

ART IN CANADA TO-DAY.

BY J. H. CHARLESWORTH.

It were folly to expect and fanciful to look for a distinctive and national art in a country so young as ours; so it behoves the writer to beware of commencing with an error and entitling his article "Canadian Art." The spectacle displayed in the *New England Magazine* something over a year ago of a writer committing this error and then denouncing Canada in blatant and untruthful terms because "Canadian Art" proved intangible and chimerical is remembered by all. But no writer, at the time, thought of comparing the hold that art has on the American public, with an older civilization, and the hold that it has on the Canadian public, by a population basis: such a comparison shows that despite our youth as a people we can at least boast as distinct and intelligent an appreciation of art as is shown by the American public. The United States, it must be remembered, has a population twelve times as large as that of Canada, and our wealth must be multiplied many times before it can reach the sum of that of the nation across the border. The nondescript character of picture exhibitions is the same in Canada and the United States, but this is not, perhaps, undesirable.

That neither country has ceased to experience rather acutely its growing pains is an acknowledged fact, and that many a year must pass before either reaches that comfortable stage of maturity when a national art is formed is equally true. Still, the palates of a people, however young, crave luxuries in a greater or less degree, and there is enough wealth in the country to gratify to a certain extent the taste for art. The number of artists is increasing in Canada every

day and the additions lately made have been of such men as add material strength to, and command an increased respect for, the cause of Art in this country. They are of all schools; each has his good points; many have their weak points. Luckily for the Canadian public, the groups belonging to different schools are so small as to prevent any profitless controversies as to the truth of the various artistic doctrines, and art, pure and simple, is certainly the gainer, that, though among the small circle of the artists there are many arguments and wranglings, the public is asked to judge only of results, and not of the orthodoxy of the various processes by which these results are attained.

It would be quite unfair in such an article as this to dwell much on the demerits of the various artists who have met with success before the Canadian public. Our object must rather be to speak of the various qualities, good and bad, which regulate their success. Investigation fails to show any flagrant instances of undiscovered and unrewarded genius. In proceeding to speak of the artists whose pictures men of culture and refinement can with pleasure hang in their houses, it must be remembered that this is largely an article of generalizations: the various phases of the art as presented to the public, affording food for several detailed articles.

The men whose art has most claim to be called Canadian are the landscape men, and they labor under the disability that W. D. Howells has pointed out, in reference to the American short story writers, of being unable to produce anything but sectional work—pictures having "local color;"