

The extraordinary thing about this lack of realization of Canadian art, is that it is the foreigner who has seen its possibilities. To-day the great centres of tourist attraction are flooded by copies of "Indian" totem poles, blankets and other objects—made in all probability in Japan, the United States, Czechoslovakia or Switzerland. They have attempted to produce images similar to our totem poles and to incorporate designs from the British Columbia Indians. Such copies are crude and for the most part ugly and lacking the symmetry, grace and simplicity of the true art. The tourist—and the Canadian public—have seen these articles and for want of something better have accepted them as examples of the "crude Canadian art." The genuine article can be obtained if the tourist is willing to look to the right places and to pay a high price, for these images of totem poles, usually in black slate but sometimes in wood, are the result of much labour and skilled workmanship—they are from the hands of artists. Small totem poles of this class cannot be produced by mass production. The old craftsmen are rapidly disappearing and their masterpieces are becoming scarce. Meanwhile through the "false" foreign product people have learnt to look upon Indian art as crude, and grotesque.

FRENCH CANADIAN HANDICRAFTS

To those, who have had the pleasure to travel through the province of Quebec and especially along the banks of the lower St. Lawrence, the memory of the French Canadian homespun must remain. Travelling through the sleepy villages of whitewashed houses visions of the past are awakened. Here still the hand loom is at work, the spinning wheel may be seen in operation and the result of the labour displayed in the glaring sun for sale. These homespun are a product of old French Canada. They were not originally Canadian, coming from France, but the years of isolation from the mother country, the settling of Scotch and other soldiers along the banks of the mighty St. Lawrence, have produced designs and methods which are found only in Canada. For years the products of these people, all speaking the French tongue but many with the names of Murray, MacDonald and other Scottish clans, have attracted the tourist. Whether the tourist travels by motor, train or steamer he will find samples of homespun laid out for inspection. Along the fence of every homestead bordering the highways, homespun and catalogue rugs are spread proving conclusively their ability to withstand the fierces glare of the sun without losing their colour.

The Canadian homespun industry has been able to survive the competition of modern production. Credit must be tendered to the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, the railways and steamship companies, the Quebec Government and other organizations which have struggled for many years to preserve this native industry. Naturally the tendency of the habitant is to introduce more and more machinery and to buy wool ready for his loom instead of producing his own. Murray Bay, the centre of the industry, is an excellent sheep country and every effort should be made to persuade the farmer to produce his own wool. Canadian homespun possess a charm of their own and a distinction that is lessened as machines are used in their manufacture. It does not take much foresight to realize that if modern machinery displaces the old hand methods, Canadian homespun will lose all individuality and become absorbed in the woollen industry. Canada has a woollen industry of which she is justly proud, but the homespun industry is separate altogether and must be fostered alone.

Naturally against cold blooded commercial competition the true homespun workers are at a disadvantage as the labour raises the price of their articles. As a consequence there is a tendency for the workers to buy factory wool for their looms. This is to be regretted as factory made wool loses much of the charm of the native product.