

### *Notes on the Crafts*

blind one to their composition and discovery of the beautiful in homely scenes where it is usually missed. It is the good fortune of Miss Jessie Willcox Smith, in the designs displayed in this exhibition, to maintain in the mere picture a certain elevation of treatment. It may be doubted if in all the exhibition there is anything more likely to be remembered than Mr. E. Shinn's handling of New York street scenes. Time may pass before these are taken at their full value. They stand apart as much as Cruikshank, and rest on a more complete academic equipment. Many people make pictures. Few like Mr. Shinn are equal to picture-making. To seize the organic clue out of the mere *mélange* of a street scene is a gift held by few.

With all the exhibition, as with him, the real interest turns upon the address and advance, the departure from convention, the fresh use of new expedients, methods, and manipulation—nothing held sacred but the picture complete. So that is gained, what matters the way?

#### NOTES ON THE CRAFTS.

**N**The state of a nation's crafts is a fair index to the condition of its high arts; for the crafts are the forerunners of the arts, and the essential development of the latter waits upon that of the former.

The artistic calibre of a people has been ascribed too much to a vague fatality, or to an irresponsible national tendency; men have been too ready to accept Hellenic immortality as God-given, and as unattainable by human effort,—forgetting that before opportunity was ripe for the conception of such consummations as those of Praxiteles and Phidias the fundamental idea of artistic fitness applied to utilitarian need was being fostered among Greek crafts for many centuries, expressing itself ultimately in that almost perfection of design typical of Greek art, which we observe in each extant piece of Greek workmanship how common and vulgar soever the purpose of its utility.

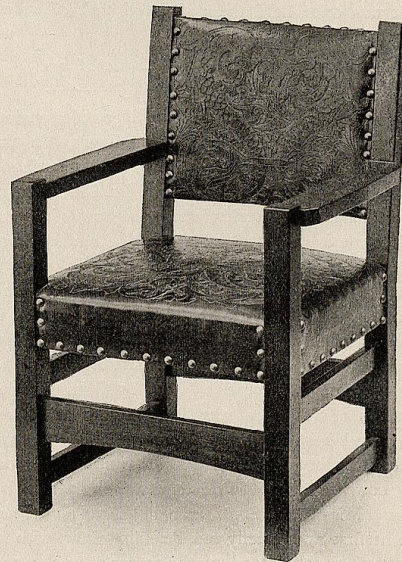
To pass from the theory outlined above to practice in general, it may be remarked that the nation starting with the idea that it may unflinchingly achieve, in due time and with due devotion of capacity to the end in view, the height of Hellenic superiority in the arts, will have taken the first step towards preparing the soil for a fruitful harvest. Then let the first efforts be devoted to propagating in the mind of every worker the artistic idea of fitness, applied as naturally in the making of the meanest utensil as in the conception of the highest artistic

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creation, and the seed will have been sown in the soil under most auspicious conditions; for the law that the standard achieved in the arts must be derived from the standard maintained in the crafts will have been recognized and obeyed.

So much for generality in practice and in theory. Now, why should not America be a country constituting a field for the working out of the above ideas? We believe that it undoubtedly is, for it has a thousand advantages denied to other nations. Its very newness makes it possible for this nation to pick the fruits of the artistic experience of later civilizations, while it remains untrammelled by an older civilization's drawbacks. The manifold crafts at the command of the various immigrants pouring into this country should be fostered and turned to good account. The ideas of these people, infused with new enthusiasm derived from the strength of this country, would, if carefully tended, soon take root and result in the growth of national crafts of a value quite beyond the possibility of present conception.

With this sanguine and sincere belief in the future of American crafts and arts, THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIO intends to add its mite of effort to the general sum by drawing attention each month to deserving specimens of workmanship from such institutions as exist for the training of craftsmen, as



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