

THEY HAVE NO SKILL.

EUROPEAN ARTISANS EXCEL
AMERICANS IN ALL TRADES.

Children are born to Crafts—Good Materials but Poor Artists—Lessons Taught by the World's Fair—A Nation's Dilemma—Art Pottery and Painting.

Now that the World's Columbian Exposition has passed, and there remains but the lingering and indelible impression in our memories of its incomparable beauty, it is but natural to dwell upon its possible effect on the creative and decorative branches of handicrafts. The exhibits of porcelain, glass and the higher grades of decorative terra cotta from foreign lands at the fair should have proved conclusively to all Americans following such crafts the inevitable necessity not only of originality of thought, but the removal of crudities by the constant and patient study of the work accomplished by the artisans of older countries. The greatest difficulty that Americans have to overcome is the absence of inheritance in any branch of the artisan's work. Nothing is obligatory. If the emigrant father, which he is more than apt to be, is a cutter of fine glass, it does not follow that his progeny will be glasscutters. They are more than likely to carry hods. Through such vicissitudes all possibility of inherited skill is dissipated. It is difficult when considering this subject not to refer to the too frequent use of the machine in place of the hand in the construction of artistic articles, also to the poverty in American schools of the teaching of even the primary perceptions of beauty, form and color. How can they expect to become a creatively decorative nation without even rudimentary knowledge of the subject. They have made great strides in that branch of art applied to the embellishment and furnishing of homes. In this branch they have expressed originality, and have been consummately clever in their imitiveness.

In England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Austria and Japan, the countries of the world that produce lovely and artistic bric-a-brac and glass, the artisans hand down their artistic ability, not only from father to son, but through generations. The children are born to crafts, educated to them, and are happy in their possession of them. The American's love of the dollar, and his impatience to gain that dollar, is one of the nation's curses. In America it is not the meritorious result of his work, but rather what the monetary gain will be from its sale. It must be that this unprecedented opportunity which has so recently been enjoyed in the viewing of porcelains at Jackson Park but result in an improvement in all American productions. They are no longer in their infancy; they have excellent clays and a goodly share of artists that would gladly devote their labor to the perfecting of artistic pottery.

The highest ceramic art in America today is Rookwood pottery. The impulse which inspired the venture of its establishment came from the Japanese display of porcelains at the Centennial exhibition in 1876. The clays of which this facience is made is found in the Ohio valley. The embellishments are entirely under glaze and express much originality of design. The color grounds are good, especially in the darker notes. The depth of the luster is also very lovely and quite equal to the porcelains of Japan. Yet this factory has presented little novelty in the shapes, but they are for the most part well-balanced compositions. This beautiful American pottery has surprisingly few defects. Its most unfortunate feature is in the fact that it is never seen to advantage when massed; this difficulty can only be overcome by the enlargement of its color range; there is too great sameness of color results. The color scale of Rookwood pottery is almost invariably either from pale yellow running to rich blueish greens or from browns to reds. They have attained close following of the Japanese, both in designs and the luminousness of their glaze; let them continue to imitate the matchless oriental potters, until they have been successful in producing the pale pistachio color, the apple-green, sea-green, dull coral, peach-blow, turquoise, a faint and pale lavender. Several of these colors have been attempted, but they have not the requisite softness which is indispensable in the lighter notes of color. Rookwood pottery is a feature in a room, seldom an accessory, which quality is a defect in an ornament. The birth, growth and improvement of this American production is unparalleled, and it has a great future.

The exhibits of the various American ceramic clubs, leagues and societies at the fair vined little improvement over past years. It was curiously wanting in freedom, force and originality. There was an incalculable expenditure of toil in the decorating of many pieces, but a large percentage were the efforts of artists mentally miniature and showing only self-direction in their labors. The methods employed were primitive, this peculiarity being due, it may be, to self-restraint. Why this particular branch of decorative art is so popular, it is difficult to determine; for there is not even now, after the World's Columbian Exposition, a forshadowing of an American school of china painting. There were a few examples of exquisite work from England and France, which it is to be hoped, were studied by American artists with beneficial results. They have several artists that are most successful in the decoration of china, but their lovely work, as exhibited in the Women's Building, was lost sight of in its unfortunate association with specimens which came from places remote from art centers, places where the students relied upon art publications for their ideas of design.

The superb English porcelains, especially those from the factories of Wedgwood, Copeland, Minton, Cauldon and Coalport, are exquisite, both in texture and glaze; they have attained such a standard of perfection that nothing can now be desired of them but new notions of embellishment. Many have an idea that each of the English factories do their own decorating, which is not the fact. There are in Great Britain several mammoth corporations that manufacture the porcelains, either from their

own models or from those designed by outside artists that make a specialty of decorating fine china. The finished articles are sold by the decorators or agents, not by the manufacturer. The English now possess the art of reproducing the most lovely old porcelains, in fact their reproductions of Sevres are more exquisite in their notes of color than anything now made in the Sevres factory.

The massing of useful and decorative china of English make at the fair was impressive. Many new thoughts were expressed in it; and very safe ones for the American manufacturer to follow. The English table china is equal to any in the world; its designs seldom offend. Chicagoans were large purchasers of the table service, and the ones to remain here are without an exception the most lovely displayed in the English division. One full dinner set that will embellish a very lovely home has as a decoration on its milky-white surface testoons of the poetical laurel, the natural tonality of the leaf being followed. There is a springtime freshness suggested by this green and white decoration that is to a degree refreshing. All colors have been tried and used on tables, but few are successful. Green is always acceptable, it is the complimentary color throughout the floral world, and as it increases the beauty of a rose, it adds to the embellishment of a table. Green will, without doubt be the prominently used color for table decoration this coming season. A lovely set of Swansea porcelain, a reproduction of that made in 1815 (it now being almost impossible, except among old collections of china, to find an old bit of it), also remains in Chicago. The design of this old porcelain is bunches of tight old-fashioned roses. The shapes are quaint and quite a little gilt is introduced in the decoration. The Minton factory has become famous for their "blue turquoise," as well as their "Rose Dabarry," two colors for many years made only in perfection by the Sevres factory, but with all the perfection attained by the porcelain factories of England, they have much to learn from the Japanese in both shape and color; the quality of their ivory white is not equal to that of Japan, but the glaze of their productions is even more luminous.

The Japanese can teach the nations of the earth many lessons, aside from instructing them to make the most exquisite porcelain and shippo ware that is made in the world. They show delightful urbanity, and almost superhuman patience, not only in their work but in their daily life. As they have taught the Americans much, they have also profited greatly by the intercourse at the world's fair with the people from the four corners of the earth. Let them not absorb the habitual impatience to produce in a month what they produce in a twelve-month. They have always been a highly sensitive race and have always kept apart from the rest of the world. For many years they were confused and erroneous. The first somewhat sudden and abundant bringing of bric-a-brac from the orient did much harm. The importations were as apt to be spurious as genuine, and it has taken many years to get a just appreciation of the exquisite Japanese ceramics.

There are today in Chicago three of the finest private collections of Japanese porcelains in the United States. They are not large collections, but contain so many valuable specimens that they have been a source of pleasure to connoisseurs even from the orient. These collections of porcelains have been much enriched by additions to them from the beautiful exhibits that were exposed in Jackson Park. The one-color pieces in powder blue, tea color, green, lavender in globe-shaped vases and gallipots, that are to remain there are surpassingly beautiful. Many selections were made from a comparatively new porcelain called "Hirato." It is luminous white, and some examples are relieved by a little Chinese blue, and in some instances, as an embellishment, the white clay of which a vase is made has in places been worked to the thinness of transparency. The modeling of these articles has been accomplished with great skill. An exquisite bottle-shaped vase in a shade of soft primrose yellow, with a decoration of the stork, which is to the Japanese the emblem of long life, which was shown in the Liberal Arts Building, is now placed in one of the finest collections of oriental porcelains in Chicago. The useful china of Japan is inferior to that of any other country both in design and glaze. The Japanese are such clever artists that they will return home with new thoughts of table china, and before many years there will be found in European and American markets a table china worthy to be called Japanese porcelain.

The craze for blue and white for decorative purposes was stimulated by the exquisite exhibits of it at the World's Columbian Exposition. Rooms are being made Dutch and English so that the use of the Holland and Rouen delft can be made appropriate; permissible. The one fault, it such it can be called, this lovely ware possesses is that its colors are so strong that all the decorations and furnishings of a room must be subordinated to it. The magnificent tile picture of "The Burgomasters" after Rembrandt's famous canvas, which formed such a conspicuous feature of the Netherlands exhibit, was twice sold in Chicago. The original is to be placed in the home of a prominent financier on the south side and the duplicate in the home of a millionaire on the Lake Shore Drive.

Very Cool About It.

Nelly had been waiting in the parlor for her lover's return, for what seemed to be an age. Her young heart turned to bloodstone as she thought of him, young, slender, but brave to rashness, closeted alone with her stern father in the grim old library. The door opened at last, and he stood before her unscathed, a flush on his cheeks, and a strange expression in his eye.

"Did you see papa, Will?" she asked, with trembling eagerness.

"Yes, dearest," he answered.

"And what did he say, Will? Tell me what he said. He refused; oh, your eyes tell me he refused; he will not give me to you. But I will be, I am yours! I do not fear his harshness—we will fly."

But he only looked down on her pleading face like a dream.

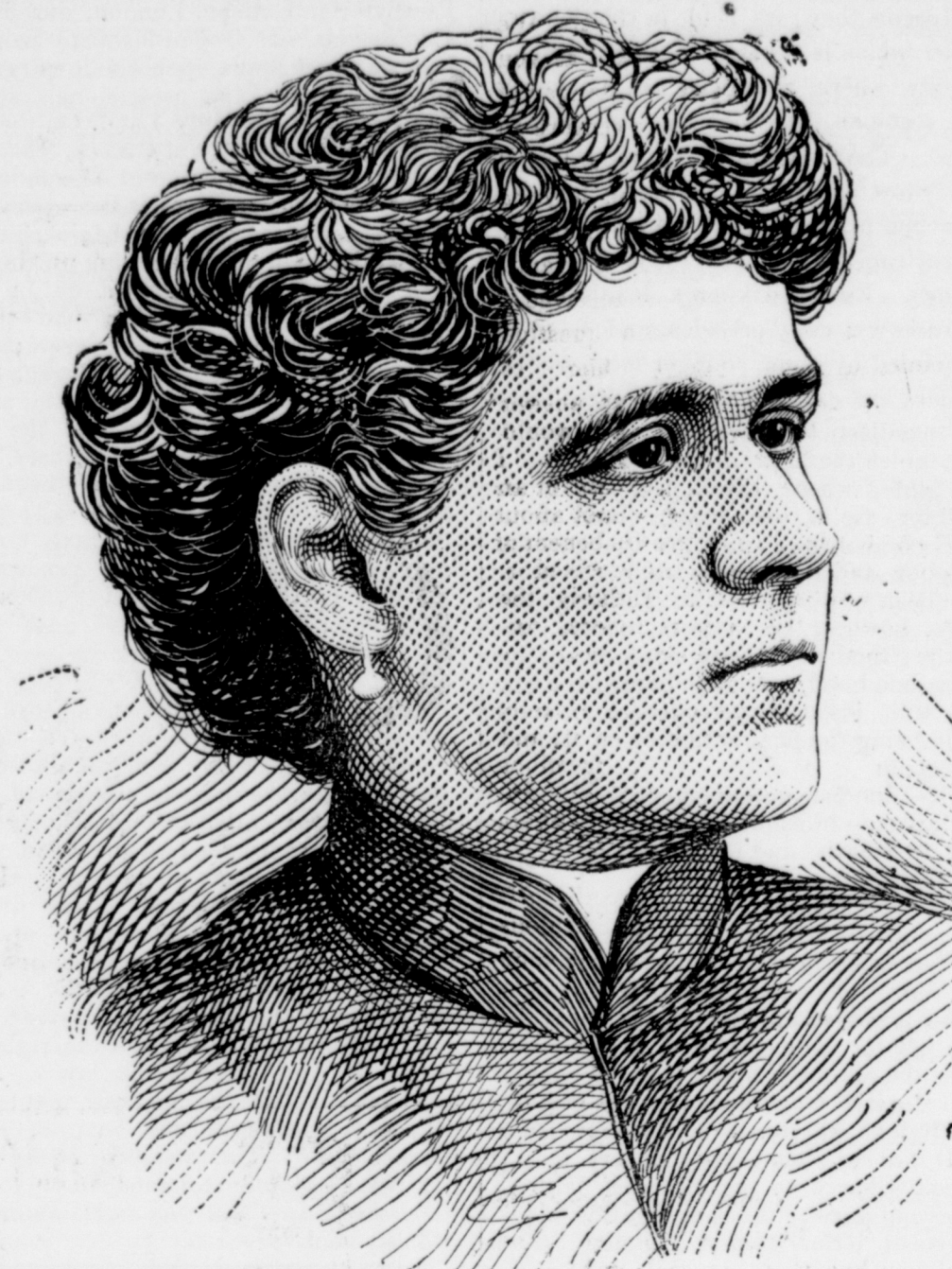
"Tell me, then, for I cannot wait," she burst forth again; "was he brutal and cruel to you? What did he do? What did he say?"

William Longton drew a long, deep breath and whispered slowly, "He said 'Thank Heaven!' and went on writing."

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Rev. J. E. Cox, of Windsor Mills, vouches for the above as follows:—"I hereby certify that the above statement is correct."

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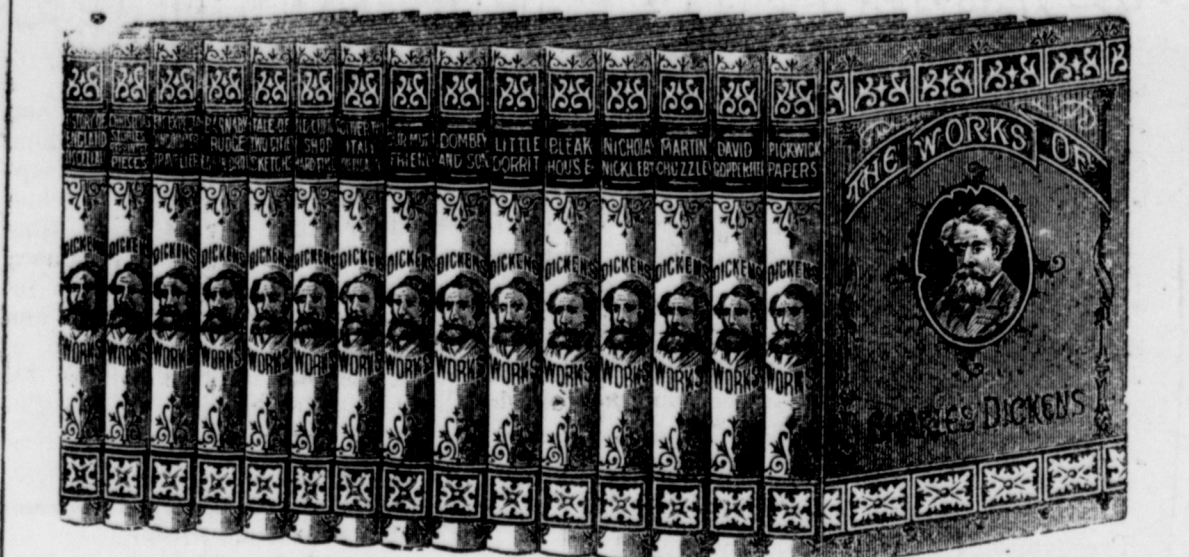
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