

HINDRANCES TO ART IN AMERICA.

BY W. A. SHERWOOD.

We in Canada by a simultaneous sympathy enter into the spirit, especially in a social sense, of the neighboring republic. The fashion plates of New York are the guiding models of Canadian clothiers, as the green room of the metropolitan theatre guides the histrionic palate of the larger mass of our people.

The evils that affect the people of the republic rapidly become our own: just as their virtues, by a slower process perhaps, become numbered amongst ours. This holds also in art. Canada and the United States, in this respect, as in many others, are practically one country.

There may be said to be three conditions that retard the development of art in America. The first, and of the greatest importance, is a fixed indifference to the universal principles of art. The uncertain condition of national character takes second place, and the third, which more particularly applies to Canada, but also affects the United States, is the hiding from view in secret chambers of the works of the great masters.

The last condition will be the one most easy to remove. Those who through their taste and wealth have possessed themselves of the treasures of art are scarcely likely, as their culture and public spirit increases, to forever hide these treasures beneath the social bushel-measure, but may be expected to throw their salons open from time to time to the earnest devotees of art. But this, though it would be a gain, is not enough. The issuing of a limited number of invitations will not suffice: the salons must be opened to the public, free, regardless of who may attend, and without the humiliating incident of attendant lackeys.

The first and the most formidable of the conditions I have mentioned—the indifference to the universal principles of art—must receive decided denunciation at the outset; and denunciation further emphasized and impressed by conclusive argument. It is always well to enquire on what ground we ourselves stand, lest we rudely condemn by false light or, worse, by prejudice, this evil in others and unduly exaggerate their indifference to our recognised canons. The public taste is always formed upon the artist's standard. This standard should always recognize the lines of grace and beauty which the antique statues so well illustrate, but must further give prominence to the individuality and local coloring that we find in nature. Nature's universal decree touching individualism, and the localization of colour, must be apparent to all. It is therefore false to introduce the chalky tints of French coloring into the richer, amber-hues of our own landscapes. This, which must be evident to every one, will in due time impress itself on the landscape painters and lovers of landscapes in foreign lands.

Not only is it the artist's duty to follow as his light will lead; but it is imperative that he use his every power to uproot prejudice, and promulgate truth.

Photography, in a very large measure, is responsible for the despicable condition into which portraiture has sunk. In its early form, the daguerreotype, it contained at least a semblance to truth, though the hands were often larger than the head, and the feet would have done service for some Brobdignagian. These, however, were merely difficulties of perspective, diffi-