

A PLEA FOR ART

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IT does not seem to me that the love of Art and its practice—and by Art I mean both Decorative and Plastic Art—has fully shared in the great progress made in the Nova Scotia universities of late years. The best evidence of the development of Art is its application to the active life of a people, and only by this test can we judge public appreciation of its value. Upon this evidence I ask—where do the people of Nova Scotia stand to-day in their love of what is beautiful and their encouragement of those who create beautiful things?

There is nothing in the character of our people or in the physical outlines of our country that should interfere with our appreciation of Art. The spirit of Art is not influenced by climate, race or time; it flourishes amid the snows of northern winters as well as under the sun and warmth of the softer south. In either case Nature affords abundant material to inspire the soul of the artist. I know of no country affording more scope to the ideal of the artist than our own Canada. Its mountains, its lakes and its forests are not exceeded in beauty and nobility by those of any other country in the world. What country has produced men more worthy to be perpetuated on canvas or in marble than the fathers of our race and the makers of our Canadian history? Nothing is more abiding, nothing more uplifting to a nation's pride than the spectacle of its history emblazoned by the ennobling handiwork of its artists.

Turning now to the more productive and practical side of life, what do we stand to gain by the cultivation of the Fine Arts? What is there more moving or instructive in the great galleries of Europe and America than exhibits of ecclesiastical Art wherein is taught the great lesson of service and sacrifice? What can better or more effectively illustrate the progress of the arts of peace than to perpetuate canvas representations of the houses, the furniture and the industries of our great grandfathers, as compared with our own productions of to-day? The development of architecture through the different periods of the world's history can be studied only through the faithful interpretation of Art.

The outlook of the artist is world-wide. This is well illustrated by the splendid Exhibition of the British Empire at Wembley,

where, in the Palace of Arts, you may see not only the Art of the United Kingdom, but that of all the overseas Dominions—Canada, South Africa, Australia, India. One of the most arresting features of this glorious Exhibition is to note how artists overseas have felt the influence of the characteristics of their different homelands. Equally important is the Palace of Industries where the value of the applied Arts in textiles, manufactures, musical instruments, even children's toys, and indeed the industrial products of the whole British Empire, may be seen illustrated by countless examples of skill and taste.

As a Canadian and a Nova Scotian who has been privileged to see most of the Art galleries of Europe and to note their influence upon the lives of the common people, I desire intensely to see my native province possessed of the artistic advantages common to most civilized countries. It is not to the credit of a province which has now passed its youth and reached maturity that no public Art Museum exists, where under such mellowing and sanctifying influences the artistic tastes of the people can be developed. The question that arises in my mind is, how such a want can be best remedied. Assuming that the provincial universities included in their faculties a professor of this subject and a school, the inauguration of a public Art Gallery might be greatly aided by natural association between the universities and the central Art Museum. Exhibitions in the galleries of the Museum of *selected* work of the students would be held from time to time, where exhibitors who have been invited would have the privilege of seeing their works shown for a season. This co-operation on the part of the schools of Art would aid in providing material for the Art Gallery, and it would secure for the productions a certain merit that would mean marketable value for a sale.

My second means for securing material would be by loans from public and private collections, following the system customary in Great Britain, where the Museums of Art in the great cities are constantly aided by loans from South Kensington and other great Museums in the metropolis.

My third source would be purchases by the Government of at least one good masterpiece of painting or sculpture each year. A Government indifferent to the influences of Art neglects its duty to one of the great sources of any national culture. I cannot believe that any Government would refuse to contribute to what would become a great provincial asset. To impart to the minds of the intelligent an appreciation of the difference between vulgar

imitation and cultivated taste is one of the greatest advantages that the province would derive from an Art Collection. And it would involve no great expense.

What I am advocating must necessarily have rather a humble beginning. We cannot expect, from our youth in the early days, works of inspired genius. The homage men pay to faith, love and beauty, as seen in the foreign galleries, will come later. There they have the patronage of kings and the wealth of the nations; they represent the history of dynasties and great movements of past generations which are now seen only through the mists of time. We may not expect immediate attainment of masterpieces; but the spirit of the past, the present and the future may be fused in the perpetuity of Art. Such a Museum might preserve and express that beauty which is the inheritance of all, without distinction of race, language or country.