



ART INSTRUCTION IN ONTARIO.

EDITOR CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

DEAR SIR,—The work of the Ontario Art Schools was on exhibition during the first week in June. There were a very large number of drawings on the walls from the different schools throughout the Province. Many of the drawings showed considerable skill on the part of the students, but the bulk of the work would lead one to the opinion that there is no definite purpose in the art training given in these schools. I am informed that the sole purpose of the Minister of Education is to give a training in the technical arts that our industries might be benefited. The drawings at the Normal School, to a very large extent, were the work of young ladies who are anxious to paint pictures before they learn to draw. They wish to have as one of their accomplishments, the artistic one of painting. It matters little whether they can draw or not, so long as they can produce something which will be the admiration of some of their artistic friends.

Many young ladies are taking a course in some one of these schools with the purpose of fitting themselves to give lessons in drawing and painting. It is therefore necessary that they should be properly and thoroughly trained, as they will exert a very large influence for the advancement or retardation of art in this country. They are not receiving that instruction in the art schools at present, nor will they until the management of the schools is placed in the hands of men who know what art is, and are capable of directing the schools so that they will be able to give the training which has been outlined for them. If the schools are only to give instruction in the technical arts, well and good, but have the training a correct and a thorough one. I should like to have schools teach art with no other purpose than to cultivate and refine the people, but if it cannot be done, I will not complain. But when neither one thing nor the other is being done, and valuable funds are being expended, we have every reason to find fault.

A reasonable amount of money expended in art training, be it technical, industrial, or what is sometimes called high art, under a competent and intelligent management, would be money well spent. But money spent in teaching nothing in particular under the name of art, is money worse than wasted. I should have liked to have seen the drawings which were sent in in competition for the medals placed together, and where one could see them. It is almost impossible to make any comparison between competitive drawings, when they are placed some distance apart. It may be that there are those who have no desire that the public should be afforded any opportunity to make comparisons. The drawings which competed for the gold medal should have been placed together, and in a good light. This was not done; they were distributed about the corridors under the gallery of the theatre where there was little or no light. I see that the decision of the judges was not acceptable to one at least of the competitors, who very spiritedly returned her certificate to the Minister of Education. I am inclined to believe that Miss Beatrice Lukes was advised correctly by her friends that she should have received the gold medal. The medal was to be given under definite conditions, which were not followed by those who decided the competition. But in any case, it is the opinion of those competent to judge, that Miss Lukes should have been awarded the medal under any and all circumstances. There are rumours that the judges did so decide, but that their decision did not meet with the approval of some one in authority, who deemed that it would be better that the interests of an individual should be sacrificed to the advantage that would result to art and a particular person by having the medal go to different parts of the country as might be found desirable. It is not pleasant to refer to such stories, but where there is apparently some foundation for them, they are better referred to. There is one point on which I have an opinion, and that a very definite one, and it is, that none but the

most capable men should be appointed as judges in the awarding of places to the students of the art schools. There were more than one of the judges in this last competition who were totally unfit for their work. Competent judges are not hard to obtain, but it may be that when competent they are not so tractable nor so likely to overlook the faults of the art school system as those who are not very well posted in the matters on which they are supposed to give a decision.

Dr. White, the president, does not seem to be altogether satisfied with the position of the school. He complains that the attendance should be at least 8 or 10 times greater. I do not hesitate to say that I am very thankful the attendance is no greater, for there are now far too many receiving instruction in art (?) which they would be very much better without. He is also inclined to affirm that the Art Societies of this city are indifferent to art. I am inclined to agree with him to some extent, but do not think they are to be censured for holding themselves aloof from his school. The fact of the matter is, their assistance was not wanted except to supply funds, and to give a standing to the school which Dr. White is evidently aware it does not possess. There was no intention to give them any control of the school, nor even to allow them to render assistance or intelligent advice. When the directors are really desirous of having the assistance of the Art Societies of this city, they will find them only too ready to give any assistance in their power. But they do not propose to enter into a contest with ignorance for supremacy in the teaching of art with Government funds. The moment that their advice was opposed to the authorities, that moment would they have to go, as they have had to go before.

The Art Societies of the city should combine and undertake the support of a first-class art school. The Royal Canadian Academy should do something towards educating the people of this city in art, if it desires to secure the support of the public in the erection of its proposed new building. Talk on the beauties and advantages of art is not of much account. Work will effect very much more. What has the Academy done to aid the young men of this city towards gaining any instruction in art? None whatever. And there are those who are deserving of such aid. The members of the Art League of Toronto should receive encouragement and aid in their efforts to study art, for they have not united for assistance, but have gone to work like men to aid themselves, and are reaping their reward.

I should like to know what value the certificates of the Minister of Education possess. They seem to be distributed with a most liberal hand, so liberal in fact, that one is inclined to place their value below the cost of printing. I should like to know why it should be considered necessary to give a scholar at an art school a certificate that he has attended such school. Scholars at our public schools are not thus provided with certificates of attendance. Before we know where we are, we will have the country peopled by certificated artists from the Ontario Art Schools, which would be very nearly as great an infiction as the French language in the public schools. Certificates should only be given for proficiency in the different branches of the course, and should mean something. As it is, they mean nothing, and are of no value whatever except to cause a person to distrust the possessors knowledge of the subject set forth in the certificate.

ANTI-HUMBUG.

If paint refuses to stick to new tin or other metal, sandpaper the metal.

Metallic or iron oxide paint is the best article for tin roof. Apply directly upon the new tin.

Gum animi, 2 ozs., in a half pound of linseed oil, is suggested as a good liquid to be used with bronze powder; the gum to be gradually added to heated oil; then boil, strain, and dilute with turpentine.

To make a good paint for shingle roofs that can be applied cold and dries quickly: Take one barrel of coal tar, ten pounds of asphaltum, ten pounds of ground slate; mix by the aid of heat and add two gallons of dead oil.