

FINE ART.

THE EXHIBITION OF THE ONTARIO SOCIETY OF ARTISTS.

THERE are marked occasions on which the capacity of journalists for the proper use and application of pithy epithets and descriptive adjectives is peculiarly tested. It might be supposed that in Canada our Legislative Sessions, with all the heat and acrimony which they evoke, would be such a time; but it is chiefly the noun substantive which then is in demand. If you call a man a scoundrel, a liar, a corruptionist, a turncoat, a profligate, adjectives are redundant, and may even weaken the pithy completeness of the idea sought to be conveyed. To Toronto journalism, however, May is eminently the adjective season, for the Picture Exhibition creates a great demand for that class of words; and sadly does their tautological misuse betray the extreme ignorance of the would-be critics. It is a pity that an opportunity of teaching the public what to admire and what to condemn is taken so little advantage of by the Press. Criticism, to be of any use, must be not only impartial, but must be also outspoken. Canadian Art has shown that it is worth fostering, that it has great capabilities of development, and we believe that its interests will be best consulted by speaking out plainly. Praise and blame are neither of much value if either is indulged in too lavishly.

After a careful scrutiny of the whole Exhibition, we feel that we are honestly justified in congratulating Canada upon the evidence here given of her sons' progress in Art; for progress there undoubtedly is. It is possible that in former years individual pictures have been equal to, or have even excelled in some particulars, the choicest works now on the walls of the Society's room; but, taking the Exhibition as a whole, there can be, we think, no doubt that a change has taken, and is taking, place, and that the direction of the change is a right and desirable one. The most obvious feature of this year, of course, is the increased prominence and number of the Oil paintings. In former Exhibitions, Oil was rather the exception; but now it more than holds its own; in vigour, in detail, and in conception, the Oil colours are, as a whole, surprisingly good. Let us look at them in some detail; though we must premise that, our space being limited, we must necessarily pass over many pictures without notice. First on the catalogue comes Mrs. W. Schreiber. It

is true that this artist is a very great acquisition to the Ontario Society. Her works indicate careful training; she manifests great industry, draws well, has a good idea of colour and considerable boldness in its use, and evidently has ideas of how a picture should be put together. Up to a certain point she is excellent, and that point is far in advance of the average standard of our artists. But we would tender to her the advice to be careful of some things—careful not to attempt too many pictures at once, careful to stick to Oil in preference to Water colours, and careful in the selection of subjects. In No. 41—'Of what is she thinking?'—there is evidence of considerable power as well as taste in portraiture, but in No. 47 she provokingly disappoints us in both particulars. The pair of girls' heads, in 34, 42, and 50, are, in both instances, good, true, and simple, mouths and noses being, however, a little unsatisfactory. 'He sees it!' a telling little picture of a girl offering her canary a cherry, is very pretty. This or a *genre* style is, we imagine, Mrs. Schreiber's real forte. Her animals we don't care much for, and her 'Joan of Arc' is a good subject, but—well, not done justice to. Mr. J. A. Fraser has some capital little studies. 'Quiet afternoon', 40, is a careful and artistic study of sands and sea, and his 'Morning near Georgeville', 6, 'In the mountain mists', 37, and 'On the Burroughs River', 17, have a quiet delicacy that is refreshing. His largest picture, 'Off in the morning mists', is a mistake, in colour, drawing, and everything: the canoes are obviously going, not only up stream, but up hill too. Of Mr. O'Brien's works, we can honestly say that his proficiency in Oils surprises us, while his industry in Water colours seems as great as heretofore. His largest Oil—'The whirlpool on the Chats', 10—is admirable. We could stand a little more colour in the distance, but coolness and clearness and realism, in a great sense, are the artist's peculiar excellence. The backwater of the pool is the best part of the picture. 'Morning on the Severn', 5, and 'A tributary of the Don', 7, are very good tit-bits; and 'Toronto harbour, early morning', 38, is a very happy, quiet rendering of a local scene. In Water colours, his evening scene of 'Ottawa', 152, is very good. There are four or five little woodland scenes that are thoroughly charming; they