Ontario Society of Artists Annual Exhibition

By Hector Charlesworth.

OFTEN in the exhibitions of a decade ago the public was prepared to be seduced by the exhibits of the Ontario Society of Artists. Now, with the present display by the Ontario Society of Artists, we see a remarkable advance in merit and interest. A variety of treatment rather than variety of subject characterizes the exhibition as a whole, and perhaps at no previous exhibition has so much color been seen on the walls. If one were to select any particular picture as outstanding the result, it would not be a native of this Province, but a French-Canadian, Mr. A. S. Buvette of Montreal. He has three canvases on view that are rich in color, poetic feeling, and sheer mastery of brushwork would command attention anywhere. It is not merely the glowing richness of his color sense that fascinates one, but its variety as well. He does not, like many painters, select a favorite color-key and hang on it alone. His best known picture is "The River Magog, Sherbrooke, Que." which one looks for one can not say why, but there is a sort of irresistible lure to it. The picture is a study of the loading of a boat on the St. Lawrence River, and one can not help asking oneself if it is worth the while. Mr. Buvette has a fine feeling for the picturesque and is not afraid to use many colors, even if they are not the more usual ones, to get the effect he wants.

Another Canadian artist, Mr. William Henry, also sends a beautiful canvas, "The Salmon," which is one of the most original and striking pictures in the exhibition. It is a study of the salmon as it migrates, and the artist has used a great deal of color and movement to create a sense of life and action. The salmon are painted with great skill and the colors are rich and varied. The picture is a fine example of the artist's ability to capture the spirit of the subject.

The amount of good work by women is surprising. Foremost among them is Miss Florence Gale of Woodstock, whose brushy, yet meticulous brushwork, color in composition, richness of color and excellent drawing always commands attention. The most beautiful of her offerings is "The Garden," in which the grace of the picture of two young women is heightened by a charming setting. The garden is painted with a real conscious skill and an unusual poetic feeling in the manner of color. It was good to see again one of Mrs. Reid's fragile pieces. Simple as they are, the tenderness and accuracy with which she suggests the texture of roses leaves is always appealing. She is also one of the most interesting of the landscape painters, and "Morning in October" being especially refined and discerning in its color scheme. A young woman whose present achievement and future promise most impress every visitor is Miss Dorothy Stevens. She has two large canvases on a wide canvas entitled "Fair Light," and the other a group "Comrades." Her fine drawing and knowledge of objects are outstanding qualities of both these pictures. From the sweet young woman who sits on the couch because no roses are not clear, but the rounded lines and other attractions of the pretty subject are beautifully modelled. The same solidity and soundness of execution characterizes "Comrades." Miss Edith Kerr displays an admirably executed portrait with a deceptive scheme entitled "Margaret Bell." The color effect is opulent and graceful, and the painting of the hair is especially good. Like Miss Stevens, Miss Kerr is an excellent draughtsman. Miss Bertha DeCaires, of Montreal, shows some landscapes that are delightful in feeling, and Miss Beatrice Macdonald has a small picture, "In Memory of Pavlova," which is admirably executed. Other ladies who display meritorious canvases are Miss Mabel May, Miss Clara Haggarty, Miss L. O. Adams, Miss Marion Long, Mrs. Gertrude Spire Cudworth, and Miss M. E. Wrench.

Among the paintings of the men, the work of Mr. Arthur Lister is conspicuous for beauty and mastery of color and composition. Particularly happy is his treatment of silvery sunlight on the water in his Georgian pictures and his color and drawing in "The Road Through the Bush." Mr. Lister excels in harmonious and balanced treatment of color, and some of the younger men cultivate. No one can fail to be struck by the skill and beauty of Mr. J. E. H. MacDonald in his landscapes. He revels in warm colors, but his work seems devoid of emotional feeling, and more startling, than genuinely in expressive of Nature. The same is true of the offerings of Mr. E. S. Jefferys, and the "Dark Woods" is especially happy in tonal effect. The light of the gallery is not enough hard on those painters who use heavy pigments, and it would be hardly fair to judge Mr. F. H. Varley's "High Park" for that reason. The color is laid on with palette knife and was thickly in this work, and at close range it means nothing, though seen in the distance, it seems to be a sympathetic treatment of a beautiful scene. The portraits of Mr. J. E. S. Sampson are admirable in their drawing and color. Particularly in his likeness of a little boy the painting of the flesh is excellent. It is sure, firm, admirably modelled, and Mr. A. M. Fleming of Chatham, Ont., has a picture "In the Light of the Moon" that is a genuinely appealing subject.

Among the veterans, Mr. McGillicuddy's pictures are represented by one especially beautiful and characteristic offering, "An Autumn Evening." They are painted with this authority of touch which always impresses one in Mr. McGillicuddy's pictures, and is apt to be overdone in color and atmospheric treatment. Mr. R. F. G. Johnson's work is more deeply rooted and has a special color of his own, but has several series of canvases, "Pilgrim Rock," being especially effective in contrast of light and shadow. Mr. C. M. Maclean shows several pictures, one of which, "Waiting for the Boat," is a large piece quite neat in its usual vein, and in which the painting and arrangement of figures are excellent. Mr. G. A. Reid's landscapes have a little grip to them, but in one little picture, "The Carpenter's Shop," he shows some of his old skill in painting interiors. There are also capable and characteristic offerings by Messrs. F. M. Bell, Smith, F. S. Challenier, E. W. Grier, T. W. Mitchell, Owen Staples, Harry Britton, T. G. Greene, A. V. Jackson, Emmanuel Hahn, Ethel L. Lown, and E. M. Law.