

## Art and Its Objects.

By J. S. Gordon.

What is art, and what are its objects? This, in a more or less definite form, is the question launched at us from day to day, year to year, and will continue perhaps to the end of time; nor do I flatter myself that any sidelights I may throw upon the subject will have any effect upon the flood of speculation.

Since we have no records, it is hard to conceive just what Jubal's sensations were when, taking his notched reeds, he breathed into them the breath of life and drew therefrom the first few faltering notes. Whether his raptures were due alone to the satisfaction he felt in achieving a series of sounds of varied pitch, or whether he felt that these sounds faintly echoed what he felt of joy or sorrow, will never be known.

While we in later days, however, may find considerable to admire in the precision and feeling with which a composition of Beethoven or Mozart is rendered by a good orchestra, we are, I venture, more concerned with the mighty effect that the divine harmonies have on the spiritual side of our nature, and, in a like manner, are we impressed by corresponding qualities in the sister art of Painting.

Deep down in the human mind are feelings that yearn for, yet cannot find, expression, and which the most comprehensive knowledge of things material, cannot explain or satisfy, and he is the artist, be it in verse, tone, or color, who can suggest these feelings in such a way as to awaken a responsive throb in ourselves.

When man, emerging from an estate of barbarism, followed his animal instincts of self-preservation and congregated in sufficient numbers to form communities, the energy hitherto expended in the selfish object of protecting himself, was diverted into a

channel,—that of raising himself by aggrandizement.

This impulse, in a modified form, continues to this day, although the socialistic tendencies of the age are a direct revolt against this primitive instinct of self-preservation, with the further advantage aimed at of placing man's animal necessities in their proper place and providing time and means for the cultivation and enjoyment of poetry, music and painting, which are not less the necessities of his intellectual existence.

Long before the awakening of his mental energies, man must have felt a capacity for useful acts. These impulses may have been instinctive or may have been born of recollections of the performances of his forefathers. These recollections were the germ of what is known to us as "traditions." Thus man in the earliest dawn was driven, by a desire to become skilful, to search for certain principles to guide his activities, and in the end the early philosophers discovered that the whole extent of mental activity could be divided into three parts: the True, the Good, the Beautiful.

For a time these three marched along hand in hand, keeping even pace, and produced the fine, evenly-balanced civilization of Greece. Lately, however, owing to the requirements of our utilitarian age, the True and the Good are being developed to such an extent that there is little encouragement for the Beautiful to maintain its growth, let alone increase it, and bids fair to land us in a state of rank materialism.

One need not be "a *outrance*" with science to be opposed to a course of study that advances one subject out of its due proportion, and if life is (as we nearly all agree) entirely mental, and the real object of life is to seek happiness and dispense it in an equal proportion to our fellowman, I am safe in venturing that a study of the Beautiful is a healthy one and