

"With Russia our relations have got worse since 1881, as they have done through every six years since the quinquennium that followed the Crimean War. The blame must be divided between the two nations, and our own share will perhaps not be the least. To Austria we have come nearer. If reasonable stipulations could be entered into with regard to our trade—stipulations which would be more useful even to Austria than ourselves—it would be absolutely immaterial to this country what share our old ally might take of the Balkan Peninsula, when that politically volcanic region is once more disturbed. We have not the slightest ill-feeling either to Turkey or to any of the numerous heirs, Greece, Servia, Bulgaria, and all the rest of them, who desire to profit by her dissolution as a European power. I much regret the circumstances that took us to Egypt; but I think that our going thither was inevitable, and can only deplore that divided counsels, a burst of popular enthusiasm which, unhappily yielded to, first placed a heroic, but utterly unsound, man of genius in an impossible position and then deserted him, should have cast an atmosphere of something worse than ridicule over operations admirably devised and, in so far as depended upon the army and navy, brilliantly executed. The errors were made at the centre of affairs. When the secrets of Cabinets become revealed, we shall know exactly on whom should fall the responsibility for many of the checks and misfortunes with which we met in Africa.

"Six years have by no means improved the relations between this country and France. It is a great misfortune. Long ere this it is probable that the two nations would have been at war if it had not been for the fear of a quarrel with us giving the longed-for opportunity to Germany. In India little has occurred in the last six years which requires notice in a brief summary like this. We have added somewhat to our national responsibilities in the Orient by the annexation of Upper Burmah, which country looks now, in spite of its troubles from rebels and brigandage, as if it were going to turn out a better financial bargain than was expected. On the whole, though we have lost many valuable lives and spent much money, I think thus far we have got off not badly, and that Lord Dufferin may be congratulated upon a series of measures in which, ably seconded by Sir Harry Prendergast, the lamented Sir Herbert Macpherson, and Sir Frederick Roberts, he has shown himself at once prompt, resolute, conciliatory and fortunate, as equal to 'the occasion sudden and practice dangerous' as to all other combinations of circumstances, with which he has had to deal in his long and brilliant career."

AMERICAN ART SINCE THE CENTENNIAL.

THE *New Princeton Review* contains an article upon the above subject which has been so widely discussed and commented upon by the American Press, that we present the subject-matter it contains to Canadian readers who may not have seen the original:

It was the Centennial Exhibition that fairly started our art in a direction similar to that which began in England with the Exhibition of 1851, but with more adequate results, let us hope. English art since 1851 has exhibited abundant talent but little or no genius, for it has added nothing really new to æsthetic progress. In recent American art, however, we note evidences of a genius which is yet to be developed into a great national school. The Centennial Exhibition gave the people at large an opportunity to discover a latent love for beauty. In the results that have followed we have at last begun to learn that no true school of art or literature can stand alone. Our people awoke to their needs in 1876; but a certain period must be allowed for the legitimate results to appear. In the meantime we note with encouragement the sign of its coming.

Industrial art has reached a most favourable position here in so short a period that one hardly realises how much has been actually accomplished. The glass works and potteries of Trenton, New Bedford, and Cincinnati, for example, are showing us what excellence we are rapidly achieving in the production of domestic ware. The coloured designs in glass by Mr. Lafarge and Mr. Louis Tiffany represent an art so distinctly original that it can be claimed as American. Both began about the year 1877 to formulate the idea of improving on the art in stained glass as now practised in Europe, and rivalling the art of the period which culminated in such windows as glorify the superb aisles of Lichfield Cathedral. Mr. Lafarge has executed some designs in flowers of extraordinary intricacy and beauty as well. The Tiffany Glass Company has achieved a grand success in an enlarged copy on glass of Doré's "Christ in the Prætorium" for a church in Milwaukee, no less than forty feet long by twenty feet wide. These artists have likewise apprehended the fact that such a window must have for its first object the passage of light, and that any design disturbing this idea has failed in its purpose.

Woodcarving has also been carried to a high degree of excellence in various quarters, but notably by an association of ladies at Cincinnati; the beautiful designs of their carving, however, are somewhat marred by a want of clear apprehension of the massing of effect, an error which will pass away with a truer grasp of certain art principles in the rejection of details.

Architecture in America during the period under consideration is so important, and progress in this department has been so widely diffused, that justice cannot be done to it in a limited space. Probably the world has never seen private dwellings more comfortable and better furnished with conveniences than the mansions which grace the streets of our chief cities. But when we consider the architecture or the art features of these buildings we are compelled to speak with reserve; though that there is much elegance and often exquisite taste exhibited in the decorative element cannot be denied for a moment. To go a step farther, however, and assert

that a new and a national school of architecture has been developed in the United States would be a manifest error. What we observe in even our most interesting buildings is a clever adaptation of foreign and old time schools, with the exercise of considerable taste and judgment in the adaptation. One curious circumstance attending this architectural reform is the almost whimsical variety suggested by local taste or influence as well as the rapidly shifting fashion from one form to another. In one city it is the Romanesque that we see imported to our shores; in another the Queen Anne or the Elizabethan; in another the Renaissance, a school by the way which has always predominated in our civic buildings. Here we observe an attempt at Italian or Moorish or Japanese; there a nondescript medley which suggests several styles. While daring to regard this building as architecturally unsatisfactory, we are quite willing to consider the recent architecture of Boston with some exceptions as the most satisfactory yet seen in the United States. The liberal use made of brick and terra-cotta in that city is worthy all praise. But after all has been said, we defy any one to prove that we have yet produced a style that is original and typical. Where is the typical building in the States that represents a new and distinct class?

Embroidery has been so extensively produced in America during this period that it may well be considered among our representative arts; while it is difficult to concede to it the merit of originality, excepting in some of Mrs. Wheeler's designs and Mrs. Holmes' attempts at landscape painting with the needle. For the rest, the embroidery done here is little more than a repetition of the South Kensington methods, which in richness of fancy, intricacy of texture, or splendour of colour, are not to be mentioned by the side of the embroideries of Asia, or of Europe in the Middle Ages.

There has been a marked improvement in the designing of metal work since the Centennial, and the wide diffusion of Industrial Art Schools over the land. But we have not yet learned the elegant simplicity of ancient metal work, though the signs are hopeful; we may indicate a notable exception in favour of many of the designs employed by our artisans who work in silver and gold. The vices of all the forms of art in the present age, and especially in this country, is that it is inseparable from the taint of trade influences, which see in the art not art, for art's self, but for money.

The same observation applies to our illustrators and wood engravers, about whose admirable work so much has justly been said that is favourable. We have reason to be proud of the original genius displayed in this department of American art. It is true that composition is not yet thoroughly understood by many of our illustrators, and that we have yet none among us exhibiting the spontaneous facility and fecund imagination of a few leading European designers like Dürer, Blake, or Doré. But it is useless to deny that within the last decade a number of American artists in black and white have come to the front who are quite capable of holding their own with the best contemporary designers abroad.

In American etching we discover a more encouraging outlook at present. This is an art in which the artist can be less fettered by the dictation of publishers. In an etching the artist may furnish at once his own design and engraving. It is a matter of little consequence whether American etchers have yet equalled foreign masters of the art—probably they have not; but what success they have achieved already has won for them a generous recognition abroad from a public very slow to admit any merit in our art and literature. We have not the slightest hesitation in asserting that it will not be long before our society of American etchers will force Seymour Hayden, Brunet, Debaines, and Jacquemart to look well to their laurels.

The art of water colour painting has also made extraordinary progress in the United States within the last decade. It is scarcely ten years since the American Water Colour Society was established. Up to that period art had hardly been known here, except as represented by miniatures on ivory, executed in the last century. The use of pastel has also taken root, and numbers of our artists have been able to give effective expression to their ideas in a seemingly easy but really difficult medium. It goes without saying that technical skill in the handling of oil pigments has kept pace with the progress lately achieved by the sister arts in America. This is very largely due to the influence of those artists who, after mastering technical principles on the Continent have returned and settled here. What is of more importance is the fact that we notice in all the branches of our pictorial art a growing appreciation of its limitations, and the fundamental value of direct study from nature. The result has been to give more seriousness to the study and practice of art, and a more artistic quality to the product of our studios. This has been specially noticeable in the increased study given to the human figure, and the growing attention bestowed on subjects suggested by the great drama of human life. Never before has such a large proportion of *genre* and historic subjects been displayed in our exhibitions.

While many excellent portrait painters have recently appeared among us, it is in *genre* that we note a most encouraging degree of excellence developed; history painting, always requiring a high degree of creative genius and intellectual power, seems yet beyond the grasp of most American painters.

As regards sculpture in the United States, in recent years it may be said that there has been no lack of quantity, but less that is favourable can be said as to the quality. This is due to several causes: one, that those of our sculptors who have studied abroad have found the artists now practising the plastic arts in Europe superior in technical capacity rather than intellectual force. To conclude, there are three conditions necessary to the future progress and development of American art. Sympathetic