

A Milestone in Canadian Art

By MARGARET LAING FAIRBAIRN.

FOR more reasons than one the twenty-eighth annual exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy, now open in Montreal, will be a noted one in its history. Not only is the exhibition ahead of its predecessor as to the number of exhibits, about three hundred and sixty all told, including architectural drawings, sculpture and art jewellery, but it bears the impress of able technique and artistic perception. Portraiture is more than usually well represented and we even venture that in more than one canvas is that something, that divine insight which pierces the outward seeming of things and gives us the very spirit of a personality or a scene. Such canvases are not those, possibly, that attract on first acquaintance, as brilliant technique is sure to do, but rather such as reveal their deeper and finer qualities only after a longer and more intimate acquaintance.

This exhibition is also likely to prove itself of more importance than the ordinary because of the announcement by the Hon. Sidney Fisher, Minister of Agriculture and Acting Minister of Public Works, read in his absence by the president, Mr. G. A. Reid, to the effect that the government was arranging for the establishing of an advisory council of art on whose advice the Minister of Public Works will make an expenditure for art purposes.

The place of honour on one wall of the main gallery has been given to Mr. Willie Hope's "Flying Dutchman," a poetic conception of the ghost-ship on the horizon in a setting of cloudy sky and stormy water well in harmony. The president, Mr. G. A. Reid, occupies the central position on another wall with a low toned study of girlhood in a young woman arranging tall iris in a jar, the upper part of the figure well lighted and strongly painted.

Mr. Gagnon's dancing girl is a brilliant achievement. The musicians in the rear keep well back in the picture. Someone demurs, "You surely don't call that good flesh

painting—those leathery arms!" But the artist is evidently not thinking of the flesh but has set himself a problem in the treatment of several reds in the strong glare of the footlights, and, judging the artist by what he is aiming for, has succeeded.

Mr. John Hammond's "On the Seashore" is full of the mellow glow which has earned for him the title of the "Canadian Turner." His other canvases deal with landscape. Mr. Brymner conveys the feeling of late afternoon in "Summer Evening at St. Famille, Isle of Orleans," with the little French village lying in a sunlit middle distance.

An October woodland by Mr. Franklin Brownell is not particularly striking at first, but impresses one on further acquaintance with its strong restrained colour quality—the clump of saplings with their yellow leaves against a background of purplish branches and a wonderful bit of blue.

Among other notable canvases are Mr. F. S. Chaler's harmony in blues with the touch of flame colour in "Fishing by Torchlight"; palpitating atmosphere and breadth of view in Mr. Percy Woodcock's "A Cloudy Day"; a stormy nature mood which makes the setting for a quaint stone cottage in "A Passing Squall," by Mr. Homer Watson; "Bretonne en Priere," by Mr. Suzor Cote, one of the strongest painters in Canada; two little peasant maids at their devotions, by Miss Margaret Houghton; Mr. Franchere's well painted but gruesome presentation of the operating room in the Hotel Dieu; Miss Helen McNichol's "Little Worker." Mr. McGillivray Knowles has a scene at Whitby heavily painted with strong contrast of sunshine and shadow.

The two new academicians, chosen at the annual meeting from the ranks of the associates, are representatives of the best of the younger men, Mr. Maurice Cullen being from Montreal and Mr. Curtis Williamson from Toronto. Two of Mr. Cullen's four pictures are winter scenes, painted with a strength and fidelity that aim at truth, not prettiness. No Canadian has approached Mr. Cullen in his delineation of snow in sunshine with its dazzling reflections and nuances of colour as in "The Winter Harvest." This strength is softened to a tenderer feeling in the summer night scene.

Mr. Williamson is represented at this exhibit by a large seascape and three figure studies, one a portrait of an old clergyman. These are all low toned, with full rich colour and well expressed, or, one might better say, the figure is instinct with expression.

The list of portraits exhibited is longer than usual and includes most of the best portrait painters of the dominion, Mr. G. A. Reid shows a well painted half length of himself. Mr. Robert Harris has three important portraits. Mr. Edmond Dyonnet's presentations of the Messrs Lafleur, father and son, are achievements to rank with the best of any country both as expressions of distinct personalities and as fine examples of that most difficult of all things to paint—human flesh.

Mr. J. W. L. Forster's portrait of the Rev. Thomas Crosby, Mr. Dickson Patterson's of Professor Lang, Mr. Kilpin's of Dr. R. Campbell, Mr. Russell's of the two daughters of Mr. William Hodgson are among the portraits to be noted. Mr. Wyly Grier's absence is noted with regret.

There is so much else in this exhibit worthy of mention among the smaller canvases and the water colours that it is with regret it is left unsaid. While the walls are unpleasantly crowded, much to the disadvantage of the pictures, there is a very small proportion one would wish left out.

Sculpture is represented by Mr. Lisney Banks, Mr. Hamilton McCarthy, Mr. Coeur de Lion McCarthy and Dr. Ross. Mr. and Mrs. Eastlake, of London, England, (Mrs. Eastlake was Mary Bell of Montreal), contributed some unique jewellery of amethysts and opals in silver settings and several very beautiful examples of art metal and enamel.

Hurstmonceaux Castle in Sussex is to be sold. It is an old feudal castle and was erected five centuries ago by the redoubtable Sir Roger de Fienes. Although the interior is in ruins, the walls are still several feet thick and of architectural beauty. Some enterprising Chicago pork-packer in search of traditions and ancestry will probably buy the property and proceed to vulgarise it.



The Dancing Girl.
By Gagnon.