

A Revival  
of  
Old Arts and Crafts  
applied to Wood and Leather.

*United crafts*

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3-1544

“Beauty does not imply elaboration or ornament. On the contrary, simplicity and character and the dignity which comes of them, are demanded in the interests alike of practicality and of art.”

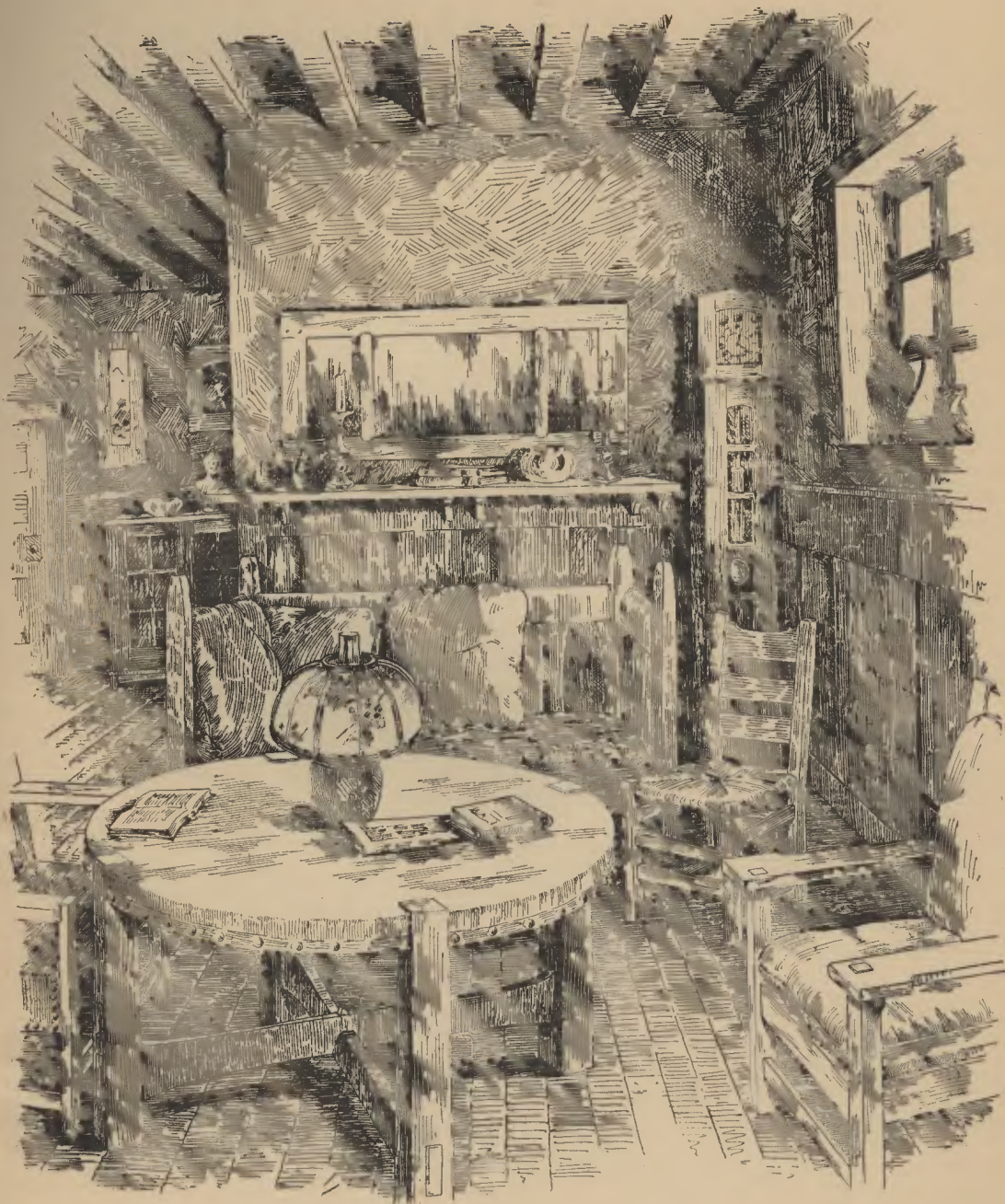
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Our object is to  
substitute the luxury of taste for the  
luxury of costliness.

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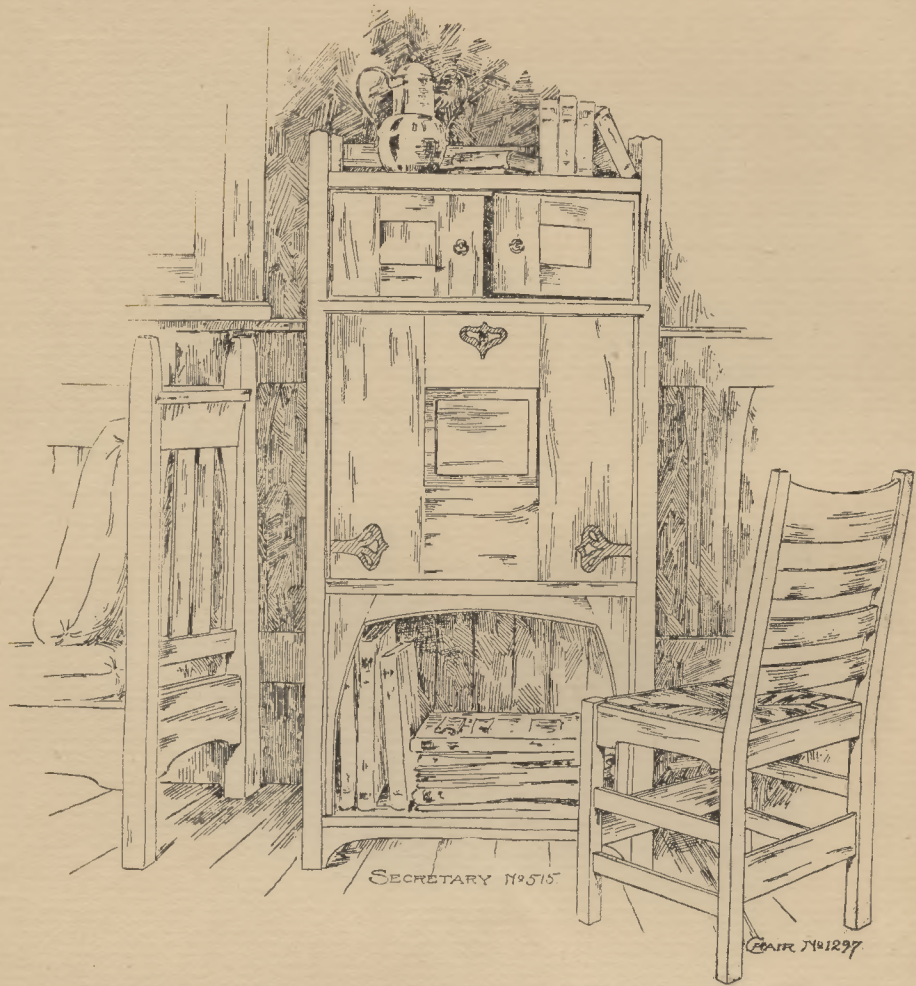
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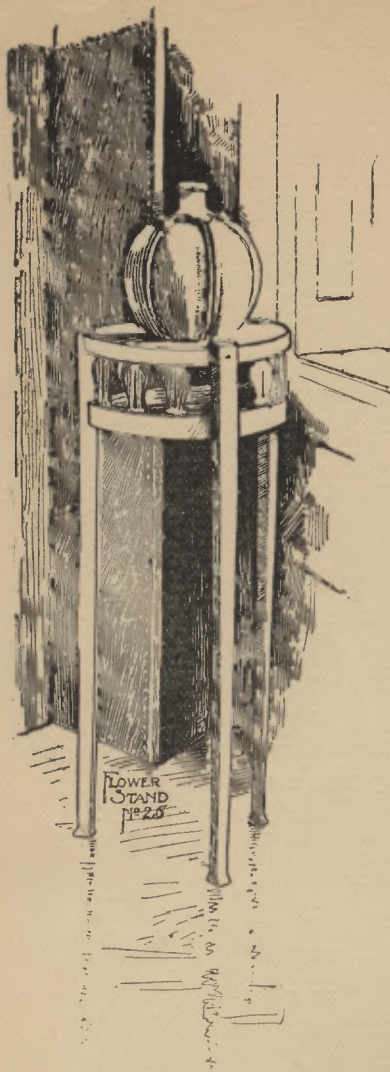


“ Art, speaking broadly, may be defined as a creative operation of the intelligence; the making of something either with a view to utility or pleasure.” This definition is given in one of the many elementary treatises of the day, which are designed to popularize knowledge. Accepting the definition and advancing a step farther, we may claim that artistic creations often attain a double end. They are useful and, at the same time, they afford keen sensuous pleasure. They minister to our physical needs and they deal with questions of harmony of line and color.

Carlyle, in his “ Sartor Resartus,” makes the statement that “ Ornament is the first spiritual need of the barbarous man.” And, indeed, we find the savage decorating with great care and no little skill his few household goods, his weapons and his clothing. If now this savage belongs to one of the superior races, he manifests his embryonic capabilities in the relations between the constructive and the decorative features of the object which he creates; in the sweep of his lines; in his use of dyes and stains. Thus we find the most ancient sun-dried pottery of the Greeks to be modeled upon the subtlest curves. We find the early inhabitants of Central and Northern Europe showing in their ornament the germs which slowly developed into the splendid art of the Middle Ages.

If it is so proven that the intellectual capacity of the races, even in semi-civilization, is clearly discernible in their ornament, it is no less true that the character of each age, or period, is expressed in the objects of use and luxury then created.

A cogent example of this fact lies in the productions of the medi-



eval crafts. With these objects before our eyes, we realize the meaning of an art developed by the people, for the people, as a reciprocal joy for the maker and the user.

And here it would be possible to go a step farther and declare that men can not be civilized and bound together in brotherhood, unless they are given a share in art, which is no mere accident, but rather an essential and a positive necessity of life.

If we advance still another step, we can state with emphasis that one office of art is to give people pleasure in the things that they must perform *use*; that a second office is to give people pleasure in the things that they must perform *make*.

What has been named the Century of Commerce has now given place to what, in the opinion of hopeful prophets, will be the Century of Education. And those now in the forceful and productive period of life should seek out their duty, and having found it, should take up its burden with steadfast purpose. First of all, it should be recognized that, as has been well said by a great modern artist-artisan, luxury is the foe of art. This is the first and most stable principle among those which should be taught to the coming generation. And the second, in the form of a commandment from the same source of wisdom, is like unto it:

“Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be ornamental.”

In common with all other governing principles, these just named are to be accepted in spirit, rather than in letter. Luxury is a relative term. The superfluity of one man is the necessity of his neighbor. The person whose relations are few and whose life is restricted, does not require the complex environment of one whom

political, social, or financial standing places within the constant view of the world at large. Again, luxury and richness are not synonyms. Luxury is the tempter of the idle. Richness in an object created by the artist, or art-artisan, is oftenest the product of the perfect union and co-operation of the brain, the hand, and the pleasure of the creator; as we may find by examining the household furniture and utensils handed down to us from the Middle Ages. In these, whether destined for the king, or the yeoman, we see the same honesty of material, the same thoroughness of construction, the same skill in decoration, the same delicacy, care and inventive quality. Therefore, we view with equal delight the king's throne, the chorister's stall, the yeoman's chimney-seat, and the peasant's bed, or marriage-chest. This is because they are all products of an art developed by the people, for the people, as a reciprocal joy for the maker and the user.

In order, then, to bring on an age of artistic activity, of widely-diffused artistic knowledge, which shall be similar in character to the Middle Ages, the maker and user must understand and value each other. The maker must bend his energies to produce objects uniting in themselves the qualities of utility, of adaptability to place, of comfort, and of artistic effect. The user must choose with discretion the objects which shall create his home; carefully providing that they express his station in life and his own individuality; furthermore, that they respond to his every-day needs.

Let us imagine a member of our great middle class, an individual neither hampered by poverty, nor oppressed by riches, choosing for himself an environment reminiscent of the French Court of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He

