Driftwood.

Truly this is Canada's "growing time" in matters artistic as well as commercial. This is a season of pictures, pictures, pictures on every hand. The Ontario Society of Artists is holding its annual exhibition in the Art Gallery, 105 King street west, which remains open during the next ten days, and strolling about amongst the pictures in the two rooms, in which the exhibition is held, one is most strongly impressed with the quality of "vigor," which in days gone by was so lacking in many of the canvases hung on walls. In the last exhibition we were spared the sight of pictures that might be the work of the Ontario Society of Artists suffers from the fact that the Royal Canadian Academy holds its annual exhibition in Montreal on the 20th of March, and consequently in many cases the pictures shown at this exhibition are not the best the artists have to offer. They are good, but not as good as some of those of the Royal Canadian Academy. Last year at the exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy the picture entitled "West of Evening," as well as a "Lumber Boat, Quebec," are perfectly delightful bits of work. The larger picture, while infinitely more fascinating, is not so subject to treatment as his largest canvas of last season, does not, for some reason, find the same favor in the eyes of the writer as the smaller works in water color.

Again and again one has been confronted with the obstacles against which the Canadian artists work. The absence of good collections of pictures by which they can measure their progress or discern their retrogression, the lack of facilities for finding support and encouragement in their work, for who in this practical, commercially-minded age would be prepared to encourage a boy or girl to "go in" for art as a means of livelihood? We have been called to the throne of the "Vigilant Fraternity," there has been a hard struggle to afford either time or money for drawing lessons, and the very materials which artists must work with are hideously expensive, and in many of our smaller towns not to be obtained. The technical process of covering a square of canvas with color is in itself an art, and the disappointments, the want of sympathy, that everlasting spirit of timidity which makes a prophet of so little honor in his own country, is one which works on and floods all efforts at artistic expression, and yet out of all this, the sternly practical side of Canadian life, out of the depth of knowledge of the lives and struggles of the men whose achievement and progress in all things in the world of art, out of all this we are daily finding men and women emerge, whose work, if at first it indicates little genius, shows the strength of endeavor and tenacity of purpose.

We can hardly boast that we have as yet in this country an art centre, and for the majority of artists there must be a sense of intense loneliness, and there may be none more poignant than that experienced by the man who knows that the expression of his thought worked out in solitary days, must one day face him in a tangible form, must express itself in color as well as in line, and must bear the keen criticism of the few trained to detect faults rather than merits. One must know all the conditions under which the majority of pictures in our Canadian exhibitions are painted, view them from an intensely human standpoint rather than that of an art critic. No one can come into close contact with many of our Canadian artists without feeling that at this period of our country's history they are making almost heroic struggles to reach even the position they occupy in the community today. The tide of commercialism sweeps over the whole world, and Canada is mainly occupied in encouraging the development of what are known as her natural resources. The energies of her statesmen and her practical men of business are all directed towards this one result, and it takes an immense amount of faith and courage to believe that by some law, which we cannot quite understand, the art life receives at the same time an impetus no less stirring and assured. But this is so, and the display of the Ontario Society of Artists at this, its thirteenth annual exhibition, proves it to the close observer. The general stir and hopefulness of the galleries give a boldness to the touch of the artist's pencil and brush that is lacking in times of depression. All artists are sensitive to a degree, and the very atmosphere of a great commercial mart, the human energy and magnetism which comes when a nation begins to realize itself, show themselves in the character, the diversity and originality of the work in our art exhibitions. Let any thinking man spend each year some days among Canadian pictures and he will read more of the national life and feeling than is found even in the best books. I am not altogether a believer in select exhibitions, and always feel that after a certain period the exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy and the Ontario Society of Artists should be thrown open daily, free of charge, to the public. Until we have an art museum this would be a tremendous boon to the public, and I think of no little benefit to the artists themselves.

Lally Bernard.