

Evolution of Man And His House.

RUSKIN says, somewhere or other, "Houses without men are futile, men without houses are absurd"—or words to that effect. But this truth was true long before Ruskin said it, or did not say it. The evolution of men and houses began together and most probably it will continue to go on together. For there is always room for improvement. Since men first learned to think in wood and bricks and to speak in tin roofs and asphalt sidewalks, their speech and thought have become of enduring interest, because they prove the evolution of a dual race—of men and of houses.

Speaking strictly, houses are not so much dead weight of lumber, or bricks, or mortar. They are the living child of man's brain. The Australian Aborigine is witness to the truth of this. They have no brains. Therefore, they have no houses. They are human life, before evolution got hold of it and developed it into men and houses.

From an old portfolio, crammed with rough sketches, sketched in with crude colors, the Colonial submits some half-dozen pictures, which he gathered up as he saw them. They may help to hear out that which was truth before Ruskin said it.

Two poles upthrust in the sand with a third pole laid athwart them. Stems of varying bark slanting to the cross-bar. A fire of dead gun-leaves and sticks with a snake or an iguana or a rat roasting in it! A couple of things, with long, unclean hair and half-clothed bodies daubed with red ochre crouched near; and, behind and before and all round tall gray gums, where the loose bark flaps on the bole, farstretching nakedness of gray sand, clumps of fat-leaved prickly-pear, a brazen sky, slanting to distant bush-ranges.

The long-haired things draw the burnt meat from the ashes. They stuff it down like men feeding a furnace. Then they gather up their tattered blankets, their filthy and torn awnings, and make tracks for the run in the ranges, where they will beg tucker from the hut-cook. Behind them the wind moving slowly stirs the sand over the fire-ashes; it lays the "mains" flat as a dead thing and the ever-shifting sand gives it decent burial. A sinking dingo snuffs up the trail of food, finds neither promise nor fulfillment, and slinks off again. The whole is a mirage in the quivering heat; a thing that was and is not. The aborigine will pass from this earth like a mirage. He leaves nothing behind—yes, very truly nothing, for he is a most earnest thief. He is the beginning of evolution, the preface to the book, the uncut page which has never been read, and which will never be understood. He is the first stage of man.

PAPUAN HOMES.

Inside the coral reef, among the mud of the mangrove-roots and the aboriginal dead fish, with the sea vivid as lightning-flashes beyond and the air heavy with the breath of the building forest-thick mountain behind, the Papuans build their houses. They build them this way, and no man knows why. Rough sticks are set up in the mud—any size, any angle, any position. More rough sticks are lashed across them halfway up. Occasional lianas are laced through walls and floor and stretched over the top. Broad bananas and coconuts leave marks on the roof, and the folk of the village scramble through their branching rooms in clothes careless as the houses.

Here life and thought are commensurate. Anything that man can stand by his long-tailed hand or his ever-prompt big toe and curling little ones is his. Anything that a man does not want goes down through the cracks in the flooring to feed the fishes. Lard and thought are yet at their simplest. Humans swing through their tree houses like monkeys; their talk is harsh as the chatter of the gold and scarlet parrots that flash in the dull greens of the bush; their skin is hairy as an animal's. It is possible that they themselves are yet uncertain whether they be animal or bird, for their houses are a hybrid of bird's-nest and rabbit warren. It is told that back in those sultry New Guinea mountains—still unexplored, still mysterious—the tall man yet swings in his tree-cups and bites at his kind with animal spite. There is a clogging sensuousness in the air here; a sweating-off of scented moisture from the thick-leaved flowers and the trees; a mingling of the waking intellect of man with the irresponsible screams of the gaudy parrots and the taciturnity of the dull-eyed bird. There is the belief that nature is trying new experiments here in her own private laboratory on one of the least known islands of earth, and there is a sense of ghastly suggestion such as has been the ordinary man humbly doubtful of his own beginnings.

All the world over the present-day man tries to revolutionize evolution. That is why most of the Australian shorlins die out in shop-made suits and tin houses that admit of no ventilation. It is why the Papuan has chiefly left his bird's-nest where the "fire-water" of the white man rendered him liable to fall through the cracks into the sea and now herds with his kind in log shacks and is no more moral or happy than he used to be. It is why the Fijian goes out to work with a spade and a loin-cloth and an umbrella and ruins his beautiful palm-leaf hats with occasional tin roofs and glass windows. But—always it is evolution.

IN FIJI.

The phrase "eternal summer" has been used once before. But it belongs to Fiji still; to the warmest, purest, bluest sea in all the world; to the pulsing hot sense of life and color and scent and sound and mystery; to the slender ridged cocoa-palms lifting their perfect crowns to the vivid sky; to the ripple of shining water along the gleaming reefs; to the warm, calm, unassuming sunlight and the green and brown palm-belt houses decked to the very ridge-pole with flowers. And it belongs to the people, to the brown, gay, irresponsible people, slender, sufficient for the day and caring for nothing beyond it; decked, even as their houses, with the purple cloths of the bougainvillea and the scarlet-lipped poinsettia and the great white water-lilies. They are built alike, these men and houses, for the eternal summer; for eternal sun, eternal content. Beauty, lazy charm, fragility of constitution for house and man. But because it is a house, made with sawn uprights and laced together, firm and four-square, it is the beginning of architecture. And because it is a man, standing straight with his great bushy head up, keeping strict orders among his kind, slaving for the white man on the wharves, he is the beginning of brains. He is evolution.

IN THE ROCKIES.

Deep in the Canadian Rockies is a log house that one man knows well. He built it with the sweat of his body and the craft of his hands and the cunning of his brain. He built it alone, and it is his alone. It explains that privacy of soul and flesh which the half-naked shorlins and the herded tree-man never knew. It is the house growing into a home, the man growing into a god. The yellow spruce logs stand stripped and rough to the day; grass clings to the sole set between them; a shyness plays along the bare ridge-pole. But that shyness has a grip of the universe. It is concrete thought fitted, long by log, into a solid and lasting thing. The floor is mud

the winds across the midnight sky; he knows the sliding hiss of the snow as it settles down through the pine trees; he knows the thumps of the falling avalanche, and the gleam of the turning leaves in the fall. And he knows the power of isolation. He knows the strength needed by man or by house when either stands alone in take the brunt of all time brags. He knows because with his own brain and body, he has wrought something that will last. And he has done it, asking no help from any man.

ON THE PRAIRIE.

There are stacks of bleeding, new-sawn timber down on the prairies. The marks of the machinery are plain on the boards yet. The fresh malle glint like numberless eyes at every morticed corner. The slanting stick material of the aborigine has grown into a house

with rooms and doors and windows and black stove with long, curling pipes. Beyond the doorstep stretches the prairie, rolling wide, with glints of ploughed land and bunches of low trees and the shine of distant rivers. A girl comes to the door of the house; a pinched girl with loose hair and a slim hand shading her eyes from the dazzle of the sun through the wind-eroded spaces. Broad and far life and the prairie before her. All things are new, unaccomplished, possible. It is not man and nature any more. It is man and machinery; man and brains; man and dollars and cents. It is man's commercial instinct interrupted by man's lumber house and cooking stove. Evolution has killed romance and stuffed her in the cooking stove that man and his commercial instincts may be fed.

And this is the beginning of the march of progress.

THE END OF IT?

This picture is spliced with the green of satin-smooth boulevards, with the gray stone of hundred-foot houses that make a jagged skyline of flat-topped roofs; with the burning white of broad pavements and the dizzy all-colored flashes of passing automobiles. Evolution has done her best—or worst. The civilized or varicillated brain interprets itself in elevators and hot-air pipes and dumbwaiters, in marvelous hangings and soft carpets and all luxury. The evolution of a house has no farther to go. But the evolution of man? That evolution which began on the Australian deserts? Does it end in Wall street and bridge parties and

summer residences? Or is to be big as the universe; clean as God's winds; bright as His sun? Evolution itself will probably disentangle this matter without any help from the Colonial—G. B. Lancaster in New York Post.

THE COOK OF HOBOKEN.

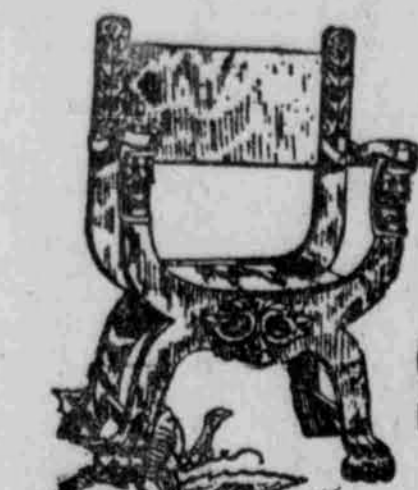
Police Commissioner Baker of New York, about a poli-crime who had made a particularly daring and successful arrest, said: "He got his man by working and his clever with daring logic. He didn't let any timidity stand in his way. He didn't get out of false delicacy, hesitates like the Hoboken cook."

"A Hoboken man whose hen roost had been rolled said to his cook, 'I see here, Lily, sleeping as close to

the henery as you do, didn't you know those chickens they've lost night? 'Lily' hesitated. Then all statements 'Yes, sir. I certainly did know those chickens, but I didn't know anything.' 'Why in thunder, then, didn't you say so? 'Lily' burst into tears. 'Oh,' she sobbed, 'I knowed my old poppy was out there in that hen-coop and I wouldn't have let him think I'd lost confidence in him for all the chickens in the world.'

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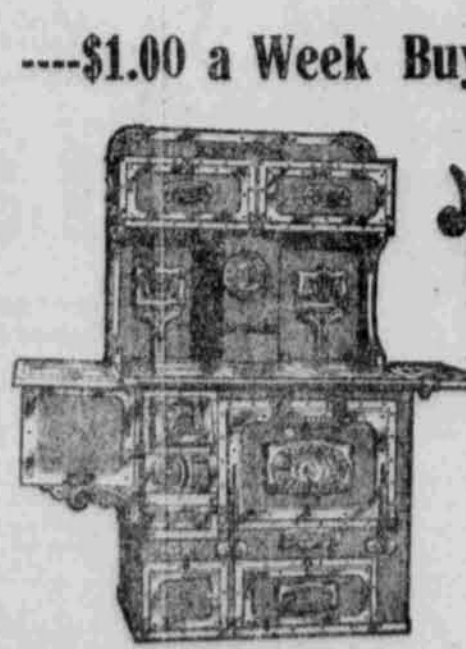
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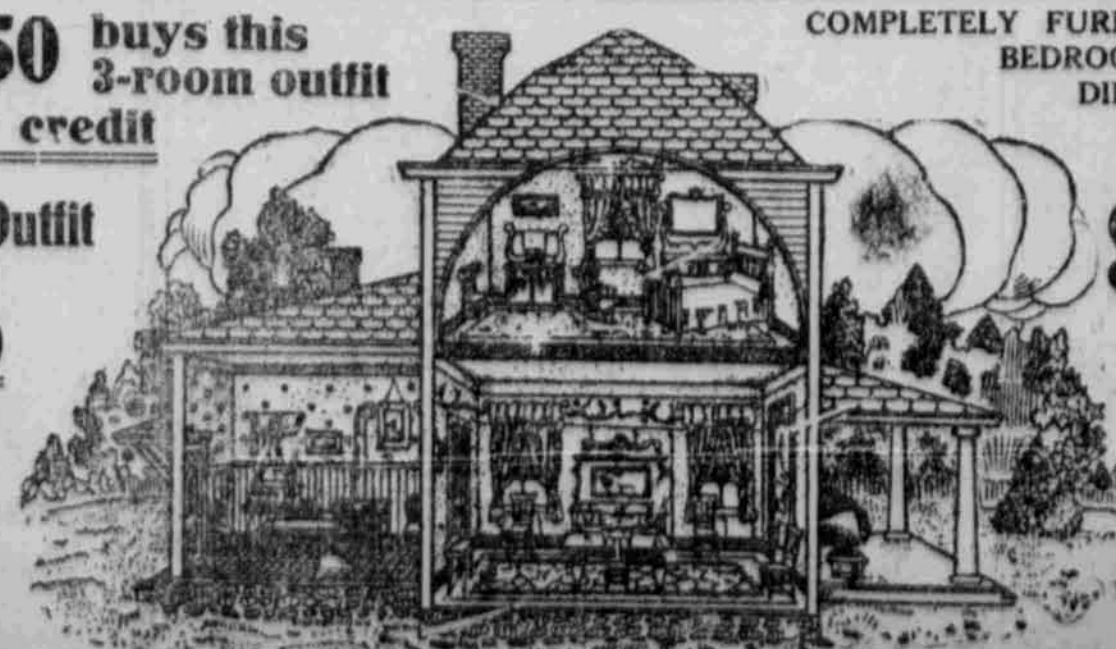
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