

ART AND ITS PRODUCERS, and THE  
ARTS & CRAFTS OF TODAY: TWO  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE ADVANCEMENT OF ART. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.

17  
1/2  
✓  
Complete set 5 Vols

£2/15/0

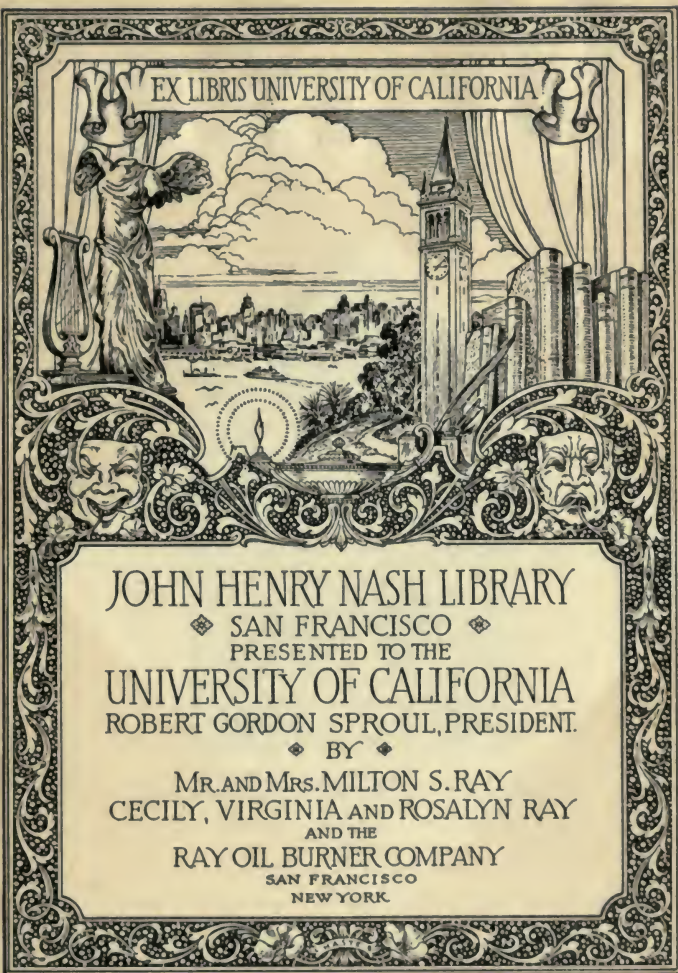
Printed in Kelmscott type



*The Bancroft Library*

University of California • Berkeley

EX LIBRIS UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



JOHN HENRY NASH LIBRARY

◆ SAN FRANCISCO ◆  
PRESENTED TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

ROBERT GORDON SPROUL, PRESIDENT.

◆ BY ◆

MR. AND MRS. MILTON S. RAY  
CECILY, VIRGINIA AND ROSALYN RAY

AND THE  
RAY OIL BURNER COMPANY

SAN FRANCISCO  
NEW YORK





THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
50 EAST LAKE STREET  
CHICAGO, ILL. 60607  
U.S.A. AND CANADA  
LONDON, ENGLAND  
WILEY-BLANKENHORN LTD.  
100 BROOKLYN AVENUE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10012  
U.S.A.



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



**ART AND ITS PRODUCERS, and THE  
ARTS & CRAFTS OF TODAY: TWO  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED BEFORE  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR  
THE ADVANCEMENT OF ART. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.**

WILLIAM MORRIS  
THE ADVANCEMENT OF ART BY  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
ADDRESS DELIVERED IN 1881  
AT THE CLAYTONS OF TODAY  
AND ITS PRODUCTION



ART AND ITS PRODUCERS. A LECTURE DELIVERED IN LIVERPOOL IN 1888. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

I fear what I have to tell you will be looked upon by you as an often-told tale; but it seems to me that at the inception of an enterprise for the popularising and furtherance of the arts of life, the subject-matter of my paper is very necessary to be considered. I will begin by putting before you a kind of text, from which I will speak, so that you may understand from the first the drift of my paper; a plan which, I hope, will save both your time and mine.

Whereas the incentive to labour is usually assumed to be the necessity of earning a livelihood, and whereas in our modern society this is really the only incentive amongst those of the working-class who produce wares of which some form of art is supposed to form a part, it is impossible that men working in this manner should produce genuine works of art. Therefore it is desirable either that all pretence to art should be abandoned in the wares so made, and that art should be restricted to matters which have no other function to perform except their existence as works of art, such as pictures, sculpture, and the like; or else, that to the incentive of necessity to labour should be added the incentives of pleasure and interest in the work itself.

That is my text, and I am quite sure that you will

Lecture V. find it necessary to consider its subject-matter  
Art and its very carefully if you are to do anything save talk  
Producers. about art: for which latter purpose works of art are  
not needed, since so many fine phrases have been  
invented in modern times which answer all the  
purpose of realities.

To put it in another way, the question I ask you is threefold. First, shall we pretend to produce architecture and the architectural arts without having the reality of them? Second, shall we give them up in despair or carelessness of having the reality? Or, third, shall we set ourselves to have the reality?

To adopt the first plan would show that we were too careless and hurried about life to trouble ourselves whether we were fools (and very tragical fools) or not. The adoption of the second would ticket us as very honest people, determined to be free from as many responsibilities as possible, even at the expense of living a dull and vacant life. If we adopt the third sincerely, we shall add very much to the trouble and responsibility of our lives, for a time at least, but also very much to their happiness. Therefore I am in favour of our adopting this third course.

In point of fact, though I have put the second one before you for the sake, I fear, of an appearance of logical fairness, I do not think we are free to adopt it consciously at present, though we may be driven to adopt it in the end. To-day I think only the two

courses are open to us, of quietly accepting the presence of an all-pervading art, which indeed pervades the advertising sheets and nothing else; or else of struggling for an art which shall really pervade our lives and make them happier. But since this, if we are in earnest about it, will involve a reconstruction of society, let us first see what these architectural arts really are, and whether they are worth all this trouble; because, if they are not, we had better go on as we are, and shut our eyes to the fact that we are compelled to be such fools as to pretend that we want them when we do not.

The architectural arts, therefore, if they are anything real, mean the addition to all necessary articles of use of a certain portion of beauty and interest, which the user desires to have and the maker to make. Till within a comparatively recent period there has been no question whether this beauty and interest should form a part of wares; it always did do so without any definite order on the part of the user, and not necessarily consciously on the part of the maker; and the sham art which I have spoken of is simply the traditional survival of this reality; that is one reason why you cannot clear yourselves of it in the simple and logical way that I put before you just now as the second course to be adopted.

But the integrity and sincerity of this architectural art, which, mind you, the workman works up with his wares, not only because he must (for he is not



Lecture V. Art and its Producers. conscious of compulsion in the matter), but because he likes to, though he is often not conscious of his pleasure... this real architectural art depends on the wares of which it forms a part being produced by craftsmanship, for the use of persons who understand craftsmanship. The user, the consumer, must choose his wares to be so and so, and the maker of them must agree with his choice. The fashion of them must not be forced on either the user or the maker; the two must be of one mind, and be capable under easily conceivable circumstances of exchanging their parts of user and maker. The carpenter makes a chest for the goldsmith one day, the goldsmith a cup for the carpenter on another, and there is sympathy in their work... that is, the carpenter makes for his goldsmith friend just such a chest as he himself would have if he needed a chest; the goldsmith's cup is exactly what he would make for himself if he needed one. Each is conscious during his work of making a thing to be used by a man of like needs to himself. I ask you to note these statements carefully, for I shall have to put a contrast to these conditions of work presently. Meantime observe that this question of ornamental or architectural art does not mean, as perhaps most people think it does, whether or not a certain amount of ornament or elegance shall be plastered on to a helpless, lifeless article of daily use... a house, a cup, a spoon, or what not. The chest and the cup,

the house, or what not, may be as simple or as rude as you please, or as devoid of what is usually called ornament; but done in the spirit I have told you of, they will inevitably be works of art. In work so done there is and must be the interchange of interest in the occupations of life; the knowledge of human necessities & the consciousness of human good-will is a part of all such work, and the world is linked together by it. The peace of the arts springs from its roots, and flourishes even in the midst of war and trouble and confusion.

Now this is the architectural art which I urge you to think it worth your while to struggle for in all its reality. I firmly believe it is worth the struggle, however burdensome that may be. There are some things which are worth any cost; but above them all I value consciousness of manly life; and the arts form a part of this at least.

This, I say, is the theory of the conditions under which genuine architectural art can be produced; but that theory is founded on a view of the historical development of the industrial arts, and is not merely built up in the air. I must, therefore, now give a brief account of my historical position, although it has been so often done before, that it must be familiar to many, if not most of you. From the beginning of history down to the end of the Middle Ages there has been, as I have said, no question as to whether due form of art should accompany all wares intended to last for any time:

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.



Lecture V. this character of theirs did not in itself enhance Art and its their price or increase the conscious labour upon Producers. them, it was part of their nature to be so, they grew so like a plant grows; during all these ages wares had been made wholly by craftsmanship. It is true that in the ancient world the greater part of the production of wares was the work of chattel slaves, and though the condition of the artizan slaves was very different from that of the field-hands, yet their slavery has fixed its mark clearly enough on the minor arts of the period, in their severe, or literally servile subordination to the higher work done by artists. When chattel slavery passed away from Europe with the classical world and the Middle Ages were fairly born out of the Medean caldron of the confusion that followed; as soon as the formation of the Guilds gave a rallying-point to the workmen, free and serf, of the day, those workmen, the makers of wares, became free in their work, whatever their political position was; and the architectural arts flourished to a degree unknown before, and at least a foretaste was given to the world of what the pleasure of life might be in a society of equals. At this time craftsmanship reached its highest point: the avowed object of the Craft-Guilds, as may be gathered from the irrefragable evidence of their rules, was to distribute whatever work was to hand equitably amongst a society of pure handicraftsmen (we have translated the word now in order to give it a meaning

exactly opposite to its original one) to check the very beginnings of capitalism and competition inside the Guild, and at the same time to produce wares whose test should be the actual use, the real needs of the public of neighbours that was engaged in work carried on in a similar spirit. This manner of work, of producing for use & not for profit, bore its due fruit: as a matter of course, the wares made by the guildsmen of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries have mostly perished; even the most enduring of them, the buildings of their raising, have been either destroyed or degraded by the ignorance and intolerance, the frivolity and the pedantry of succeeding ages; but what is left us, mostly by sheer accident, is enough to teach us the lesson that no cultivation, no share in the science which has in these days subdued nature, as long as it is exterior to the working life of the workman, can supply the place of freedom of hand and thought during his working hours, and interest in the welfare of his work itself; & further, that the collective genius of a people working in free but harmonious co-operation is far more powerful for the production of architectural art than the spasmodic efforts of the greatest individual genius; because with the former the expression of life and pleasure is unforced and habitual, and directly connected with the traditions of the past, and consequently is as un- failing as the work of Nature herself.

But this society of workmen, this crown of labour



Lecture V. of the Middle Ages, was doomed to a short life. Art and its Producers. Its tendency to equality was so completely extinguished by the development of the political element in which it lived, that the existence of it has been scarcely suspected before the rise of the school of historical criticism of our own days. Those who, perhaps unwittingly, are wont to trouble themselves about what might have been, may consider the lesser causes that seem to have led to this change, and speculate on what would have happened if the Black Death had not half depopulated north-western Europe; if Philip van Artavelde and his bold Ghentmen had defeated the French chivalry at Rosebeque, as their fathers did at Courtray; if the stout yeomen of Kent and Essex, gathered on 'the Fair-field at Mile-end,' had had wits not quite so simple as to trust the young scoundrel of a king, who had just had their leader murdered under tryst, but had carried out the peasants' war to its due conclusion.

All this is pleasant fooling, but it is little else. The Guild-governed industry must in any case have come to an end as soon as the general longing for new knowledge, greater command over nature, and greater hurry of life, had grown strong enough to force on the next development of productive labour. The Guilds were incapable of the necessary expansion then called for, and they had to disappear, after having contributed largely to the death of the feudal hierarchy, and given birth to

the middle-classes, which took its place as the dominant force in Europe. Capitalism began to grow up within the Guilds, the journeyman, the so-called free-labourer, began to appear in them; and outside them, notably in this country, the land of the country began to be cultivated for the profit of the capitalistic farmer instead of the livelihood of the peasant, and the system of production was created which was needed for carrying on modern society...the society of contract, instead of the society of status. It was essential to this system that the free-labourer should be no longer free in his work; he must be furnished with a master having complete control of that work, as a consequence of his owning the raw material and tools of labour; and with an universal market for the sale of the wares with which he had nothing to do directly, & the very existence of which he was unconscious of. He thus gradually ceased to be a craftsman, a man who in order to accomplish his work must necessarily take an interest in it, since he is responsible for making or marring the wares he has to do with, and whose market was made up chiefly of neighbours, men whose needs he could understand. Instead of a craftsman he must now become a 'hand,' responsible for nothing but carrying out the orders of his foreman. In his leisure hours an intelligent citizen (perhaps), with a capacity for understanding politics, or a turn for scientific knowledge, or what not, but in his working hours

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.



Lecture V. not even a machine, but an average portion of that  
Art and its great & almost miraculous machine ... the factory;  
Producers. a man, the interest of whose life is divorced from  
the subject-matter of his labour, whose work has  
become 'employment,' that is, merely the oppor-  
tunity of earning a livelihood at the will of some  
one else. Whatever interest still clings to the pro-  
duction of wares under this system has wholly left  
the ordinary workman, and attaches only to the  
organisers of his labour; and that interest com-  
monly has little to do with the production of wares  
as things to be handled, looked at ... used, in short,  
but simply as counters in the great game of the  
world-market. I fancy that there are not a few of  
the 'manufacturers' in this great 'manufacturing'  
district who would be horrified at the idea of using  
the wares which they 'manufacture,' and if they  
could be witnesses of the enthusiasm of the cus-  
tomers of the customers of their customers when  
those wares reached their final destination of use  
they would perhaps smile at it somewhat cynic-  
ally.

In this brief account I have purposely left out the  
gradations by which we have reached the contrast  
between the craftsman of the Middle Ages & the  
free workman of to-day; between the productions  
of wares for direct use and their production as ex-  
change wares for the world-market. I want to lay  
before you the contrast as clearly as possible; but  
that I may meet objections, I ought to say that I



am well aware that the process of transformation was gradual; that the new free labourer did not at first have to change his manner of work much; that the system of division of labour was brought to bear on him in the seventeenth century and was perfected in the eighteenth, & that, as that system drew near to perfection, the invention of automatic machinery changed the workman's relation to his work once more, and turned him, in the great staple industries, into the tender of a machine instead of a machine (which I think was to him an advantage); but, on the other hand, brought almost all the surviving handicrafts that had hitherto escaped, under the sway of the system of division of labour, & thus for the time being abolished craftsmanship among the wage-earning classes. Craftsmanship is now all but extinct, except among the professional classes, who claim the position of gentlemen.

If we are in earnest in wishing to make the architectural or decorative arts a reality, we must face these facts as they regard the workman in the first place. But in order to be clear as to what the position of the workman, the producer of such wares, really is, we must also consider that of the consumer of them. For it will perhaps be said, if you desire the production of these wares, there is nothing necessary but to create a demand for them, and then they will come naturally, & once more transform the workman into a craftsman. Now, granted

Lecture V. that such demand is genuine, & also wide enough,  
Art and its that is quite true; but then comes the question  
Producers. whether this genuine and wide demand can be  
created; and if it can be, how it is to be done?

Now, as the present system of production has transformed the handicraftsman into a machine without will, so it has turned the neighbour purchaser with good marketing faculties into a slave of the world-market... a purse. The motto of the modern commercialist being, not the market for man, but man for the market: the market is the master, the man the slave, which to my mind, is reversing the reasonable order of things. Let us see if that is not so. In the present day the great problem which we have to face is the due employment of human labour; if we fail in employing it in some fashion, it will eat us up to begin with, whatever it does afterwards; if we fail to employ it duly we must at least expect to have nothing but a corrupt and degraded society; and for my part I wish we could turn our thoughts to employing labour duly, instead of employing it anyhow. But at any rate we are all practically driven to recognise the fact that, except for a few hundred thousands, who for anything we can do must starve or go to the workhouse, we must look to the employment of labour power, that is, men. Now, I have said just now, and repeat it again with all the emphasis that I can, that the proper employers (or say customers) of the working men are the working men: and if they

had no other customers, I should have perfect confidence that in the long run they would be employed in making nothing but useful things; among which, of course, I include works of art of various kinds: but as they have other customers, I have not that confidence, for I see, no one can fail to see, that they are employed in producing a great deal that is not useful, although it is marketable. They themselves are not as good customers to themselves as they should be, because they are not wealthy enough; all the wares which they consume must be of inferior quality for one thing, let alone their quantity; therefore their custom must be supplemented by that of the well-to-do and the rich classes, and these we will suppose are all of them wealthy enough to satisfy their needs for really desirable things, and they do so: other things the reasonable among them would not demand, if they could help themselves; but from what I can see round about me, I judge that they cannot help themselves. It seems that the market for gambling in profits is too exacting, or the need for the employment of labour is too pressing to allow them to purchase and consume only what they need; they must, in addition, purchase & consume many things which they do not need; habits of pomp and luxury must be formed amongst them, so that the market which would be starved by the misery of the poor, may be kept busy with ministering to the luxury of the rich. And you must understand that

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.



Lecture V. I mean here to assert that though all wares made  
Art and its must be consumed, nevertheless that consump-  
Producers. tion does not prove their use: they may be used, or  
they may be wasted, and if they are not needed,  
they cannot be used and must be wasted.

Here, then, in considering the possibility of the  
widespread and genuine demand for architectural  
art, we are met at the outset by this difficulty, that  
the workmen, who must be the producers of the  
art, are largely, I will say mostly, employed in wast-  
ing their labour in two ways; on the one hand, in  
making inferior wares, which their inferior posi-  
tion forces them to demand, and for which there  
ought to be no demand; and on the other, in mak-  
ing wares, not for the use, but for the waste of the  
rich classes, for which, again, there ought to be no  
demand. And these two haplessly false demands  
are forced on to both these classes, because they are  
forced into the position which so forces them. The  
world-market, which should be our servant, is our  
master, and ordains that so it must be. The wide  
and genuine demand, therefore, for the architect-  
ural arts which we have seen can only be produced  
by the handicraftsman, cannot be created under  
the present system of production, which, indeed,  
could not go on if the greater part of its wares were  
the work of handicraft.

We are driven at last, then, to this conclusion; that  
pleasure and interest in the work itself are neces-  
sary to the production of a work of art however

humble; that this pleasure and interest can only be present when the workman is free in his work, i.e., is conscious of producing a piece of goods suitable to his own needs as a healthy man; that the present system of industrial production does not allow of the existence of such free workmen consciously producing wares for themselves and their neighbours, and forbids the general public to ask for wares made by such men; that, therefore, since neither the producers nor the users of wares are free to make or ask for wares according to their wills, we cannot under our present system of production have the reality of the architectural arts which I have been urging you to strive for, but must put up with pretending to have them; which seems to me a rather sorry proceeding.

What can we do, then, in order to shake off this disgrace; in order that we may be free to say either that we want the ornaments of life, and no makeshifts of them shall content us; or that we do not want them, and will not have them?

If my premises are accepted the practical position is clear; we must try to change the system of the production of wares. To meet possible objections once more, I do not mean by this that we should aim at abolishing all machinery: I would do some things by machinery which are now done by hand, and other things by hand which are now done by machinery: in short, we should be the masters of our machines and not their slaves, as we are now.



Lecture V. It is not this or that tangible steel & brass machine Art and its which we want to get rid of, but the great intangible Producers. machine of commercial tyranny, which oppresses the lives of all of us. Now, this enterprise of rebelling against commercialism I hold to be a thoroughly worthy one: remember what my text was, and how I said that our aim should be to add to the incentive of necessity for working, the incentive of pleasure and interest in the work itself. I am not pleading for the production of a little more beauty in the world, much as I love it, and much as I would sacrifice for its sake; it is the lives of human beings that I am pleading for; or if you will, with the Roman poet, the reasons for living. In this assembly there are perhaps only a few who can realise the meaning of the daily drudgery, hopeless of any result except the continuance of a life of drudgery, which is the lot of all but a few in our civilisation; for indeed it is only possible to be realised by experience or strong imagination; but do your best to realise it, & then further to realise the result of turning those daily hours of hopeless toil into days of pleasant work, the happy exercise of manly energies, illuminated by the certainty of usefulness & the hope of applause from the friends and neighbours for whom it is exercised. Surely when you have thought of this seriously you will once more have to admit that the attainment of such a change is worth almost any sacrifice. I say again, as I have often said, that if the world cannot

hope to be happy in its work it must relinquish the hope of happiness altogether.

Again, the aim of those who look on the popular arts seriously is, that we should be masters of our work, and be able to say what we will have and what we will do; and the price which we must pay for the attainment of that aim is, to speak quite plainly, the recasting of society. For that mechanical and tyrannous system of production which I have condemned is so intimately interwoven with the society of which we all form a part, that it sometimes shows as its cause, & sometimes as its effect, and is in any case a necessity to it; you cannot abolish the slums of our great cities; you cannot have happy villagers living in pretty houses among the trees, doing pretty-looking work in their own houses or in the pleasant village workshop between seed-time & harvest, unless you remove the causes that have made the brutal slum-dweller and the starveling field labourer. All essential conditions of society, the growth of ages as they are, must bring about certain consequences which cannot be dealt with by mere palliation. The essentials of ancient society involved the chattel slave, those of mediæval society the serf, those of modern society the irresponsible wage-worker under a master; and the latter cannot by efforts from without be set to do work which does not belong to his condition of dependency on a master; the craftsman is responsible for his work, and a dependent cannot be

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.



Lecture V. responsible for anything save the fulfilment of the Art and its task set him by his master.

Producers. But lest you may think I show no course for you to take except striving, as I do, towards the conscious reconstruction of society on a basis of equality, I will say a word or two on work which may lie ready to our hands as artists rather than as citizens. There is a small body of men who are independent in their work, who are called by the name I have just used ... artists: as a separate group they are the result of the commercial system which could not use independent workmen, and their divorce from the ordinary production of wares is the obvious external cause of the sickness of the architectural arts. Anyhow, they exist as independent workmen, the loose screw in their position being that they do not work for the whole public, but for a very small portion of it, which rewards them for that exclusiveness by giving them the position of gentlemen. Now it seems to me that the only thing we can do, if we will not help in the reconstruction of society, is to deal with this group of gentlemen workmen. The non-gentlemen workmen are beyond our reach unless we look on the matter from the wider point of view, but we can try to get the artists to take an interest in those arts of life whose production at present is wholly in the hands of the irresponsible machines of the commercial system, and to understand that they, the artists, however great they may be, ought to be taking part in this

production ; while the workmen who are now machines ought to be artists, however humble. On the other hand we may try to dig up whatever of responsibility & independence lies half smothered under the compact clay of the factory system, to find out if there are not some persons in the employ of the commercial organisers who are artists, to give them opportunities if possible of working more directly for the public, and to win for them that applause & sympathy of their brother artists which every good workman naturally desires. The idea that this may and can be done is by no means mine alone ; in putting it forward I represent not merely a vague hope that it may be attempted, but an actual enterprise in good working order. I have the honour to belong to a small and unpretentious society, of which Mr. Crane is President, which, under the name of the Arts and Crafts Society, has just carried out a successful exhibition of what are called 'the applied arts' in London, with the definite intention of furthering the purpose I have just stated. To some of us such work may seem very petty and unheroic, especially if they have been lately brought face to face with the reckless hideousness and squalor of a great manufacturing district ; or have been so long living in the shabby hell of the great commercial centre of the world that it has entered into their life & they are now 'used to it,' that is, degraded to its miserable standard : but it is something to do at least, for it means keeping

Lecture V.  
Art and its  
Producers.

Lecture V. alive the spark of life in these architectural arts  
Art and its for a better day; which arts might otherwise be  
Producers. wholly extinguished by commercial production,  
a disaster which not many years ago seemed most  
likely to happen. But I think this lesser work will  
be so far from hindering us, that it will rather draw  
us on to engaging in the wider and deeper matter,  
and doing our best towards the realisation of that  
Society of Equals, which, as I have already said,  
will form the only conditions under which true  
craftsmanship can be the rule of production; that  
form of work which involves the pleasurable exer-  
cise of our own energies, and the sympathy with  
the capacities and aspirations of our neighbours,  
that is, of humanity generally.



THE ARTS AND CRAFTS OF TODAY.  
BEING AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN  
EDINBURGH IN OCTOBER, 1889. BY  
WILLIAM MORRIS.

'Applied Art' is the title which the Society has chosen for that portion of the arts which I have to speak to you about. What are we to understand by that title? I should answer that what the Society means by applied art is the ornamental quality which men choose to add to articles of utility. Theoretically this ornament can be done without, and art would then cease to be 'applied' ... would exist as a kind of abstraction, I suppose. But though this ornament to articles of utility may be done without, man up to the present time has never done without it, and perhaps never will; at any rate he does not propose to do so at present, although, as we shall see presently, he has got himself into somewhat of a mess in regard to his application of art. Is it worth while for a moment or two considering why man has never thought of giving up work which adds to the labour necessary to provide him with food and shelter, and to satisfy his craving for some exercise of his intellect? I think it is, and that such consideration will help us in dealing with the important question which once more I must attempt to answer, 'What is our position towards the applied arts in the present, and what have we to hope for them and from them in the future?'

Now I say without hesitation that the purpose of

Lecture VI. The Arts and Crafts of Today. applying art to articles of utility is twofold: first, to add beauty to the results of the work of man, which would otherwise be ugly; and secondly, to add pleasure to the work itself, which would otherwise be painful and disgustful. If that be the case, we must cease to wonder that man should always have striven to ornament the work of his own hands, which he must needs see all round about him daily and hourly; or that he should have always striven to turn the pain of his labour into a pleasure wherever it seemed possible to him.

Now as to the first purpose: I have said that the produce of man's labour must be ugly if art be not applied to it, and I use the word ugly as the strongest plain word in the English language. For the works of man cannot show a mere negation of beauty; when they are not beautiful they are actively ugly, and are thereby degrading to our manlike qualities; and at last so degrading that we are not sensible of our degradation, and are therefore preparing ourselves for the next step downward. This active injury of non-artistic human work I want especially to fix in your minds; so I repeat again, if you dispense with applying art to articles of utility, you will not have unnoticeable utilities, but utilities which will bear with them the same sort of harm as blankets infected with the small-pox or the scarlet-fever, and every step in your material life and its 'progress' will tend towards the intellectual death of the human race.



Of course you will understand that in speaking of the works of man, I do not forget that there are some of his most necessary labours to which he cannot apply art in the sense wherein we are using it; but that only means that Nature has taken the beautifying of them out of his hands; and in most of these cases the processes are beautiful in themselves if our stupidity did not add grief and anxiety to them. I mean that the course of the fishing-boat over the waves, the plough-share driving the furrow for next year's harvest, the June swathe, the shaving falling from the carpenter's plane, all such things are in themselves beautiful, and the practice of them would be delightful if man, even in these last days of civilisation, had not been so stupid as to declare practically that such work (without which we should die in a few days) is the work of thralls and starvelings, whereas the work of destruction, strife, and confusion, is the work of the pick of the human race ... gentlemen to wit.

But if these applied arts are necessary, as I believe they are, to prevent mankind from being a mere ugly & degraded blotch on the surface of the earth, which without him would certainly be beautiful, their other function of giving pleasure to labour is at least as necessary, and, if the two functions can be separated, even more beneficent and indispensable. For if it be true, as I know it is, that the function of art is to make labour pleasurable, what is the position in which we must find ourselves with-

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.



Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

out it? One of two miseries must happen to us: either the necessary work of our lives must be carried on by a miserable set of helots for the benefit of a few lofty intellects; or if, as we ought to do, we determine to spread fairly the burden of the curse of labour over the whole community, yet there the burden will be, spoiling for each one of us a large part of that sacred gift of life, every fragment of which, if we were wise, we should treasure up and make the most of (and allow others to do so) by using it for the pleasurable exercise of our energies, which is the only true source of happiness.

Let me call your attention to an analogy between the function of the applied arts and a gift of nature without which the world would certainly be much unhappier, but which is so familiar to us that we have no proper single word for it, and must use a phrase; to wit, the pleasure of satisfying hunger. Appetite is the single word used for it, but is clearly vague and unspecific: let us use it, however, now we have agreed as to what we mean by it.

By the way, need I apologise for introducing so gross a subject as eating and drinking? Some of you perhaps will think I ought to, and are looking forward to the day when this function also will be civilised into the taking of some intensely concentrated pill once a year, or indeed once in a life-time, leaving us free for the rest of our time to the exercise of our intellect... if we chance to have any in those days.

From this height of cultivated aspiration I respectfully beg to differ, and in all seriousness, and not in the least in the world as a joke, I say that the daily meeting of the house-mates in rest and kindness for this function of eating, this restoration of the waste of life, ought to be looked on as a kind of sacrament, and should be adorned by art to the best of our powers: and pray pardon me if I say that the consciousness that there are so many people whose lives are so sordid, miserable, and anxious, that they cannot duly celebrate this sacrament, should be felt by those that can, as a burden to be shaken off by remedying the evil, and not by ignoring it. Well now, I say, that as eating would be dull work without appetite, or the pleasure of eating, so is the production of utilities dull work without art, or the pleasure of production; and that it is Nature herself who leads us to desire this pleasure, this sweetening of our daily toil. I am inclined to think that in the long-run mankind will find it indispensable; but if that turn out to be a false prophecy, all I can say is that mankind will have to find out some new pleasure to take its place, or life will become unendurable, and society impossible. Meantime it is reasonable & right that men should strive to make the useful wares which they produce beautiful just as Nature does; and that they should strive to make the making of them pleasant, just as Nature makes pleasant the exercise of the necessary functions of

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.



Lecture VI. sentient beings. To apply art to useful wares, in short, is not frivolity, but a part of the serious business of life.

The Arts and Crafts of Today. Now let us see in somewhat more detail what applied art deals with. I take it that it is only as a matter of convenience that we separate painting and sculpture from applied art: for in effect the synonym for applied art is architecture, and I should say that painting is of little use, and sculpture of less, except where their works form a part of architecture. A person with any architectural sense really always looks at any picture or any piece of sculpture from this point of view; even with the most abstract picture he is sure to think, How shall I frame it, and where shall I put it? As for sculpture, it becomes a mere toy, a tour de force, when it is not definitely a part of a building, executed for a certain height from the eye, and to be seen in a certain light. And if this be the case with works of art which can to a certain extent be abstracted from their surroundings, it is, of course, the case a fortiori with more subsidiary matters. In short, the complete work of applied art, the true unit of the art, is a building with all its due ornament and furniture; and I must say from experience that it is impossible to ornament duly an ugly or base building. And on the other hand I am forced to say that the glorious art of good building is in itself so satisfying, that I have seen many a building that needed little ornament, wherein all that seemed needed for its



complete enjoyment was some signs of sympathetic and happy use by human beings: a stout table, a few old-fashioned chairs, a pot of flowers will ornament the parlour of an old English yeoman's house far better than a wagon load of Rubens will ornament a gallery in Blenheim Park.

Only remember that this forbearance, this restraint in beauty, is not by any means necessarily artless: where you come upon an old house that looks thus satisfactory, while no conscious modern artist has been at work there, the result is caused by unconscious unbroken tradition: in default of that, in will march that pestilential ugliness I told you of before, and with its loathsome pretence and hideous vulgarity will spoil the beauty of a Gothic house in Somersetshire, or the romance of a peel tower on the edge of a Scotch loch; and to get back any of the beauty and romance (you will never get it all back) you will need a conscious artist of today, whose chief work, however, will be putting out the intrusive rubbish and using the white-washing brush freely.

Well, I repeat that the unit of the art I have to deal with is the dwelling of some group of people, well-built, beautiful, suitable to its purpose, & duly ornamented and furnished, so as to express the kind of life which the inmates live. Or it may be some noble and splendid public building, built to last for ages, and it also duly ornamented so as to express the life & aspirations of the citizens; in itself a great

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

piece of history of the efforts of the citizens to raise a house worthy of their noble lives, and its meredecoration an epic wrought for the pleasure and education, not of the present generation only, but of many generations to come. This is the true work of art... I was going to say of genuine civilisation, but the word has been so misused that I will not use it... the true work of art, the true masterpiece of reasonable and manly men conscious of the bond of true society that makes everything each man does of importance to every one else.

This is, I say, the unit of the art, this house, this church, this town-hall, built and ornamented by the harmonious efforts of a free people: by no possibility could one man do it, however gifted he might be: even supposing the director or architect of it were a great painter and a great sculptor, an unfailing designer of metal work, of mosaic, of woven stuffs and the rest... though he may design all these things, he cannot execute them, and something of his genius must be in the other members of the great body that raises the complete work: millions on millions of strokes of hammer and chisel, of the gouge, of the brush, of the shuttle, are embodied in that work of art, and in every one of them is either intelligence to help the master, or stupidity to foil him hopelessly. The very masons laying day by day their due tale of rubble and ashlar may help him to fill the souls of all beholders with satisfaction, or may make his paper design a



folly or a nullity. They and all the workmen engaged in the work will bring that disaster about in spite of the master's mighty genius, unless they are instinct with intelligent tradition; unless they have that tradition, whatever pretence of art there is in it will be worthless. But if they are working backed by intelligent tradition, their work is the expression of their harmonious co-operation and the pleasure which they took in it: no intelligence, even of the lowest kind, has been crushed in it, but rather subordinated and used, so that no one from the master designer downwards could say, This is my work, but every one could say truly, This is our work. Try to conceive, if you can, the mass of pleasure which the production of such a work of art would give to all concerned in making it, through years and years it may be (for such work cannot be hurried); and when made there it is for a perennial pleasure to the citizens, to look at, to use, to care for, from day to day and year to year.

Is this a mere dream of an idealist? No, not at all; such works of art were once produced, when these islands had but a scanty population, leading a rough and to many (though not to me) a miserable life, with a 'plentiful lack' of many, nay most, of the so-called comforts of civilisation; in some such way have the famous buildings of the world been raised; but the full expression of this spirit of common and harmonious work is given only during the comparatively short period of the developed



Lecture VI. Middle Ages, the time of the completed combination of the workmen in the guilds of craft.  
The Arts and Crafts of Today. And now if you will allow me I will ask a question or two, and answer them myself.

1. Do we wish to have such works of art? I must answer that we here assembled certainly do, though I will not answer for the general public.

2. Why do we wish for them? Because (if you have followed me so far) their production would give pleasure to those that used them and those that made them: since if such works were done, all work would be beautiful and fitting for its purpose, and as a result most labour would cease to be burdensome.

3. Can we have them now as things go? Can the present British Empire, with all its power and all its intelligence, produce what the scanty, half-barbarous, superstitious, ignorant population of these islands produced with no apparent effort several centuries ago? No; as things go we cannot have them; no conceivable combination of talent and enthusiasm could produce them as things are.

Why? Well, you see, in the first place, we have been engaged for at least one century in loading the earth with huge masses of 'utilitarian' buildings, which we cannot get rid of in a hurry; we must be housed, and there are our houses for us; and I have said you cannot ornament ugly houses. This is a bad hearing for us.

But supposing we pulled these utilitarian houses

down, should we build them up again much better? I fear not, in spite of the considerable improvement in taste which has taken place of late years, and of which this Congress is, I hope, an indication amongst others.

If the ugly utilitarian buildings abovesaid were pulled down, and we set about building others in their place, the new ones would assuredly be of two kinds: one kind would be still utilitarian in fact, though they might affect various degrees and kinds of ornamental style; and they would be at least as bad as those which they replaced, and in some respects would be worse than a good many of the older ones; would be flimsier in building, more tawdry, and more vulgar than those of the earlier utilitarian style. The other kind would be designed by skilful architects, men endowed with a sense of beauty, & educated in the history of past art, and they would doubtless be far better in form than the utilitarian abortions we have been speaking of; but they would lack the spirit of the older buildings of which I have spoken above. Let that pass for the moment. I will recur to it presently.

For one thing I am sure would immediately strike us in our city rebuilt at the end of the nineteenth century. The great mass of the building would be of the utilitarian kind, & only here and there would you find an example of the refined and careful work of the educated architects; the Eclectic style, if you will allow me so to call it. That is all our rebuild-



Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

ing would come to; we should be pretty much where we are now, except that we should have lost some solid straightforwardly ugly buildings, and gained a few elegantly eccentric ones, 'not understood of the people.'

How is this? Well, the answer to that question will answer the 'why' of a few sentences back.

The mass of our houses would be utilitarian and ugly even if we set about the work of housing ourselves anew, because tradition has at last brought us into the plight of being builders of base and degrading buildings, and when we want to build otherwise we must try to imitate work done by men whose traditions led them to build beautifully; which I must say is not a very hopeful job.

I said just now that those few refined buildings which might be raised in a rebuilding of our houses, or which, to drop hypothesis, are built pretty often now, would lack, or do lack, the spirit of the mediæval buildings I spoke of. Surely this is obvious: so far from being works of harmonious combination as effortless as any artistic work can be, they are, even when most successful, the result of a constant conflict with all the traditions of the time. As a rule the only person connected with a work of architecture who has any idea of what is wanted in it is the architect himself; and at every turn he has to correct and oppose the habits of the mason, the joiner, the cabinet-maker, the carver, etc., and to try to get them to imitate painfully the habits of



the fourteenth-century workmen, and to lay aside their own habits, formed not only from their own personal daily practice, but from the inherited turn of mind and practice of body of more than two centuries at least. Under all these difficulties it would be nothing short of a miracle if those refined buildings did not proclaim their eclecticism to all beholders. Indeed, as it is, the ignorant stare at them wondering; fools of the Podsnap breed laugh at them; harsh critics pass unkind judgments on them. Don't let us be any of these: when all is said they do much credit to those who have designed them and carried them out in the teeth of such prodigious difficulties; they are often beautiful in their own eclectic manner: they are always meant to be so: shall we find fault with their designers for trying to make them different from the mass of Victorian architecture? If there was to be any attempt to make them beautiful, that difference, that eccentricity, was necessary. Let us praise their eccentricity & not deride it, we whose genuine tendency is to raise buildings which are a blot on the beautiful earth, an insult to the common sense of cultivated nineteenth century humanity. Allow me a parenthesis here. When I look on a group of clean well-fed middle-class men of that queer mixed race that we have been in the habit of calling the Anglo-Saxon (whether they belong to the land on this side of the Atlantic or the other); when I see these noble creatures, tall, wide-shouldered, and well-

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

knit, with their bright eyes and well moulded features, these men full of courage, capacity, and energy, I have been astounded in considering the houses they have thought good enough for them, and the pettiness of the occupations which they have thought worthy of the exercise of their energies. To see a man of those inches, for example, bothering himself over the exact width of a stripe in some piece of printed cloth (which has nothing to do with its artistic needs) for fear it might not just hit the requirements of some remote market, tyrannised over by the whims of a languid creole or a fantastic negro, has given me a feeling of shame for my civilised middle-class fellow-man, who is regardless of the quality of the wares which he sells, but intensely anxious about the profits to be derived from them.

This parenthesis, to the subject of which I shall presently have to recur, leads me to note here that I have been speaking chiefly about architecture, because I look upon it, first as the foundation of all the arts, and next as an all embracing art. All the furniture and ornament which goes to make up the complete unit of art, a properly ornamented dwelling, is in some degree or other beset with the difficulties which hamper nowadays the satisfactory accomplishment of good and beautiful building. The decorative painter, the mosaicist, the window artist, the cabinetmaker, the paperhang-maker, the potter, the weaver, all these have



to fight with the traditional tendency of the epoch in their attempt to produce beauty, rather than marketable finery, to put artistic finish on their work rather than trade finish. I may, I hope, without being accused of egotism, say that my life for the last thirty years has given me ample opportunity for knowing the weariness and bitterness of that struggle.

For, to recur to my parenthesis, if the captain of industry (as it is the fashion to call a business man) thinks not of the wares with which he has to provide the world-market, but of profit to be made from them, so the instrument which he employs as an adjunct to his machinery, the artisan, does not think of the wares which he (and the machine) produces as wares, but simply as livelihood for himself. The tradition of the work which he has to deal with has brought him to this, that instead of satisfying his own personal conception of what the wares he is concerned in making should be, he has to satisfy his master's view of the marketable quality of the said wares. And you must understand that this is a necessity of the way in which the workman works; to work thus means livelihood for him; to work otherwise means starvation. I beg you to note that this means that the realities of the wares are sacrificed to commercial shams of them, if that be not too strong a word. The manufacturer (as we call him) cannot turn out quite nothing and offer it for sale, at least in the



Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

case of articles of utility; what he does do is to turn out a makeshift of the article demanded by the public, and by means of the 'sword of cheapness,' as it has been called, he not only can force the said makeshift on the public, but can (and does) prevent them from getting the real thing; the real thing presently ceases to be made after the makeshift has been once foisted on to the market.

Now we won't concern ourselves about other makeshifts, however noxious to the pleasure of life they may be: let those excuse them that profit by them. But if you like to drink glucose beer instead of malt beer, and to eat oleo-margarine instead of butter; if these things content you, at least ask yourselves what in the name of patience you want with a makeshift of art!

Indeed I began by saying that it was natural and reasonable for man to ornament his mere useful wares & not to be content with mere utilitarianism; but of course I assumed that the ornament was real, that it did not miss its mark, and become no ornament. For that is what makeshift art means, and that is indeed a waste of labour.

Try to understand what I mean: you want a ewer and basin, say: you go into a shop and buy one; you probably will not buy a merely white one; you will scarcely see a merely white set. Well, you look at several, and one interests you about as much as another: that is, not at all; and at last in mere weariness you say, 'Well, that will do'; and you

have your crockery with a scrawl of fern leaves and convolvulus over it which is its 'ornament.' The said ornament gives you no pleasure, still less any idea; it only gives you an impression (a mighty dull one) of bedroom. The ewer also has some perverse stupidity about its handle which also says bedroom, and adds respectable: and in short you endure the said ornament, except perhaps when you are bilious and uncomfortable in health. You think, if you think at all, that the said ornament has wholly missed its mark. And yet that isn't so; that ornament, that special form which the ineptitude of the fern scrawl and the idiocy of the handle has taken, has sold so many dozen or gross more of that toilet set than of others, and that is what it is put there for; not to amuse you, you know it is not art, but you don't know that it is trade finish, exceedingly useful... to everybody except its user and its actual maker.

But does it serve no purpose except to the manufacturer, shipper, agent, shopkeeper, etc.? Ugly, inept, stupid, as it is, I cannot quite say that. For if, as the saying goes, hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue, so this degraded piece of trade finish is the homage which commerce pays to art. It is a token that art was once applied to ornamenting utilities, for the pleasure of their makers and their users.

Now we have seen that this applied art is worth cultivating, and indeed that we are here to cultivate



Lecture VI,  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

it; but it is clear that, under the conditions above spoken of, its cultivation will be at least difficult. For the present conditions of life in which the application of art to utilities is made imply that a very serious change has taken place since those works of cooperative art were produced in the Middle Ages, which few people I think sufficiently estimate.

Briefly speaking, this change amounts to this, that Tradition has transferred itself from art to commerce... that commerce which has now embraced the old occupation of war, as well as the production of wares. But the end proposed by commerce is the creation of a market demand, and the satisfaction of it when created for the sake of the production of individual profits: whereas the end proposed by art applied to utilities, that is, the production of the days before commerce, was the satisfaction of the genuine spontaneous needs of the public, and the earning of individual livelihood by the producers. I beg you to consider these two ideas of production, and you will then see how wide apart they are from one another. To the commercial producer the actual wares are nothing; their adventures in the market are everything. To the artist the wares are everything; his market he need not trouble himself about; for he is asked by other artists to do what he does do, what his capacity urges him to do.

The ethics of the commercial person (squaring themselves of course to his necessities) bid him give as little as he can to the public, and take as much



as he possibly can from them: the ethics of the artist bid him put as much of himself as he can in every piece of goods he makes. The commercial person, therefore, is in this position, that he is dealing with a public of enemies; the artist, on the contrary, with a public of friends and neighbours.

Again, it is clear that the commercial person must chiefly confine his energies to the war which he is waging; the wares that he deals in must be made by instruments; as far as possible by means of instruments without desires or passions, by automatic machines, as we call them. Where that is not possible, and he has to use highly-drilled human beings instead of machines, it is essential to his success that they should imitate the passionless quality of machines as long as they are at work; whatever of human feeling may be irrepressible will be looked upon by the commercial person as he looks upon grit or friction in his non-human machines, as a nuisance to be abated. Need I say that from these human machines it is futile to look for art? Whatever feelings they may have for art they must keep for their leisure...that is, for the very few hours in the week when they are trying to rest after labour and are not asleep; or for the hapless days when they are out of employment and are in desperate anxiety about their livelihood.

Of these men, I say, you cannot hope that they can live by applying art to utilities: they can only apply the sham of it for commercial purposes; and I may

Lecture VI. say in parenthesis, that from experience I can guess  
The Arts what a prodigious amount of talent is thus wasted.  
and Crafts For the rest you may consider, and workmen may  
of Today. consider, this statement of mine to be somewhat  
brutal: I can only reply both to you and to them,  
that it is a truth which it is necessary to face. It is  
one side of the disabilities of the working class, and  
I invite them to consider it seriously.

Therefore (as I said last year at Liverpool), I must  
turn from the great body of men who are producing  
utilities, and who are debarred from applying art  
to them, to a much smaller group, indeed a very  
small one. I must turn to a group of men who are  
not working under masters who employ them to  
produce for the world-market, but who are free to  
do as they please with their work, and are working  
for a market which they can see and understand,  
whatever the limitations may be under which they  
work: that is the artists.

They are a small and a weak body, on the surface  
of things obviously in opposition to the general  
tendency of the age; debarred, therefore, as I have  
said, from true cooperative art: & as a consequence  
of this isolation heavily weighted in the race of  
success. For cooperative tradition places an artist  
at the very beginning of his career in a position  
wherein he has escaped the toil of learning a huge  
multitude of little matters difficult, nay impossible  
to learn otherwise: the field which he has to dig is  
not a part of a primeval prairie, but ground made



fertile and put in good heart by the past labour of countless generations. It is the apprenticeship of the ages, in short, whereby an artist is born into the workshop of the world.

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

We artists of to-day are not so happy as to share fully in this apprenticeship: we have to spend the best part of our lives in trying to get hold of some 'style' which shall be natural to us, and too often fail in doing so; or perhaps oftener still, having acquired our 'style,' that is, our method of expression, become so enamoured of the means, that we forget the end, and find that we have nothing to express except our self-satisfaction in the possession of our very imperfect instrument; so that you will find clever and gifted men at the present day who are prepared to sustain as a theory, that art has no function but the display of clever executive qualities, and that one subject is as good as another. No wonder that this theory should lead them into the practice of producing pictures which we might pronounce to be clever, if we could understand what they meant, but whose meaning we can only guess at, and suppose that they are intended to convey the impression on a very short-sighted person of divers ugly incidents seen through the medium of a London fog.

Well I admit that this is a digression, as my subject is Applied Art, and such art cannot be applied to anything; and I am afraid, indeed, that it must be considered a mere market article.



Lecture VI. Thus we artists of today are cut off from cooperative tradition, but I must not say that we are cut off from all tradition. And though it is undeniable that we are out of sympathy with the main current of the age, its commercialism, yet we are (even sometimes unconsciously) in sympathy with that appreciation of history which is a genuine growth of the times, and a compensation to some of us for the vulgarity and brutality which beset our lives; and it is through this sense of history that we are united to the tradition of past times.

Past times; are we reactionists, then, anchored in the dead past? Indeed I should hope not; nor can I altogether tell you how much of the past is really dead. I see about me now evidence of ideas recurring which have long been superseded. The world runs after some object of desire, strives strenuously for it, gains it, and apparently casts it aside; like a kitten playing with a ball, you say. No, not quite. The gain is gained, and something else has to be pursued, often something which once seemed to be gained and was let alone for a while. Yet the world has not gone back; for that old object of desire was only gained in the past as far as the circumstances of the day would allow it to be gained then. As a consequence the gain was imperfect; the times are now changed, and allow us to carry on that old gain a step forward to perfection: the world has not really gone back on its footsteps, though to some it has seemed to do so. Did the world go back, for in-

stance, when the remnant of the ancient civilisations was overwhelmed by the barbarism which was the foundation of modern Europe? We can all see that it did not. Did it go back when the logical and orderly system of the Middle Ages had to give place to the confusion of incipient commercialism in the sixteenth century? Again, ugly and disastrous as the change seems on the surface, I yet think it was not a retrogression into prehistoric anarchy, but a step upward along the spiral, which, and not the straight line, is, as my friend Bax puts it, the true line of progress.

So that if in the future that shall immediately follow on this present we may have to recur to ideas that to-day seem to belong to the past only, that will not be really a retracing of our steps, but rather a carrying on of progress from a point where we abandoned it a while ago. On that side of things, the side of art, we have not progressed; we have disappointed the hopes of the period just before the time of abandonment: have those hopes really perished, or have they merely lain dormant, abiding the time when we, or our sons, or our sons' sons, should quicken them once more?

I must conclude that the latter is the case, that the hope of leading a life ennobled by the pleasurable exercise of our energies is not dead, though it has been for a while forgotten. I do not accuse the epoch in which we live of uselessness: doubtless it was necessary that civilised man should turn himself



Lecture VI. to mastering nature and winning material advantages undreamed of in former times; but there are signs in the air which show that men are not so wholly given to this side of the battle of life as they used to be. People are beginning to murmur & say: 'So we have won the battle with nature; where then is the reward of victory? We have striven and striven, but shall we never enjoy? Man that was once weak is now most mighty. But his increase of happiness, where is that? who shall show it to us, who shall measure it? Have we done more than change one form of unhappiness for another, one form of unrest for another? We see the instruments which civilisation has fashioned; what is she going to do with them? Make more and more and yet more? To what avail? If she would but use them, then indeed were something done. Meantime what is civilisation doing? Day by day the world grows uglier, and where in the passing day is the compensating gain? Half-conquered nature forced us to toil, and yet for more reward than the sustenance of a life of toil; now nature is conquered, but still we force ourselves to toil for that bare unlovely wage: riches we have won without stint, but wealth is as far from us as ever, or it may be farther. Come then, since we are so mighty, let us try if we can not do the one thing worth doing; make the world, of which we are a part, somewhat happier.'

This is the spirit of much that I hear said about me, not by poor or oppressed men only, but by



those who have a good measure of the gains of civilisation. I do not know if the same kind of feeling was about in the earlier times of the world; but I know that it means real discontent, a hope, partly unconscious, of better days: and I will be bold to say that the spirit of this latter part of our century is that of fruitful discontent, or rebellion; that is to say, of hope. And of that rebellion we artists are a part; and though we are but few, and few as we are, mere amateurs compared with the steady competency of the artists of bygone times, yet we are of some use in the movement towards the attainment of wealth, that is toward the making of our instruments useful.

For we, at least, have remembered what most people have forgotten amongst the ugly unfruitful toil of the age of makeshifts, that it is possible to be happy, that labour may be a pleasure; nay, that the essence of pleasure abides in labour if it be duly directed; that is if it be directed towards the performance of those functions which wise & healthy people desire to see performed; in other words, if mutual help be its moving principle.

Well, since it is our business, as artists, to show the world that the pleasurable exercise of our energies is the end of life and the cause of happiness, and thus to show it which road the discontent of modern life must take in order to reach a fruitful home, it seems to me that we ought to feel our responsibilities keenly. It is true that we cannot but share in

Lecture VI. The Arts and Crafts of Today. the poverty of this age of makeshifts, and for long I fear we can be little but amateurs. Yet, at least each in his own person, we may struggle against makeshifts in art. For instance, to press a little home on ourselves, if drawing is our weak point, let us try to improve ourselves on that side, and not proclaim that drawing is nothing and tone is everything. Or if we are bad colourists, let us set to work & learn, at least, to colour inoffensively (which I assure you can be learned), instead of jeering at those who give us beautiful colour habitually and easily. Or if we are ignorant of history, and without any sense of romance, don't let us try to exalt those deficiencies into excellencies by maintaining the divinity of the ugly and the stupid. Let us leave all such unworthy shabbinesses to the Philistines & pessimists, who naturally want to drag everybody down to their level.

In short, we artists are in this position, that we are the representatives of craftsmanship which has become extinct in the production of market wares. Let us therefore do our very best to become as good craftsmen as possible; and if we cannot be good craftsmen in one line, let us go down to the next, and find our level in the arts, and be good in that; if we are artists at all, we shall be sure to find out what we can do well, even if we cannot do it easily. Let us educate ourselves to be good workmen at all events, which will give us real sympathy with all that is worth doing in art, make us free of that

great corporation of creative power, the work of all ages, and prepare us for that which is surely coming, the new cooperative art of life, in which there will be no slaves, no vessels to dishonour, though there will necessarily be subordination of capacities, in which the consciousness of each one that he belongs to a corporate body, working harmoniously, each for all, and all for each, will bring about real and happy equality.

Lecture VI.  
The Arts  
and Crafts  
of Today.

Printed at the Chiswick Press with the Golden type designed by William Morris for the Kelmscott Press, and finished on the twenty-sixth day of April, 1901. Published by Longmans & Co. 39, Paternoster Row, London.







N7445

M87





