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## EDITORIAL AND OFFICIAL.

THE essential factors in making good furniture may be classified under four headings—good design, good material, good workmanship, and good finish. Slight any one of them and the result is a partial failure.

Almost every man imagines that he can design good furniture. In fact, one trade school man is credited with the remark that he had yet to see the article of furniture that he could not "improve," but subsequent observations made it clear that what he meant to say was "alter." The man who tampers with furniture design is treading upon dangerous ground. He is experimenting along lines where other men have spent years of careful study, and is putting his immature judgment ahead of theirs. In all trades and professions there is a distinct line drawn between amateur and professional work. Unfortunately for the trades, there is no law protecting the professional workman from the encroachments of the amateur, save the unmistakable brand upon the product of his labor.

Furniture  
Design.

he had yet to see the article of furniture that he could not "improve," but subsequent observations

made it clear that what he meant to say was "alter." One of the commonest criticisms of school-made furniture is "that it can be recognized anywhere as the production of a school shop." This is only natural. It takes only one or two terms of exercise work in a training school to make an industrial teacher, while most of the trades require an apprenticeship of two or more years' actual practice, eight hours a day and six days a week.

The ordinary man of this world dresses like other men, lives like other men, and amuses himself like other men. He leaves the designing of his clothes to the tailor, and usually picks the most popular tailor. He leaves house designing to the architect and accepts the result without question. Along almost every line he is governed by public opinion, yet, if this man is blessed with a little brief authority and a lumber pile he will immediately begin to design something. Not only that, but he is often known to point with pride to the freak that he has produced and advertise the fact that he designed it. Imagine any man, save a tailor, coming out on the street in clothes of his own design. Robinson Crusoe did it, but he was marooned on a desert isle and had to make the best of it. He was not in touch with the best designers of the world as are all of our amateur workmen to-day.

Admitting that such a thing as designing new styles of furniture is possible, there are certain important details that cannot be changed, even by a real artist. One of these is standard heights. There is a certain height at which the seat of an easy chair should be made. Vary that height a small amount and the result is an uncomfortable chair. There is a standard height for a dining table. Vary it and the change is noticed by every person who dines at that table. These things that are not meddled with by professional designers are the commonest faults of amateur designers.

The recent exhibition of school-made furniture at the Carnival of 1913 was criticised by many people for some of its "freak" designs. To be sure, many of the critics, most of them in fact, knew very little about furniture design. They merely looked at an article and saw that something was wrong. In spite of this fact several of the defective articles were sold. The average layman believes the dealer who tells him that his goods are all right and feels a certain amount of respect for his opinions.

Some twenty assorted tables and chairs, most of which were sold, were measured and only one article, a dining chair, was found to be of standard American height. The question naturally arises: Why don't the people who make furniture every year to sell at the Carnival follow the common rules of the trade? They depend almost entirely upon an American market, yet it seems that they get the most important details from Spanish or Chinese models. It may be the custom in Spain or China to make high tables and chairs, but it is not in America. The purchaser of a dining table hired workmen after the Carnival to cut two inches off the legs and bring it down to a comfortable height.

On the subject of material very little need be said. The furniture makers of the Philippines are fortunate in having some of the finest woods in the world with which to work. Beauty of color and grain covers many deficiencies in design and workmanship, and little decoration is necessary. On the other hand, the material selected is often too good for the design and vice versa. The handsomest piece of wood shown in the whole exhibit was made up as the top of what appeared to be a kitchen table. In other words, a cheap design was used with high-class material with the result that the piece was not sold. In regard to good workmanship, there was very little fault to be discovered. Joints were well made and the tool work in general was good.

As to finishing, the exhibit this year showed a marked general improvement over that of previous years. The most noticeable defect was premature finishing; that is, attempting to polish surfaces that had not been sufficiently prepared. One Filipino critic remarked that "the boys in — Province knew how to polish, but they did not know how to plane." It is customary to blame such work on the boys, but what about the teacher who approved this article and sent it on to be shown to a hundred thousand people as a product of his school?

One piece which occupied a very prominent place in the exhibit showed unmistakable traces of the machine planer under the finish, and another showed hammer marks which had not been removed before finishing. Stain, which must have been about the consistency of thick paint, had been used on another article and it would have required an expert to tell what kind of wood had been used.

To return to the subject of design: There is one kind of furniture that figures in all of the four divisions mentioned at the beginning of this article, namely, "knock-down" furniture. At least 75 per cent of the beauty in a design has to be sacrificed to accomplish this feature, hence fine material is not necessary, durability being most important. Finishing also takes second place. The making of knock-down furniture is not worth teaching to Filipinos as it has a very limited market. About the first thing a man does after purchasing knock-down furniture is to put in a few screws so that it will not "knock down" while in use.

The term "mission" furniture is also much abused. The original mission furniture was made by the padres in the remote missions of the old Southwest. They had inadequate tools and so made their furniture heavy, without curves, and pegged it together for lack of nails. They polished their chairs by sitting on them for a couple of generations and polished their tables by eating countless meals thereon. The average layman to-day thinks that a dull finish means mission style and his belief is often strengthened by ignorant "designers" or salesmen.

In conclusion, it may be positively stated that the only safe course for an amateur furniture maker to pursue, is to provide himself with a good stock of catalogues and copy from them. If the furniture is made for an American market, copy American styles; if for a Spanish market, copy Spanish styles; but above all things, do not get the two styles mixed, as the result will sell neither to an American nor to a Spaniard.—F. W. C.

One of the most encouraging pamphlets which has come into our hands for some time is "A Study of Certain Social, Educational and Industrial Problems in Porto Rico," prepared at the request of the Hon. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, and the Hon. George R. Colton, Governor of Porto Rico, by Mr. Meyer Bloomfield, Director of the Vocation Bureau of Boston. This pamphlet of 26 pages was based upon a visit of nineteen days during which time Mr. Bloomfield carefully inspected many of the public schools, factories, and sugar centrals, attended several labor conferences, and talked personally with several hundred people representing all classes and conditions of the population.

Industrial  
Problems in  
Porto Rico.

The following extracts are taken from his report:

The day and night schools of the island, excellent though they are from the academic standpoint, might as well be in Massachusetts or New York. There does not seem to be that creative localization of the school which Porto Rican necessities, the standard of living of the masses, and the probable future of the majority of the children call for. The island schools are unquestionably helping to make good citizens. It is a grave question whether the present arrangements contribute materially to the making of homemakers, producers, skilled workers, self-reliant and efficient bread-winners.

"They are preparing their brightest and most fortunate children, in so far as any life work is attempted, for professional and commercial careers, and not for self-support in agricultural and mechanical pursuits. Porto Rico lacks, to be sure, a diversity of occupations.

Many homes of the well-to-do are furnished with highly varnished, crudely glued, cheap furniture of a kind we associate with the installment furniture dealers of Boston, Chicago, and New York. It cannot be that furniture, appropriately designed in native woods, will not find a market in the island homes.

Too much time is spent indoors, at the desks and benches, in the Porto Rican schools. The children of the rural districts in almost all the grades might well forego some of the book learning and classroom instruction and learn road building, planting, yard ornamentation, and simple industrial work of both educational and marketable value.

The instruction has been good along academic and cultural lines, with some school buildings and a number of teachers that compare with the best in the States. But there is little practical preparation for agricultural, homemaking, and industrial pursuits.

Domestic science in the island schools represents at the present time a pious wish rather than an accomplishment. Except for some class work done by a few high-school girls, and well done, if one can be satisfied with the use of canned things and non-native products, the girls of Porto Rico are not being largely prepared for their most immediate and most important function.

In this connection the statement may be made that home gardening for food is the most practical and necessary form of nature study. The children learn about sugar, tobacco, and fruits, and are thus given an insight into the prime products of the island. But these lessons and those on native

fibers, woods, plants, etc., are almost futile, because they are not connected with actual productive experience on the part of the children.

Vocational instruction does not in itself carry any assurance that it will not deteriorate into academic routine. Wherever introduced in the island, whether as elementary manual training for cultural purposes, domestic training for home or livelihood purpose, or training in trades and agriculture for any purpose, there should be rigid insistence on at least elementary business methods. The time must come when industrial schools will be asked to approach self-support, partial, if not complete. This is not because such schools must be treated as profit makers. Let me emphasize this point. Vocational instruction is meant to teach skill and not speed; it is interested in the producer more than in the product, and this differentiates it from factory work. But there is urgent need of applying the simple and concrete tests of ordinary business enterprise. These fairly indicate the efficiency of the teaching and the teachers. They give reality to what may otherwise seem sham or play. Business methods therefore must be applied to every form of vocational instruction, and the children taught how to keep track of the economic aspects of their work. A comparison of such records from the vocational shops, classes, grounds, and fields of the various schools will show in time where real work is done.

Effective agricultural teaching is not so much a matter of school building and school routine as it is a system of personal coöperation with the children and the adult pupils, too, in their own home grounds. The usual academic devices of instruction are subordinate in this work, except in so far as classroom instruction is directly related to the work outside.

To insure success of these projects, the educational authorities must definitely formulate agricultural and other kinds of vocational training as forms of truly liberal education, ranking in cultural and Americanizing value with history, mathematics, or foreign languages. Nothing will so speedily injure these efforts toward a more fundamental education as a suspicion that one kind of education is being devised for the poor and another for the rich. Every school, therefore, must, in order to justify its title to an educational institution, provide in a greater or less degree the elements of localized training. Teachers out of sympathy with this conception of education do not belong to a democratically supported system of public schools.

With a great degree of satisfaction we feel that such criticism would not be made upon our educational system were Mr. Bloomfield to visit us. We have localized our schools as much as possible to meet the necessities of the Philippines. We are centering our activities upon the training of the children for self-support in agricultural and mechanical pursuits. Our trade schools furnish many homes with solid furniture made of native wood. More time is spent in industrial work and less time in book learning and classroom instruction than in any other educational system with which we are familiar. We are laying more and more stress upon practical preparation for agricultural and homemaking and industrial pursuits. Our domestic science is not satisfied with the use of "expensive canned things," but aims at the general use of native products. More attention is given

to home gardening than to nature study and every effort is made to connect all lessons with actual productive experience. Our trade schools are already approaching partial self-support and are enabling many of the pupils to "keep track of the economic experience of their work." All of the primary and intermediate pupils must take some form of industrial work and thus learn that the same kind of education is being devised for the poor as for the rich. Mr. Bloomfield criticizes the system of boarding out in hotels and even in private homes by the American teachers. He believes that the teachers should establish home centers from which should radiate the best influence such as comes from model homes adapted to the neighborhood. Fortunately in this respect, very few of our towns provide boarding facilities and thus by stress of circumstances most of the American teachers have their own homes.

Another of his criticisms was to the effect that many of the classrooms lack appropriate decorations. Mr. Bloomfield maintains that the school walls should show what might be inexpensively done with barren homes. He also maintains that health suggestions effectively presented would serve a better purpose than the usual class of mottoes found adorning school halls. This criticism would doubtless be valid in respect to many of our schools, although the stimulus given by Governor-General Forbes in presenting a large number of valuable pictures to many of the schools has greatly improved classroom decorations. One of the criticisms of Mr. Bloomfield which might be well taken to heart in a number of schools is the following query: "If school toilets cannot be properly cared for, how can we expect home sanitary conditions to be right?"

The separation of the university from the public school system and the establishment of the Labor Bureau, both of which were urged for Porto Rico, have already been accomplished in these Islands.

A reading of Mr. Bloomfield's report strengthens us in the conviction that our educational policy is along the right lines. It also suggests a number of improvements that would be applicable here. Its perusal is recommended to all interested in the educational policy of the Philippines.

In connection with this survey of Porto Rico, especial interest will be attached to the survey of Philippine schools being made by Dr. Paul Monroe of Columbia University, who will lecture at the Baguio Teachers' Vacation Assembly.—W. W. M.