

## Art in Daily Life.

In addition to those who are devoting their lives to the artistic vocation there are no doubt many people who wish to know how they may apply artistic ideals to their everyday life; how they may introduce into even the most prosaic existence some inner gleam of artistic activity that will brighten, illuminate, and refine their characters until they attain step by step to the Ideal which is calling to each one of us.



And here it may be said at once that, however mundane and sordid certain life-works may appear to be, *all life ought to be artistic.* The artist-labourer in any activity whatever, be it high

or humble, will always produce the finest results. And this is only to be expected when we remember that the artistic temperament is the highest and best temperament.

No doubt it is sometimes difficult for us to realize this when artists allow their artistic faculties to become abnormally developed at the expense of sound reason and intellect, upsetting the proper balance of mind and causing them to become but poor specimens of humanity. But grand is the Artist-Philosopher who, seeing the glory of the Divine Light ever around him, preserves his mental vision clear and unimpeded!

We look forward to the day when professional artists will be no longer required—to the dawn of that New Age when the spiritual insight of man will be so awakened that even the shops, the streets, the buildings, and the common objects of daily use will all be pervaded by an inarticulate significance approaching to the sublime. The art-spirit in daily life does not depend upon externals. It is an inner consciousness.

The man who cannot make even the sweeping out of a room into a spiritual act has either not progressed very far with his inward vision—or else, and more probably, has ceased to discern that which he could see quite clearly when he was a child.

Who is there amongst us that does not remember how in childhood's days the rag doll, the toy donkey, and the very spoons and forks, seemed to possess a sort of inward essence of their own—a sort of "personality"? And these ideas, so far from being foolish, as some would have us believe, are in their greater part true, and well worth preserving. We should not, as we grow older, allow such perceptions to be altogether, extinguished, but duly carry them along into the serious business of our life.

There is far too much of the Gradgrind philosophy in our midst, and when Mr. Gradgrind\* made his famous

\* "Hard Times," by Charles Dickens.

remark "Louisa, never wonder," he put into two short words an excellent recipe for extinguishing the light of art in our daily life.

To one man the sight of an old toy-book or toy animal, dear to him in former days and now flung upon the dust-heap, excites no emotion; to another man it is as though an old friend were being scorned and ill-treated. Some people are too much inclined to despise such simple "feeling," calling it mere sentimentality, but there are many cases in which the inner *feeling* of right, some reminiscence, or some association, will hold a man back from wrong-doing when mere *reason* would be insufficient.

The man who could not forge a cheque because the influence of a certain picture on the wall restrained him, found a helping hand extended to him that would not have existed to the inartistic and matter-of-fact individual.

Therefore let us remember to encourage true artistic perception in children. This we can do by means of the simple art of nursery rhymes, with their pictures and tunes; by fairy tales; and by folk-songs. Only the other day I came across a picture of Red Riding Hood and the Wolf that gave me intense delight. Men and women ought never to lose this childlike pleasure—no matter how hard they may have to fight in the battle of life, nor how painfully they may have journeyed through the vale of tears. Not only do such simple artistic perceptions form a never ending source of delight, but they also help greatly in maintaining that childlike spirit of simplicity which does not readily link itself with that which is evil. Should that which is evil be allowed to enter into our life, this quiet joy will be driven away.

From the above rough outline it will be seen that artistic happiness and delight is really an inward state or beatitude, and does not depend upon the possession of those art treasures which money only can buy. Art can, and ought to, enter into and light up the lives of all people however poor they may be in this world's goods.

The rich man, surrounded with pomp and vanity, with his fine picture gallery, his extensive library and magnificent music-room, may very possibly fail to glean as much artistic happiness from it all as the poor cottager may obtain from the sight of a single flower.

Nevertheless, following in the path which we have pointed out, we shall no doubt like to surround ourselves (as far as may be wise) with some material emblems of beautiful ideas—*e.g.*, Works of Art. We must however be very careful in selecting these works of art.

How is it that a card containing a single verse of poetry or a hymn is often infinitely more precious to someone than a great picture of high market value? Simply because the halfpenny card says more and stands for more to them than the picture valued at a thousand guineas. Therefore we should endeavour to surround ourselves with such books, pictures, music, and furniture that *say most to us*, seeing strictly to it that we only allow the presence of those works of art *which say that which it is good for us to hear.*

This makes a very good general rule by which we can guide our choice in such matters.



Everyone should start early in life to form a library of his own—however small. If the books are carefully selected, they will in time become his dear friends.

Everyone should also—when possible—endeavour to form some collection of carefully chosen pictures. Those who cannot afford to buy really good pictures had best content themselves with good reproductions. There are now so many good pictures reproduced by carbon, platinotype, and photogravure methods that they are, in this way, placed well within the reach of very moderate purses. A shilling carbon copy of Rossetti's "Beata Beatrix" forms a Christmas or birthday card that should bring the recipient many true and happy hours. Such carbon or photogravure pictures should be framed in broad panel frames, the frame being flush with the picture and no mount being left visible.

Volumes might be written about music in the home-circle, but here again the same rule applies—choose music that says something to you, and that says that which it is good for you to hear. Lose no opportunity of hearing such music whenever the chance offers. Probably the best music for the home-circle is part-singing; it costs nothing, is good for the health, and requires no instruments save those which Nature has provided.

When one thinks of all the hard practising of scales and arpeggios going on around us, and the endless musical examinations that most of our young folk go in for, it is somewhat depressing to find that scarcely any of these musical aspirants can give the least adequate expression to a simple little pianoforte solo. With the violin it is even worse. The fact of the matter is this—they do not study *art* at all, but they spend their whole time grappling with the *science of the keyboard*.

To all these people I would say: "*Can you play four simple notes with an artistic proportion—both in tone and rhythm—that will arrest the attention of the listener and make him feel that you have said something?*"

If not, don't bring out a sonata, a scherzo, or a ballade, for it is mere jingling! Study your four notes first. Study until you can play a simple little melody in single notes with just that *subtle degree of intensity that causes people to feel*, and remember that a single phrase beautifully interpreted is far better than the "clatter of loose notes."

Art also enters into our life in all the common objects that surround us—such as furniture, wall papers, carpets, curtains, ornaments, and so forth. Here the keynote should be *Simplicity*.

Quiet, bold outlines such as tend to rest and strengthen the mind and character are what we should choose, avoiding all those complicated vulgar effects that—reeking of earth and showy craftsmanship—stifle and confuse the spiritual faculties. Many a smart London drawing-room, surfeited with gross materialism, affords a striking example of an evil art which is degrading to the soul.

But, after all, the arts such as we know them are but preliminary! They are but the beginnings of a higher spiritual activity. As Emerson would say, they are only "initial."

We Artists have our ideals and we strive to fix them in our music, painting, writing, and so forth. But these are early days.

The fact is *everyone*—whether he likes it or not—is *himself a living work of art*, in the sense that he is an outward material manifestation of an inward spiritual essence or content. He cannot breathe without being an agent for good or evil. What we want is the man who is a true work of art in himself—the man who by his very presence, and still more by his conduct of life, infects us all with the highest feeling—the perfectness of things—the heavenly attainment.

And so it is that the greatest art of all—that art in which every man, woman, and child ought to be a worker—is not the moulding of inanimate clay into the Ideal, not the moulding of sounds into the Ideal, *the moulding of our lives and character into the Ideal!*

A living work of art! A work of art which, commencing as art, finishes as nature—a work of art that breaks down the dividing line between itself and reality. For we must see to it that, as living works of art, we manifest the Divine Spirit, and, as far as may be, nothing contrary to it. What an artist is the mother who—by her influence and conversation, by a word or a look—infects her children with that right *feeling* which in turn becomes right *character*.

Most of us have formed high Ideals in our youth, and these we ought to have retained. If we have lost them we must revive them whilst there is yet time. There can be no doubt whatever as to this necessity if we really aspire to live the Life which is Eternal. Having once experienced and set up the Ideal in our lives we must keep our faces steadily fixed towards it—hewing off from our characters all that clashes with it, day by day, year by year—cutting off this, and rounding that, until the very expression of the soul we are working out begins to shine forth from our faces. Thus and thus only can we attain to the higher Life!

Whatever the circumstances may be, there, straight before us, stands the Ideal. Whether grief or joy, sickness or health, success or failure may be our lot, each position, each state of existence, has its own particular Ideal. Yet although the ideals that are open to us in fashioning this living work of art—a perfected character—are many and varied, they must all fit in and be at one with the Prevailing Spirit or Ideal—namely that Divine Life to which we hope some day to attain and the Vision of which we must keep ever before us. For it is plain that in any art it is impossible to fashion our material into a semblance of the Ideal we are seeking unless we keep this same ideal firmly centered in our minds.

So it is in the art of life. The man who—on hearing a true and great artist—cried "Oh that I could *live* like that song *sounds!*" was no fool; he was unconsciously announcing a great truth. And it is the mission of art at the present moment to bring the Ideal so strongly before men's eyes that they realize that they must either strive to live up to it or perish—that they must overcome all obstacles, and tread down their lower nature,



until they are able to breathe this purer and more rarefied spiritual atmosphere that is before them.

There is a story of an old man who, after a career filled with apparent failure, lay down to die. His friends who attended him noticed how he retained his customary happy smile, and at length one said:—"Master, tell us the secret of your life—what has given you this quiet happiness which—when all else has failed—ever remains with you?" And the old man made an answer and said:—"My son, it is because I have always followed the Vision."

And this is what we must all determine to do in our own lives—to follow the Vision. First we must establish the ideal in our minds, and then we must remember to keep it continually in view by walking steadily onwards in the straight road at the end of which the Vision is seen shining. We must earnestly pray to be saved from going down the many bye-paths which lead from this road; for if we wander out of the narrow way into one of these the Vision will fade away. And should we at any time enter unawares into a bye-path, and find that we have lost the Vision, then we must strive with all our might to regain the King's high-road, never resting until the sight of the Vision once more lights up our way. Keep the eye of the soul ever towards the light.

Let us repeat once more that the greatest art of all is the gradual development of character towards that clear, radiant, ideal life which reveals the truth of the Divine Light. The greatest work of art, the work where art and true nature are united, is the man who—in his outward manifestation, in his every thought, word and deed—shows forth the Divine Spirit that dwells within him.

Oh! most Blessed and Incomparable Artist who spake as never man spake and whose intense Love and Radiance caused the very lepers to be cleansed when they approached unto Thee, surely and indeed Thou art the Way and the Truth—the Light of the World! Help us so to write this precious Semblance in our hearts that, taking root, it may grow and grow, until we attain to the Vision of the True Reality!

Ernest Newlandsmith.

This article will be reprinted in pamphlet form. Price One Penny net.

### If we only Understood.

Could we but draw back the curtains

That surround each other's lives,

See the naked heart and spirit,

Know what spur the action gives,

Would the grim external roughness

Seem, I wonder, just the same?

Should we help where now we hinder?

Should we pity where we blame?

Oh! we judge each other harshly,

Knowing not life's hidden force,

Knowing not the fount of action

Is less turbid at its source;

Seeing not amid the evils

All the golden grains of good.

We should love each other better

If we only understood.

Ella W. Willcox.

## The Advantages of Simple and Natural Diet.

### A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

(Reprinted, by request, from the Daily Graphic.)

Twenty years of experience as a seeker after a diet that is both hygienic and sustaining have taught me some valuable lessons, and as my quest has been rewarded with success, I am glad to pass on to others some of the helpful knowledge which I have gained by personal experiment, extensive observation, and much reading.



The building of a healthy body, like the construction of a sound dwelling-house, depends upon the quality of the materials used for the purpose and the care with which they are incorporated. Every intelligent person realizes the inconvenience of becoming the occupier of a "jerry-built" house, but very few realize the fact that a human tabernacle of a similar character should, and can be, avoided. And few indeed are those among us who, in this matter of selection of our daily food, have not "done the things which we ought not to have done, and left undone the things which we ought to have done"—and all for the want of thought and hygienic education.

Until eleven years ago I laboured under the popular delusion that flesh food is natural and essential for human sustenance under present conditions, and up to that date my efforts to overcome chronic indigestion and the consequent evidences of malnutrition were ineffectual. But in 1894 my attention was drawn to the terrible cruelty involved in the flesh traffic, and to the fact that man is by nature a frugivorous (fruit-eating) animal. I then resolved that, sink or swim, I would abstain from butchers' meat henceforth, and try to live in harmony both with the law of Nature and the law of Love. In consequence I began at once to look around for substitutes for flesh, and to study and experiment in dead earnest, with the result that the initial difficulties were soon overcome, and I found that I had, as it were, at last "struck oil."

At the time I was in a very weak and neurotic condition through prolonged mental overstrain, and my physique showed serious indications of malnutrition, resulting from a dietary that was more stimulative than nutritious, while being difficult to digest. I was incapable of any serious physical exertion, was wearing spectacles for double astigmatism, and was unable to read for half an hour without experiencing headache. Thus I commenced my career as a total abstainer from carnivorous food under discouraging conditions, but with the following result.

My attacks of indigestion soon became less frequent, my strength soon increased, and my brain became clearer and capable of doing much more and much better work. Within three years I laid aside my glasses, and have never worn them since, and I am now able to read small print for hours without any inconvenience.

Although I devoted my time and strength with enthusiastic ardour to the advocacy of Dietetic Reform, because I seriously realized its humane, philanthropic and spiritual