

## THE EARLY ARTISTS OF ONTARIO.

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IN a paper, an excerpt of which appears in the Proceedings of the Canadian Institute, was presented the conditions affecting the beginning of art in this country.

The purpose of this sketch is to refer to the artists themselves, and an introductory paragraph will perhaps help us in this.

European art came with European settlement, and flourished while the traditions of the old world lived. True, as Mr. Davin has said, the designs which formed the sign manual of the Indian chiefs, and their graphic picture-writing on birch-bark, might, by some, be considered the dawn of Canadian art. A good deal of this "art" is still to be found emblazoned on the skins which line the lodges of the prairies; while the remains of pottery, copper, arms, and the like, show traces of a still higher culture and no inconsiderable development of technical skill, in a previous age. All this was perhaps rather the end of a phase of art in a decaying race than the beginning of it in Canada. Indian art is childish and unimportant.

But the paintings that remain, executed in the early days of European settlement, show that there was a noticeable overflow of art and artists into Canada. Some eminent names have been registered with pencil and pigment, beginning with Lady Simcoe, (whose sketches of Canadian scenes are to be brought again to Canada,—reproduced after a hundred years of absence), down to the last exhibition held under the patronage of what may be called the Old Régime. This was in 1847, and its chief promoter was the late Mr. Howard, of Howard Park.

The strongest influence favorable to art during that period was created by

Sir Perigrine Maitland and his talented wife, while his aide-de-camp was a painter of excellence.

But those acquainted with the history of our country know that the political conditions existing then were not permanent, and were by degrees forced aside to make way for others favorable to the better recognition of the growing national opinions and spirit. That era may be properly called the Colonial Era. The new era gives some slight evidence of a national character, which every loyal Canadian will gladly welcome and judiciously encourage.

The first native Canadian to gain eminence in the profession was Paul Kane; to him, therefore, I give first attention. In speaking of him, Nicholas Flood Davin, in his "Irishmen in Canada," says: "Art began early to attract some attention. Ireland, which had done so much in other walks for the infant nation, was destined to give it the first impulse toward art, Michael Kane and his Dublin wife accompanied Lieut.-Governor Simcoe to Canada. Having left the army, Michael settled in York, where, in 1810, his son was born. The new arrival was christened Paul. The child's growing mind could not fail to be influenced by the picturesque Indian figures then still to be seen haunting the Don, while Indian trails ran where King and Yonge-streets are to-day.

"In the preface to his travels, Kane, in 1844, accounts for his resolve to devote himself to painting a series of North American Scenery and Indian Life, by saying: 'The subject was one in which I felt a deep interest from my boyhood. I had been accustomed to see hundreds of Indians