

TORONTO AND ABOUT.

It is, as I had reason to fear, the exhibit of the Ontario Society of Artist scarcely comes up to the average of preceding exhibitions. There is not by any means sufficient judgment exercised in excluding works of inferior merit. It is the veriest nonsense for the *Globe* reporter to go into ecstasies over his descriptions of the various works of arts; though some very few however are passable, the great majority of the pictures hung ought never to have been placed on exhibition, being merely mechanical and got up for sale. A description of the pictures would be out of place in the columns of the *SPECTATOR*, but I will merely mention the names of one or two of the best. "Laurentian Splendour," by J. A. Fraser; this picture is about the best on exhibition, but the main fault is the main fault of almost all the pictures,—the clouds are particularly harsh; there is nothing soft or mellow, no toning down about the work. On the other hand, O'Brien's "Sunrise on Cape Trinity" is too much toned down; in the toning down of this picture there has been far too much colour laid on. Homer Watson's "Waning Summer" is the most expensive picture on exhibition \$260 being the price asked. Fancy the Ontario Exhibition beside the Royal Academy Exhibition where their pictures realise enormous sums, here the majority of the pictures are dear at \$50, and yet the reports of our too complimentary journals would have us understand the artists of Ontario are not so very far behind those of Europe after all. Sandham of Montreal I should say is the most careful artist whose pictures occupy a place on the wall, his "Beacon light, St. John Harbour" is rather good, the rolling swell of the water being peculiarly effective, though I cannot say much for the background; his "Fishnets, Bay of Fundy," shows rapid execution or carelessness I don't know which, the water has all the appearance of a curve, and is particularly stiff. I think the members of the Society make no question of the fact that the exhibition is not up to the average, and although the water colours, as a rule are fair, yet there can be no mistake about it the Ontario Society of Artists have reached apparently their highest state of perfection, neither O'Brien nor Verner, nor Martin, nor Hannaford nor Bellsmith nor Mrs. Schrieber being able to excel previous efforts. We must be content to wait until the new blood of the "School of Art" becomes proficient before we may expect to see a change for the better in the character of our local productions.

It is exceedingly gratifying at times to be able to notice an improvement, however slight, in the character of the musical performances given by Canadian talent in Canada. Some years ago, at the suggestion of Lord Dufferin, the Philharmonic Society was started in Toronto, and from its commencement up to the present time, the Society has been doing good service in advancing the cultivation of a higher class of music than has generally been attempted in Ontario. The rehearsals for the Oratorio of "Naaman," just concluded, have been well attended, and under the able leadership of Mr. Torrington the success of the piece may be said to be complete.

An Orangeman told me the other day he would desire no better fun than to see Davitt and Brennan joined by Dillon, as is proposed in Ireland, upon a Toronto platform—the Park would be a good place—spouting to raise a "Home Rule" fund. "The boys," said he, "would give him such a warm reception as would make them not soon forget their Toronto welcome; let them come, and let them carry back to Parnell an account of how they were received, and see if it would tally with his glowing account. I would give ten dollars twice to starving Ireland, but I would not think twice before I would help to make it lively for him or the other three if they commence to talk treason in Toronto." Parnell thought twice before he came to Toronto; let Brennan and Davitt and Dillon think twice before they come to Canada.

What sort of reasoning can influence municipalities in offering bonuses to enterprising manufacturers to resuscitate defunct industries? The system is vicious. Acton west lately offered a premium in the way of exemption from taxation for five years to any person or company who would recommence operations in a tannery long since dead. The offer, as might have been expected, has been accepted, and for

five years, or less, the tannery may do a small business; but its ultimate extinction is a foregone conclusion, there being no tanning bark nearer than Berlin, of which fact the late proprietors doubtless were too well acquainted. A manufactory or corporation which cannot exist without heavy bonuses and exemptions had better cease operations altogether, and if this sort of thing must necessarily follow as a consequence of the N. P., then the sooner Free Trade is adopted the better. But it is not an offspring of the N. P., but has arisen through a mistaken system of argument which the good sense of the community at large should frown down, as it cannot possibly serve any good end, building, as it does in a measure, the commercial prosperity of the country on a borrowed and false foundation.

There is to be a six days' walking match in Toronto Skating Rink soon. Last year the sensibilities of delicate Torontonians were shocked through the brutish exhibition of a six days' walking spree, and now the same thing is to be enacted again. Public journals at the time waxed wofully indignant that such things were permitted to be tolerated, at all, the *Mail* especially expressing a hope to the effect that anything of a like nature should immediately be discountenanced both by the authorities and public sentiment. Such a spectacle of physical endurance carried to excess, sleeplessness, swollen and bleeding ankles, blistered feet, bloodshot eyes, and a general ruination permanently of the system, surely these ought to be sufficient reasons to vest the authorities with power to stop such indecent contests.

Walking matches, carried beyond all bounds of reason and common sense, are very little removed from the disgusting brutalities of prize fights; and as the authority of the Police has just been proved equal to the emergency at Port Dover, so, it is to be hoped in the anticipated walking matches the powerful arm of the law may be found potent enough to stop the degrading trial of endurance.

Not very long ago I was surprised in drinking a glass of city water to see a forty-legged animal swimming about very calmly at the bottom of the glass. Small worms are no uncommon thing in a jug of city water, whilst the stoppage of water-meters on account of small fish getting into the cog-wheels is an every-day occurrence. The assistant engineer said the other evening, "I don't mind the water when it is like that," holding a glass of muddy water up to the light, "because I know what it is; it is only mud, and that is good for dyspepsia." That is all very well, but the people of the capital of Ontario cannot see it in that light. If there happens to be a man in Quebec who knows anything about good water, or when water is fit to drink, his services are required in Toronto.

In fact, indignation runs high, and justly so, over the deplorable mismanagement of the Water Works Department. Having expended \$2,000,000, one half of which is entirely thrown away, they have just placed before the ratepayers a by-law wanting \$20,000 more. The Water Works are not only not self-sustaining, but are actually a burden upon the people; the water is charged with visible animal life, and is expensive in the bargain; the engineers are young and inexperienced, and from the beginning up to the present time the blunders have been frequent, costly and enormous. I am safe in saying there is no city in Canada or the United States, where such tremendous blunders have been made and so much public money expended with so little of a satisfactory result.

The *Telegram* would like to know where the deputation who went to Chicago and Detroit to examine the permanent roadways is. The fine weather is here and has been here ever since the deputation returned, but never a word has been spoken about permanent roads yet, and I suspect, judging from previous experience, for all the good their journey will have accomplished they might as well have stopped at home and attended in the usual bungling way to civic affairs.

It is all very well for people to say the population of Ontario is increasing fast; but the proof of it is a long way off. Week after week the exodus continues, both the Grand Trunk and Great Western carrying thousands away; instead of an increase the next census is more likely to show a decrease.

Queen City.