

OUR ART DEPARTMENT.

The Canadian Amateur.

MID-WINTER EVENINGS AT HOME.

Continued from last week.

If she carves deftly with her knife while she is still a young girl, and her muscles are yet soft and unsteady, she may count upon a certain means of livelihood when her hand secures the forces that belong to maturity, and her taste is cultured by observation and comparison. The boy may possess a latent and unsuspected talent for art and architecture, which if it exists will be sure to be found out and developed by these amusements.

Energies that are vaguely directed, or perhaps not directed at all, are likely to be neutralized if not destroyed by mischievous powers in the human mind. Something definite and pleasant to do in the Winter evenings most likely requires thought and weariness on the part of the mother, but its most difficult details are infinitely less exhaustive than to look upon a child's too early longing for excitements that can only be found outside of the household.

To see discontent and restlessness early filling the brains and hearts of immature people is the most dangerous symptom of future worthlessness, and all this a mother can cure if she will only substitute in time a pleasant preoccupation for the roaming and naturally unsatisfied and spreading thoughts of the small people.

Occupation, if competitive and aimed at superior results, is quite as delightful to a trained and intelligent child, as the pleasantest of useless amusement.

FRET-WORK.

The fret or jig saw is no new invention; it is as well known as any cabinet-maker's tool. Formerly we only saw fret work on a music rest of a piano, and now and then on a screen; now, there is not a man or a boy, who, if he does not own a saw or knife, knows very well what it is and what it is for. The first thing of the kind introduced into Canada was the bow saw, of which a large quantity were sold. Then came the machine, and when the Fleetwood came into use every one thought it was perfection, but it has been improved upon and now it is hard to find a Fleetwood anywhere. There have been many cheap machines made by our American neighbors, but none of these last long because they are too cheap. The best machine in the long run is a good one. Nine times out of

ten where a man or boy gets a cheap machine and it will not work, it is thrown aside and fret sawing is said to be a fraud. Fret sawing is a fine art and ought to be encouraged; as it is, a great many have been astonished by what has been done with it, and it is not near perfection in this country yet. Sorrento, Italy, was the place where the work was first started, there the people have great taste for it and make a good living out of it. The designs they used were anything but good, too much work upon them for to look nice; but in this country we have some fine productions of artists for the work, any one who has seen the foreign designs will agree with this. The Americans claim that the finest machine was one of their inventions, but when they made this assertion the "Dirigo" was not in use, only by a Canadian who built one for himself 10 years ago. Now no other machine can be sold beside it; for a first-class machine it stands without a peer. From the one design or pattern made of the Dirigo there have been sold from Toronto nearly 1000 machines. The Industrial Exhibition gave it a big push, for nearly every person who visited the fair bought articles cut from these machines. When the business was first started in Toronto most people thought it would die out in a year or so, but it is a mistake, there being more demand for machines, wood, etc., than ever, and the day is not far distant when the Seroll Saw will be as necessary in every house as a Sewing Machine. To give an idea of the amount of work done in Ontario, last winter one firm in New York shipped to a Toronto House, 25,000 ft. of Holly, beside other fancy woods; of saw blades there must be sold together by dealers and hardware men upwards of 50,000 gross per month. From returns at the United States customs, there was over 500,000 blades passed the different ports each month. Of course the work has been very popular over there, but we are just as smart people as our cousins, and we ought to go in for the art as there is no telling what can be done in it. For instance all inlaid work that is used here comes from the States; now there is nothing difficult about inlaying; it has been explained very often in the *Amateur*. It can be made here by those having a taste for the finer work of the saw. As we have said before, the blades are all imported, being made by Swiss workmen; each tooth is filed out by hand, yet they are sold for 15c. per dozen, or \$1.25 per gross. We never recommend a cheap machine, a hand saw is better, but to work with it is slow and laborious, as compared to a foot power ma-

chine. Inlaying can not be done with the hand saw to any extent, as you require to keep the lines and sweeps very correct or it shows up bad when finished; in fret work it does not matter so much as the space is left open, but we would advise the hand saw in preference to the cheap machine. With a bow saw you can show more ability of what you can do, because it is then the workman rather than the tool. Hand saws cost about \$1 to \$1.25, with designs, blades, etc., all ready to start. Amateur work should be confined to wood of 1-16 to 3-8, beyond this thickness it is only fit for cabinet makers. Boys or beginners should start with a bracket of leaves or scrolls; always avoid straight lines to start with as they are more difficult. Among designs that can now be bought for scroll sawing and inlaying are boxes, screens, table-tops, book-racks, easels, wall-pockets, clocks, photo frames, pen racks, thermometer stands, vases, card receivers, watch rests, paper knives, match boxes, and in fact every thing one could think of. The saw can only cut a vertical line, and always through the wood, just as a sewing machine can only make one stitch and always through the cloth. This seems a very restricted capacity, but ingenuity soon discovered how to make it answer for all work, except button holes, and ingenuity will probably in like manner enlarge the application of the saw to purposes of ornament. This is, however, limited to cutting on the parallel sides with straight edges. The execution of fine work rests entirely with the operator. It is not a carving tool, it cannot paint pictures, but it can cut out a silhouette very natural. You could get a sketch of any person and if it is a good resemblance of them, when cut the representation is perfect—you can almost saw the expression. Another idea that the saw can be used for is that of over-laying. This simply consists of cutting out the design of Veneer or 1-16 stuff, glueing the figure to the thicker wood; the colors of course must contrast. Over-laying may be used for the ornamentation of panels, etc., but do not do this if the work is going before a critic, because an art critic hates anything that is not solid work. But when you can get in a shaving or rather see in a shaving all that you would have in the solid work, here is no fraud because you know it is veneer, and where is the necessity of solid wood when the veneer looks as well and it is just as strong when finished. It would be very well if we could have everything solid, but a great many things are just as well to be good on the top and backed up by something strong behind.