

THE TEACHING OF ART AND DESIGN.

To the Editor of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER.

SIR,—The article on the above subject in your May issue calls for some comment. I for one feel delighted that you are able to state "It is gratifying to observe that in Canada this subject is attracting attention," and I fully endorse your opinion "as to the importance of the relation which should subsist between the teaching of art and design and the development of a nation." But surely some of the clauses in the comprehensive resolution adopted by the executive committee of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association on 28th April last must have been adopted either in ignorance or purposely to pervert facts with a view perhaps to induce the government to pay the entire cost of educating apprentices.

The first six paragraphs contain the well worn platitudes of after dinner speakers, only that an important omission occurs, viz., that the tide has turned back on France, which 50 years ago sent designers to England to such an extent that nearly all the chief positions were then filled by Frenchmen, while to-day scores of English (South Kensington system men) are filling positions as designers in France and in their chief industry too, viz., that of silk manufacture.

The report goes on to state, in par. 7, "In Canada no strong effort has yet been made to develop in our schools the art needed in our manufactures. While our industrial establishments are giving every sign of extensive development and expansion, every facility should be afforded by our government to supply competent designers to them and in no way can this be so well done as by equipping and supporting industrial art schools, where art and technique work hand in hand."

I must take issue with this report. 1st, there has been a fairly strong effort made by the Ontario government to supply this need, as art schools have been established in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, London, St. Thomas, Kingston and Brockville; but it is the Ontario manufacturers themselves, with but few exceptions, who have done so little to aid these schools financially, or to give employment or encouragement to the students who have been trained in them. Taking Hamilton art school as an example, situated as it is in a manufacturing centre, the government gives a grant of \$400 and about \$150 more for certificates taken. This is not bad, but when compared to a similarly situated school in England having about 200 students (the number annually enrolled in Hamilton), the English government would grant about as many pounds sterling and pay the expenses also of the Principal while visiting the metropolitan museums and industrial art exhibitions, and sometimes in foreign countries as well. The government there pay also 50 per cent. of the cost of buildings and equipment, the manufacturers subscribing the bulk of the remaining 50 per cent. besides liberal donations towards annual expenses and local prize funds—and no doubt the government here will do the same when the manufacturers take the initiative.

In Hamilton I am sorry to say the names of manufacturers are almost conspicuous by their absence from any list of subscribers. Even when this school was started in 1886 and forty citizens subscribed \$50 each, only six manufacturers' names appear, two of whom make soap, and one, factory-made clothing; these have little use for design in their business, leaving only three others who could use designs—but even these three do not employ a designer between them; they get their "patterns" from the States. There is the same lack of support to our annual expense fund, for we get a sum not exceeding \$10 from manufacturers, while other citizens subscribe more liberally.

In paragraph 8 of report, it stated: "It requires years to develop acknowledged lines of design in art," etc. True, and if fairly dealt with it will take time to regain confidence. I have heard many sad accounts from other Canadian cities, but must take them as heresay; I do know, however, that out of hundreds of students in this city, scarcely any have been able to earn a livelihood in Canada—in fact they might graciously give their services to Canadian masters—but had to go to the United States to earn an adequate salary. Let me quote a few instances of those who have secured employment here. The manager of a large factory has been antagonistic to this school for ten years because he has to pay \$1000 a year to each of two employees, who improved themselves by studying with me, and he has bemoaned that prior to the advent of the art school he got these hands for about half that sum. When asked if he would dismiss them, he replied, "They are good help, and maybe I should have to pay more if I got Englishmen or Americans to do the work they are doing." Another firm employing a man to work a machine, hearing that he was attending classes at the art school gave him at first a little drawing to do, then more and more, and when the man asked for a slight increase in pay he was sharply told "No! we can fill your place many times over in half an hour." He having a family, had to accept the old rate of wages or leave the city to get other work. Another firm on hearing that an apprentice was attending the evening class, brought work from other departments for this apprentice to do, besides his usual work, but not

one cent was paid for it, and worse still, for three months in the winter when work was slack this apprentice was paid off and might starve for all the firm cared.

Paragraphs 11 and 12 state: "Whereas there are no existing schools constructed or equipped to meet the necessities herein alluded to, resolved, that this association use its efforts to induce the proper authorities to establish or contribute to the support of schools of art and design in the manufacturing centres of the country that will promote the growth and development of our industrial institutions." These schools are already in existence. They have been getting some help from the government for many years. We need more, and possibly would get it if the manufacturers seemed disposed to bear their share of the burden. Now sir, let me state, that it is a most difficult thing for a young designer to get a Canadian manufacturer to purchase a design, no matter how good it may be, as the custom has been for years to reproduce only articles designed in other countries—pirating the design—and is it any wonder we hear grumbling on all sides that Canadian made wares do not find foreign purchasers when they have no distinctly Canadian characteristics of either novelty or beauty? Allow me also to draw attention to another reprehensible practice, viz., when a designer offers his designs for sale he is frequently asked to "leave them, as [the 'manager,' or 'gentleman,' who attends to this is out at present but the designs will be shown him when he returns; call again, please." This time the designer is informed the firm regrets being unable to purchase the designs at present—they are good practicable, saleable things, and there should be no difficulty in disposing of them; but the firm do not inform him that they have taken either photographs or tracings of them, or even put them in execution with slight modifications during the twenty-four hours of possession, or will do so in a year or so. To check this dishonesty the government should grant greater facilities for copyrighting designs, and then make it as much a penal offence to steal the product of brains as objects of material value.

The resolution leads one to think this committee consider there is not a school or an art master in Canada. I will speak for myself and leave others to do the same for themselves. Without egotism I wish to inform them that there are few English art masters who have had better training in all branches of technical design than myself, having devoted 30 years to this work, studying at South Kensington during seven years of this time, and I have visited France, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland and Germany on various occasions to gain knowledge on this subject. In regard to this school, I must inform them that the premises of the Hamilton art school were specially built and equipped for this work. In it will be found thousands of copies of the best examples of industrial art. The manufacturers may have been influenced by some of their employees who discredited the work which is being done. As an instance, some time ago two of my students sent some designs for sale to a large manufacturing concern. The reply came that the company were surprised that designs as good as those submitted could be made in Canada, but their buyer decided it was still necessary to go to France twice a year for designs. Of course any one could see this man's semi-annual trip would be stopped if Canadian designs were used. I have some of these designs by me, and the letter received in reply, which I will show to the Editor of the CANADIAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDER should my statement be discredited. I will also give him in confidence the names of the firms and employees referred to in this letter. Apologizing for taking so much of your space, I remain sir,

Your obedient servant,

S. JOHN IRELAND,
Principal Hamilton Art School.

LEGAL.

Alexander McFarren, a ratepayer of the city of Toronto, recently brought action against the Public School Board charging them with having violated the plumbing by-law in connection with the sanitary system in use in the Church street school. At the first hearing of the action before Magistrate Kingsford, the case was dismissed. The prosecutors appealed to the County Judge, who gave the following as his decision: "I am of the opinion that any brick pit built within a building without connection with the drains, and used, or intended to be used, as a privy, the construction of which allows the deposit of filth to accumulate and remain in the said pit, and attached even to a ventilating system, which, under conditions likely to arise, creating back draughts, allows the contaminated air or gas to escape therefrom into the building, is prohibited by the by-law. * * * No one is at liberty to construct a privy pit such as is in use in the Church street school." The appeal was, therefore, allowed, and His Honor ordered the defendants to pay \$5 and all costs of the action, including the costs of the appeal. The case has now been carried to a higher court.