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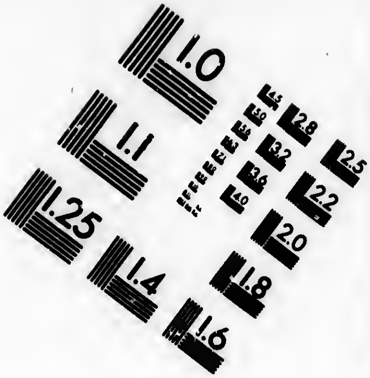

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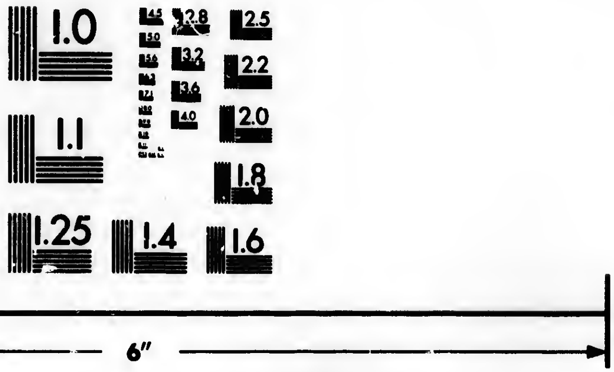

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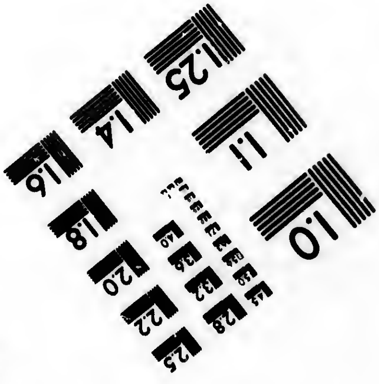

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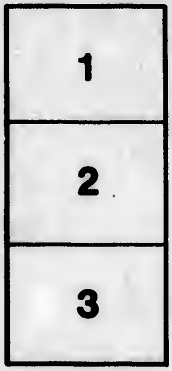

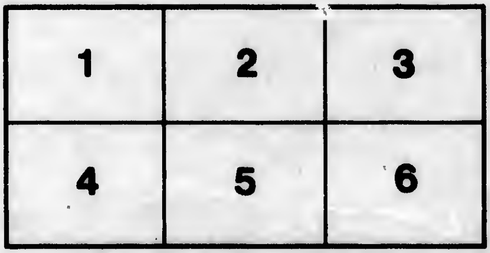

TASTE IN COMMON THINGS:

17

AN ESSAY

READ BEFORE

THE HOCHELAGA DEBATING CLUB, MONTREAL,

BY

ALFRED BAILEY, ESQ.,

ON THE EVENING OF THE 15TH MARCH, 1858.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLUB.

MONTREAL:
PRINTED BY SALTER & ROSS, GREAT ST. JAMES STREET.
1858.

PREFACE.

The following Essay was read before an ordinary meeting of the "Hochelaga Debating Club" in connexion with the Mercantile Library Association of Montreal. It was written as an Essay to be *delivered*, and not as an Essay to be *perused*. I need hardly say that I never had the slightest thought of publishing it. My kind friends of the Club, having manifested an interest in the subject, requested me to let it be published by them. I have done so, hoping that it may call attention to a matter which we, as Canadians, have, as I think, too much neglected; and at the same time, far from thinking that any small effort of mine can do anything more than perhaps induce other and abler minds to enlist themselves under the banner of "Taste in Common Things."

Having thus explained the circumstances under which the Essay was written, I have thought it best to publish it as it *was* written, without change. The only matter which I have added is contained in the few explanatory notes in the Appendix.

A. B.

MONTREAL, April 3, 1858.

TASTE IN COMMON THINGS.

THOSE gentlemen belonging to this Club who did me the honor to ask me to read an Essay in this Hall, coupled their request with another—'that I would take for my subject something neither political nor exclusively local." Not being by education or position a mercantile man, and not being a sufficiently long resident in Canada to have attained much knowledge of the commercial, political or social affairs of the colony, I thought it more respectful to these gentlemen and the Club if I wrote on a subject on which, from professional study, I felt more at home—a subject in some way connected with the fine arts. And I am particularly anxious at starting, to define precisely what I mean by the term "fine arts." I mean certain arts which though not absolutely necessary to man's social and physical existence, nevertheless appeal strongly and pleasureably to his senses and imagination, contribute in a great degree to the health of his mind, and add very considerably both to the refinement and force of his intellectual power. Such are painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. In a somewhat but not much lower rank, I would class oratory and the histrionic art; and in a lower grade still, I would claim a place for courtesy, good breeding, conversational elegance, and all those little nameless graces which adorn the characters of those beings whom, in the best sense of the misused terms, we call "ladies and gentlemen."

Another point connected with the fine arts must not escape us. That either in their origin, their tendency or their application, while remaining essentially distinct, they are at the same time intimately connected with nature. I will try to illustrate this. Perhaps one of the greatest works of art that the world has ever seen, is the old Greek Mythology. That was a great people who, entirely destitute of any notion of a revealed religion, found themselves, like the leaders of the French Revolution, under the necessity of inventing one. And although they could not in their finite imaginations conceive any Deity without human passions, still what an immense superiority have these old Greek fables over the sensual and cruel priestcraft which is even at the present day the curse of Asiatic nations.

There is a well known and oft quoted sonnet of Wordsworth's on the origin of these myths which wonderfully illustrates the connection of art with nature. The poet first depicts the peasant of Attica meditating on the diurnal course of the sun, its fresh and early dawn, its fiery midday career, its slow, splendid and apparently reluctant decline ; and then how by the easy process of a poetic imagination he likens this glorious orb to a youth in a fiery chariot ; how fancy soon invests this youth with a god-like attribute ; makes him the representative of light, heat and the life-giving principle ; the exponent of manly beauty ; the patron of the beautiful ; in his hand a lyre ; his rays metamorphosed to darts of fire from a silver bow. Such was that splendid creation of classic imagination, Phœbus Apollo. And then as the bright luminary disappeared, and forth came the moon with her attendant stars, how easy it seemed to the same luxuriant fancy to conjure up

"A blooming goddess and her nymphs."

This is an example of art derived directly from nature. Now let us go once more to poetry for illustrations of unnatural art forced to return to nature to make itself perfect. When the genius of Shakspeare had almost spent itself in depicting the varied phases of human life, it seems to have gone almost as a relaxation to the supernatural :—

" Each shade of many colored life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new."

I speak not now of Banquo's ghost, or the shadow of the Majesty of Denmark, but of his most fantastic creations of fairy land, such as " The Tempest" and the " Midsummer Night's Dream." We shall find strong touches of human nature in his most imaginative beings. Take for instance Ariel revelling amid the storms of

" The still vexed Bermoothes,"

launching lightning and thunder on the tempest-tossed bark, saving every creature in the vessel, and then quietly grumbling like an overtasked laborer about having done too hard a day's work for too little recompense. Take again Puck, endowed with every fairy attribute, but with a most mortal propensity for child-like practical jokes ; and last of all, Oberon and Titania, the fairy King and Queen, exercising a sway even over man's thoughts and feelings, and yet, among themselves, retaining the quarrels, the curtain lectures, and the conjugal reconciliations of the veriest Darby and Joan that ever existed. Now, had this fairy land of Shakspeare's been entirely destitute of natural attributes, it would have only seemed to us absurd and incomprehensible, or at least as some social satire, like Gulliver's Travels, or the adventures of Baron Munchausen. It is these touches of nature which have made it art. I feel tempted to give one more very remarkable example—Milton's description of the personal appearance of Satan. He gives him a mortal shape, only makes him a giant and endowed with superhuman strength; but when he comes to the features, he sees that natural ones would be prosaic and even ridiculous, and unnatural ones incomprehensible, so he disguises the subject with one grand shadowy image.

"What seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

Although I have been thus particular in insisting on the intimate and essential connection between art and nature, I do not the less strongly insist on their distinctive individuality. "To attempt to define art," says an eminent German critic, Friedrich Von Schlegel, "as a representation or reproduction of the highest beauties of nature, strikes at the very root of its free and independent existence. Had not art a power distinct from that of nature, were it not governed by its own peculiar laws, we should be compelled to regard it as a feeble device of the ancients, a subtle contrivance by which to prolong in faint reflexion, the declining vigor of their own natural life." Raffaelle has told us that in historical painting "we should not depict men as they were, but as they ought to have been." Imagine a statue colored with the natural hues both of face and drapery. It would at best but resemble a piece of wax work, of all plastic arts at once the most life*like* and life*less*. But I would prefer to illustrate this in portrait painting, because this is decidedly a *common* thing. A portrait of an individual which is a mere accurate representation of a man's physiognomy, a senseless inanity of a pretty face, or a furiously colored indication of an honest blacksmith in rifle uniform, is certainly not a work of art. Unless that portrait give us some reflex of the mind, disposition or habits of the man, it can have little value. Many years ago, some English gentlemen brought to Europe the son of a King of some savage tribe, I forget from whence. This boy, known as Prince Lee Boo was gifted with a rare amount of acute penetration and observant intelligence. His English friends were fond of directing his attention to objects of European civilzation, in order to hear his remarks upon them. One day he was shown a miniature of a friend of his, a certain Mr. Keate. On seeing it, he exclaimed—" Missa Keate, good—very good." "Do you," said a gentleman present, "understand the true meaning of this picture?" "Oh yes," was the reply, "Missa Keate die, this Missa Keate live." The greatest philosopher could not have given a more eloquent description of the ends, uses and poetry of portrait painting. And bearing in mind this principle, that a portrait is something to live when the original is laid in the tomb, how very vain seem many of the fashionable productions of our own day. What kind of portrait would we desire to have of a deceased parent? Would we care for one of a mother decked in silks and satins as she appeared at the great ball in the year blank, given in honor of somebody or something? Or of a father as he appeared in full uniform at the dinner given to him for his gallant conduct at the battle of West what's-its-name? Would you not rather have a representation of those features as you had known them, with the every day garb and every day expression of the evening family circle—something that when the bodies had become dust, should still preserve a vivid recollection of the ordinary life of the beloved departed?

No Scotchman here present, and no one else who has ever seen the poorest engraving of it, can have forgotten that exquisite portrait of Sir Walter Scott, by Raeburn. It is related that when Sir Walter first gave the painter a sitting, he was fidgety and constrained, with an almost morose expression of countenance. In vain did he talk to him, it was no use. Raeburn saw that he might produce an accurate likeness of the man, but no indication of the mind of the great unknown. Suddenly, by a happy thought, he turned the conversation to ancient border poetry. The bard was himself in a moment. Out came the quiet smile and sparkle of the eye such as his friends knew, and such as his world-wide admirers would have wished to have known.* This is the true art of portrait painting, that art for which the finest production of the Photographer can never be a substitute.

I have been thus particular, and I am afraid tedious, in trying to define the peculiar relation of art with nature, because it is this connexion that I want to insist on always in the application of art to common things. Now I am not going to touch at all on taste as applied in the highest way. It is not probable that any of us are collectors of high class pictures, purchasers of expensive statuary, or are likely to build large and splendid mansions. Nor are there many men in this country of that stamp. It is no disgrace to a young country that such should be the case. But with all possible respect, I do hold that in the common things of this life, in the ordinary refinements and decorations of society, we are too prone to consider a display of wealth as a display of taste. "Have you seen A——?" says one; "such a magnificent house he has taken; he must pay at least such and such rent for it." "What did you give for that ring, Jack?" says another. "A hundred dollars." "Well, well! what a lovely thing." In both these cases, beauty is a mere question of *dollars*.

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* See Note A. Appendix.

I shall endeavor to-night to touch as briefly as possible on three things only.

First,—How it becomes a man to decorate himself.

Second,—How he should respectfully endeovor to decorate his wife.

Third,—How he should decorate his house.

And first, of himself. I know that the question of costume is one of the most delicate on which an essayist can touch. To the whole community it savors of personality. Let me assure you, gentlemen, that in what I say to-night, I have not in my eye a single individual in this city; and pray therefore let my impertinence be resented collectively and not individually. I know, too, that in matters of dress, there is one tyrant even more potent than the tyrant fashion—the tyrant habit. I know the edicts of this tyrant are like the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable. Against his laws I make no appeal. Were it not so, I would ask how it is that in a country where the absence of that kind of covering neither makes one eccentric or ridiculous, any man can condescend to insert his head into seven inches of stove-pipe with a flange at one end. Were it not so, I would ask, why does a man deprive himself of one of the most serviceable, as well as ornamental appendages that nature has given him, by the copious application every morning of soap-suds and cold steel to his chin.

On one point I believe we shall mostly agree—that the present fashion of male costume is one of the ugliest that the world has ever seen, and that in proportion as it becomes more and more fashionable, does its ugliness increase. To change it is impossible. We should not do it. I know nothing so contemptible as eccentricity of costume. It is the worst possible *taste*.

Bearing in mind that custom has doomed us to wear an ugly garb, does it not seem to us consistent with good taste, to make that garb as simple and unobtrusive as possible? From the days of Alcibiades, to that of Beau Brummell, can you name a single instance in which a "swell" has ever held a prominent position in the world's esteem?

> "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
> But not expressed in fancy—rich, not gaudy,"

was the advice that Shakspeare put into the mouth of a father remarkable for worldly wisdom in common things. And it is possible to make our own ugly costume still more repulsive, by loading it with jewelled decorations. I will endeavor to draw a picture of a type of a certain class of young Canada, which is to be found in great quantity during this slack season of the year, in Great St. James Street, between the hours of four and six. He is a fine, manly, good looking young fellow. Adversity has never dimmed that eye, nor has trickery or deceit ever lurked in that honest face. "Your handsome countenance, young man, does one's heart good to look upon. But do you think that your own fine complexion is at all improved by that huge red marble, which you carry on your bosom, which suggests the simile of a blue scarf, suffering from prickly heat? It is near tea time, I know. You had better consult the Seminary clock, because that very elegant little gold time piece of yours has stopped, as usual. It is really odd that so delicate a piece of goldsmith's work should require to be kept in its place by so ponderous a chain cable, most massive in metal, but hideous in design. But what is that I see suspended at your button-hole? Your charms, you call them. Dear me, allow me to see. Here is a gold dollar, a doll's shoe, a useless watch key, a four-penny piece, and sundry other nondescript articles, in a state of rattling suspense." The tasteful intermixture of a few pieces of red coral, gives the whole very much the appearance of a lilliputian bunch of carrots, combined with other vegetables. But our youth does not go home yet. He has to call at the office. There arrived, he rolls up his fashionable sleeve, to prevent it getting in the ink, displaying in the act, a jewelled wrist-stud. Before bending his head, he endeavors, but in vain, to impart a degree of flexibility to an all-round collar. From the pocket of a vest, with jewelled buttons, he draws forth a jewelled pencil case, and with a triple-ringed hand, he checks the addition of an invoice of barrels of molasses.

"Were mine an Essay on morals, young man, I might suggest that in the purchase of all this finery, you were exceeding your income, and it is remarkable that the amount of jewellery on a young man's person is generally in an inverse ratio with the amount of his salary. But be this as it may, sir, what good does it do you? Do you think that any one person respects you for your rings? Look at those in the city who have been both respectable and respected for many years; you will find none of this kind of decoration upon them. If you have any love for your own appearance, do not, I pray you, disfigure the fine person with which nature has blessed you, by loading it with a quantity of hideous jimcracks without meaning, without taste and without art. I trust that I need not allude to the contemptible snobbishness of wearing sham jewellery, for I feel certain that you would disdain to put a mosaic gold chain round the neck of your dog."

Now I am far from condemning the application of a decent portion of every man's income for the purchase of ornament, only let that ornament be of a tasteful kind—a kind that will do us good, or at least give us some prominent pleasure. With the money that many young men spend in disfiguring their persons, they might have covered the walls of their rooms with first class engravings, or might have filled their shelves with first class poetry; or if their taste was musical, might almost have bought a decent piano.

I own to great respect for the jeweller's art. God gave us gold, silver and precious stones. In His pre-eminent wisdom He made them beautiful as well as valuable. To man he gave the power of working the metals and polishing the stones. The art of the goldsmith has in all ages been considered one of the greatest and most respected of handicrafts.[*] For the privilege of patronising Benvenuto Cellini, monarchs almost came to blows; but remember that gold and precious stones have only a raw material, old iron kind of mercantile value, when put together without taste, or applied without judgment. No one would complain of a brooch on the lace frilled neck of a Charles I., of a jewelled sword-hilt attached to the costume of an Albanian Chief, or to the opal clasp on the belt of a Circassian mountaineer. There the presence is beautiful and appropriate as the garb they adorn. But let us bear in mind that when in full dress costume, we imitate the raven. Let us further imitate that sagacious bird, by preserving unsullied our own glossy plumage of spotless black.

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[*] See Note B. Appendix.

I will own to an intense love of seeing beautiful jewels on a beautiful woman. "Nay, gentle madam, smile not; I neither wish to minister to your extravagance nor your vanity. Female beauty is, I am happy to say, in Canada, a tolerably common thing, and well appreciated. Young Canada of the masculine gender requires no exhortation to improve his taste in that respect. But think not, madam, that any jewel, however lustrous, can improve your beauty in the least. Were you attired in a garment of home-spun cloth, you would win as many hearts as you do now. And yet why do we love to see you in jewels? Not for your sake at all. All the gems in the world, as we said before, can never adorn what needs no adornment; but really, my dear madam, those happy jewels do themselves look so remarkably well when borne by so graceful a wearer."

Some years ago, the attire worn by our fair countrywomen—the tight fitting sleeve, the short waist, the long flowing and flounceless robe, the small collar, the graceful girdle and the simple shawl—more nearly resembled the costume of ancient Greece than any perhaps that ever existed. And what is it now? In the name of good taste, of elbow-room, and even of decency, let us protest against the further continuance of that vile garment which we first tolerated as a freak of fashion, and ridiculed accordingly, but which now, strange to say, some of us are not only willing to endure, but even to like. I seek not to pry into the mysteries of a lady's toilette. I know nothing of the construction of this vile appendage beyond an examination of that ghastly white skeleton which used to hang from Mr. Aitkin's window. I seek to know no more. I will not sully my lips by even pronouncing its name, and that even is not English. But I do trust that all members of this Club who have wives, sisters or daughters, will tell them that we cannot stand this state of things any longer. Addison and Steele in the last century, and John Leech in our own day, have tried what wit can do in the matter. That plan has failed. Let us tell our fair friends respectfully and seriously, that this bulbous addition is ugly and immodest. What Homer most admired in Juno, after her eyes, was her queenly gait. Happy Juno! She wore no hoops.

"She walks in beauty like the night."

Not she—she waddles like a young tortoise not yet used to its shell. She resembles an inverted goblet drawn by a string across a corduroy road, while

"Not a charm of beauty's mould
Consents to stay where nature placed it."

Milton, in the second book of "Paradise Lost," has a description of a female monster who guarded the gates of the infernal regions. I commend this passage to our fair friends:—

Upon the gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape.
The one was woman to the waist, and fair,
But ended foul in many a scaly fold.

Doff the garment, ladies—doff it, we beseech you. Never mind what Godey, or Leslie, or the Illustrated News tell you; but come out again as you once did, walking as Canadian ladies *can* walk, and charming all hearts by your modesty and womanly grace.

I now come to the most important part of my subject. In our President's very able Essay on "Canadian Nationality," I think he forgot one essential element of patriotism. I mean that quality possessed so strongly by the Briton, and still more by the Irishman, German and Scandinavian, a love of his home. The restless disposition inherent to the American mind seems almost to have driven this sentiment from our hearts. We care not for our homes, we care not to make them worth the loving. One hope that we cherish throughout the year, is the hope of moving on the first of May next. Considering the varied origins of our hybrid community, it seems strange that a greater amount of home feeling does not exist. With what a reverence do we not contemplate the places where great and good men once moved. However modest the tenement may be, we know that greatness has been there, and we wish not to add one stone to the humble pile.

"Nec domo dominus sed domino domus honestanda est."

What American visiting Europe, does not make a pilgrimage to that cottage at Stratford where the Bard of Avon first saw light? Many a pilgrimage have I myself made to that old house in Westminster, now no more, where Caxton first printed "The Bible," and many a time have I turned aside from my daily walk to gaze on that tottering dwelling in a narrow passage in London where Newton first edited "The Principia." Nor is America herself deficient in associations of this kind. I fondly hope that I may one day make a pilgrimage to that honored dwelling on the banks of the Potomac where the great founder of American liberty laid his sword aside and became once more the modest tobacco planter of Mount Vernon.

With all possible deference to the abilities of the members of this Club, I do not think it likely that any of us will become Newtons or Washingtons; but I do trust that when we die we may leave behind us the characters of honest, upright, God-fearing men. If so, our haunts and habits will have an interest among those survivors that knew us. The chair in which *he* sat, the book in which *he* delighted to read, and the house where *he* lived, will still be reverenced by our children. At least, such will be the case, if we teach our children to love their home. Nothing is more destructive to this almost pious feeling, than the custom of making a home a mere display of the wealth of the occupant. To cherish and decorate our home is a noble impulse. To load it with tasteless finery, is a piece of vulgarity. Among the deities of the ancients, were the Lares and Penates, or household gods, the statutes of which stood in the hall surrounded by offerings. We have substituted a different kind of idol—a golden calf, set up above the threshold.

Some years ago, when in Germany, I met with a touching instance of attachment to home. I was shown a small and very ancient dwelling in the Jews' street, at Frankfort. In external appearance, this house had nothing to distinguish it from its neighbors in that poor quarter, except a greater amount of cleanliness and propriety. The blinds were as white as snow, and little sprigs of plants, German fashion, adorned the windows. Taste evidently reigned within. This lowly tenement was inhabited by a very aged lady, the widow of one millionaire, and the mother of three. In that house was she born; from that house no wealth could tear her. In that house, a year after, Madame Rothschild died.

And if we wish to make our homes worth the loving, taste must be there a constant guest. And think not that taste must be necessarily an expensive guest to entertain. The same sun shines on the rich and the poor. The same taste should adorn the palace and the cottage. Had my lot destined me to live in the bush and build my own log hut, even there I would have invoked taste to come and help me. There would not have been much opportunity for a display of that quality it is true. But still I would endeavour to place my log cabin where it should not injure the effect of the surrounding landscape. I would try and coax some creeping plants to trail over my dwelling. My furniture would be rude and rustic; nay, in such a case, good taste would demand that it should be so. The axe and the saw would be in more request than the adze and the plane, but however rough the forms, those forms need not be ugly. When we rent a house in Montreal, it must be owned that it is rather difficult to find one with much art on the outside. When landlords find that tenants care for their houses, then, and not till then, will good architecture be a good speculation. But still taste may do much. If the house be a new one, I would try to prevent its being painted with that painful combination of color, white walls, red roof, and green blinds. I would try to banish from my ceilings all those common-place plaster enrichments, which are bought in Europe by the yard, and I would spend the money in a little colored decoration. I would try and save the paint on my doors, and varnish the natural wood, heightening the effect with a little dark colored stain, and above all, I would be particular in paper-hangings. The taste in paper-hangings in Canada is very peculiar. We love most those that are most gaudy in color, totally forgetting that the walls of our room are only the ground to set off other objects. Bright colored hangings, too, always make the room look smaller and lower than it really is. For my own room, I would choose colors of a secondary class, such as dull reds, olive greens, peach colors, and greys, and especially those self-color papers, formed of two or more shades of the same color. The color of a paper is of more consequence than its pattern, most undoubtedly; because if the color be properly subdued, its pattern can never be very prominent. But still I would try to avoid a series of bouquets of flowers, stuck about the walls in an unmeaning manner, with the same rose in the same position, repeated at regular intervals. Nor would I care much for that patriotic paper, very popular in Montreal, which exhibits intermixed with ugly scrolls, a series of big Raglans and big Napiers, alternating with little Cronstadts and little Sebastopols.

With your permission, gentlemen, I will try and explain a few simple principles, which, in my humble judgment, should regulate the design of paper-hangings, carpets and textible fabrics generally. Nature may and in most cases should furnish the forms, but nature should not furnish the grouping. We take for instance a maple leaf. Nature disposes them in bunches. We cannot do that. The size of our printing block is limited, we must therefore on our wall repeat the same bunch over and over again. That is absurd. Nature never does that. To imitate nature slavishly will not do. Now let us take the maple leaf, and dispose it in geometrical patterns. We are much more successful. We see at once that an imitation of nature is not intended, but we have art instead; for art in its highest forms is but a conventionalism of nature. Another point to which I wish to direct your attention is, that when we design our ornament from natural types, we must entirely omit all shadows. Nature changes the direction of her shadows every hour. How absurd is it to see in our room, natural shadows cast in one direction and the artificial ones on our carpet taking a totally different line.

I produce two specimens of Indianbead work, the one the work of the Indians at Caughnawaga, the other the production of the Micmacks at Nova Scotia. How infinitely superior in design is the latter one. Now notice the reason. The one has shadows, the other has not. In one, nature is poorly imitated, in the other, cleverly conventionalized. An art for which I own to little sympathy, is that of the grainer and marbler. I do not love imitations of things too expensive for me to buy. If I cannot afford a walnut bureau, I will do with a pine one, only I will not grain my pine one to imitate walnut. Why should my poverty try to tell a lie. My wife shall never wear sham jewellery, neither shall my furniture.

The other day a friend told me of a remarkably cheap purchase that he had made—a glass candlestick for twelve cents; and yet I never saw a more ambitious design than this cheap production. Here it is—a transparent and very rampant dolphin, in the painful attitude of supporting a long Belmont sperm on the tip of his tail. For not one cent more cost, the manufacturer might have given us a really elegant design. Here is another candlestick of earthenware, which only cost a quarter dollar, and yet I have seen many a candlestick of massive plate of far less pleasing form than this very simple and appropriate one. All cheap things should have the modesty to appear simple, and if so, they will never be unpleasing.

I cannot help saying a few words about taste in color as applied to furniture; and here let us take a lesson from the fair sex. A lady wearing a red dress, does not match it with a red bonnet on her head. Far from it. She chooses a color which will both harmonise and contrast with it. And so should we dress our house. I do not know who first invented the system of having everything to match. Our paper is green, therefore our chairs must be green, our curtains green, our carpet green. This is a great mistake. Art is most displayed in the harmony and contrast of colors. Without taking up your time by going into much detail with regard to laws of color, allow me to state that every color has its complement or neutralizing color. Nature will teach us a lesson in this respect. Take a sheet of white paper and place on its centre a red wafer. In a strong light gaze fixedly on that red spot, for about two minutes; then suddenly close your eyes. In place of a red spot you will see a green one. Try another experiment. Gaze in the same way at the sun. On closing the eyes, strange colors seem floating about. In proportion as the sun is red, will those colors be more or less green; in proportion as he is yellow, more or less violet. This teaches us that green is the complement of red, and yellow of violet. If then our room should have too much red about it, correct it by introducing objects of a green color. If our yellow curtains appear to us too prominent, place a violet cover on our table. Another thing in a room is very necessary, completeness. Nothing is worse than one piece of furniture a great deal too elaborate for the rest, or vice-versa. Garrick was one day playing a new part, in which he had to represent a man in a state of intoxication. The actor, after the performance, asked Reynolds the painter what he thought of it. "As an imitation of nature," said he, "it was almost perfect; but I think that your left leg was a little too sober." Applying this principle to ourselves, how often have we not seen the effect of a nicely furnished room completely marred, by something more shabby than the rest, by some chair out of keeping in design, by some left leg a little too sober. It is very difficult to say what, in this country, we should hang on our walls. Pictures or drawings of a moderately good class, are in Canada, hardly to be found—not even in the Picture Exhibition of the Mercantile Library. But we may at least content ourselves with good engravings and photographs; and if our purse is no too low, with one of those exquisite crayon sketches of Mr. Lock's. And I hope we may have the good taste to avoid those furiously colored French lithographs so popular in Montreal, consisting of damsels with pink cheeks, saucer eyes, and scanty clothing, grinning on black grounds and labelled "La Reverie," "la Pensée" or "l'Etoile du Soir."

In conclusion, gentlemen, I cannot help saying a few words on the duty that man owes to his Creator, to cultivate his taste. For old and young, rich and poor, has He made nature beautiful past man's understanding. To satisfy man's wants has He made the soil productive; to gratify man's eye, has He made those productions fair. To supply man's commonest necessities has He given him hands to work. To effect still greater marvels, has He given him a mind to direct their motion. Look at that little instrument, a man's hand. With genius to direct it, what cannot that hand do? It can propel the shuttle, weave the imperial robe, launch a Leviathan and navigate a rapid, write a "Paradise Lost," and, still more, depict the awful splendor of a last judgment. We are slowly and gradually realizing the fact that Canada, and this Province in particular, will one day become a country of no mean manufacturing skill. In our manufactures, let us humbly imitate those of nature. While making them as serviceable as we can, let us not forget that it is also our duty to make them, as far we can, beautiful to the eye and sense. Taking a low ground on the subject, among civilised nations, art in manufactures always pays. One kind of manufacture is even now characteristically our own. We children of the pine forest and cedar swamp, are essentially workers in wood. All workers in wood by nature have a natural aptitude for carving in wood. The Norwegian carves his drinking cups and bowls, the Bohemian his boxes and tobacco pipes, and the Swiss carves everything from his house to his spoon. Now these are all by nature denizens of the forest. In natural taste and talent, the French Canadian is no exception to the general rule. He only wants a proper amount of artistic instruction to set him in the right path.

The time will come, and I hope soon, when Canada will follow the example of Europe in establishing Schools of Design throughout the country.* This will do more for our own manufactures than all the protective duties in the world. There are existing in Canada elements for creating a style of ornamental design eminently novel, original and national. I mean if Canadian art will consent to go hand in hand with Canandian botany. It is a fine exemplification of that connection between nature and art with which I started, that national art in ornamental design has generally originated in national botany. The Egyptian loved the palm—it shaded him from the sun's rays. He loved the lotus—it was present at every feast; so he carved them both on his temples. The Greek loved the crisp spiky acanthus—he trod it under foot in his daily walks; so he moulded it into a Corinthian capital. The monks of the middle ages loved the quiet repose of the Convent mead,

> "Nor herb, nor flowret glistened there
> But was carved in the cloister arch as fair."

What care we for the lotus and acanthus? Yet I have seen the one on our iron castings, the other on almost everything from the Montreal Bank to a bill-head. What do we want with English water lillies and hedge row hawthorns? Yet I have seen them in Canadian plaster work. With a little more cultivation of national taste, and a little judicious instruction to national talent, we may yet hope to see a new kind of ornamental art essentially Canadian—combinations of maize and mountain fern, of sumach and Virginia creeper, and beautiful devices made from that maple under the protection of whose kindly shade we all dwell, and which is gaining a fresh and vigorous strength from the numerous sprigs of rose, shamrock and thistle, which we are daily grafting upon it.

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* See Note C. Apppendix.

APPENDIX.

Note A.

Many years ago, a controversy was raging in England among artists, as to the proper costume for monumental sculpture. Some advocated the modern garment, some the Roman toga, some a sort of compromise between the two, in the shape of a cloak of ample folds thrown over the person. When it was proposed to raise a monument to Wilberforce in Westminster Abbey, all parties seemed puzzled. There was certainly nothing classical either in the features or the mind of the large hearted Yorkshiremen. The commission was entrusted to Mr. Joseph, who fortunately belonged to the natural school. He has given us a marble effigy of the philanthropist, thinking in his arm chair. Quaint and odd as the original, is that remarkable monument. No stranger ever passes it unobserved, but pauses for a moment to gaze on those deeply set eyes, that massive forehead, that pendentive jaw, and those ungainly limbs. Beautiful it is not, nor was the prototype; but it is a real historical reflex of the person and mind of a British worthy.

Note B.

Among the great masters of Italian art whether in painting or sculpture, it is curious to note how many were originally brought up as goldsmiths. Witness Ghirlandajo, Verocchio and Francesco Francia.

Note C.

SCHOOLS OF DESIGN.—To Mr. Walsh of Lower Canada College is certainly due the merit of first calling attention to this important Canadian necessity. I own that I am surprised that our manufacturers and artisans have shown so much apathy on the subject. In the articles from Canada in the London and Paris Exhibitions, it seems odd that the *art* displayed therein was almonst exclusively *Indian*. Our President, Mr. T. S. Brown, remarked, on the occasion of the reading of this essay, that a great natural taste was evinced by all classes of Americans, whether Canadian or otherwise, in the forms of their tools and agricultural implements. He instanced most appropriately the beautiful form and curve of the Canadian axe when contrasted with the clumsy shapes of those of the old country. From all that I have seen of Canadian operatives generally, I am convinced that there is a natural taste of a high kind within them. It should be the duty of our government to bring that out. There is not at present in England a manufacturing town of any importance that does not possess a government School of Design. We have in our city a drawing class at the Mechanics' Institute. This is an excellent thing in its way, but totally insufficient for our present wants. Whether we are to be governed by a Free Trade or by a Protective policy, we shall never be able to compete with foreign manufactures if we neglect the important element of *taste*.

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