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#### THE WOMEN'S ART ASSOCIATION OF CANADA.

N September, 1387, a group of young women was organized in Toronto into a self-governing, mutually helpful society on the same plan of work and study as that of the Art Students' League in New York. A large, well-lighted studio was opened in the Yonge Street Arcade in connection with the Associated Artists, but separate from them, and in that studio, those young women used to meet and work together—drawing, painting, modelling, and also sketching from still life, and the living model, which was a new step in art education in Toronto.

These young artists carried off the Government prizes and medals at the Toronto Exhibition in 1888, and they were very ambitious to pursue the work that was being done by serious students in Paris and New York. As there was no opportunity of seeing good pictures, or hearing lectures on art, they undertook the initiative in Toronto—and later in other parts of Canada—of gathering together good pictures, and holding loan exhibits. They also held exhibitions of their own work, and arranged musicales, and lectures on art, illustrated with photographs, gravures and etchings.

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Friends were invited to spend an hour at the studio on each Wednesday afternoon for art conversation, which was followed by a lecture—the first Wednesday of the month, however, being reserved tor talking upon composition, and for criticism of the students' efforts in that direction.

Those art talks and lectures were the precursors of the delightful Art

Study Club, and the organized lecture courses of after years.

In 1889 the first Art Loan Exhibition was held in Toronto. Along with the Club's work in painting, drawing and industrial design, more than fifty loaned canvases were exhibited for the purpose of giving the students an opportunity of studying some of the pictures in Toronto, and of giving the public a chance of seeing them.

So, already, there had been inaugurated Exhibitions, Lectures, Courses in Art, At Homes, Musicales and Sketching Clubs, and the next advance was a proposal by the Director to effect an organization that should not only be a bond and centre of interest in Toronto for Canadian women artists, but which should, through various branches throughout the country, form a wide-reaching circle permeated with the same idea (courage and purpose in art) as the Head Association.

Consequently in 1890 the Club was incorporated into "The Women's Art Club," for the purpose, according to its preamble, "of creating a general interest in art, and the encouragement of women's work, and for mutual help and co-operation among its members, and the holding of

Art Exhibitions and Art Conversations."

Three Exhibitions were to be held annually. At the Spring and Autumn Exhibitions—which were to be public—only original work done by women, members or non-members, was to be admitted subject to the approval of the Club Hanging Committee.

The officers elected were: President, Mrs. Dignam; Vice-President, Miss E. Armstrong; Secretary, Miss M. F. Pattullo; Treasurer, Miss C. D. Osler. The Patronesses were: Mrs. Armstrong, Mrs. Irving Cameron, Mrs. John Cameron, Mrs. Edgar, Mrs. Farrer, Mrs. Falconbridge, Mrs. H. H. Humphrey, Mrs. McPhedran, Mrs. MacVicar, Mrs. Featherstone Osler, Mrs. B. B. Osler, Mrs. John Payne, Mrs. Robt. Sullivan, Mrs. Street.

The motto chosen was that of the old Plantin Printers of Antwerp:

"Labore et Constantia."

The active membership consisted of about a score of women, resident and non-resident, the annual fees being, for resident members, \$10; for non-resident, \$5, and for honorary or associate members, \$1—of whom there were a large number, including several artists in the United States.

The Club was conducted on the same lines as previously. The members worked from life, studied the history of art, and the development of the different schools, and were always ready and willing to give a helping hand to any advanced artist or serious students. The Club was doing good work, and it soon became a valuable stimulus and centre, in drawing to a focus much artistic ability that would otherwise have become scattered, or have become lost in desultory or misdirected effort. The Spring Exhibition of 1891 contained work from women in Toronto, Goderich, Brantford, London, Kingston, California, Birmingham, Ala., and New York. At this Exhibition the Club had the distinction of issuing the first illustrated art catalogue published in Toronto. It contained the first pen and ink illustrations done by the members, and which represented some of the work on view. As the allegorical cover indicated, by Labor and Constancy, a new realm had been reached in the flight of the Club, which advance was as startling as it was unexpected.

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The Women's Art Club had established a reputation at home for energy and ability, and it had gained so much recognition abroad that for the Spring Exhibition of 1892 excellent work was sent in from different cities in the United States, and over 200 exhibitors were represented from Toronto, Montreal, Portage la Prairie, Winnipeg and other Canadian centres. The public was invited to view the exhibit without charge.

The Club was now incorporated into The Women's Art Association of Canada.

Nearly all the women painters of Canada, many of whom are among the best-known artists of to-day, were enrolled as active members, and the increasing list of patronesses and associate members contained many well-known names. The Society continued to live up to its motto, "By Labor and Constancy," and while the work showed the influence of academic and foreign training, it presented Canadian subjects, and was characterized by earnestness of purpase, and steady advance with regard to subject, composition, treatment, quality and variety.

No instruction was given—that could be obtained in art schools, and private studios, at home or abroad—and the adherence to this principle was the cause at this time of a slight disatisfaction. A few members failing to appreciate the Society's broad aim and outlook toward the future, wished to turn its fine rooms into a studio with an instructor, but as the patriotic spirit of the Association had been fostered too strongly to yield, the movement was rejected, and the disaffectants withdrew to open their own studio under a newly-arrived teacher, where they pursued their work for about one year. The object of the Association was and is, to provide—not instructions, but an incentive and help toward self-development; to draw out, independent of the instructor, personal resources, which are necessary to individual and distinctive effort, and which alone can produce growth.

In 1891 the Association moved into beautiful new quarters in the Canada Life Building. In 1893 it affiliated with the newly-formed National Council of Women. The year 1894 reported active branches of the Association in London, Winnipeg and Montreal. Wherever there was sufficient interest to warrant it, a branch was formed to carry on, locally, the aims and objects of the Head Association, which now revised its Constitution in order to provide by-laws for the branches, which henceforth continued to spring up, until they were established at London, Winnipeg, Montreal, Hamilton, Brockville, St. Thomas St. John, N.B., Kingston, Portage la Prairie, Ottawa, Peterborough, Charlottetown, P. E.I.; Moncton and Fredericton, N.B.; Fernie, B.C.; Owen Sound, and Edmonton. Representatives were also appointed in Vancouver, Victoria, London, Eng.; Edinburgh and the Hague, Holland.

Several branches at various times have been discontinued for lack of local directing effort.

In 1897 the Association affiliated with the Women's Institute of London.

An important part of the work of the Association was now being done by the associate members, who acted on committees in connection with exhibitions, lectures, social functions, and the work being undertaken in the various fields of new endeavor. This was particularly marked during the great Portrait Loan Exhibition in 1899, for the success of which credit is justly due to some two hundred members for their valuable and untiring efforts on committees, in arranging and classifying the exhibit, attending to social functions, musical programmes, editing, printing, publishing, catalogues, etc., etc.

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Also, with a view to interesting the public, and to showing the relative standing of Canada in this branch of industry, as compared with other countries, a notable Exhibition was arranged in 1900 of the handicrafts and art industries at which women work, such as—lace, embroidery, metalwork, basketry, book-binding, wood-carving, pottery, leather work, weaving, rug making, etc., illustrating different periods in their development in different countries.

This Exhibition was the first of its kind held in Toronto, and it aroused an interest which resulted in the organization by the Association and its branches, of the competitions for the promotion of practical designs.

To sustain the interest thus awakened, and to concentrate it intodefinite purpose through an intelligent and well-informed public has since been the continual care of the Association in its work towards the ultimate end of arousing the State to a realization of its responsibility for furthering the arts and crafts industries of this country after the example of the Governments of older worlds.

In connection with the hand-book issued by the Government for the Paris Exposition of 1900, important data was gathered for the statistics regarding Canadian women in art, music and the drama, by the President of the Association, who read a paper that same year on "Purity in Art and its Influence on the Well-being of the Nation." before the Art Section of the International Congress, in London, England. At this time the Arts and Crafts Association of London, promised assistance to the Association through interchange of exhibits, and the Women's Institute thereupon sent out to the Association its first foreign exhibits of painting and craft work.

Special efforts have been made to exploit the homespuns of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, and under the auspices of the Canadian Government. large exhibits have been sent to International Expositions at St. Louis, Edinburgh, London and Melbourne; for the latter, arrangements were made by the Hon. President, the Countess Grey, who had taken up the interest in the W.A.A.C. of her predecssor, Lady Minto. Similar hand to any advanced artist or serious student. The Club was doing exhibits were also shown in several European centres. In connection with the Quinquennial Congress, a permanent depot was arranged by the Association, with the Society of Artists, Bond Street, London, Eng., at the close of a very large and successful exhibit held there in the rooms of the affiliated Society, the Women's Institute. The Home Industries have become a very important work of the Association.

In the hope of consolidating a movement towards a Woman's Building, the Association now offered to other organizations the use of its fine new galleries and studio in the Confederation Life Building.

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It also entered heartily into the work of the Art Leagues, that were organized for the purpose of improving the environment of children in their school life.

In 1902 the exhibitions of imported foreign pictures were instituted for the purpose of showing the great schools of water colorists, in which Canadian artists at that time were particularly concerned. The imported exhibit of 1903 was augmented by the addition of the pastels and cartoons of Willy Sluiter, and it was afterwards placed on view by the Winnipeg and Montreal Branches.

A new seal, designed by Mr. Howard, was adopted by the Executive.

While the Association is doing pioneer work in art education in Canada, and while it offers social and educational opportunities for sendevelopment of a very high order to the individual and to the community, it has always manifested a spirit in sympathy with the advanced thought and movement of the age, which is in some degree indicated by its affiliation with the National Council of Women of Canada, the Women's Institute of London, Eng., the Toronto Society of the Archæological Institute of America, the Toronto Guild of Civic Art, the National Society of Craftsmen, New York; the Toronto Local Council of Women, and by its friendly relations with the International Art Club, London, Eng.; the Women's Art Club of New York; L'Industrie Feminile Italiane, Rome.

The direct influence of the Association, by its effort for the cultivation of taste, and the elimination of the superfluous, is upon the *Canadian* home, and its consequent influence upon the nation is easily perceivable.

Its great purpose is not commercial, but through the awakening of public intelligence on the subject of art, its aim is to stir artistic impulse; educate artistic ability; promote artistic growth; and produce artistic accomplishment, a condition which is surely being attained by the united and persevering efforts of its members, "By Labor and Constancy."

From the President's report of last year: "In the history of this Association the past year will be marked by an event of very great importance to us: the purchase of the building where we now meet, and its adaptation to the purposes of our various activities. Much of our regular work has been for a time necessarily interrupted, but before the end of the season our various departments of work have gradually become well organized, and all our excellent and efficient committees busy." The growth of the Society has been such as to require a permanent home suited to its needs. A tea room is supplied for the use of members and their friends. A series of afternoon Musicales and Lectures (on Art topics) takes place on alternate Wednesdays; on two Saturday evenings in the month the Guild of Arts and Crafts meets for lectures and discussions; on two Monday afternoons in the month lectures have been arranged at the Royal Ontario Museum and have proved most interesting; there are also many additional events through the year.

The Association has a national charter granted by special Act of Dominion Parliament, is thoroughly organized and equipped for the consinuance of its work for Canada and Canadians in the field of art in its broadest sense, and pays tribute to the press for its generous support at all times, also to its friends who have never failed to respond to any call upon their time, means or influence, and to the loyal help of its members in their untring, continuous and strenuous work.

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