Observations.

A visitor to the exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists will find much of interest, if criticism be his purpose. But if his idea be to inform himself as to the progress of painting in this province, he will surely find many grounds of satisfaction. The exhibition is not large. Indeed, it seems almost meagre when one remembers the proportions of the Dominion exhibition of a few months ago. But it is perhaps none the worse for that. It is easy to believe that the officers of the society could have had all their walls covered if they had so desired. It seems rather to have been their desire to hang nothing but what would bear a reasonably critical inspection, and in this regard they have achieved a very decent success. Though the exhibition, therefore, is small, it is comprehensive; it shows a little of the best work that each of the best painters in the province is doing. It is, therefore, a characteristic exhibition of the progress of art in Ontario, and as that is exactly what it is intended to be, the officers and members of the society may congratulate themselves on having done their duty.

It would be a little difficult to say in just what particular the artists of Ontario are improving. They are certainly improving in point of color, though I believe they are still weak here. In point of construction, they have made very remarkable advances, during the past few years. But it is in point of drawing that they seem to be learning most. I am given to understand that several of the most eminent members of the Ontario Society of Artists profess to scoff at the idea that the instruction of a proper conception of the value of drawing can have any respectable place in the development of a school of art in such an out-of-the-way place as is this province; that drawing is a mechanical thing at best to be picked up if the public has time, but to be subordinated altogether to the grouping and application of color. Many of the pictures in the present exhibition look as if they had been built up on these lines, but for the most part the exhibition shows, in this most important particular, a marked improvement over the exhibitions of previous years. I believe, indeed, that the improvement in simple drawing is one of the most notable and one of the most gratifying features of contemporary painting in Ontario as developed in the several exhibitions that have taken place recently. I call it gratifying, because it seems to indicate a wholesome desire to begin at the beginning and I believe that, however insatiable our artists may be, they will never succeed in establishing a Canadian school until they have begun at the beginning, and nowhere else.

Take the two pictures by Carl Ahrens, for instance. This artist displays in all his work a really remarkable appreciation of atmospheric effects, and an unquestionable technical skill in the handling of them. But, not to put too fine a point upon it, his drawing would be called atrocious by anyone who visited the exhibition for the purpose of criticizing and not praising it. In very marked contrast to this sort of thing is a small water color, "A Study of Weeds," by Mr. Matthews, which is certainly one of the gems of the show. Here, where the coloring is exquisite, the drawing is almost marvelously true to nature.

Great praise in the same respect must be given the conscientious work of Miss Tully, and Miss Muntz, each of whom shows several pictures. Miss Tully has an exceedingly good portrait and several charming bits of old country scenery. Miss Muntz shows a study, in oils, of a young girl with flowers. The treatment of this picture is distinctively French, but the coloring is remarkably delicate. The flesh tints and the shorn of the head are admirable. Miss Muntz has several smaller pictures, among which a small head of a little girl cannot fail to attract attention.

A water color, which for accuracy of drawing, warmth and delicacy of color and a highly artistic handling of atmosphere, is shown by C. W. Jeffreys, an ex-pupil of the Central Ontario School of Art, and now a member of the New York Herald's artistic staff.

Mr. Atkinson shows at least one picture wherein he has conquered his affection for the bizarro in color, and has painted a blue sky and green trees, blue and green as they appear to ordinary mortals. This is really gratifying; Mr. Atkinson should encourage in himself this nascent tendency to see things as they are.

Mr. Bruce shows a beautiful water color ("September Afternoon in the Lothen Islands").

Mr. Owen Staples, always a conscientious student, has two or three pictures which display his steady progress in his art.

Miss Ingarity shows a very well drawn pastel portrait.

Mrs. M. A. Holmsted has some "Dead Birds," which are strong in both color and drawing.

Mr. Goger's "Summer Light" is a gem. Herein the atmosphere effect is indescribably delicate and truthful.

The better known men, like Reid, Orie, Bell-Smith, Knowles, O'Brien, Sherwood, Manley, Forster, Mower-Martin, Raph, and the rest, who must be tried by now of seeing their names in print, all show pictures, and, of course, all of them are good.

I have attempted to portray only the impressions of the average visitor to the exhibition.

—The Casual Observer.