SANDY DESERT, GRAZING LANDS, MOSTLY POOR AND MOUNTAINOUS LAND, WHILE OUR POWERFUL GOVERNMENT STANDS BY AND PROFesses ITS HELPLESSNESS TO PREVENT THE EVIL. THESE DISCOURAGING FACTS ARE ENOUGH TO MAKE THE JUST AND GOOD MEN WHO ONCE GUIDED THE REPUBLIC RISE FROM THEIR GRAVES. IS THERE A REMNANT OF HONOR, JUSTICE, OR INTEGRITY, LEFT AMONG OUR POLITICIANS?

SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN CRAFTSMANSHIP. BY DOUGLAS VAN DENBURG


ASSUMING THE DEMAND FOR THE RESULTS OF HIS LABOR TO BE PROVIDED, AND THAT HIS WORK MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF GOOD WORKMENSHIP AND DESIGN, WE NEXT ASK HOW BEST IS THE CRAFTSMAN TO REACH THE DESIRED RESULTS; WHAT ARE THE GUIDES TO HIS SUCCESS, AND WHAT THE DANGERS WHICH HE MUST AVOID?

TO THE ARTIST "BEAUTY IS ITS OWN EXCUSE FOR BEING," AND FOR THIS HE STRIVES: IF HIS WORK BE BEAUTIFUL, IT STANDS APPROVED. THE CRAFTSMAN'S WORK MUST ALSO BE BEAUTIFUL, BUT IT MUST FILL OTHER REQUIREMENTS; FOR HE IS NOT ONLY AN ARTIST; HE MUST BE AN ARTISAN AS WELL. HE IS A BUILDER AND MAKER OF THINGS USEFUL TO THE HAND, AS WELL AS PLEASING TO THE EYE.

UNSERVICEABLE BEAUTY IS AS FOREIGN TO HIS ART AS IS SERVICEABLE UGLINESS. THUS, TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN HIS CRAFT, THE WORKMAN MUST PRODUCE AN ARTICLE VALUABLE BOTH FOR ITS BEAUTY AND ITS USEFULNESS—AN ARTICLE PLEASING IN ITSELF AND CAPABLE OF SERVICE.


THE DESIGN SHOULD ALWAYS COMPLY WITH TWO FIXED RULES. NOT ONLY SHOULD IT LEND ITSELF READILY TO THE MEDIUM IN WHICH IT IS EXECUTED, BUT IT MUST ALSO BE APPROPRIATE TO THE ARTICLE ITSELF. ANY DESIGN OR DECORATION WHICH DETERS FROM THE USEFULNESS OF THE WORK, BY REASON OF SHAPE OR DURABILITY, IS TO BE CONDEMNED. THE BEAUTY OF THE WORK SHOULD LIE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DESIGN, AND NOT IN THE APPLIED DECORATION. THE ORNATE IS TO BE AVOIDED, BOTH BECAUSE IT SOON BECOMES FATIGUING TO THE EYE, AND BECAUSE IT AT ONCE LESSENS THE DURABILITY AND
usefulness of the work to which it has been applied. Within certain limits, therefore, the craftsman should strive for strength and simplicity of design by which to insure the durability of his wares, for it is upon these qualities that his work must stand.

Equal in importance to knowledge of material and design is the workman’s skill in the use of tools. If his hand lack deftness, if he blunder or bungle in the execution of his work, failing to give it both individuality and the essential neatness which marks all true workmanship, he has failed to give value to his work.

The desired result must never be made abortive from the insufficiency of time devoted to achieve it. The first requirement of good craftsmanship is the unremitting attention to detail which it is impossible to give, when the hands of the worker strive to keep pace with those of the clock. It is a false theory which would limit the craftsman’s use of tools, or deny him any method or device which reduces his labor, provided it does so without injury to his results. Time spent because of lack of proper tools, is time wasted; it adds nothing to the value of the work. A plank cut from the log by hand is no better than a plank from the mill, even though it cost much greater labor to produce. So, also, carving done without proper tools, may stand as a marvel of the patience and the skill which have added nothing to the value of the work on which they were bestowed.

Nor should the machine be decried as having no place in the craftsman’s shop. The machine is nothing more than an enlarged tool, the distinction between tool, machine-tool, and machine, not being sharply defined. The three, in fact, are mere modifications of one another.

To limit the craftsman’s tools is to limit the scope of his work. We speak fondly of hand-made objects, but, in reality, their true value lies within themselves, rather than in the process by which they were wrought. Thus, the craftsman’s success will be found to lie in choice of material, simplicity and strength of design, and untiring endeavor toward perfection of workmanship; his failures arising from disregard for these things.

The work of the craftsman is costly in some measure, and can be defended only when it reaches standards unattainable by the factory and the machine. If any part or process capable of improvement, has been slighted and passed over as being “good enough,” the work might better have been left undone.

Individuality, simplicity, utility, and durability, are the hallmarks of the craftsman’s success. For these he should strive perpetually.