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ART IN CANADA.

A very excellent article appeared in the *Telegram* of the 14th February, written by Mr. John Hague, in which he points out the undeniable crudity of taste in reference to Art in Canada, and remarks that a series of articles might be written on the subject, and expresses his conviction in the following words:—

“Altho' the people might wince under, and feel a momentary indignation at the strictures such articles would contain, they have sufficient good sense and self-knowledge to forget quickly their irritation in resolutions and practical efforts toward correcting those defects, which keep back the scientific and artistic progress of the country.”

That such a series of articles might to a certain extent improve the state of affairs complained of, we do not doubt, but who is to write them, or if written in a truly art style who would read them? or if read, who would understand them? and still further, if understood who would *heed* them? Taking these four questions consecutively, and supposing that such an article appeared this morning in the *Globe* or *Mail*, these papers reaching the largest number of readers. The people, including all the under strata of society, might read the heading and possibly a line or two of the article, but soon finding themselves struggling with words and expressions the meaning of which they could not understand, in connection with a subject they do not appreciate, they would turn with relief to a more congenial column, police reports, murders, accidents, births and deaths. The business men, including storekeepers, brokers and agents of many varieties, also read the heading, look to see the length of the article, finding it a column or so, pass it by for the money or market reports. The professional men, Lawyers, Doctors, Dentists, catch sight of the heading. The more liberal education which these classes have received, would fit them to understand and foster a better taste for matters of Art, if they would read the articles, but pleas, replications, rejoinders and demurrers are chasing each other through the mind of the former, so hastily glancing at the “affairs in Europe” they turn to the Law Reports, and in like manner the Doctors and other professional men. An exception here and there will doubtless be found in all of the classes, but these exceptions taken in the aggregate will form but an insignificant minority of the people, weak in numbers and dis-united, their influence is too small to work reform. It seems to us then, that the better way to improve the public taste for Art is to begin with the teachers, for as no fountain can be pure if the source is impure, so can

there be no art education if the teachers are not artists. While art *instinct* is purely inborn and exists in various degrees in different people, yet there can be no doubt that its development is altogether a matter of education, and any one who has given the matter the slightest attention, will have noticed that the tastes of the pupils reflect those of the teachers. There is no “royal road” to knowledge nor to art, and the growth of the latter is slow, and this slowness is largely due to the ignorance of unprincipled teachers and traffickers, who give it a *false direction* for the purpose of preying upon that art instinct, which after all is more generally diffused than we believe. “Show me the books you have read, and I will show you the mind of the reader.” “Show me the music in your portfolio, and I will show you your teacher,” was the remark of an able and experienced master. An old proverb is the following: “A little nonsense now and then, is relished by the best of men.” In like manner, a little trashy music now and then may serve to while away an occasional idle moment or please those whose tastes have not had the advantages of education; but a portfolio full of such pieces as “Robin's Return,” and “Maiden's Prayer” prove an utter absence of musical art taste; if on the other hand the portfolio is filled with the most difficult pieces of Lizst, Beethoven, Chopin, etc., pieces altogether beyond the ability of a young student to play or understand, but which they may possibly play *at*, we have a right to enquire where they intend to *leave off*, since they have *begun* where great artists *finish*. We have known pupils who have refused to study appropriate pieces on the ground that they were “too trivial,” nothing but Lizst or Chopin being worthy of their consideration, and yet these same pupils were quite unable to play the major scales or arpeggioed chords correctly. “I play the Moonlight Sonata,” said a pupil of this class one day. On our enquiring if she did not find the arpeggios in the last movement rather difficult, she said, “not at all,” our surprise gave when she naively continued *I never play the last movement*. On another occasion we called upon a young lady of whom we had often heard, as a “lovely” player, and who played Chopin, Hummel, Thalberg Lizst, Beethoven, &c., and whose piano was buried under a mountain of choice works of these and other composers. We rang the bell, and while waiting for the door to be opened, heard thro' the opened windows a few spirited bars from the G minor concerto of Mendelssohns, the dash and style of which assured us that the “lovely” player had not been over rated—we modestly entered, and soon fell into a sprightly conversation on music. You were playing a fragment of the last movement of