

THE SEVEN ARTS



AN EXPRESSION OF ARTISTS FOR THE COMMUNITY

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DURING the summer months, we sent out the following statement to American authors:

It is our faith and the faith of many, that we are living in the first days of a renascent period, a time which means for America the coming of that national self-consciousness which is the beginning of greatness. In all such epochs the arts cease to be private matters; they become not only the expression of the national life but a means to its enhancement.

Our arts shown signs of this change. It is the aim of *The Seven Arts* to become a channel for the flow of these new tendencies: an expression of our Amer-

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ican arts which shall be fundamentally an expression of our American life.

We have no tradition to continue; we have no school of style to build up. What we ask of the writer is simply self-expression without regard to current magazine standards. We should prefer that portion of his work which is done through a joyous necessity of the writer himself.

The Seven Arts will publish stories, short plays, poems, essays and brief editorials. Such arts as cannot be directly set forth in a magazine will receive expression through critical writing, which, it is hoped, will be no less creative than the fiction and poetry. In this field the aim will be to give vistas and meanings rather than a monthly survey or review; to interpret rather than to catalogue. We hope that creative workers themselves will also set forth their vision and their inspiration.

In short, *The Seven Arts* is not a magazine for artists, but an expression of artists for the community.

Some of the response to this may be seen in this number. But we are only at a beginning. Such a magazine cannot be created by either work or wishing. It must create itself, by continuing to exist. Its presence then becomes a challenge to the artist to surpass himself. He reads his contemporaries, and a sportsmanlike rivalry springs up which evokes his best effort. So a community spirit arises: and out of this once again, as it has before, among the Cathedral builders, among the Elizabethans, a genuine and great art may spring.

“**A**MERICA AND THE ARTS” was written for us by Romain Rolland, immediately after word had reached him of the founding of *The Seven Arts*. Coming as it does from the foremost literary figure of the new

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French Liberal movement, its interest is rendered perhaps still more poignant by its author's present situation. For M. Rolland's stand against hate and indiscriminate blame has won him a hearty and powerful hostility among the chauvinistic and sectional leaders of his country. Before the War, his message of internationalism, his plea for a European spirit, his profound study of the fallacy of boundaries in thought and culture, were welcome enough throughout intellectual Europe. But with the movement of the Armies, the tempest of blood and outrage that ensued, most of intellectual Europe disappeared. It was as if the cataclysm that levelled so many edifices had swept along with them the outstanding minds of the European nations. The crowd-wave of passion did its work even more perfectly than the wave of iron. Men who had been thinkers talked like fools; men who had been artists lost the vision and truth of feeling that had distinguished them. After the first wave, few of the eminent minds of Europe were found standing above the intellectual ruin. And among those few, Romain Rolland was almost alone in France.

He has felt this solitude and suffered by it. To what depths, his later writings show with tragic clearness. The failure of the leaders of his country to understand his ideal for it has been a great blow for Romain Rolland. And yet, despite his martyrdom and the martyrdom of France, he has found the spirit to give us a message of faith.

In times of extreme trial, only rare minds know themselves. If many of his countrymen have denied Romain Rolland, it must mean simply that many in France, as in Germany and England and Russia, have been denying themselves. For the authenticity of the French spirit voiced by Romain Rolland needs no clearer title than these words addressed to us. They are indeed typical of the amazing soul of France, whose role it has been, before this, to speak for the world.

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IF the War is a destroyer, it is also a creator. The philosopher, the artist and the teacher may snap back to a primitive state, like elastic bands released from their strain, but the population rises to a consecration very similar to that of the philosopher, the artist and the teacher. We think of a Bergson and a Rodin as giving their lives to the unnecessary, to the future. In war the unnamed millions go that way. The mill-hand may spend himself for something as great as "The Hand of God." The young, the able-bodied, the gifted are slain: the lands are scarred with cripples: the homes become bleeding fragments of families. But the nations are going through an experience of life and death: they are enduring again the ancient disciplines of heroism and of sorrow. They have died that they may be born again.

There is, however, this difference. A Rodin voluntarily suffers devotion to a vision out of which something joyous is wrought, an addition to human wealth. But the soldier falls under the compulsion of the herd-instinct and is devoted by his passion to a vision out of which destruction and death are wrought, a loss of human wealth. We shall never cease from war until the mass of the race achieves a greater growth, until the millions volunteer to suffer creation.

THE trouble with outstanding minds is that often they are not in the skulls of outstanding personalities. That is one reason that the war has levelled down so swiftly the thinkers and the scholars and the artists. A man may evolve out of his head a marvellous philosophy or a great vision, and so project his upper half into the future: yet his lower half may be a child and a savage. He may be infantile in his emotional life and his animal functionings. Naturally then in a terrible crisis, when his nature catches fire from the general conflagration, the superstructure topples, and he is left raving in the grip of his passions.

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Only through the emotional development of the race may we have personalities whose thinking is not in advance of themselves. This is one of the tasks of art, which must lift the hidden desires into consciousness, which must tap and drain off destructive impulses, and which must save the individual through a vicarious experience. We have Othello to save us from jealousy, and Faust to save us from inaction, and Jean-Christophe to lead us to heroic battles of peace. And in an age that has lost the supreme emotional growth through religion, what is left but art?

THE artists themselves, however, have been in the greatest danger from lack of emotional development. Modern art has become, for many artists, self-conscious and intellectual. The artist has longed to be a scientist: to make the exact description, to be psychologist or sociologist, to construct his work according to a predetermined theory. The painter who says he will go deliberately back 25,000 years to the archaic and primitive, is applying an intellectual process to creative work. He would be a child, but is merely childish: for a man cannot be a child, but merely a dwarfed and stunted man.

It is no wonder then that the terrific sweep of war has blown to pieces so much of modern art. Such art could not meet the tests of life and death, "the corrective of reality." It was a pose the artist lost as soon as he was in danger. For it takes a Goethe to stand above the battle and then go to his room and continue his work. Why should war make a difference to him? This new reality does not crowd out the old, because it is all of a piece with his experience. But he who creates an artificial world of intellect, and is suddenly confronted by the real world, loses the one and is utterly lost in the other. He is dazed and confused, a fool among men.