

STUDIO NOTES.

This is the season at which the artists begin to take stock of their winter's work, and the studios are overhauled with a view to ascertaining what is available for the Spring Exhibitions. Up to this time of writing it has not been possible to visit all these silent workers in their lofty dens, but enough has been seen by us to warrant the assertion that their will certainly be no falling off, but, on the contrary, a very decided improvement on the displays of former years. The members of the Ontario Society of Artists intend opening their Annual Exhibition early in May, thus getting the start this year of the Royal Canadian Academy, which holds its Second Annual Meeting at Halifax, in July next, when His Excellency and Her Royal Highness intend to open it in person. The Toronto Exhibition will thus have the advantage of being first and placing the newest works before us. However, the great distance of the two places from each other will cause this to be of little detriment to the grand gathering in midsummer. It is hoped Mr. O'Brien will show us his picture of Quebec which he has been painting during the winter for Her Majesty. This is a fine picture, showing the harbour of the "Ancient Capital" crowded with shipping, and suggests all the movement and stir of a busy seaport. Among the vessels are noticeable the splendid flagship of Admiral McClintock and the other vessels of his fleet, also one of the fine steamers of the Allan Line is most truthfully portrayed.

The time is that at which the sunset gun is heard, and the smoke wreaths curl around Cape Diamond. One almost fancies he hears the muttered thunder from the bristling battlements which line that lofty height. Besides this work Mr. O'Brien has managed to execute several others both in oil and water colours this year, which fact evinces a most indomitable energy, when it is remembered that he has also drawn some dozens of exquisite illustrations for this coming work, "Picturesque Canada," the first number of which serial may shortly be expected to be out.

Mr. T. M. Martin has passed a winter of steady hard work, using up the fine lot of subjects he accumulated in his extended expedition last fall among the lakes and rivers of Muskoka.

Mr. Homer Watson seems to have plucked up courage and taken heart from the approval his "Old Mill" met with last year, and the Royal patronage he obtained. His largest work is a very honest and truthful rendering of a subject which few of our artists would have chosen; it bears the impress of being a portrait of the scene, and will go far to convince the too sceptical mind of the average Canadian visitor to the exhibition, that it is possible for a Canadian pastoral landscape to possess beauty, and the power to move the soul. Of course we reserve our more extended remarks on individual works until we are noticing the pictures when on view upon the walls of the exhibition.

Mr. J. A. Fraser is putting the finishing touches to a very large and ambitious work, a scene among the fishermen in the background in the Perce Rock, a long barrier of old ocean standing like a gigantic breakwater just off the beach. The main subject of the picture is the crowd of fishermen and women. At the time we had the privilege of seeing this, so much remained to be done that it would not be fair either to the artist or our own judgment to pronounce any opinion on its merits.

Mr. Harris, the earnest and enthusiastic Vice-President of the Society, has also painted some fishing scenes, in which he displays great power of drawing the figure, and shows a most thorough love of his subject. This is the true spirit, and one which should always actuate painter or poet. Mr. Harris is both. Other artists may pay a flying visit to the shore of old Atlantic, but it is evident these pictures of Mr. Harris' are not the outcome of a tourists prying glance, but the work of one who has lived, suffered and enjoyed the varied phases of a coast life from childhood's spring, for thus only do we learn not only to love, but to see and feel the scene as one of home and home-life.

Mr. A. D. Patterson intends exhibiting some portraits of merit, and the subjects of which will be well known to the citizens of Toronto.

Mr. Perre, who announces his intention of visiting Europe this summer, has in his studio some lovely little bits of colour, both in oil and water colours.

The limits of this article will not permit us to mention the many others who will this spring put their best work before the public, did it do so, papers might easily be filled in describing the finish in preparation by the devoted few who have, now, for nine years struggled to support this annual display, in many cases sacrificing most tempting offers of a much greater pecuniary advantage for the sake of reserving their best strength to keep up, or rather to raise aloft Ontario's reputation as an art producing province, and to give the lie to those who say we know nothing in Canada beyond how to swing an axe, plough a field, or shovel snow.

The past week brought rather a severe loss upon Mr. J. C. Forbes the well known portrait painter in Ottawa, in the destruction by fire of two pictures which must have cost him much labour and considerable outlay of money to produce. One was his "Wreck of the Hibernia," a very large canvass which was not without merit, though portraits are Mr. Forbes' specialty.

The offer of Messrs. Rolph, Smith & Co., of Toronto, of prizes for Christmas cards designs was largely responded to, some two hundred having been sent in, of which the firm have selected some twenty-eight for reproduction, and the prizes are to be awarded to the three best of these by the committee of the Royal Canadian Academy at their Exhibition in Halifax in July.

The season's work in the Ontario School of Art so efficiently established by the Ontario Society of Artists, with some small assistance of the Ontario Government, is