

ART EDUCATION.

BY RICHARD BAIGENT, A.R.C.A., COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE, TORONTO, TEACHER
IN THE ONTARIO SCHOOL OF ART, AND FORMERLY OF WINCHESTER
COLLEGE, ENGLAND.

THE wide-spread and growing feeling of the importance of Art Education, as a part of a liberal, or of an ordinary education, sufficiently attests the value of the intellectual and moral benefit to be derived from it, if it be rightly pursued. Scattered through the pages of the CANADA EDUCATIONAL MONTHLY many allusions to this subject from thoughtful minds bespeak their appreciation of its value—a sure augury that the time is approaching when it will be considered not only as an individual gain but as a matter of national benefit. Schools of Art and Design are being established for the furtherance of artistic production, and for the technical training of the artisan in design and embellishment; but what inducements has he to become foremost in the competition for excellence when the public, in whose appreciation is the reward, is incompetent to decide on the merits of his labour? If education be necessary for the production of works of Art and of beautiful design, it is equally necessary for their just appreciation, and herein lies the true secret of a national taste.

It is not sufficiently recognized (though it cannot longer remain so) how universal is the yearning towards Art. The young mind delights in pictures; nothing pleases and attracts it so much, and acknowledgment is made of this craving in the infant mind by the pictorial attractions supplied by parents who delight in the dawning intelligence of the little ones.

Nevertheless, no sooner is the child advanced in years than all this natural craving is forgotten, or is considered of little account in the practical education of the young.

Art has had to contend against many prejudices, for it is worthy of note that those who acquire information from books only, in their eager pursuit after knowledge, too often leave themselves no time for the study of Art; and having shut themselves out from its benign light, they not only are blind and dead to its impressions, but they drift into false ideas and contracted notions of its usefulness. The faculty to see and admire, it should be borne in mind, needs cultivation among educated people as much as it does among the uneducated.

Again, it is a prevalent error, which cannot be too earnestly refuted, that special inborn powers or natural gifts are indispensable to the acquisition of Art. Whatever ability or mental aptitude the young may shew in other paths of learning, if they be given the opportunity of studying Art they will exhibit equal aptitude; those who distinguish themselves in the general studies of the school-room will be equally certain of doing the same in the drawing class.

If general education thus advantageously helps and facilitates the acquisition of Art, Art is capable of and will undoubtedly repay all obligations, for it finds avenues to the understanding, not otherwise disclosed,