

art is to see what is apparently most popular among the masses. Go into the streets or music-halls of the cities in any particular country and year, and observe what is most frequently sung, shouted, or played on the barrel-organs. It may happen to be

“Tarara-boom-deay,”

or,

“We don’t want to fight,
But, by Jingo, if we do.”

But whatever it is, you may at once declare these songs to be the highest musical art, without even pausing to ask to what they owe their vogue—what actress, or singer, or politician, or wave of patriotic passion has conduced to their popularity. Nor need you consider whether that popularity is not merely temporary and local. Tolstoy has said that works of the highest art are understood by unperverted country peasants—and here are things which are popular with the mob, *ergo*, these things must be the highest art.

The critics then proceed to say that such a test is utterly absurd. And on this point I am able to agree with the critics.

Some of these writers commence their articles by saying that Tolstoy is a most profound thinker, a great prophet, an intellectual force, etc. Yet when Tolstoy, in his emphatic way, makes the sweeping remark that “good art always pleases every one,” the critics do not read on to find out what he means, but reply: “No! good art does not please every one; some people are colour-blind, and some are deaf, or have no ear for music.”

It is as though a man strenuously arguing a point were to say, “Every one knows that two and two make four,” and a boy who did not at all see what the speaker was driving at, were to reply: “No, our new-born baby doesn’t know it!” It would distract attention from the subject in hand, but it would not elucidate matters.