

EXHIBITION OF CANADIAN ART.

It is not necessary, or desirable, even were it possible, for us, within our limits, to enter into detailed criticism of the pictures now on exhibition by Canadian artists. Much has been written, and undue prominence has been given to some of the works, while others of greater merit have been passed by in silence by the daily papers which have noticed the paintings, and in such a manner have they performed the task that we are led to believe that if the arts in Canada require improvement so does that of art criticism.

Upon entering the room one is impressed with the excellence and variety of the exhibition, and the general exclamation is heard on all sides, "That it is a very creditable one." There is great truth in this remark. While admitting that there are works of great merit, fully deserving of all praise, we candidly think that many have been unduly lauded. This will not affect those capable of judging for themselves. It is not for them I write, but for those whose opportunities have been limited, and have as yet not made art a study, and at the same time to give honour where honour is due. So without further preliminary remarks we will proceed to notice some of the works on exhibition, doing so in a fair and impartial manner, not fearing to censure where it is right to do so in the interest of true art.

First on the list is a head of a "Newsboy," by R. Harris, C.A. The head is well modelled, but in the shadows there is a muddiness. There is also a sameness in all the heads by this artist; they are one type. His "Chorister" strikes one as dirty and wanting in those clean blendings of white and pale red, subdued by gradations of pure and pearly greys, so much admired in nature and true art. The white drapery of this figure is heavy and dirty in appearance, and the background shows too much trick. These two are his principal works, the rest are not of sufficient importance to dwell upon.

Of Jacobi, who has been so long before the public, most people have formed their opinions, some favourable, others adverse. To anyone observing the works of this painter, one thing must be apparent, their decided mannerism, with a certain feeling for colour, which often transcends Nature and a want of attention to correct form—the first and primary element of good art. He seems to ignore Nature, and paint according to a conceived ideal. It is well for a painter to look into himself for his strength, but if he wishes for truth in his art, he must go frequently to the great teacher—Nature. It is a pity the artist has neglected it so long. Of waterfalls he seems to be particularly fond, and to judge from specimens exhibited, it is evident he cannot paint running water.

Allen Edson, C.A.—When speaking of this painter we must take into consideration the causes which have led to his mannerism of late years. He may be said to have entered into the manufacture of pictures, all after a stereotyped style. Possessed of genius he certainly is, and capable of doing good work, and I would advise him, if he wishes to succeed and produce pictures worthy of himself, to go and stand before his own painting representing "Mount Orford" in the present exhibition, (we believe it was painted years ago) and study it carefully, and resolve to go back and take a fresh start from it and ignore his later style. In that picture there is earnest work and careful study of Nature, worth all the efforts of his later years.

Mower Martin, C.A., shows evidence of earnest work and study of Nature, especially in his trees and rocks, but he has not mastered the art of rendering the truths of water. This is particularly observable in his "Early Morning" (Muskoka.) You could walk dryshod over it.

E. Hamel, another C.A., is neat in his handling without any strength. In the portrait of a Belgian officer there is in the face a tendency to vertical lines; it may be the peculiar characteristics of the face of the sitter, but it strikes us unpleasantly.

Of J. A. Fraser we expected much, the Press having been loud in his praise, and there is a feeling of disappointment upon seeing his work. There are two or three of his pictures in the exhibition possessing merit, but what possibly can be more obnoxious to good taste than that presumptuous title and coarsely painted picture called "Laurentian Splendour." One turns from it with a smile, not merely against the painting, but the selection of it as a diploma picture, if such a work is intended to elevate the public taste, the less it is seen by them (the public) the better. If his "Breezy October" had the standing figure painted out, and the sea and sky more carefully rendered, it would be a better representative diploma picture.

"A Cow," by the late A. Vogt, is what may be called a colossal animal, realistic in treatment, as all this painter's works are. The head and back of the cow are well drawn and firmly painted, but what uncouth limbs, such a cow would prove a novelty in a fair, but would never obtain a prize for its beauty.

W. Raphael, C.A., in his "Moonlight" is true to Nature, but we must confess we prefer those small pictures, representing interiors, with *habitants* smoking, &c., and it is a pity he is not represented by one here. The two exhibited at Ottawa were sold. His "Morning at Murray Bay," a small

picture, is a charming little bit with a well painted sky. His "Tandem Team" is hung too high to be seen to advantage.

Mrs. Schrieber, C.A., is out in full force in figure subjects, sustaining her well earned reputation. There is a little too much smoothness, a want of more expression in her figures, more crispness of touch and texture.

"Sunrise on the Saguenay," (Cape Trinity) by L. R. O'Brien, occupies the post of honour. It is an excellent subject, and is exceedingly well put upon the canvas. The vast rock, in the morning mist looms up, and the judicious manner in which the artist has introduced the boats, gives additional size and grandeur to the great mass. The whole effect of the picture is unmistakably morning, and the amount of scumbling used to produce this effect, has led some to say "Although there is a great body of paint on the picture, it yet has a thin look about it."

A portrait of "Thomas Coats, Esq.," (Paisley) by H. Sandham, is an ambitious work, being life-sized, and bears evidence of the photograph. Conspicuous in the picture are the decorations upon the coat, and the painting of the table cover; this last is the best bit of painting in the picture, the background, and the want of a receding quality in the floor, detract greatly from the work.

His "Beacon Light" (St. John Harbour) is a direct libel upon the place. The light is not used during the day. Vessels do not come into the harbour during a fog, and never without a tug, on account of strong currents. Nor do they come over the bar, where he has represented his ship coming, for the Beacon is placed there to warn them off. We never remember seeing a ship sparred like that. The fog may be London fog, but it is not the fog of the Bay of Fundy. It is not often that such a swell is seen in the harbour, nor do fishermen usually fish in a fog, or on the place where he has placed his boat. The picture lacks all the elements of truth so necessary to art, it is merely an affectation, a desire to do something out of the common; in this he has succeeded, both in the picture and the frame surrounding it.

"The Valley of Champéry," (Canton Valais) by C. J. Way, is a conscientious painting, as all this artist's works are, the distance and foreground are well studied and carefully painted, the middle distance is not equal to the rest of the picture. There is no trick, but honest work about the painting, and the introduction of the group of cattle in the foreground has a very pleasing effect, being well painted.

Next on the list comes Homer Watson, whose work, "An Approaching Storm, (Adirondacks)" is unmistakably the picture of the exhibition. Wild and powerful the coming storm is breaking upon the mountain top, and the dark mass portends a perfect deluge of rain. The mountain side shows careful study of stratified rock formation, and over all there is a wild and weird feeling, which causes the picture to dwell upon the memory. It is the painter's single contribution, and stamps him as the coming man.

Wyatt Eaton is but poorly represented, and it would be unjust to speak of him from the specimens on exhibition.

H. Perre, in his "Pennsylvania Landscape," gives evidence of his ability to round out and mass tree forms.

Harrington Bird, in his picture of "Cattle," has evidently challenged comparison with the large picture, "Cattle Returning from Pasture," in the Gibb collection, which is not favourable to the artist, (Mr. Bird.) The immense bull in the foreground is altogether too large, so much so as to spoil the picture. The animals are carefully painted, but the feet are badly drawn, and the sky and distance lack atmosphere, and it is only by the dark mass of cattle they are made to keep their place; a more careful observation of the truth of Nature is wanting in the picture.

F. A. Verner exhibits two works, one of which "Indians Gambling," is too large a canvas for such a subject, and the background trees do not sufficiently retire.

Krieghoff—Two small pictures by this deceased artist are good examples of his style, carefully painted, never possessing much force, yet happy in catching the peculiar traits of the French-Canadians in their occupations.

"Halifax Harbour," by W. Ruel, is a quiet bit of painting, low in tone, as all this painter's works are. It is hung too high to be seen to advantage.

Of fruit and flowers there is an abundant supply, some well painted, others the reverse; also, a quantity of dead game; we never remember seeing an exhibition with so much of this style of art. Of water colours there are about 80, and among them may be seen many works of merit. The strongest man in this branch of art is the President, L. R. O'Brien.

W. A. Cresswell, C.A., in his diploma picture, "The last of the brig," Mount Desert, Maine, gives us a perfect little gem, true in the motion of wave line, and a fine feeling for atmosphere.

We would like to dwell upon these water colours, for there is much good work among them, but space will not permit.

Art.