

THE CANADIAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. IV.

APRIL, 1895.

No. 6.

THE ART SPIRIT.

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HUMAN life, we know, is not to be lived on bread alone. As life rises above the barest necessities of existence, it becomes more and more a thing of the higher senses. The oyster may go on supporting its limited and motionless existence through its mouth alone; civilized men and women feed also through the eye and the ear, the mind and the heart.

We are somewhat too much accustomed nowadays to substitute the word "Art" for the proper and better term "the Arts." Art is not simple but manifold. It is not a special technique, but a method and a spirit, applied to all things. The commonest necessities may be ennobled and caused to give added enjoyment by suffering that magic touch. The object of our voluntary Art Associations ought not to be the mere making of pictures, so much as the cultivation of this Art Spirit amongst their members, and, through their influence, in the community around them. Under the influence of Art, clothing early ceased to be merely a means of warmth and covering. Art arranges its folds and selects its colors. It becomes significant of taste and character. Food and drink have become the subjects of nicety and refinement. The house, once a mere shelter, enlarged in time into "butt and ben," is transformed at

length into home, sweet Home. From the days of our rude ancestors, huddling around their forest fires, wrapped in skins, uncouth and unclean, and wrangling over bones and pottage—what a miraculous change to the thousands of happy homes of the cities and towns of our fair Canada: their myriad comforts and graces, their gentle faces and refined manners! What an hourly delight are those pictured interiors; how fondly borne abroad in memory! We think of good and gracious women, whose mere entrance brings an indescribable illumination into a room. To experience this—is it not to know the consummation of civilization—the highest product of the art of Life? The same art that has brought the picture to its perfection has labored on its fitting frame. What beauty in daily surroundings! What wealth in simple common things! We eat from pictured plates, spread on snowy cloths, decked with flowers. We drink from sparkling crystal. We are ungrateful if we return thanks for food alone. We would be forgetful of the brightness insensibly reflected into mind and soul from a multitude of daily foregoing attentions:—quiet, patient ministrations, working mutual respect and mutual pleasure.

The nature of all arts is human skill