
Canadian Art

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CANADIAN ART

The Pan-American Exposition has brought conspicuously to public attention a phase of American art that has been developing slowly and surely, but without so much as a passing notice of its existence. I mean the work of Canadian artists.

The art exhibition of the provinces in the Albright galleries is not extensive—only forty-nine artists are represented by eighty pictures—but the collection is eclectic in the best sense of the term, and it is thoroughly representative of the best efforts of the Canadian painters. Fully half the contributors are connected with the Royal Canadian Academy, whose members, through their officers, Robert Harris, G. A. Reid, M. Matthews, and James Smith, have taken a commendable pride in showing the high class of work now being done in their country.

We, in the United States, with our larger and broader art interests, are apt to overlook, and perhaps even disparage, the art products of the Canadian provinces. Many readers, doubtless, do not even know that there is such an institution as the Royal Canadian Academy, and those who know of its existence perhaps fail to realize that in the measure of its opportunities this institution is striving zealously to stimulate and broaden the art spirit in Canada and to promote every form of art interest.

That this work of the Academy is attended by difficulties and discouragements is frankly admitted by the officers of the institution. It is chiefly in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec that one can speak of an art spirit at all. Many of the best artists of these provinces have of recent years left the country, lured by what they thought were the brighter prospects offered by the populous cities of the United States. The market for high-class work in oil and water-colors in Canada is narrowly circumscribed, and as a consequence there has been a tendency for years toward the depletion of Canadian studios. The artists move away and soon are utterly lost to their country, since change of residence has in most cases involved the assumption of new allegiance, the artist claiming little more than Canadian birth.

The same is true of those who have made illustration a specialty. The publishing interests of the provinces are meager and can give but scant employment to promising men. In consequence there are probably fewer competent artists in Canada to-day than there were a decade ago.

Canadian artists have the same complaint as their American confreres, that the collectors and connoisseurs of their own country, who spend thousands of dollars annually in works of art, are prone to

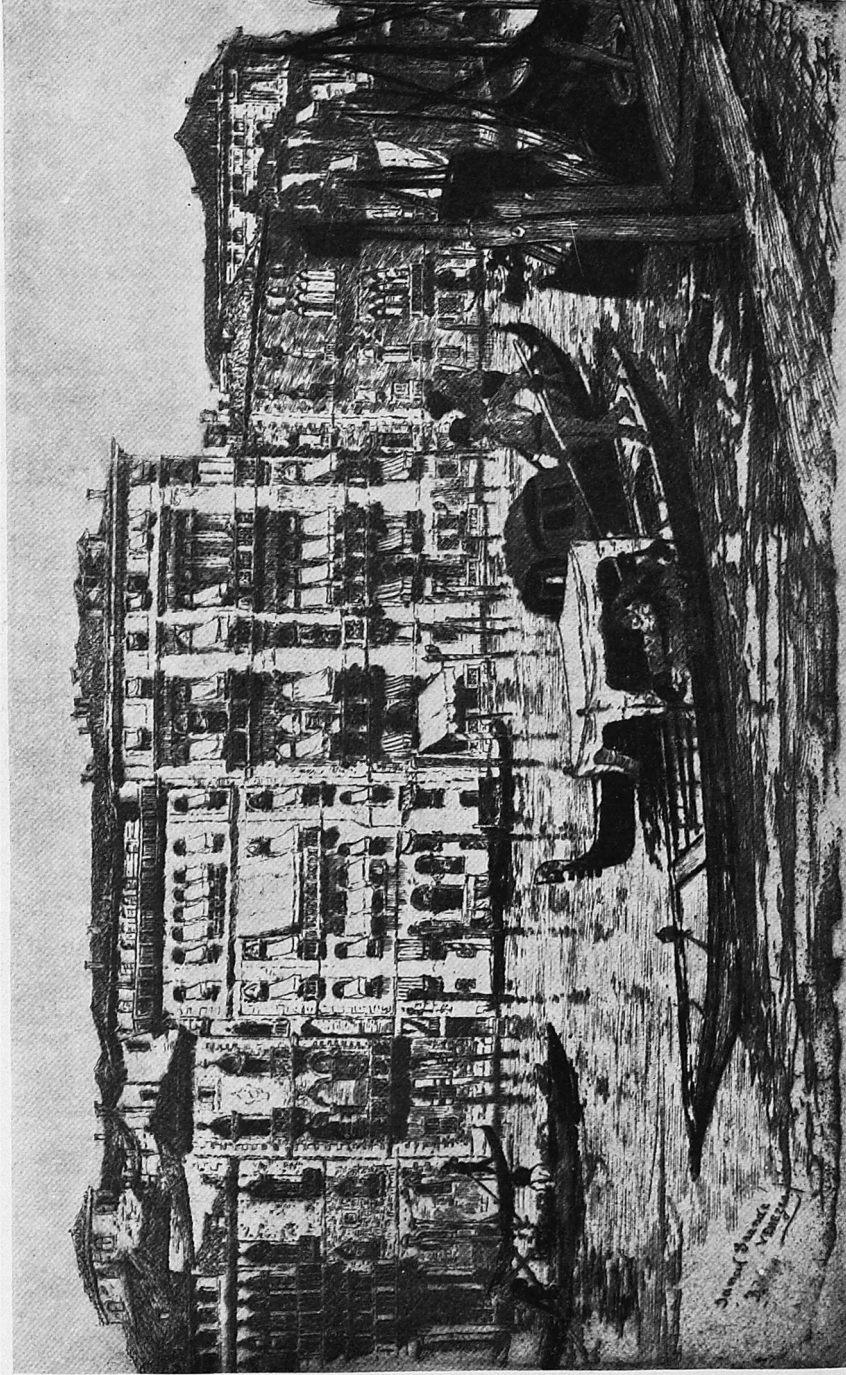
slight native talent and devote their money to the purchase of Old World products by recognized masters. This, however, is less surprising than in the case of artists of the United States. As was recently pointed out by one of the closest observers of Canadian art interests—and a Canadian himself—it is only of recent years that the art of Canada has passed beyond the production of fairly well exe-



CANADIAN ART EXHIBIT
Pan-American Exposition

cuted water-colors depicting still-life subjects or topographically correct bits of landscape.

It is not to be overlooked—and the fact should be noted in justice to the public—that those Canadian collectors who have expended large sums for foreign art works have felt a sense of obligation to foster home talent and have been the most liberal patrons of the colonies. In a word, Canada has been in the position of most colonies the world over. It has received slight and patronizing recognition from Englishmen in general, and virtually no recognition from the residents of other countries. Under these circumstances, it is somewhat surprising that native artists have made such satisfactory progress. In



DESDEMONA'S PALACE ON GRAND CANAL, VENICE
By Frank Dureneck
Courtesy of Albert Roullier



reviewing the development of Canadian art during the last decade, M. L. Fairbairn said recently:

"Our national art institution, the Royal Canadian Academy, during these ten years has pursued the even tenor of its way, filling the vacancies made by death or removal, holding its yearly festival, staid, respectable, slowly progressive, adding to the permanent collection in Ottawa the diploma pictures of its new members. The number of exhibits each year has not increased, because in former times each academician was entitled to have twenty pictures hung, no matter what their merits, so the walls were always covered. The number has since been reduced to ten, and later to eight. The standard for the works of outsiders has been raised, so that with fewer pictures the exhibitions are better."

The same characteristics that Mr. Fairbairn speaks of as obtaining in the last Canadian exhibition are observable in the exhibit at the Pan-American. Canadian painters have been brought under the influence of all the art influences of recent times. This is partly due to the fact that many of them have received instructions from masters in leading schools outside their own country and partly to the practice of importing and exhibiting in the leading cities of the provinces examples of the best work of American and European artists. Canadian artists have thus fallen into line in all new movements, following instead of leading, it is true, but nevertheless giving evidence of an alertness to what is going on in the art world to-day and a desire and a capacity to profit by the examples which they have not yet been able to set.

This is conspicuously shown in the work of the various art schools throughout the provinces. These schools are increasing in number and efficiency, and they find an able auxiliary in the Women's Art Association, which has developed with remarkable rapidity during recent years, and which now has branches in a number of the leading cities throughout the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Interest in the art work of the better known schools is also markedly advanced by the development of an arts and crafts movement in Canada. Lovers of the beautiful were not slow to take inspiration from William Morris, who sought to apply art to the requirements of daily life. The direct result of Morris's influence has been to impel Canadian artists to supply designs for the manufacturers of their own country and to inaugurate various exhibitions of applied art and design. A higher standard of taste has thus been developed as regards both fine and applied art, and this higher standard of public taste, for which the artists themselves are responsible, has reacted upon themselves and of necessity impelled them to higher attainments.

The Canadian art exhibition at the Pan-American shows the fruits of this healthful condition of affairs. Of the eighty pictures dis-

played, many are of an exceptionally high quality, showing broad, truthful treatment and mastery of technique. William Brymner shows three charming water-colors, two of which, "The Gray Girl" and "Francie," are finely executed figure-studies. "The Gray Girl" presents a little miss in the attitude of writing, and "Francie" portrays a sunny-haired child standing in natural posture against a dull gray background. In both pictures the color scheme is low-toned, harmonious, and eminently pleasing. F. M. Bell-Smith also displays three characteristic pictures, "London Bridge," "Strawberry Pickers," and "Above the Clouds." These show a wide range of interests, and a capacity for different types of work that augurs well for the future of the artist.

J. L. Graham's three pictures, "Dinner-time in a Stable," "Ploughing," and "Carting Sand," show a marked ability to invest homely scenes with poetic character. His "Carting Sand," depicting two horses pulling a load over a heavy road, with a couple of countrymen walking beside the wagon, is an especially worthy interpretation of country life. Robert Harris, president of the Royal Canadian Academy, who won a medal at the Chicago exhibition, and also an honorable mention at the Paris International Exhibition a year ago, exhibits two fine portraits of women, suggestive of a close study of Gainsborough.

In the line of portraiture, E. Dyonnet, E. Wyly Grier, who took a third medal at the Paris salon, A. D. Patterson, and G. A. Reid also exhibit fine canvases, which betray a delicate palette and a firm grasp on the essentials of good portraiture. "The Beach of St. Malo," by James Wilson Morrice, is especially pleasing in tone and subject, as is also "Girl Knitting," by Laura Muntz, in which sunlight effect is most admirably depicted.

G. A. Reid, also a medalist at the Chicago Columbian Exposition, exhibits a choice decorative panel, "Summer"; F. M. Knowles, two fine pictures of the Thames River and an equally choice canvas, "The Last Load"; William Cruickshank and F. S. Chalmers, familiar farm scenes; M. A. Bell and John Hammond, marines; and H. Blair Bruce, a dainty canvas depicting nude maidens sporting on a moon-lit beach.

Other canvases are no less worthy of mention, and space alone forbids further specific mention. Suffice it to say that W. E. Atkinson, J. A. Brown, Henri Beau, W. D. Blatchly, F. H. Bridgen, Maurice Cullen, Florence Carlyle, J. W. Forster, J. C. Franchere, R. F. Gagen, C. S. Haggerty, Homer R. Watson, Mrs. Mary Heister Reid, Edmund Morris, C. J. Way, F. A. Verner, William Hope, M. Matthews, and other leading artists of the provinces are represented by pictures ranging from still-life to landscape, and from portraiture to *genre* subjects. These pictures, do not suffer by comparison with the work of other American artists.

KATHERINE V. MCHENRY.