comb and the necklace here illustrated, will prove our statement and will point to the fact that one of the greatest geniuses of our times has put into practice the counsels given a half century ago by the thoughtful, Nature-worshiping Michelet. M. Lalique has renewed his ancient traditional craft, and has placed it upon a level with the fine arts. He has largely effected these desirable results through his passionate devotion to the minute and humble creatures of the animal and vegetable kingdoms: by making a frank and loyal return to the Great Mother.

From Art et Décoration, January, 1904

WILLIAM MORRIS: HIS TASTES IN ART AND LITERATURE.

For the refined products of modern ingenuity which did not root themselves back on that old tradition, he had as little taste in literature as in painting. The modern books which in later life he read with the greatest enjoyment were those which, without artifice or distinction of style, dealt with a life whether actual or imaginary, which approached his ideal in its simplicity and its close relation to Nature, especially among a race of people who remained face to face with the elementary facts of life, and had never become fully sophisticated by civilization. In this spirit, he admired and praised works like Mr. Doughty’s “Arabia Deserta,” or “Uncle Remus,” from which he was always willing and eager to read aloud, or “Huck Finn,” which he half-jestingly pronounced to be the greatest thing, whether in art or nature, that America had produced. For refinement of style, for subtle psychology in creation, he had but little taste. He could not admire either Meredith or Stimson. When he was introduced to Ibsen’s plays and called on to join in admiring their union of accomplished dramatic craftsmanship with the most modern movement of ideas, they were dismissed by him in the terse and comprehensive criticism, “Very clever, I must say.” But neither elaboration of style nor advanced modernism of treatment stand in the way of his appreciation when the substance of a book was to his liking, and among the books which in recent years he praised most highly were the masterpieces of Pierre Loti and Maurice Maeterlinck.

“Master of himself and therefore of all near him,” Morris at the same time retained the most childlike simplicity in the expression of his actual thoughts or feelings on any subject, and was as little hampered by false shame as he was guided by convention. In some points he remained an absolute child to the end of his life. If you introduced him to a friend and he had the faintest suspicion that he was there to be shown off, his manners instantly became intolerable. As childlike was another of his characteristics—the constant desire to be in actual touch with the things he loved. He became a member of the Society of Antiquarians for no other reason than that he might be part-owner of one of their mediaeval painted books. The mere handling of a beautiful thing seemed to give him intense physical pleasure. “If you have got one of his books in your hands for a minute,” Burne-Jones said of him, “he’ll take it away from you as if you were hurting it, and show it you himself.”

From the Life of William Morris, J. W. Mackail.