

# A LITTLE PAINTING NOW <sup>AND</sup> THEN

*Early Spring, by J. W. Beatty*  
*The Concrete Bridge, by Peter C. Sheppard*

SHOWN AT THE ROYAL CANADIAN ACADEMY EXHIBITION IN MONTREAL.

ALTHOUGH one eminent picture collector in Canada once said that all artists are fools, it by no means follows that all good pictures are nonsense. If so, the exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy, opened a few days ago in the gallery of the Montreal Art Association, contains a great deal of nonsense. Two only are shown on this page. One is by a Toronto artist, the other by a painter in Montreal. Each is as different from the other as chalk is from cheese. We are not saying which is chalk—or that either is not good cheese. J. W. Beatty has always ranked as a strong painter of landscapes. This one, entitled *Early Spring*, is one of his best of late years. What is particularly noticeable about Beatty is that he is thoroughly Canadian. Illustrations from his brush and pen have appeared in the *Canadian Courier* often during the past seven years, since the artist made his last return from Europe. But an illustration, no matter how good, is apt to be anything but national. A good painting is different. A good title for this painting might be *Winter in the Lap of Spring*. But, of course, that's poetic. A great many painters don't like poetic titles. They prefer to put the poetry into the picture; which, in this case, has undoubtedly been done by Mr. Beatty—unconsciously, perhaps, because he was not thinking so much of poetic quality as of an element of realism in a Canadian subject. Here, again, we are on boggy ground. A lot of artists despise the idea of subject. They contend that it doesn't matter what a picture may be about so long as it is well painted. And a good many Canadian pictures seem to suggest that subject matter is really no matter at all.

IN the cement picture, by Mr. Sheppard, there is no lack of subject. You understand at once that by no kind of brain-twisting could it be considered a picture of sheep, or of twilight, or of the morning after. It is as realistic as a photograph. And it's considerably, though not typically a Canadian subject. Other countries build bridges and cement structures. Also one might imagine that the Beatty picture was painted in the State of Maine. To build a national line fence in art is foolishly impossible. We must give the artist room. If a Canadian artist wants to live in Calcutta and paint some scenes in Cariboo, we must still regard him as a Canadian! If he pays his studio rent in Dawson City and paints scenes in the South Seas, we must still regard him as a Canadian. He may have been born in Canada and do his painting in Timbuctoo; born in Capetown and paint in Montreal; born in Melbourne and live in Paris and paint Ungava; live in Canada and paint Canadian subjects in Canada and sell every blessed canvas in New York—he is still some sort of Canadian painter. And you can find Canadian painters somewhere

in the world in all these classes.

Of course the ideal Canadian painter is he who was born here, lives here, paints Canadian subjects and sells his canvasses in Canada. These are—not a great majority.

THE reason some painters live elsewhere, or paint non-Canadian subjects, or sell their work in other markets, is because, according to some people, Canadian pictures are not popular in Canada. That may be so. It's a national defect that we don't appreciate our own productions. As Mr. MacMechan points out on the previous page to this, Canada is not independent enough in a great many ways. We have a hard time to keep ourselves spotless and undefiled from contact with other countries. But we are so much a racial mixture inside that some day we may balance up.

Canadian pictures are probably as popular in Canada as might be expected under the circumstances. Most people in Canada are not aware that we have any artists here except a few imported from other countries. When a picture

exhibition opens, what is the crowd we see along the street, all wishing to get in, taxis lined up, street-cars letting people off by hundreds, young ladies waiting in the rotunda for their companions, ticket office jammed—police lining up the extras along the sidewalk?

No, it's not the Royal Canadian Academy, or the Ontario Society of Artists or the Canadian Art Club. It's the moving pictures—Charlie Chaplin or Mary Pickford. It's the picture that moves that draws the crowd. If the artists will only paint moving pictures they can get 'em. Can they do it? Well, the Cubists and the Futurists came as near it as possible—and they got the crowds. Of course it was foolish. But often it's the wise thing tricked up to look like foolery that catches the crowd. And when Canadian painters act on the doctrine that a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest men, a little painting now and then may be more popular even in Canada.

## A War Story

NOT so very long ago a young lieutenant and three or four men, were working steadily at their single remaining 3-inch gun—not hoping to escape; only knowing that everything depended upon these broken advanced lines holding out till the second and main position of defence was fully manned. Two days passed, and they were still working their gun—grimy, hungry, thirsty, nearly dead from fatigue.

They had only a little water, and throughout that time the lieutenant refused to taste a drop, lest there should be none left with which to clean the gun. "No," he said, when his men pressed him, "it is more thirsty than I."

Every branch of the Army can tell such tales.

