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Transactions of Societies.

THE TORONTO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE EXHIBITION.

(From the Toronto Leader, March 31st)

The exhibition at the Institute has been a remarkable success. In its pecuniary results, it has exceeded all past efforts in this direction, and if regarded simply as a means for increasing the revenue of a useful public Institute, which is now carrying a debt of \$18,000, it is highly satisfactory and suggestive. Mechanics' Institutes are never supported on a large scale by the mere subscriptions of their members, and have generally to appeal to the benevolence of the wealthy for pecuniary aids. But this system induces a spirit of dependence and patronage adverse and prejudicial to the spirit of self-reliance and personal effort that distinguishes this age and forms so large an element of its progress; and when mechanics' and similar institutes can derive revenues from enterprises that contribute to public amusement and instruction, they are in the safest and healthiest condition. The exhibitors in this instance are assisting the Institute and serving the public bet-

ter by lending their articles of interest and beauty, than by gifts of money. The assembling of large crowds of all classes together for rational and elevating enjoyment, has high social and moral advantages. Exhibitions of this kind level all ranks, not by degrading those above, but by exalting those below; and enjoyment, as well as suffering, when it is shared in common by all, knits men together, kindles and fosters the courtesies of life and civilizes and humanizes the race. But no one can look upon visitors that throng the Music Hall and fail to see, that, other high intellectual and moral results must attend such exhibitions. The intense earnestness and delight with which all inspect the objects of nature and art before them are highly suggestive and encouraging. No doubt the great majority of these visitors are ignorant of the principles of coloring and composition, of light and shade and harmony, and all else that contributes to make a picture attractive; they may know nothing of the characteristics of "schools," and be quite incapable of deciding whether a picture before them is a Raphael or a Murillo, a Rubens or a Guido. But wherever there is good taste and intelligence, there will be a just appreciation of nature and of beauty; and even where the culture is not high a truthful, natural, beautiful picture, will always give the highest enjoyment and have a refining influence on the coarsest nature. No one can look long on a masterly painting, which expresses some deep human passion—a good copy for example of the Madonna and Child without being moved and influenced for good. The tender, loving, and inspired expression of the holy mother passes from the canvass, as it seems to breathe with life, into the soul of the beholder, and lifts it up into its own atmosphere of divine glory and passion. Thus, too, the Beatrice of Guido, of which there is a beautiful copy in the exhibition, so angelic in its expression of child-like innocence, yet so sad and touching that it suggests at once feelings of sorrow and sympathy and horror, such as move all who know the awful tale of the sufferings of Beatrice and of the terrible crimes of the Cenci. Hazlitt has said that a man cannot commit an ignoble action in the presence of the picture of a beautiful woman, and this is true of all beautiful and truthful pictures; for the picture of a lovely and virtuous woman or a great and good man or a landscape, with its glories of earth and sky, and field and flower awakens in us a mysterious consciousness of a higher and purer Presence. It is with these views that we regard with more than common interest this department of the exhibition. It is one that has the most important relations with the refinement and prosperity of the people and must owe its development to their patronage. Like literature, art has cast off the bondage of lordly and princely patronage, and like literature it must now owe its sustenance and life to the multitude, who are always in the end the most just and liberal patrons of true merit. Literature, however, in this respect is in advance of art, because every one learns to read and few learn to paint. The artistic taste must precede the artistic power, and it is by public exhibitions of every species of works of art, whether in painting or sculpture, or in their numerous applications to manufactures, that this