

The National Gallery of Canada

SOME RECENT PURCHASES BY
THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF
CANADA.

THE National Gallery of Canada has recently entered upon a new phase of existence. It has been incorporated by Act of Parliament and is henceforth to be governed by a Board of Trustees on somewhat the same lines as its great English prototype. There is everything to hope from such a change which will enable it to exercise a far greater influence towards proving the value of art in the daily life of the community.

It had been felt for some time that in the recent progress of the National Gallery of Canada the contemporary school of British painting had to some extent been passed by, and it was resolved that an effort should be made to remove the reproach. The President of the Trustees and the Director proceeded to England, and I trust the following list will show that at least the nucleus of a fine representation of contemporary British painting was secured as the result of their quest.

To begin at random. The McCulloch sale at Christie's in May of last year realised four pictures—*Charity* by Frank Brangwyn, *October* by D. Y. Cameron, *Wayside Pasture* by Austen Brown, and *The Pier, Sunset* by J. Buxton Knight. From Mr. Brangwyn's studio, swept bare of all but titanic mural decorations, the Director had turned disconsolately away a month previously, and *Charity* at the McCulloch sale came as a hope revived, and then, to the sound of the hammer, a hope realised. It is a beautiful blonde example of the artist's work, of wonderful rhythmic line, tone gradations and pale colour harmonies expressive of its simple theme. *October*, by D. Y. Cameron, also came when hope was all but gone—a golden bronze picture of curious horizontal planes and harmonious mellow distances, rich in colour and lacking the austerity of the artist's most recent work. *The Pier, Sunset*, by J. Buxton Knight, shows a summer sea with its pier and shipping, bearing the golden path of the sun; while the *Wayside Pasture* of Austen Brown is a purely decorative treatment of landscape with cattle, of big design and strong warm colour.

Orpen might well come next with his two pictures *The Reflection* and *Mary*. *The Reflection* is one of his mirror pictures and is remarkable for the exquisite treatment of the grey bath robe, the subtleties of the flesh painting in the nude reflection and for some inimitable still-life in the corner.

Mary is just an out-of-doors child with golden tawny hair, faded lilac frock, blue eyes and rosy cheeks, the very spirit of a summer day on an Irish hillside.

Glyn Philpot's *Watcher on the Roof* has a breadth and dignity of effect approaching grandeur. A solitary figure wrapped in a shimmering snakeskin robe stands monumentally upon the roof against the first breaking of the dawn across the velvet eastern night. Impressively conceived and simply executed, this painting is greatly effective and altogether sincere.

Another treasure from the mart is *The Lilac Gown* by Charles Furse. This is an oval portrait of Miss Mabel Terry Lewis, fresh and free in its handling and happy in its conception of the sunshaded face and sunsplashed lilac gown in a garden landscape. *The Lilac Gown* is one of the last pictures from the artist's hand.

The list proceeds by way of Charles Shannon's *Lady in Black Fur*, a circular portrait of Miss Constance Collier of charming design; George Henry's *The Connoisseur*, a lady in blue before a lustrous grey wall and curtain; David Muirhead's *The Dark Night*, rich and warm in colour and of transparent sincerity; Gerald Festus Kelly's altogether successful study of a Burmese girl; Mrs. Swynnerton's intensely individual head of an old woman, and a number of other works not less interesting.

This is not all by any means. Beginnings were made upon a representation of the Dutch and German etchers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The representation of such moderns as Whistler, Legros, Zorn, Strang, Muirhead Bone, Charles Shannon, D. S. MacLaughlan, Van Angeren, Sir J. C. Robinson and others was begun or added to, and now as I write these lines—some time before they will appear in print—the last of the treasures is catalogued and hung ready for public approval of the fruits of two months' work upon the contemporary British painters.

One last acquisition and I have done. It is Arnesby Brown's landscape, *In Suffolk*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy last summer and has already been reproduced in this magazine. It is a notable example of the artist's work and worthy of the very finest traditions of the British school of landscape painting. Bold in design, incisive and generous in its handling, it has an incomparable richness of beauty, and is at once peace-giving and heart-satisfying to its observers.

ERIC BROWN,

Director, National Gallery of Canada.