A DEGENERATE WORK OF ART: CUBISTIC CREATION

In the world of art, as in the world at large, we have moral degeneracy and intellectual degeneracy. The latter nearly always is the result of the former.

Intellectual degeneracy of the modernistic movement of to-day can be easily traced back to the moral degeneracy of Paris during the period of the last French Revolution. The destructive influence of the revolution which destroyed France and, I might add, Napoleon III, when Paris had fallen so low that, as an authoritative writer says: "There was then no longer any virtue, no press, no public opinion. The unique care was the material interests and the satisfaction of coarse passions towards which the government itself pushed the people." Alcoholism, drug addiction, and megalomania became so common that Paris was said to be a disorderly and metastasizing of all kinds, until finally moral degradation, pauperism, and a burgher for a change suggested a revolution, not only in government but in life and everything. Art did not escape. The whole movement ending in modernism was the natural result.

Like a disease the Empire had run its course. It was finally destroyed because it corroded the nature of the French people. Likewise modernism, like a plague, will have to run its course. It will also be soon destroyed because it corrodes the nature of the beautiful, and because it is a manifestation of intellectual degeneracy rooted, we repeat, in the moral degeneracy of our times.

The cubistic picture we show on page 424 is a degenerate work of art.

We do not remember how the photograph from which the plate of this creation was made came into our hands, do not know the title or the author of the painting, and cannot to lose sight of the fact that a true artist is a master of all beauty and a liber of the human form which it presumes to represent and in a vague way resemble.

Wherever we wish to express the falsity of any work of art, we have but to point to its resemblance to a living nature to obtain the most useful weapons. Nature is our mother and always gives us the smallest hints and suggestions. We do not always follow them, but we do always understand them. She reveals to us all that is best for us to know, and we can learn those things if we will only humble our pride and listen to her suggestions and then modestly set them upon our work.

All the indications offered us by nature prove that—Nature abhors the straight line, even were there no curves and always seeks the curves. There are almost no rectangles in nature and few, if any, cubes even among the animals.

It is the curve which dominates nature. Our eyes, mind and soul are adjusted to the curves. Therefore there must be a curve in art, and not a severely plain and empty picture frame of say about a yard square. Why? Because the eye, being compelled to follow the lines, will be led, to a corner, an end, in a direction, and this sudden switch of the focus, shocks and twists the eyes. If the curve is followed, the eye is led, with a picture full of curves, and also positively enjoy this following of the curves. When a fresh mind with a picture full of curves, we forget the frame, because the mind is focused upon the picture; but an empty frame on a wall is a disagreeable object only because its angularity at each corner shocks the eyes.

Therefore a cubistic picture full of straight lines and right-angles, such as we find in the one we show, is a sort of contradiction to the laws of nature, which have insist upon the establishment of curves.