

The Ergonomiac* Finds Peace at Last

by Doug Hepler © 2018

A week ago last Tuesday, I was with my friend Jerome
And we spoke about our interests in wood.
He has a little workshop adjacent to his home
And I said I'd like to see it -- if I could.

He replied he'd be delighted, so he took me to his shop,
And opened up the solid steel plate door.
And the scene that lay before me, almost caused my breath to stop,
Like nothing I had ever seen before.

Rows and ranks of chisels, and maybe ninety planes,
Standing at attention two by two,
And saws of all descriptions, Pax and every famous name
The finest rasps and rifflers, hand stitched by Ariou

Levels and bevels and try squares galore
Benches of maple and fine Swedish beech
No wonder he uses a solid steel door
Putting these treasures far beyond reach.

I said that jealous envy might just turn my eyes to green.
I'd truly love to work with such fine gear.
He frowned as if my comment was off color or obscene
An expression unexpected, that I found a little queer.

I said that my grandfather, who earned his bread with wood
Might risk a term in jail for such as these.
He'd be overjoyed to use them, if he only could
There'd be no question whether he'd be pleased

Was it terribly confusing, given such a wide supply
Which tool he should be choosing to cut and trim and such?
And then that same expression returned into his eye
He said, he didn't use them very much.

His comment was surprising,
My wonder it did irk
My question quickly rising
How did he do his work?

“One must employ the proper tool, for ev'ry operation.
I demand a tool to fully please myself.
It is the tool that makes the man, I make this affirmation!
If they displease me, I put them on the shelf.”

“My friends have told me, ‘Jerry, its *you* who guides the tool’
I’ve decided that for some, this may be true.
Perhaps my search has been in vain, perhaps I’ve been a fool
But I don’t have time to follow such a rule.”

“They told me I must sharpen each new tool right from the box.
I tried that out, although it’s not my style.
And so I bought a Tormek and a bunch of fancy rocks.
I ground and gnashed and polished for a while.”

“I bought a little meter, with which I hoped to learn
How much weight it took to cut a bit of thread.
If there was any difference, I sure could not discern
I might as well have shaved my arm instead.”

“I’ve tried these all, and each has failed to satisfy my need
But I finally found the tool that will cut clean.
I was searching the wrong catalogues, of that I will concede
I’m delighted with my brand new tool, the coolest that I’ve seen
And there it is, my pride and joy, a CNC machine.”

**Ergonoiac*: An ergonoiac is a tool brain or tool head. I coined this as a mock-medical name for a person who is under the delusion that expensive tools can substitute for craftsmanship or is simply obsessed with tools rather than making things. Ergonoia is a severe case of *ergophilia*, which is love of tools. Ergophilia is normal, because I have it (and so do you). The diagnostic question for ergonoia is “You must have \$40,000 worth of tools in here.” The diagnostic response is, “Yes, thank you.”