

**ART AND THE  
FORMATION OF  
TASTE: SIX LECTURES**

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Art and the formation of taste: six lectures by Lucy Crane

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POPULAR EDUCATOR SERIES.

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ART  
AND THE  
FORMATION OF TASTE.

SIX LECTURES.

BY LUCY CRANE,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN BY THOMAS  
AND WALTER CRANE,

AND

AN INTRODUCTION BY CHARLES G. WHITING,  
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## PREFACE.

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THERE is a certain vogue of Art in these days, that in some respects is different from any that has been known in other ages of the world. In Greece the love of beauty, and the skill in dealing with beauty in the forms of all the arts, was so general that we may accept it as scarcely an exaggeration, that the fishers who dried their nets on the shores at the Piræus were as good critics of a statue or a poem as our best-educated people are now ; and in fact, in æsthetics they were most thoroughly educated. In the great renaissance of Italy and France, the spring of it was wealth ; and its influences and benefits were for moneyed men, for princes and bishops and the rest. Art is again coming to be general and popular,—coming so by means of a diffusion of knowledge which makes the beautiful an object of desire as a fashion ; so that art is not yet at its stature of greatness with us, but is dwarfed to the level of the popular capacity, and must wait until we the people, who are taking the

world into our hands, shall have grown to an intelligent appreciation of what the beautiful is, and why it is, and with what purposes it should be sought, and how its true place in our lives and in the order of the universe shall be discovered and attained.

There is no lack of talk about Art; but there is little that is said, after all, that is based on the principles that underlie art as well as every thing that pertains to our life, and there is too much about the narrow, technical, and temporary details and fashions. These unpretentious lectures of Lucy Crane offer the truest and healthiest introduction to Art on the indispensable basis of principle. The lovely nature, both sweet and strong, of their author, informs her gracious and intelligent instruction with a fine charm; and she leads her disciple, by a hand as firm as it is gentle, to the safe and true ground of taste and judgment. After the reader has reached that ground, the most eloquent treatises on china-painting, water-colors in twelve lessons, or, in short, all technical matters, may safely be taken up; for these lectures will prove a protection against doing these things badly, as they are done and must be done by those who undertake them without culture of their higher perceptions.

Lucy Crane taught in sympathy with the best teaching of Ruskin, and more consistently than he. When the student has become acquainted with the best examples of art, and with the essentials of its presence,

he will do well to read as much of John Ruskin's work as he can ; for then his temperamental caprices and extravagances will not confuse the mind, and the profound beauty and nobility of his gospel of art, which is also one of life, will impress the soul. But Miss Crane also teaches the best, the virtues of honor and reality, of fitness and thoroughness ; and she applies it to every thing. She does not say exactly that one should

"Give to barrows, pots, and pans,  
Grace and glitter of romance ;"

but she shows that the commonest utensil may have these foundations of excellence, and having them it will also have a true and worthy measure of beauty ; Art being so far an assistant and adorer of use as it shows sympathy with it, and no farther. There are illustrations of this that will occur to every reader when he begins to open his eyes to the common things around him ; and, as Miss Crane says, Art adds a new interest to daily life, by teaching our eyes to observe common things no less faithfully than uncommon ones. Miss Crane finds nearly her worst example of unfitness in design in an American toilet-jug ; and this is almost the sole instance of the British insular spirit in the book, since it is certain that no nation has a monopoly of vulgarity in such matters, and British designs are apt to be the clumsiest that are seen in the international expositions. Of teaching ill adapted to Ameri-

can life, there is scarcely a trace in this book. Indeed, the Cranes are of the people, and have done their beautiful work for the people.

It is the highest praise for such a book as this, that, while it is within the comprehension and lends itself to the practical service of all, it does so without once losing sight, or suffering us to lose sight, of the prime and perpetual necessity of truth in Art. It gives the impression of kinship with great souls, as the life of Michael Angelo or of Beethoven does. Like them, it shows that all that is worthy and enduring springs from the eternal verities, as Carlyle called them. Consider for a little what Art is, and what its meanings. We are not thinking now of the toys of an hour, or the fashions of the day; not of the pretty trivialities of ornament, or the skill of graceful design, — but of Art in its high sense, as an interpreter of Nature, and a link in the divine relationship of man. The complement of Science, which pursues the true, and of Philosophy, which reaches after the good, Art fulfils this trinity with the beautiful; and these three are one. There is a debasement of Art which descends to ugliness, just as there are philosophies of evil: but this is the work of false conception; for in Art, as in every thing else, the loss of truth is the loss of goodness and the loss of beauty. Art, therefore, must be at one with Nature; they being, says Sir Thomas Browne, “both the servants of His providence. Art is the perfection

of Nature. Were the world now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a chaos. Nature hath made one world, and Art another. In belief, all things are artificial, for Nature is the Art of God." The mission of Art is no less noble than this. And what an honorable and holy burden is thus laid upon the artist! Like the poet, he is one of the mediators of the divine messages.

Nature being the Art of God, if we search for and find its interior charm, we shall thence be able to divine the charm of its image, human Art, which must be like it. Is it not that there is something behind, of which it is the mere symbol and representative? The surface of nature is illusion. For, look upon the earth, its grateful green fields and royal forests, its wonderful flowers and leaves, its birds and myriad things of life, its generous streams and its majestic hills: it is beautiful to us, as it has been to untold generations before us, and will be for untold generations more; and yet it is transient even to us, as preachers and singers have said ever since man has thought. The human form, most beautiful and wonderful of objects, is a mere semblance,—a pinch of dust, a drop or two of water: it is not real. And the crowded heavens that are awful above us,—for remember, that, as Young says, "A fixed star is as much within the bounds of Nature as a flower of the field, though less obvious and of far greater dignity,"—we know that