

Just :: Friendly :: Chats

The Potter by the side of the Road...

by Unknown Author

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No handicraftsman's art

Can to our art compare;

We potters make our pots

Of what we potters are.

- Longfellow



He is a magical sort of fellow. With his own hands he shapes the clay as it whirls on a moving disc from the power of his own limbs. You might have seen him in old Athens before the Christian Era, or on the pike that leads to Jericho. It's an olden craft he plies; and yet old as it is, it produces a type of individual beauty in pottery out of all comparison with vases and bric-a-brac turned out by Twentieth Century production methods.

If you are driving near Canandaigua on the road to Buffalo, you pass this Potter of Bloomfield town who quietly ignores the practices of modern pottery. His face is lined with the cares and humors of sixty or more years. It's a wise face, looking down upon the shapeless clay and taking one mood upon another as the limp clay evolves into objects.

Tourists stop to see the old-fashioned potter. They marvel at his deft touch, his instinct for shaping pitchers, vases, flower buckets, mugs and urns on a "kick-wheel," just as it was done two thousand years ago.

One visitor asks: "Been at it long?" The smiles quietly, "Oh, not very, just started in 1888." Another wants to know how he fashions his object so perfectly: "Not so perfect sir," he replied; "but a little more perfect than their maker." Still another propounds: "And what do you mix with your clay besides water?" "Experience madam," says the potter, "nothing but experience." A light of laughter twinkles in his eyes. Tourists amuse him even if they don't buy.

And this potter who refuses to concern himself with the ways of rapid mass production, creates hand-art of uncommon charm, makes the clay of common earth into handsome sculptures and finds enough people who admire distinguished artistry in hand wrought pottery to enjoy life – and keep busy. His wit and humor roll off the disc as he pedals and molds.

He's a tourist himself with a mind and hands that wander over the world of ideas, and in this age of machinery one feels strangely rested to see him stand apart from machine competition and win his bread by the rare skill of his fingers and the fire in his heart. This is the philosophy: "There is a story in every man's and every woman's hands that wants to be told. Tell your fingers to speak – that's all I'm doing. Machines, you know, can't talk, or feel, or understand."

Is that the solution to some of our economic problems – a little more time for the joy of hand accomplishments?

When a man does not realize his kinship with the world, he lives in a prison-house whose walls are alien to him.

- TAGORE
