attracts its hundreds, where it ought to attract its thousands, it will perhaps be considered fortunate. But why is this? Because the aims of the society—will it be said?—are beyond the bourgeois taste of the art department of our agricultural shows, and that the training and culture of our native artists must therefore go for naught. The reply does the country honour! Did the exhibition contain a national tableau representing the actors, say, in the recent Conspiracy case, with all the accessories and excitement of the Police Court enquiry, no doubt we should have crowded rooms, and the interesting picture would "draw" for weeks. Whatever the Academy may foster, thank heaven, it does not gravely foster the sensational in art. In the rooms of the Society, for the time being, one can forget party politics, and get out of range of the "shooting gallery" and belligerent journalism.

But the visitor to the Art Exhibition, though he may regret the absence of any Canadian historical subject, largely conceived and gravely treated, will find little to disappoint him in the collection brought together for the year. It may be said that the art faculty has not descended, like Minerva from the head of Jove, upon any one member of the society in particular.

There is a larger average of good work, especially in oils, than has been seen for years; and there is manifest fruit of more thorough study, and a more intelligent appreciation of artistic aims and objects. In oils, the most noticeable and interesting pictures of the year are Messrs. Martin's "Close of a Stormy Day"; Sandham's "Call to Sunrise Mass"; Cruickshank's "Hauling the Mast"; Forbes' "Rocky Mountain Canon"; Harris' "Colour-Sergeant Hard Pressed," and a portrait subject by Mr. Forster. Mr. Bell-Smith's "Daughters of Canada," and two of Mrs. Schrieber's paintings figure among the ambitious pictures in the gallery, but they fall short of that merit which would entitle them to place among the successful products of the year. Other pictures, also in oils, are worthy of mention were we here attempting a criticism on the year's showing, which we are not. In water-colours the showing for the year is, as usual, excellent, and the visitor will find much to delight him especially in the contributions of Messrs. Porteous, Fowler, O'Brien, Perré, Matthews, Walker, and Cresswell. Mr. Gagen's work in flower subjects, and the sculpture of Messrs. Reed and Dunbar also merit notice. Not only the society, but the Province, is to be congratulated on so admirable an exhibit as our native artists have brought together. It will bring discredit on the Canadian name if the exhibition this year fails of success.

READ in conjunction with the speech of Sir Richard Cartwright in the Toronto Opera House on Tuesday night, a statement in the *Winnipeg Weekly Times* to the effect that Mr. Blake is about to retire from the leadership of the Opposition is noteworthy. Our contemporary, though a Tory organ, has hitherto been free from the blinding partizanship which has characterized other leading papers, and is not likely to originate or circulate a *canard* pure and simple. Of the reasons attributed for Mr. Blake's retirement—the discontent in the Reform party with his leadership, and his discouragement at the desertion of a score of followers in the vote on the railway resolutions—little importance can be attached to the latter. It is the sort of rumour that commonly follows such little political *désagrémens*. But the open secret that "a gathering of the faithful is to be held in Toronto at the close of the present month," with a view to re-organizing the Reform Party, would appear to give colour to our contemporary's prophecy that Sir Richard Cartwright is to be proposed for the leadership in succession to Mr. Blake, "who, there is little doubt, has resigned that position." Be this as it may, of Mr. Blake's failure as a party leader there seems to be no question. Possessed of exceptional abilities, of high character, and a powerful speaker, he is singularly lacking in the qualities necessary to impart cohesion to a following including so many antagonistic factions as the Opposition. Added to which, with a reputation founded rather upon his oratorical powers than upon the able advocacy of great principles, Mr. Blake does not appeal to popular sympathy as a man with a policy which might with advantage to the State be substituted for that of his Machiavellian rival. The disorganization which this fact and a want of tact have produced amongst his followers have made it possible for the *Times* to say: "It is almost the same treatment that was accorded to Mr. Mackenzie. It is the only policy the Grit party has possessed since the return of Sir John Macdonald to power—the policy that there shall be a change in leadership every few years. The party is like Japhet in search of a father—it is ever searching for a leader who will lead on to victory."

THE departure of Mr. Macpherson, Minister of the Interior, for Europe is practically the close of his political career. Of course the usual rumours of disagreements in the Cabinet, shelving, and the like, will follow, and Mr. Macpherson will no doubt be credited with having lost the confidence of his chief. Personal reasons, not party quarrels, are, however, the sole cause of his leaving home and probably the Cabinet. Mr. Macpherson is unfortunately suffering from a very serious malady which renders proper attention to the duties of office impossible.

BRADSTREET's weekly report shows thirty-five failures in Canada, during the past week, as compared with twenty in the preceding week, and with thirty-one, fourteen, and fifteen respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882, and 1881. In the United States, 187 failures and suspensions were reported, against 133 the preceding week, and 166, 116, and eighty-three respectively, in the corresponding weeks of 1883, 1882, and 1881.