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The Value of International
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Jessie Woodward Hargis.

The Value of International Expositions in the Culture of Art.

An international exposition may be defined as a collection for display of the fruits of the industry and art of all nations. It is a time of progress for every race when new life is spread broadcast over all the world, when art becomes of industry an ally. But one should not interpret art by the popular use of the term to mean painting; in its true meaning it embraces painting but also includes many other branches. In its truest and fullest sense it includes a

knowledge and appreciation of the beautiful. How, by means of international expositions is this love of the beautiful made of value to the different nations? Before the eyes of the people of all classes are brought the noblest, most beautiful productions of man. Even since mediæval times it has been the custom of people to hold national fairs, and by these we have formed an international intellect in art.

Prince Albert of England proposed the first international exposition. This was held at London in eighteen hundred and fiftyone at which time all

people were surprised at the movement. Then for the first time, England became awakened to the realization that she herself was in some ways far inferior to other nations. In the arts she found in France her peer and this fact was an unwelcome revelation. By the next exposition, in the short space of four years, we find a great advance in her cultivation for art and a greater advance in enthusiasm. To quote Russell, "England had been struck by the amazing superiority of some Continental nations in the beauty and grace of design" which

sufficed to convert clay and flint
into valuable and invaluable works
of art in earthenware and glass."

As the rain gently falling from
heaven infuses new life into every
withered leaf, so did this first world
fair create new life in the minds
and ingenuity of men. The good
Prince consort, realizing the
refining influence of culture in
art, sought every means by which
to stimulate this in the minds
of the people. It was then that
he established academies of design,
distributed works of the great
artists, trained men to become
teachers of art. By these means

he succeeded in awakening the people to lead nobler, more beautiful lives.

By the Crystal Palace a new spirit was created. After this, within a quarter of a century eight world's fairs occurred, when Paris, London, and Vienna received all nations.

At Philadelphia in eighteen hundred and seventy six the United States opened wide her arms to every nation. Upon the United States herself this had a most broadening influence, for however unpleasant it may be to dwell upon it, our native country had become exceedingly narrow.

Raised high by her victories of a hundred years, she had become perhaps too self-sufficient. Thus she learned, much to her chagrin, by comparing her progress with that of other nations.

This was true also in the field of art. It would be impossible to deny that she had proved herself capable of producing masters as efficient as those of Europe at that time. What European nation could surpass in painting the portraiture of Stuart, the historical and religious painting of Reynolds, of Copley, in short of fifteen

other masters who flourished during the first century of the Republic? These all possessed much power in causing the masses to cultivate a love and knowledge of the beautiful. However, America found herself deficient. Now she experienced the same sensations as England twenty five years before. Of this Senator Hawley says, "The exhibition had not closed before our potteries changed their forms and struggled for grace, finish, and decoration to meet a more refined and elevated popular demand. In like manner we

changed our taste in glass-ware,
and plated ware, in gold and
silver work, in paper hangings, in
curtains and carpets, and all
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and particularly in domestic
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advanced, and the supply
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Of the real benefits derived
by America in comparing her
culture in art with that of
nations whose lives had
surpassed hers hundreds of
years, these benefits only may

be judged by the comparisons
at the greatest of world's fairs, at
Chicago in ninety-two.

To attempt to describe the
beauty and splendor of the
buildings in their outward
appearance would be beyond
power. The soul of the most
uncultured person would yield
to a thrill of delight inspired
by these palatial structures.
They alone could not fail to
inspire an appreciation of the
beautiful. Of this Sir Walter Besant
wrote, "It is Dreamland. Apollo
and the Muses with the tinkling
of their lyres, drown the bells

of the train and the trolley;
the people dream of peace; Art
and Music and Poetry belong
to Chicago."

But let us turn to the
Building of Liberal Arts, that
huge structure covering over
forty acres of land by the blue
lake. Within were booths of
every nation. There Germany
displayed the great wrought
iron gates by Ambrüster, finer
works than which America
had never witnessed; it was
there that France proved
herself unsurpassed in
architectural display; there

Russia proudly exhibited her
bronzes; England displayed
the magnificent exhibits of her
potteries; there in the art of
silver-smithing America triumphed
over all nations. From these
displays America found for
herself many rivals.

Perhaps the influence of
the Columbian Exposition for
prompting culture in art has
been unrivalled. In sculpture
a single illustration of its
universality may be shown.
In every form sculpture has
become popular, but more
particularly in decorative art

from the triumphant Clewney
Arch recently erected in New
York, to the uncostly, yet comely
plaster-of-Paris casts ornamenting
the interior of almost every
American home.

France is on the threshold
of another great world's fair.
By towering high above all other
races in art she will put forth
every effort to make the grandest
display of art known to the
world. It would be vain for
any nation to cope with her.
But for every nation it will
be a time of greatest
enlightenment; a time when

the eyes of all people will
be opened to behold many new
and beautiful things; a time
when the minds of men will
awaken to thoughts of beauty
before undreamed.

Commencement Oration of Jessie Woodward Hargis, Class of 1900

Transcribed by Meg MacAvoy, September 2008

Edited by Krista Gray, September 2008

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changed our taste in glass-ware, and plated-ware, in gold and silver work, in paper hangings, in curtains and carpets, and all manner of interior decoration, and particularly in domestic architecture---The popular taste in engraving, etchings, paintings, and sculpture advanced, and the supply hurried to meet it.

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of the trains and the trolley; the people dream epics; Art and Music and Poetry belong to Chicago.”

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France is on the threshold of another great world's fair. Towering high above all other races in art she will put forth every effort to make the grandest display of art known to the world. It would be vain for any nation to cope with her. But for every nation it will be a time of greatest enlightenment; a time when

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