



THE Loan Collection of pictures exhibited at the Toronto Club during the third week of January proved one of the chief attractions of the month. Each afternoon and evening the luxurious club-rooms were thronged with visitors representing Toronto's highest social element. The murmur of trained voices and gentle speech, the appreciative criticisms, the rich furs and laces, the entire atmosphere, indeed, was charged with a breath of fine culture.

Yet, had it been otherwise, the beauty of the pictures was in itself sufficient to subdue all things unto itself, triumphing, as true art should, above all material sense, and appealing only to the spiritual.

The pictures were not too many—forty in number—to receive each its share of attention. They were well arranged, and the rooms were sufficiently spacious; the lighting was perfect; so that everything conduced to full appreciation and enjoyment of the guests.

In the hallway one of the pictures that commanded most attention was a half-length portrait of the Duke of Wellington, by Sir Thomas Lawrence, loaned by Mr. William Blakelee—a face worth studying in its noble almost spiritual lines, with only the fine, straight nose and firm chin to indicate the martial qualities of the great general.

It was a suggestive portrait to greet one in these stirring days.

Another that proved most attractive to the visitors was "The Conscript's Return," loaned by Mrs. Cameron. The lighting of this picture was excellent, showing to full advantage, every detail. The conscript, in his military wrappings, his bronze, healthy face alight with the pleasure of home joys, and his child on his knee, reciting the war's stirring episodes; while the old mother smiles proudly beside him, and the household and neighbors gather in the homely peasant cottage room to listen, admire and congratulate. The faces are each a splendid study.

"Aaron and the Budding Rod" is the title of a wonderful head by Ribera, loaned by D. Morrice. It is remarkable for its strength of light and shade. It is a strange, weird conception, a scartling face in its effect of open mouth, uplifted eyes, ghostly pallor and worn lines—not representative of our idea of the Biblical character, perhaps, yet almost mesmeric in its uncanny impressiveness. And probably the picture reveals to us, as we endeavor to recall the Aaron of the Bible, how vague our knowledge is of him—being confined chiefly to the fact that he had a budding rod.

Two or three of the pictures shown, found favor above the others; and, perhaps, the chief of these was "Bog, Hill and Cloud," painted by a modern-school artist who is fast coming into fame, Peter Graham. The pic-

ture is owned by Mr. E. B. Osler. It is only a landscape in misty effects, but as we look, lo! we are no longer outside, we are within the picture. The lovely feathery clouds roll down the hill sides; we feel their softening, misty touch upon our cheeks; we follow down the grassy inclines to the lowlands where the grazing cattle stand, and stoop to pluck the coarse, strong grass tufts at the bog edge. The fine shading, the delicacy of touch, the exquisite airy effects, cannot be told in words; but the deep involuntary breath given by each new corner is the best tribute to the picture's worth.

Another favorite, and one of the most perfect things, artistically considered, in the collection, is "Border of Forest, Fontainebleau," by Rousseau, loaned by Sir William Van Horne. The perspective and proportion are excellent, the virility of twisted boughs and gnarled and knotted trunks splendidly depicted.

One recognizes, even in this border bit, that here is a forest historic—a forest for king's hunting and statesman's hiding—whose every tree could tell a tale. The master-hand of the painter had revealed it all in his strong dramatic touch.

A splendid color study is entitled "A Morocco Carpet Warehouse," by Fortuny, loaned by Mr. James Ross. It is a water-color, rich in Oriental tints. Two men, buyer and customer, are bending over a pile of crimson and blue Oriental hangings, while several dogs, lanky, yet graceful like their masters, sniff inquisitively about an exquisite rug, daring in pattern and tint. The entire room is aglow with rich touches of color.

An effective picture that hung near it is entitled "Evening," by Tholen, a rising young Dutch artist, loaned by Dr. Gardiner. It represents a barge on a canal, with trees upon the bank and all the sky in the rosy flush of sunset clouds. So still it is that barge and trees look up in reflected perfection from the glassy water—so still it is that all the summer evening peace breathes into our spirit as we look.

"Seeking the Evening Meal," by Swan, the famous English animal painter, loaned by Mr. E. B. Osler, is one of the strong and effective pictures of the collection.

It portrays only a lion and his consort standing upon a great stretch of plain, their figures clearly outlined against an expanse of fair evening sky; but the effect is Kiplingesque in virile savagery.

The male with fearsome, heroic face uplifted, and long-lapped tongue, to scent the prey that may be; the female with head down-hung, and strong limbs stretched beside him, dwarfed by his greater presence—yet superbly brutal;—his fit consort, of a truth.

The forms of the creatures are magnificent in anatomical fidelity; but the artist gives more—there is the inexpressible awfulness of brute might, and the mystery of brute life suggested. We look at it with feeling of terror, yet fascinating.

"Nymph of the Fountain," by Henner, loaned by Sir Donald Smith, is a lovely poetic thing in nude study, the coloring being particularly good in giving ideal effect.

"Interior with Sheep," by Jacque, loaned by Mr. E. B. Osler, is charming, and attracted much attention from lovers of the pretty, gentle animals. A rude sheep shed, with a flock of the gentle creatures nosing around the tin that contains their evening meal; poultry straying below them with pert strut, picking cheerily at the gleanings,—a shepherd in attendance; the picture has an atmosphere peculiarly its own.

Another sheep study shown is a smaller

one "The Shepherdess," by Millet, loaned by Mrs. Benson.

A home-coming, with the young moon in the sky, and a girl followed by her sheep flock, with one on the bank, outlined against a roseate sky. The coloring is soft and beautiful.

"Figure from 'The Legend,'" by Chalmers, loaned by Mr. E. B. Osler, is a dainty child figure in shabby gown, a little Cinderella maid, with all of womanhood dawning in the sweet, spiritual little face.

"A Burgomaster," a head study by Helst, loaned by Mr. R. S. Cassels; "The Readers," by Ribot, loaned by Mr. W. J. Learmont, two splendid old Dutch profiles with strong gnarled features; "A Model Housewife," by Bonvein, loaned by Sir William Van Horne,—these and many others of the smaller pictures are delightful and of highly artistic excellence.

But where every picture is by a master, and of such merit, criticism is impossible. We who are not critics, but only picture-lovers; who feel the beauty and the poetry, but cannot tell the whys or wherefores, can only speak of those which appealed most strongly to us.

The exhibition was a rare delight to all who were fortunate enough to spend some quiet hours among its treasures.

A collection of pictures such as this Loan Exhibition shows more than ever the necessity of a public gallery free to our citizens and a place of special interest to visitors, who at present make the Normal School with its curios—the pictures not the least among them—the place of their first pilgrimage, and return home thinking it the art center of Toronto. Montreal has long had such a gallery; it is one of the things the city is especially proud of. Let us hope it will not be long before we have such an one in our city.

Mr. and Mrs. Reid sailed the other day for Gibraltar, and will likely be absent from us until next autumn. Their intention, we understand, is to spend several months in Spain, making Madrid their headquarters; later, to work for a time in Paris, and then proceed to London for the spring exhibition. We may expect some delightful pictures as the outcome of their trip abroad.

At a meeting of the Council of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts, lately held in Toronto, it was decided that the exhibition of 1896 should be held in Montreal, the opening day to be March 6th. Amongst the pictures that will probably be exhibited there we have seen one, recently completed, by Mr. L. R. O'Brien, R.C.A., entitled "Towing Barges on the Hudson," in which he has succeeded in realizing in a most happy manner the scintillating effects of sunlight.

Mr. C. M. Manly, the artist, has just returned from England. He has been sketching in the southern counties.

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