

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

1892 APR 9

FOLDER NO.

JAMES J. HILL PAPERS

PLEASE RETAIN
ORIGINAL ORDER

"Worth twice the money it costs."—Judge.

KATE FIELD'S WASHINGTON



PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY AT

39 Corcoran Building,
Washington, D. C.

115 Twenty-third St. East,
New York City.

Washington, D. C., *Apr 9* 1892.

The Shureham.

Dear Mr. Hill;— Mr. Foulke
tells me that you were
here for a day and I
sincerely regret that
I did not know it
at the time.

Several weeks ago
I asked you by letter
whether you would
be an honorary

members of the Wash-
ington Society of Ar-
tists to whom I confi-
ded the care of the
Art Congress. Since
then a change has
taken place. This
Society failed to de-
velop the energy re-
quired & informed me
that there was not
time to do the work;
so I at once or-
ganized the Na-

"Worth twice the money it costs."—Judge.

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Washington, D. C., 189

Art Association
of which I now send
you a circular.
Consider the previous
letter withdrawn
and let me now ask
a better question.
You have been e-
lected a member
of this Association.
Will you be one

of its Vice-Presidents?
We want every section
of the country repre-
sented and no one
knows what may
grow out of the idea.
Can you come to
the meeting in May,
you and Mrs. Hill?
Mr. Bourke Cochran
of N. Y. (Dem.) has
charge of a free
art bill in the

"Worth twice the money it costs."—Judge.

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House and, I think
if it passes, the House
we can get it through
the Senate.

I am now beginning
to pay bills and
shall be glad of
your generous sub-
scription. I find
some of the sub-
scribers yet as

ready with their
checks, as I should
like.

Hoping you can
come again to
Washington, believe
me

Very truly yours,

Kate Field.

Reprinted from Kate Field's Washington, of April 6, 1892.

NATIONAL ART ASSOCIATION.

I tell it once more in order to explain the birth of a new association destined perhaps to play no small part in the advancement of popular taste.

Instigated by Mr. J. Carroll Beckwith, President of the Free Art League which includes almost every American artist, I appeared, by request, before the House Committee of Ways and Means on March 27, 1890, and argued against retaining a tax of thirty per cent. on paintings and statuary. My reasons were these facts: Before 1861 there was no tax on foreign art in this country. In 1861 a tax of ten per cent., the lowest of all, was instituted as a war measure. This comparatively mild burden was borne for twenty three years. Then artists asked for its abolition, and Congress replied by increasing the tax to thirty per cent., making the burden two hundred per cent. greater in peace and prosperity than during the period of bloodshed and financial depression!

The history of the passage of this thirty per cent. measure is significant reading.

It was *not* advocated by the press.

It was *not* demanded by the people.

It was *not* recommended by the Tariff Commission.

No bill was introduced or considered.

No legislator proposed or advocated it.

Congressional requirements were not complied with.

Senate and House disagreed on details of a bill on general tariff.

The committee of conference inserted two or three lines which were passed unnoticed, March 3, 1883.

Does not such a trick savor of dishonesty?

Taxation is justified by two reasons, revenue and protection. This increase, therefore, was an outrage; for revenue was not needed, and artists wanted no protection.

The law was disastrous in its results. Duties fell from \$307,000 in '83 to \$191,000 in '84, a decline of forty per cent., while general trade only fell seven per cent., and jewels advanced.

The sales of American artists decreased, the demands for American art lessened. The export of paintings amounted to \$387,000 in '83, and fell to \$176,000 in '84. Foreign nations remonstrated, as well they might; for in Italy, France, Germany and Russia, art is free; while in all other countries, except Servia and those speaking Spanish, it is taxed only eight per cent.

Keeping out foreign art decreases popular interest in art, deprives home artists of inspiration, and renders their work less valuable and less profitable. To claim that this tax falls solely on the rich, is to ignore artists who are, as a class, poor. It is to forget the people who are dependent upon public sales, exhibitions and museums for their knowledge of the beautiful, whereby they become better educated and consequently make better citizens. Not only this, but it is to forget all artisans who are prevented from attaining a high standard of work in many industries.

Not the least objectionable feature of this outrageous tariff is the resentment it inspires in foreign artists, and the difficult position in which our own art students abroad are thereby placed. Our young men and women go to Paris and are received with open arms, never paying a sou for their education so far as public galleries and instruction are concerned. Their works are well hung and generously treated. They make reputation which brings them fortune, more or less great. At the Exposition of 1889, American artists received one hundred and four medals and recompenses, the largest number ever given to a foreign country. We repay this magnanimity by virtually slamming our doors in the face of Europe. We said to Millet when sent here for exhibition—an exhibition of incalculable benefit to the artists and public—"Remain in bond longer than a year, and you must pay into our Custom-House thirty per cent. of your value." So this wonderful educator was galloped through the country in order to get back to New York in time to take a steamer before the twelve months were up!

The history of the fight for free art in this republic is a twice-told tale to many of my readers, but

"We don't want a tariff on foreign art," sing American artists in chorus. "Wool-growers may want a tariff, but we object. It is our ruin." "As long as wool is taxed you shall be," reply demagogues. "You represent the rich, wool represents the poor." So pulling wool over the eyes of their free-trading constituents, they pose as friends of labor! Farmers cannot long be hoodwinked by such sophistry. Give the United States free art and the sons and daughters of the soil will learn that the family chromo is but the dawn of beauty.

Twelve hours after my address, I received this delightful note:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON.

DEAR MISS FIELD: Governor Gear and myself were authorized to inform you that, after your eloquent plea, the committee unanimously voted to place art on the *free list*. The Governor wishes to join with me in congratulations.

Yours truly,

SERENO E. PAYNE.

It seemed too good to be true. In one brief hour's argument, a tax of thirty per cent. had been taken off art! Yet so true was this assurance from the Committee of Ways and Means that the McKinley Bill passed the House without a moment's discussion about this art clause.

I knew so little then of politics as to believe the victory won, despite the cold water poured upon my ardor by an editor who had seen far more of Congress than I, and better understood its methods. "Don't be too happy," said he. "There's the Senate. Nobody knows what changes it may make in this tariff bill."

Alas! that wary man was right. The Senate restored the thirty per cent. duty, but in conference, a compromise resulted in leaving a tax of fifteen per cent.

Disappointed but not disheartened—for half a loaf is surely better than no bread—I began to wonder what should be done next. As a woman had done some good to art, I saw no reason why my sex should not persevere until the removal of the last burden. Then I thought of Mrs. Harrison, the first lady in the land, who, practically interested in art, could do it royal service. This idea so grew upon me that in the WASHINGTON of the 5th of November, 1890, I suggested that Mrs. Harrison give a special reception to American artists, who had never yet been officially recognized by a republic claiming to be founded on intelligence.

Warmly responding to this appeal, Mrs. Harrison signified her desire to honor art, and it was decided, after much consultation, that at the proper time American artists and art patrons should be invited to meet Congress socially at the Executive Mansion. Out of this idea has sprung the National Art Association, organized for the advancement of art throughout the country, with special reference to the Capital.

HONORARY PRESIDENT, Mrs. Harrison, Executive Mansion.

PRESIDENT, Daniel Huntington, Ex-President National Academy of Design.

HONORARY VICE-PRESIDENTS, Hon. L. P. Morton, Vice-President of the United States; Mrs. Morton.

VICE-PRESIDENTS, Albert Bierstadt, F. D. Millet, Augustus St. Gaudens, Wm. M. Chase, E. F. Riggs, C. M. Foulke, F. Colton, Jefferson Chandler, Thos. E. Waggaman, M. M. Parker, C. J. Singer, C. L. Hutchinson, Jas. W. Ellsworth, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Beriah Wilkins, Mrs. George Hearst, Mrs. Potter Palmer, Mrs. H. K. Porter, Mrs. Candace Wheeler, Mrs. Bellamy Storer, Mrs. S. V. R. Cruger.

TREASURER, S. W. Woodward.

SECRETARY, Kate Field.

Our plan as so far conceived is:

I. An Art Congress at Washington, called May 15, for the advancement of Free Art.

II. Organization by the Government of a Commission of Art and Architecture.

III. A National Loan Exhibition of Paintings by American artists, none but the best works being asked for.

IV. A reception at the Executive Mansion, tendered by Mrs. Harrison.

At first the Loan Exhibition seemed impossible for want of a proper *locale*; but, thanks to Professor Langley, President Welling, Hon. John B. Henderson and other patriotic officials, the chapel of the Smithsonian Institution has been placed at our disposition. Thus the acorn planted two years ago already rears its head above the ground and promises to become a fruitful oak.

KATE FIELD.

Faskally, Pitlochry
Scotland. 9th April 1892

Encls.

My dear Mr. Stibb

I duly received your cable stating that the announcement respecting the issue of Colliery Bonds has been very well received in New York. Here, as I cabled you, some of our friends, who had been led to expect a 5% Bond at 80, were, for a moment, a little disappointed; but that has now all passed away, and I have no doubt every holder on this side will take his share of the new Bonds. The enclosed note from Lord E. of Kinnaird expresses, in a general way, the first feeling here; but I have no doubt you had good reasons for adopting the form of Bond decided upon, and nothing would have been said here had you thought of informing me a little beforehand of



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