

## THE EXHIBIT OF THE ONTARIO SOCIETY.—I.

A FAVOURABLE comparison of this year's pictures of the Ontario Society with its recent exhibitions will hardly occur to most people at first sight. The rooms are as well filled as usual, and the best pictures of the best men will help materially to define their motives and methods to the public generally. A decided lack of originality, even of variety, in either subject or treatment, may be said to characterise the exhibition as a whole, however. Two or three artists give us the exceptions that prove the rule, but from most of them there is a very general feeling that we have received just about what we expected. The departures of the exceptions, too, seem to be chiefly experimental, and fail to give anything like impetus to the body of the pictures shown. The non-appearance, moreover, of anything by two or three members for whose work one always looks with pleasurable anticipation, is disappointing. J. Kerr Lawson, gone to congenial Paris, might have left something to testify of him in his absence, one thinks. Paul Peel is quite unrepresented, except by proxy in his clever sister. We get nothing from J. C. Pinhey, of Ottawa, whose art always interests us by its suggestiveness of future development. Even the pretty pink-and-white conceptions of Mrs. Schreiber, that usually elicit so much admiration from a public that knows what it likes, are absent this year. Grumbling aside, however, a careful inspection of the Society's walls will find them covered with a large amount of careful work, showing a gratifying degree of growth, and discover even the less meritorious pictures reasonably void of offence.

Mr. Homer Watson's nine contributions form, rather more evidently than usual, the basis of the Society's claim to recognition in landscapes. The strength of the hills is his, the low-browed hills that roll away from the Grand River, and the knowledge of our Canadian skies and their moods, and rare sympathy with the common homely life of the fields, with the power to make his canvases reflect all this, as most of the nine do. "Evening after the Storm," reminds one of Mr. Watson's earlier manner, with its tendency toward the sombre, not to say the lugubrious. A mill, its stream swollen to a torrent, a large tree broken sheer across the middle, the upper half prone upon the ground, are its chief features. The motion of the clouds and the branches show that the wind, in subsiding, has veered, and helps wonderfully in expressing the past violence of the gale. Most people will turn with relief, however, to the restful "Twilight," or quiet "Morning," which are full of the more easily comprehensible virtues of Mr. Watson's style, and are only pleasantly suggestive. "Before the Storm," shows admirable management of light, and an appreciation of tender half tones which is new in Mr. Watson's painting. "Early Spring" is full of the promise of that season under the pale brown tints in which it appears. The young undergrowth in the foreground is quick with life: indeed it quivers everywhere, to the gleam of moss on the cottage roof, which makes one of the scanty incidents of the picture. Admirers of Mr. Watson's work will be glad to know that he is divorcing himself from a manner that was beginning to hint of stereotype, and utilising values, ideas, and sunlight effects more broadly than ever before. There is a suspicion of extremism in "May" however. The picture is most harmonious, and full of a subtle atmospheric effect, but we can hardly believe that even a play of sunlight would denude the willows of the foliage that month should supply them with.

Mr. F. A. Verner's "Nutting Season, Burnham Beeches," is as charming an example of his skill in producing soft, hazy effects of rose and gray and yellow as we have seen. The pigs in the foreground are capitally done, and the rendering of the autumn foliage is very agreeable. It must be admitted, though, the artist has made an unfortunate blunder in sprinkling the nuts carefully and impartially over the entire surface of the trees in the foreground. Mr. Verner's "Dutch Fishing Boats" is a pleasing composition, and in his "Red Man's Rancho" he illustrates once more the popular saying that "the buffalo will never become extinct so long as Verner is alive." His name may change, but not his nature, or his attitudes, or his environment.

Mrs. M. E. Dignam has a fresh, impressionistic little garden sketch, nameless in the catalogue, containing, with a somewhat meaningless background, a vivid bit of tree-work that lifts it above the charge of insincerity. Mr. G. A. Reid's "Autumn" is a realistic bit of Canadian woods, to which the characterful figure of an old man, rambling among the fallen leaves, gives an easy motive. The forest perspective is particularly good. Mr. W. E. Atkinson has three pictures which evince much painstaking work. The influence of Mr. Watson is quite too palpable here, however, and Mr. Watson cannot easily be imitated without damage to the imitator. Mr. W. Cruikshank's Dutch pictures are well composed and drawn, but exhibit a painful lack of feeling for colour, or knowledge of it, which gives them almost a barbaric crudity.

## RECENT FICTION.

THE Hon. Lewis Wingfield, who enjoys a varied reputation and an almost universal fame, is the author of "The Lovely Wang," a tale of Chinese life, which is conceived in the spirit of gentlest satire, and charms, by its quaint adaptations of European ideals and the frequent touches of nature that make even that queer world of sampans, junks, scrolls, tiles, dragons, fans, and mandarins, akin to our less picturesque but surely more convenient one. The story deals with the sacrificing attentions of a charming young girl called "Plumbloom," who, robed as a boy, traverses both the lowest and highest circles of Peking society in order to find her affianced lover. Plumbloom is quite a heroine in her way, and although heroines are out of fashion, charms by her undaunted energy and the ease and coolness with which she discusses opium and skating parties, chopsticks, and the chase. The unfortunate lover is at last tracked to a low opium den, and bought back from the old crone who keeps it with forty ounces of silver. Plumbloom is handsomely rewarded by the Emperor, and one is inclined to wish for her a better husband than the weak one she has rescued from so vile a fate.

IN "The Feud of Oakland Creek," by Josiah Royce, published in exceptionally handsome style by Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, the novel-reader does not find anything either very novel or very interesting in itself; but what there is, is told very well—remarkably well in some parts. The main point in the story is the love of a woman for a man not her husband, and the love of that man for her, his own wife being dead. This is not new. But there is something new in the manner of sketching this love—its slow, happy, unconscious, innocent growth; its frightened expression, its one or two paroxysms of despair, its final lapse into respectable absence and ostensible oblivion. Margaret Dover is a beautiful and whole-souled woman, incapable of vice, but quite capable of that inner spiritual life which is possible to a few good women who are defrauded in this world of natural love and affection. Though twice married, Margaret has of course "never loved," until thrown in the company of the charming stranger of sympathetic tendencies, with blue-gray eyes, old china, and an altar with three candles continually burning before his wife's picture! The passing sketches of old Escott, old Eldon, his friend, Boscowitz, the scheming editor of *The Warrior*, and Ellen Escott, are well done and evince much literary experience. But, having thought it necessary to kill the husband in the last chapter, why, oh! why must not Margaret marry her sympathetic friend with the blue-gray eyes? What possible good is promoted by their remaining apart, when, before Tom's most fortunate death (he is a weak, vain fellow) the situation had been perfectly innocent and fraught with great self-control? Nevertheless Mr. Royce sends Harold abroad with "no great hold upon life at present." Let us hope that he will presently return, and, marrying the beautiful Margaret, work out, as expiation, his salvation and her own in the care of poor little Alonzo, Tom's only child. The literary value of the book is mainly shown in the interviews with Boscowitz and Alonzo Eldon. Old Eldon's views on literature are worth the whole book. They reveal a power of characterisation which is rare enough in American novels, and which justifies the dedication of the book to Henry James, and the hope that Mr. Royce may write many more novels as good, and possibly better, than the "Feud of Oakland Creek."

MRS. ADELINE WHITNEY is well known as a charming writer for girls. Perhaps, with Miss Alcott's, her books have done as much as any of the other sex to create a demand in every cultured city in the world for American literature. Her "Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life" has never been excelled as a sweet, earnest, and well-written story for young girls. Her little volume, "Pansies," has been the delight of women of all classes for years; and her latest poetical production, entitled "Daffodils," has many of those high, womanly qualities which distinguish all her work. At the same time that work is here and there defective in motive, the motive being forced and brought in anyhow, or else quite obscure or inadequate. It is possible to try and extract too much out of this life and all the beauty that goes with it, and it should be perfectly possible to find a full and satisfying beauty in the closed gentian one picks out of the cleft of a rock, without having to observe that by it always grows the "white bloom of everlasting life." "Little Maid Bertha's Stork" will prove one of the most popular pieces in the collection, and the really exquisite binding and appearance of the little volume will make it quite a charming gift-book.

## CURRENT COMMENT.

I WAS at the house of a friend who had just returned from Maine, and I noticed a bottle labelled "Liniment" standing on her sideboard. What have you been using liniment for? I asked. She laughed a musical laugh and proceeded to explain. "That," said she, "is alcohol for my spirit lamp. I wanted to make a pot of tea last week in Brunswick, Maine, and found I had no alcohol for my lamp, so I sent my maid out to the nearest drug store to get some. She returned bearing that bottle marked as you see, and the druggist told her that he had put poison in it. He hoped that I wouldn't mind, it was just as good for burning, and unless he did that, and called it liniment, he could be arrested." As my friend did not want to drink it, it answered her purpose.—*Lounger, in the Critic.*

ONE mad idea which Rossetti ventilates at this period deserves to be mentioned as anticipating in a remarkable manner a portion of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson's brilliant romance, the "New Arabian Nights." It is propounded by Rossetti to his brother and close ally, writing to whom he says: "Apropos of death, Hunt and I are going to get up among our acquaintances a mutual suicide association, by the regulations of which