

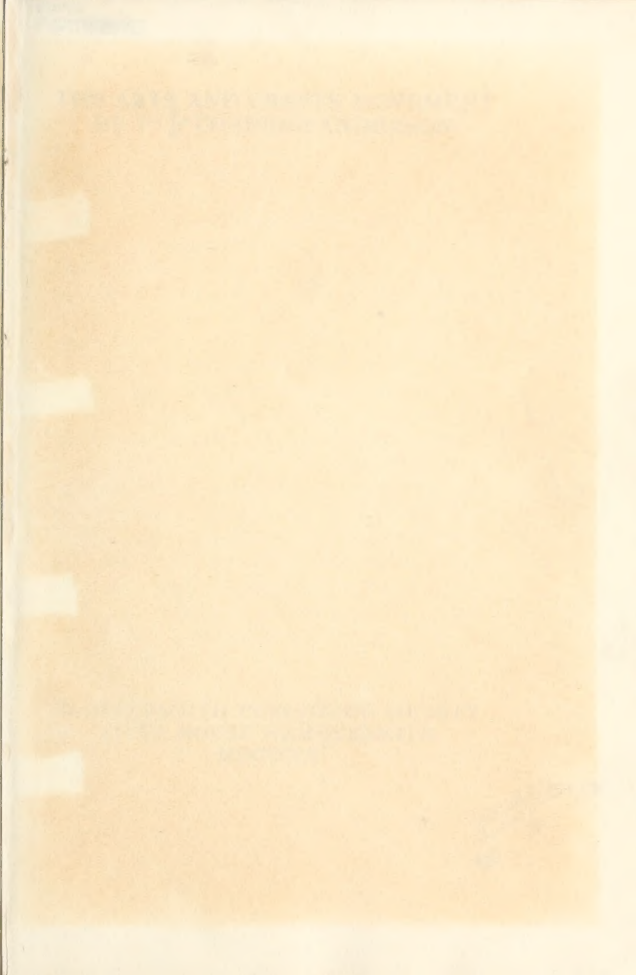
THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT
BY T. J. COBDEN-SANDERSON

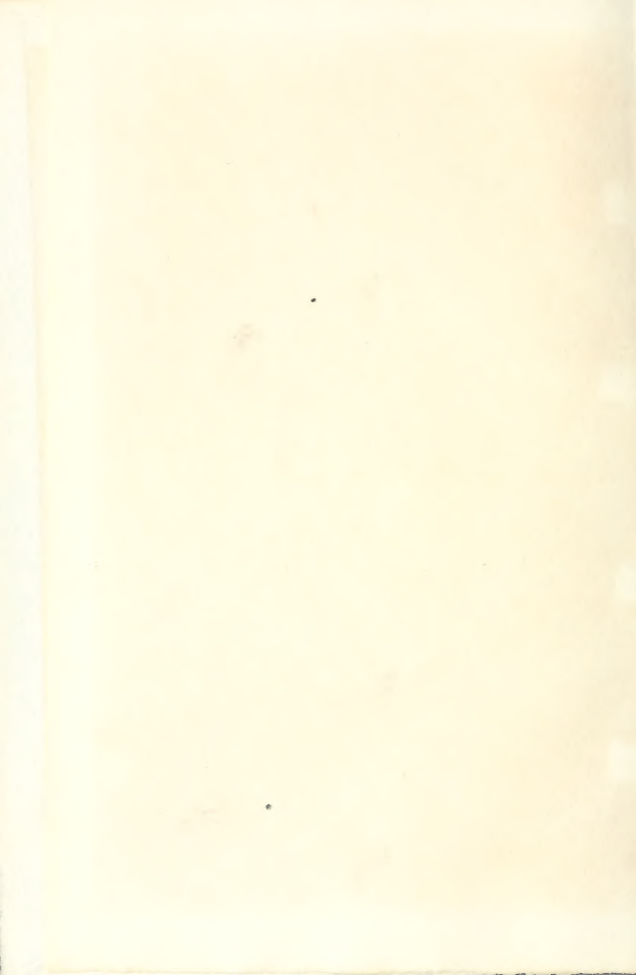
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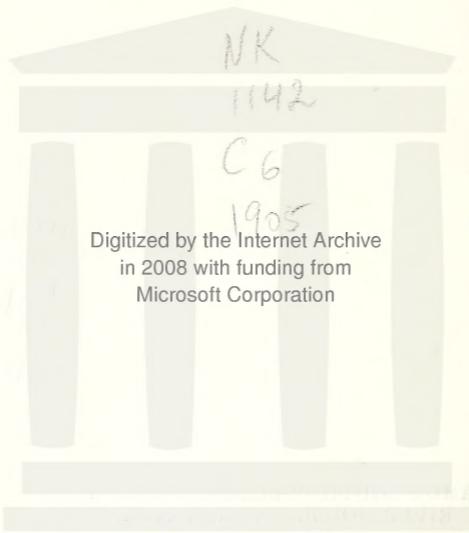
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THE ARTS CRAFTS MOVEMENT
BY J. COBB DUOFT



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THE Movement, passing under the name of 'Arts and Crafts,' admits of many definitions. It may be associated with the movement of ideas, characteristic of the close of the last century, and be defined to be an effort to bring it under the influence of art as the supreme mode in which human activity of all kinds expresses itself at its highest and best; in which case the so-called 'Arts and Crafts Exhibitions' would be but a symbolic presentment of a whole by a part, itself incapable of presentment: or it may be associated with the revival, by a few artists, of hand-craft as opposed to machine-craft, and be defined to be the insistence on the worth of man's hand, a unique tool in danger of being lost in the substitution for it of highly organized and intricate machinery, or of emotional as distinguished from merely skilled and technical labour: or again, it may be defined to be both the one and the other, and to have a wider scope than either; as for example, it may be defined to constitute a movement to bring all the activities of the human spirit under the influence of one idea, the idea that life is creation, and should be creative in modes of art, & that this creation should extend to all the ideas of science and of social organization, to all the ideas and habits begotten of a grandiose and consciously

conceived procession of humanity, out of nothing and nowhere, into everything and everywhere, as well as to the merely instrumental occupations thereof at any particular moment.

No definition, however, is orthodox or to be propounded with authority: each has its apostles: and besides the definitions attempted above, there are still others, some of them, indeed, concerning themselves only with the facilities to be afforded to the craftsman for the exhibition, advertisement, and sale of his wares.

Nor do I propose, myself, to propound one at this stage of my description of the movement. I merely adumbrate the shifting goal, as it may have presented itself to the minds of the men engaged in the movement, that you may know at the outset, in vision, those far-off heights, which they, or some of them, essayed not only themselves to climb, but to make all mankind also to climb.

It is to the movement itself that I will first ask your attention.

Art is one, though manifold, and when the Royal Academy of Arts, in spite of many protests, continued to restrict its Academic Exhibitions to Painting, Sculpture, and Abstract Architecture, a body of protesters came together, not any longer to protest only, but this

time to constitute a society of exhibitioners who should widen the academic conception of art, and open its exhibitions to all forms of art, provided only that the form *was* of art, born of the imagination, and destined to touch the imagination.

Such a society was in due time formed, and, under the name of the 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society,' initiated the wider movement which, from itself as source, has spread all the world over, and created a new interest. The arts and crafts have been born again, and, in a new sense, occupy the attention of mankind.

The first exhibition was held in the New Gallery, in London, in the autumn of 1888. It is not necessary to dwell on the exhibits which stand enumerated in the catalogue now before me. It is sufficient to say that whereas each exhibit, standing alone, might have been seen without any sense of a new 'movement' being on foot, the accumulation, under one roof and idea, of so many different and differently conceived things of beauty, made a marked impression on the public imagination, & unmistakably heralded the advent of a new force into society, at once creative and classificatory. Old things, long since done, were to be put into new relations, & upon a higher plane, and all new work

was to be conceived of as convergent upon one end, the dignity and sweetness of life, and the workman—artist or craftsman—was to derive therefrom his measure of happiness & delight. And that work, which for the world had lost all association with human initiative & solicitude, was to be made to resume that intimate relation, and the workman himself to be recalled into the assembly of those who are consciously striving to the acknowledged end. The workmen contributing to the creation of a work were to be thenceforward named its author, and to have their names inscribed upon the great roll of the world's ever visible record.

Such appeared to be the new movement of which the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was the first overt act.

Besides the enumeration and description of exhibits, the catalogue contained a preface by the President, Walter Crane; a notice of lectures to be given in connexion with the exhibition; and a number of 'Notes' upon various arts & crafts written by men who, as stated in the preface, were associated with the subjects of which they treated, not in the literary sense only, but as actual designers and workmen.

The object of the lectures was stated to be twofold: (1) To set out the aims of the Society;

and(2) by demonstration & otherwise, to direct attention to the processes employed in the arts and crafts, and so to lay a foundation for a just appreciation, both of the processes themselves, and of their importance as methods of expression in design.

And here I may intercalate an extract from a book which appeared at that time, as it throws a light upon, indeed constituted, one of the main impulses to which was due the inception of the lectures. I refer to 'Scientific Religion, or Higher Possibilities of Life and Practice through the Operation of Natural Causes,' by Laurence Oliphant; and the passage to which I ask your attention is the following:

'He can no longer be esteemed an excellent workman who can only work excellently! for his work, to prove that it is living, must be generative, and it will not be generative unless the workman has his mind trained to a clear conception of his own methods and their connexion with the laws of Nature: and unless he can impart that understanding by word of mouth: unless, in fine, the sum of his experience, while he is constantly increasing it, is as constantly forced by him into mental shape'—or, as I might add, into imaginative shape and association.

When I read this I seemed to see all crafts and manufactures and commerce crystal clear and capable of statement, so that, even as they stood outlined and embodied to the corporeal eye, so they should shine in all their processes and relations clear as in sunlight to the eye of intelligence: and it was in such wise that when the time came I proposed to the Committee of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society that Lectures should form a part of the purpose of the Society, and should accompany and be delivered in the building of the Exhibition (1) to convert the implicit mental processes involved in the exercise of a craft into explicit articulate utterance capable of making such mental processes intelligible at once to the worker himself and to the spectator interested to know, and (2) to widen the horizons of the workers and to set their work in due relation to the other crafts and processes with which it was associated, and to the forces of Nature upon which they and it depended.

Lectures, as announced in the Catalogue, were given in connexion with the first exhibition by William Morris on Tapestry, by George Simmonds on Modelling and Sculpture, by Emery Walker on Letterpress Printing, by myself on Bookbinding, and by Walter Crane on Design.

Perhaps, in view of the results which have flowed from it, and at this distance of time, I may for a moment dwell particularly on the lecture on Letterpress Printing. It was at my urgent request that Mr. Walker overcame his reluctance to speak in public, and I therefore claim for myself the honour of being the real author of The Kelmscott Press! for it was in consequence of this lecture given by Mr. Emery Walker at my request, and the lantern slides of beautiful old founts of type and MS. by which it was illustrated, that William Morris was induced to turn again his attention to printing, and this time, as a printer, to produce, in friendly collaboration with Mr. Walker, that splendid series of printed books which has inspired printing with a new life, and enriched the libraries of the world with books as nobly conceived and executed as any that distinguish the great age of Printing itself.

The 'Notes,' to which reference has already been made, occupied a little more than a third of the Catalogue, and treated of:

Textiles,
Decorative Painting and Design,
Wall papers,
Fictiles,
Metal work,

Stone and Wood carving,
Furniture,
Stained and Table glass,
Printing, and
Bookbinding:

and as they contain the doctrines of the new movement so far as it was applicable to the crafts of which they treated, it may be worth while to turn over a few pages and to see what those doctrines are.

Mr. Morris, who writes on Textiles, opens at once on his subject. 'There are,' he says, 'several ways of ornamenting a woven cloth.' He then enumerates the ways as follows: (1) Real Tapestry; (2) Carpet weaving; (3) Mechanical weaving; (4) Printing or Painting; and (5) Embroidery; and proceeds under each head to lay down principles, accordant with the particular method, for the production of the ornament required, and concludes his note with some general maxims applicable to all the methods alike, as thus, 'Never forget the material you are working with, and try always to use it for doing what it can do best: if you feel yourself hampered by the material in which you are working, instead of being helped by it, you have so far not learned your business, any more than a would-be poet has, who com-

plains of the hardship of writing in measure and rhyme. The special limitations of the material should be a pleasure to you, not a hindrance: a designer, therefore, should always thoroughly understand the processes of the special manufacture he is dealing with, or the result will be a mere *tour-de-force*. On the other hand it is the pleasure in understanding the capabilities of a special material, and using them for suggesting (not imitating) natural beauty and incident, that gives the *raison d'être* of decorative art.'

In a note on wall papers Mr. Crane goes into useful detail as to the conditions of successful pattern making for their decoration. As, however, our purpose is only with the more general lines and direction of the movement, we need not follow him into this detail, and I will leave it with the remark that this and kindred notes by him and others show sufficiently that the writers did not confine themselves to general principles difficult of application without intermediary illustration, but addressed themselves vigorously to the actual practice of the craft treated of, and sought to quicken it into life at once by Principle and Precept, by Example, and by Trade Recipe.

Continuing our exploration of the Notes, we

next come upon an interesting one by the late—alas! too many of the early workers in the movement have ceased to be with us, and I feel here tempted to break off, and, in sympathy with that sublime chapter of Ecclesiasticus which I have recently been printing, to commemorate ‘our fathers that begat us,’ the great Dead.

Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms,
Men renowned for their power,
Giving counsel by their understanding,
And declaring prophecies.

Burne-Jones, William Morris, Madox Brown—‘these be of them that have left a name behind them to declare their praises.’ And some there be that have no memorial save the memory of them enshrined in the hearts of them that knew them. But adequately to commemorate were too great an enterprise, and I return to my immediate topic; and yet, as I turn, one of great name, greater than all whom I have named, impels me to pause and to praise him, him who begat the begetters, him who was ‘as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, as the moon at the full,’ Ruskin! To him we all owe whatever of impulse is in us toward that goal whose outline it is my business to de-

scribe to you to-night. To Ruskin, then, all honour, all praise, to Ruskin, the great Dead who in life, living, begat us!

To resume.

The Note on Fictiles, by the late G. T. Robinson, carries us to the dawn of art and craft, for, as says Mr. Robinson, 'Man's first needs in domestic life, his first utensils, his first efforts at civilization, came from the mother earth, whose son he believed himself to be, and his ashes or his bones returned to earth, enshrined in the fictile vases he created from their common clay. And these fictiles,' continues Mr. Robinson, 'tell the story of his first art instincts, and of his yearnings to unite beauty with use. They tell, too, more of his history than is enshrined and preserved by any other art; for almost all we know of many a people and many a tongue is learned from the fictile record, the sole relic of past civilizations which the destroyer Time has left us. Begun in the simplest fashion, fashioned by the simplest means, created from the commonest materials, fictile *Art* grew with man's intellectual growth, and fictile *Craft* grew with his knowledge—the latter conquering in this our day, when the craftsman strangles the artist alike in this as in all other arts. To truly foster and forward

an art,' concludes Mr. Robinson, 'the craftsman and the artist should, where possible, be united; or, at least, should work in common, as was the case when, in each civilization, the Potter's Art flourished most, and when the scientific base was of less account than was the art employed upon it.'

It is not necessary for our purpose to go through the succeeding Notes, or to say more than that, assuming the principles which underlie all great art, they deal in their several ways with a number of crafts which the creative ingenuity of man, working, as described by Mr. Robinson, for the satisfaction & for the adornment of the satisfaction of his wants, imaginative and real, has in different circumstances and at different times invented, and seek, amid the confusion which has arisen in the abuse of these crafts by pseudo-craftsmen and artists, who have approached them from the outside, to restore to them their sanity, alike in process and in choice of material, in aim, and in the expression of beauty and of purpose.

The master-principle, however, to be deduced from the Notes may be here restated in the words of Mr. Morris, for it is a principle applicable to the whole range of imaginative creation: 'Never forget the material you are working

with, and try always to use it for doing what it can do best.'

To the catalogues of the two following exhibitions more Notes were added, and finally, in 1893, all the Notes were put together and published in one volume, entitled 'Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society,' with a Prefatory Note by William Morris. This volume was reprinted in 1899.

In the Prefatory Note Mr. Morris sets out the purpose of the Society as understood by him—too narrowly, I think. 'It is,' he says, 'to help the conscious cultivation of art and to interest the public in it, by calling special attention to that,' in his judgement, 'really most important side of art, the decoration of utilities by furnishing them with genuine artistic finish in place of trade finish.' To this I shall return by and by.

After the Prefatory Note comes the Table of Contents of the volume. And looking for a moment down the long list of tongues in which Craft, under the guidance of Art, is striving to speak afresh, how can one fail to lament the time now past and to wish it back, when these tongues, now the language, and too often the quite artificial language, of a professional and

specially trained class, were but the vernacular of one common language, widely and familiarly spoken, and craftsmanship itself but 'joy in widest commonalty spread'; joy in working in all the various ways of imaginative invention, upon all sorts and kinds of material, material brought from afar, sought with danger or grown in pastoral peace; joy in making and devising things of use and of beauty, homely things, princely things, things of beauty for beauty's adornment, noble things for a city's; all amid Nature's own, yet unsullied, immense creativeness, all for the admiration and use of vigorous emergent and vanishing generations, whose common bond in life was the thing so made, its beauty and its use.

We may now leave the explanatory preludes, the Notes, and turn to the Lectures, to which reference has already been made. They were given, I think, at each Exhibition, except the last, and in the Exhibition itself, and were meant, besides the objects officially announced in the catalogues, to widen the scope of the Exhibitions, otherwise restricted to things of minor importance only, and to extend the attention of the public to things not present in the Exhibition, though to be imagined and thought of in association with it. And here we

may expect to find, and shall find, as I shall show, a more extended view of the aims of the Society as set out by itself.

It is matter of regret that, save one series presently to be mentioned, and a lecture by William Morris, no record has been kept of them. They were delivered, and are now perhaps forgotten. And yet how stimulating, how interesting the circumstances of some of them! William Morris, on a raised platform, surrounded by products of the loom, at work upon a model loom specially constructed from his design—now in the Victoria and Albert Museum—to show how the wools were inwrought, and the visions of his brain fixed in colour and in form; Walter Crane, backed by a great black board, wiped clean, alas! when one would have had it remain for ever still adorned by the spontaneous creations of his inexhaustible brain; George Simmonds, demonstrating to us the uses of the thumb, and how under its pressure things of clay rose into life; Lewis Day, designing as he spoke, and bringing before our inner eye, as well as the outer, the patterns of Asia and of Europe in stage after stage of development; Selwyn Image, by his studied elocution, taking us back to the church which he had left, but with sweet reasonableness depict-

ing before its shadowy background the bright new Jerusalem toward which his enfranchised imagination burned; Lethaby, entrancing us with the cities which crowned the hills of Europe, or sat in white on the still seashore, or mirrored in the waters of Italy: all vanished, save the memory of them! And here, dwelling in memory on the past, may I not recall the fervour, the enthusiasm of those first years, the ready invention, the design, born of the moment and the occasion, for catalogue, rules and room; and one design that caused so much, long-forgotten commotion—the design by the President, to be hung over the out-door entrance to the gallery, of artist and craftsman, hand in hand! But how recall them to those who knew them not? Impossible! I mention them only in piety to that holy time, when we circled about the founts, and played, of that great movement which is now the world's!

As I write these words I am reminded of that definition to which I said I would return. 'The aim of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society'—I repeat the definition—'is to help the conscious cultivation of art, and the attempt to interest the public in it, by calling special attention to that really most important side of art, the decoration of utilities, by furnishing

them with genuine artistic finish in place of trade finish.'

Surely this is a strange misapprehension & restriction of the aims of the Society! Were that the only aim, then the movement was not what I imagined it to be, and still imagine, nor would it be worthy of your attention to-day, not to speak of the world's!

In the same preface in which this definition occurs there is a passage which I passed over at the time, but which at this stage of our history it is important that I should notice. 'We can,' says the writer, 'expect no general impulse towards the fine arts till civilization has been transformed into some other condition, the details of which we cannot see.'

And it was therefore—because we could expect no general impulse towards the fine arts, until this obstacle was removed, that we were in the meantime, and this was to be our 'movement,' to help the conscious cultivation of art, which the writer at the same time says is no art at all, and the attempt to interest the public in it!

Here I am at issue with the writer, and would submit that this general impulse must precede and *itself* bring about the transformation: and further that this general impulse is precisely

and already the impulse constituting that great movement dubbed 'Arts and Crafts,' and that its aim is not merely to help the conscious cultivation of art pending the transformation, but itself to bring the transformation about.

In fact, I submit that in the intention of the founders, or in the intention of some of them, Art is, or should be, an agent *in the production* of noble life, and not merely an executant dependent upon and presupposing its existence.

As some evidence of this intention, I may adduce the following conclusion from an unpublished Report of the Committee to the Members of the Society. 'In conclusion, the Committee would venture for a moment to take their stand upon the higher plane of the Society, and to say a word or two upon the cause which in the opinion of the Committee constitutes the claim of the Society to attention and support. For a small body of artists to band themselves together, simply to produce and to exhibit objects of art for an age which is not indeed essentially inartistic, but which, by the accident of the failure of the imagination to grasp and mould its dominant realities, has not had revealed to itself the splendour of its opportunities, or of the meaning of Beauty in association with Industry and Science—for a small body

of Artists to band themselves together for such a purpose is indeed something; but it is to leave unfulfilled, unessayed, the main function, in this and every age, of all great Art and of all great Artists. Such Art and such Artists would and should, whilst still producing, as best they may, if not "things of immortal Beauty," at least "things of their own," strive at the same time to understand the true drift and possible Ideal of the Age in which they live. It is the function of an Artist to divine the Ideal of an age, and to express it in manifold Form. The Ideal of the present age has been neglected by him. The actuality has been left as an actuality, unredeemed by ideas, to those whose sole business it is to carry on, and to constitute, the actuality of the age. But there is above and beyond every Actuality an Ideal upon which it can and should be modelled. It is this Ideal which it is the function of the Artist—which it is the function of this Society—to discover and to express, in great things as in small, in small as in great: and the Ideal, expressed, is then as a great Light to those who sit in darkness; it is a light towards which the soul of Actuality turns; it is that which, aspired to, gives to an age dignity and immortality, and converts the work of the hand and brain from

work that is sordid and mean, to work that is imaginative and noble.'

But the claim does not rest on unpublished records alone. This I think will be apparent if attention be given to the one series of Lectures which has survived their delivery, and been published. I refer to 'Art and Life, and the Building and Decoration of Cities,' a title which of itself carries the scope of the Society beyond all the possible Exhibits of an Exhibition.

The object of these Lectures is thus explicitly stated by the Lecturer on 'Art and Life,' which introduces the series, and his statement is borne witness to throughout by all the other speakers. The statement to which I refer is as follows: 'I now begin the first of a series of Lectures having for their object generally the extension of the conception of Art, and more especially the application of the idea of Beauty to the organization and decoration of our greater cities.' And of his own Lecture he says: 'I desire to extend the conception of Art, and to apply it to life as a whole; or, inversely, to make the whole of life, in all its grandeur, as well as in all its delightful detail, the object of the action of Art and Craft.'

And in the course of it the Lecturer thus defined what seemed to him the function of art

in this extended conception of its meaning. 'Art implies a certain lofty environment, and is itself an adjustment to that environment of all that can be done by mankind within it. Art as a great function of human imagination is not the creation of isolated objects of beauty, though isolated objects of beauty may indeed be created by art, and, in themselves, resume all that is beautiful, orderly, restful, and stable in the artist's conception of that environment. Still less is it, what some may seem to imagine, the objects of beauty themselves. Art is, or should be, alive, alive and a universal stimulus. It is that spirit of order and seemliness, of dignity and sublimity, which, acting in unison with the great procession of natural forces in their own orderly evolution, tends to make out of a chaos of egotistic passions, a great power of disinterested social action; which tends to make out of the seemingly meaningless satisfaction of our daily and annual needs, a beautiful exercise of our innumerable gifts of fancy and invention, an exercise which may be its own exceeding great reward, and come to seem to be indeed *the* end for which the needs were made.'

It was thus and thus that, in the inception of the Society, we sought to 'divine' the Ideal of the Age, and to give effect to it in the work

which lay immediately to hand. But it was not to such work only that the ideal was to be extended. 'Nor,' continues the Lecturer, 'do I stop at deeds to be done in such unison. I demand in the name of art—and here is especially the note and distinction of Modern Art as I conceive it—I demand in the name of art, that Science itself, that knowledge, shall enter upon a new phase, and itself become, in the mind of man, the imaginative *Re-presentment* of the universe without, an analytical knowledge of which has hitherto been its one sole and supreme aim.'

Again, in another matter, bearing upon the aims of the Society & of the movement, I must, albeit reluctantly, dissent from the view taken of it by my friend Mr. Morris. It will help, perhaps, to clear up the situation.

In an article 'On the revival of Handicraft' published in the 'Fortnightly' in 1888, the year of the first Arts and Crafts Exhibition, an article interesting and stimulating as are all the writings of Mr. Morris, there is, amid so much that is admirable, a statement which would sweep away the whole of modern life, & render the achievement of its distinctive ideal an impossible dream—a consummation devoutly to be wished! we can indeed imagine Mr. Morris to exclaim.

'As a condition of life,' Mr. Morris says, 'production by machinery is wholly an evil.'

But surely this is altogether questionable. Surely things there are, the production of which by machinery may be wholly right, things which, moreover, when so produced may be wholly right also, and in their rightness even works of art.

Great works of art are useful works, greatly done. In the same article Mr. Morris, deprecating, as I would do, the exclusive production of Beauty for Beauty's sake, goes on to say, as I would wish to say: 'In the great times of art, conscious effort was used to produce great works for the glory of the city, the triumph of the Church, the exaltation of the citizens, the quickening of the devotion of the faithful: even in the higher art, the record of history, the instruction of men alive or to live hereafter, was the aim rather than beauty.'

But if in the great times of art, great works were the aims of great art rather than beauty, why to-day should not great works still be the aim of great art rather than beauty? Is to-day wanting in great works waiting to be done in the great way, which is the way of art? or is it that to-day all great works are machinery only, and so an evil, incapable of artistic treatment?

But, to take a simple instance, one short of that complete Transformation of Life which should be the main aim of art, to take a practical problem of modern life, the supply of water to a great city, consider the grandiose character of the problem, despite, or shall we say in consequence of, the mighty mechanical agencies now involved in its solution—the fetching of the water from the far-off pure source, the hills of rain & of snow, to the city of the plain and the sun, its storage and distribution, by the immense pulsations of machinery, day & night, year after year. Is not that a noble problem for the imaginative faculties of the artist, only less noble than the supply of the Holy Spirit from the pulpit or the altar, to the massed congregation at their feet, or than the summons from Tower or Belfry to unity of action or of prayer, of the separated members of a city or a Church? But such a problem, since the great days of Rome, is not thought of in connexion with art, nor is the grandiose character of its solution so much as dreamed of—the carriage of the water to the city, one long triumphant procession: and within the city what noble works! first in importance, the pumping station; how prosaic it sounds! yet to the imagination how magnificent! that mighty heart, that to the

uttermost ambit of the city drives the far-off burthen of the hills! Then the public fountains in the great thoroughfares, at the great crossings & in the great squares; noble works of art, at once to typify and to actualize a city's purity and to satiate a city's thirst, and for a city's joy and remembrance, in pleasant shower, to cast into the air the liquid drops which first fell for it, and fall, on the distant heights of snow. And finally in each house, in each room, the separate jet, the very taps this time ablaze with beauty for happy beauty's sake, and happier use!

Again, to take a larger instance—still an instance of machinery. The people of England, like the people of Rome, have been engaged for a thousand years or more in making a constitution, a great piece of machinery, for their own governance, and are still engaged in that task, and are likely to be engaged in it, perhaps for a thousand years or more to come. It is a great task, a great problem, ever changing its conditions with the changes which, with other causes, its own changes bring about: it is also, or should be, a great work of art as well as of machinery, in which, in future ages, will be seen the moral & imaginative framework of this people of England. That work of art should be had in view in the struggles of the moment, should be had

in view and be promoted by every citizen who would do more than live out his individual years in selfish & ignoble isolation; but it should especially be had in view by the people as a whole, be their ideal, their supreme work of art; and theirs whom the people's will has placed at their head to mould and to guide their destinies, theirs, so that when the world's history shall be rounded off and resumed in planetary stillness, and in the consciousness of the gods, England, England's history, shall shine out starlike, England, which shall have made, not itself its goal, but an immortal purpose—ideal freedom and the world's joy!

Such is one other great work of art, of machinery, still awaiting accomplishment, still awaiting the devotion to which all great art is due.

But art to-day has no eyes, no devotion, & so for art there is no great object, and for the great object no art. Nor does the great artist, as does the great opportunity, sojourn in our midst. Such art and artists as there are, and are there any? are but engaged in the conscious cultivation of art for art's sake, or of beauty for beauty's sake, pending the great transformation which, meanwhile, is no affair of theirs.

Of such art and of such cultivation, nothing

need be expected: and such art and such cultivation are certainly not in my judgement, nor are they, so far as I know, in the judgement of the artists whose revolt founded the Society, the aims of the movement now passing under its name.

What those aims are, I will now, from my own point of view, endeavour to restate: for of the subsequent exhibitions of the Society, nothing more need be said. Subsequent exhibitions, whether in England, on the Continent, or in the United States of America, were, and are, but repetitions, with variations only of detail, of the first, and need no description; though against exhibitions themselves I may be allowed before I pass away from them to urge one objection, an objection, not indeed condemnatory of them, but an objection which should, I think, be borne in mind in promoting them, and be obviated as far as the circumstances of each exhibition will permit. The objection which I would urge is this.

An exhibition, as I have already insisted, is but a small part of the Arts & Crafts movement, which is a movement in the main of ideas and not of *objets d'art*, & there is a danger in the constant repetition of exhibitions, civic, national, and international, of public attention being

diverted from the movement of ideas, & action thereupon, to the mere production and exhibition of exhibits. Moreover, of exhibits, very few things, relatively to the whole of life's possessions and productions, can be brought together usefully, or at all, under one roof, and of those which can very few can tell their own tale, apologize for their shortcomings, or of themselves ask to be forgiven for the sake of their approximate merit. It was to guard against the danger of this possible diversion of interest and forgetfulness of the movement's greater purposes, and indirectly, by suggestion of the ideal, to illuminate the possible deficiencies of the exhibits, as well as to draw attention to their merits, that the aid of lectures was made an essential part of at least the scheme of the Society: and lectures of the kind in question, lectures, that is to say, which shall deal at large with the meaning, as well as the contents, of an exhibition, are, in my opinion, an essential adjunct of every exhibition.

With this objection stated, I now proceed to wind up my observations and to come to a conclusion. But before doing so I must ask your attention in one other matter in which I find it necessary to differ from Mr. Morris.

But pray note that it is a matter of interpre-

tation only in which here, as elsewhere, I presume to differ from that great spirit, now passed away. Only in the matter of interpretation, for I do not—how could I?—call in question, here or anywhere, the greatness of the aims of William Morris himself. I claim only (1) that the movement which I am attempting to describe had a higher aim than in his own despite he assigned to it in the passage I have quoted: (2) that machinery may be redeemed by imagination, and made to enter even into his restored world, adding to the potency of good, and to its power over evil, which itself, in my view, it is not: and (3) finally, & this is the last point of difference to which I shall have to call your attention, that the age upon which mankind entered, at the close of the fifteenth century, was one of decay of an old world indeed, but at the same time, and this was its characteristic, was an age in which a new and a greater world came to the birth, as in this age it is coming to maturity, and that it is with this new world, and not with the old world, that the movement & ourselves have now to do.

To resume, and to revert to what I was about to say.

In that magnificent brief lecture on Gothic Architecture, which was first spoken as a lec-

ture at the New Gallery for the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in the year 1889, and afterwards printed by the Kelmscott Press during and in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in the New Gallery, 1893, Mr. Morris traced, with lightning-like swiftness and clearness, the progress of Gothic Architecture from its first inception by the Romans in the invention of the Arch to its consummation in the exquisitely poised and traceried buildings of the close of the fifteenth century.

At the end of the fifteenth century, Mr. Morris says, 'the great change' came, & Mr. Morris means that we and Architecture, our principal structural expression, entered upon a period of decay. But I would rather—and here is my point of difference—I would rather put it, that the great change came in that the inner vision was substituted for the outer; or, better still, that one inner vision was substituted for another inner vision and that the outward expression of the latter was arrested. Its buildings had been built and the passion for them exhausted, for the world which had inspired them had vanished, & another had been born or created in its place: partly another world of fact, the newly discovered continent of America, and the whole round world itself; partly another world

of ideas, the ancient world and its literature, Greece and Rome. At the end of the fifteenth century the printing press was at work, and Europe left for a time the outer world, the world of the senses and material building, and entered into the inner world, the world of imaginative reason, of ideas—communicable henceforward, for a time, by the printed page only, whereon only it could build up and contemplate the vision of its extended universe.

Ever since that time this vision has been growing, taking on new matter for greater change still, and now it is worldwide indeed, and the time has come to cast its inspirations into form, to embody them in works of Art.

What of the past is past is no matter of regret, but somewhat of the past is imperishable because it is of all time: such is the instinct to build. The building of the past is built and is in decay. The building of the future has yet to be built. Of what will it be?

The answer to this question will be the answer to the question: What, then, is the movement which I am attempting to describe?

The building of the future will be the building of the industries thereof, the building of its ways of looking at things determined by the vision which has taken the place of that

old vision, under the inspiration of which were built the buildings of the past.

And the first thing to build will be the vision itself, the supreme vision—for 'where there is no vision the people perish.'

The important, the essential thing in the Architecture of the early and middle ages, as of all ages, is not the Architecture itself, but the exaltation of sentiment and knowledge, and skill of hand and brain, which produced it, and the vision of life which was also the creation of the sentiment, and in turn its inspiration. The vision, indeed, here as elsewhere & always, is the important, the essential thing. What then is there in the life of to-day comparable in exaltation to the vision of that day, what vision competent to produce to-day an Architecture of life and occupation, with resultant material and imaginative expression, comparable to the Architecture of life and occupation and resultant material and imaginative expression, which the vision of that day was competent to produce and did produce?

There is one set, static universe, or vision, the Norm of Life, in which all force is at rest, at rest in equilibrium, in equilibrium of motion, and there are in the many minds of men innumerable versions thereof, isolated, unre-

lated or related, sequent, one: set in motion by passion, crime, terror, frenzy, even of hate, love, madness, ambition, or by the soft touch of the dreamer of dreams, the musician, painter, poet. But be these visions what they may be, they are but visions, which die again into the norm, the static universe, which is the tomb, as it is the womb, of all motion, at once the birth-place and the cinerary urn of all change, the all in all. It is with this all of change and rest, that the soul of man, athwart all distraction, aspires to be at one, at one for the fruit of its energy in creation, at one for the control of its energy in rest, in rest interlocked, repose absolute.

And if I were asked, as I have asked, what that supreme vision, that Norm of Life, in plain words was, I should say that it was the vision of the universe as revealed to-day in history & science, including in science all that is not man, though revealed by man working to that end through the ages, and in history all that is man, all his doings, all his imaginings, all his aspirations, all whatsoever that is his, but all seen in the light of science, positively—the vision of the universe, framed in the infinite. And I should say that man is at the top of his thought when in exalted, ecstatic contempla-

tion thereof, and at the top of his doing when in action in accordance therewith, be the action what it may be. And I should say that the supreme consciousness emergent from the supreme vision was the consciousness of Being—the wonder, I AM—and of its inexplicable, insuperable mystery.

The next thing to build will be the work of the world in the light of this supreme vision so seen and understood.

A time arrives in the development of the world's work when, in addition to the perfect workmanship and beauty of the world's wares, the embellishment of the world's work itself should become the object of ambition of those who carry the world's work on, an embellishment which may take one of two forms, but should take both : the embellishment by material means and the embellishment by ideas. In embellishment by material means the senses are satisfied and the imagination touched, and we have noble roads and houses, noble cities and harbours, noble wharves and warehouses, noble modes and means of communication, and noble modes and means of creativeness, and, crowning and giving significance to all, crowning and expressive ceremonial : in embellishment by ideas we have the illimitation which

is the characteristic of the imagination, and enables us to see and to create wholes and relations which surpass the sweep of the senses, and are visible to the eye of reason only; it is thus that we have the vision, and see all man's work in its entirety and as part of the universal process of creation.

Thinking, then, dispassionately of the world, not for my country's sake or another's, but for man's, I am haunted by the vision of this its industrial life, as the matter of man's art to-day. And there come to me the murmur of the beat of far-off waves on an unknown shore, the rustle and the struggle of winds through unknown forests and over wide spaces of inhabitable land: I see the masts of shipping far asunder, solitary, on the wide seas, or clustered into peopled harbours: I see the busy hives of industry, glittering like fanes of light by the river's side or bridging them—all part and parcel of the ocean, the land, and the air, obedient like them to the cadency of thought, as day and night, the seasons and the years, beat out their sequences and bear life onward into the future, or leave it, silent, in the irrecoverable past.

Such a world, such a wealth of animate forces, such a vision, the creation in part of the

unknown force, God, in part of man, who is ourselves, *such* is the vision upon which, pending the arrival of the shadow which is Death, we should fix the eyes of Art, permeating all, embracing all, producing all, even as would do, were he us, the supreme force, God.

As of the world of man's work, so of all the visions within the vision—build with the instincts of fitness and beauty, build & await the Shadow: to-day again, for a time, comes the light, again and yet again. In the infinitude of sequences the soul rests, and whilst it rests, resting, it disappears, even as in life, into sleep, into Death. Build and await the Shadow.

Such as I dream it is the Vision of Life, such the Vision of man's world within it, such the Vision of Art, such, or something like it, the Vision of the Arts and Crafts Movement, its inception, its history, and its aims.

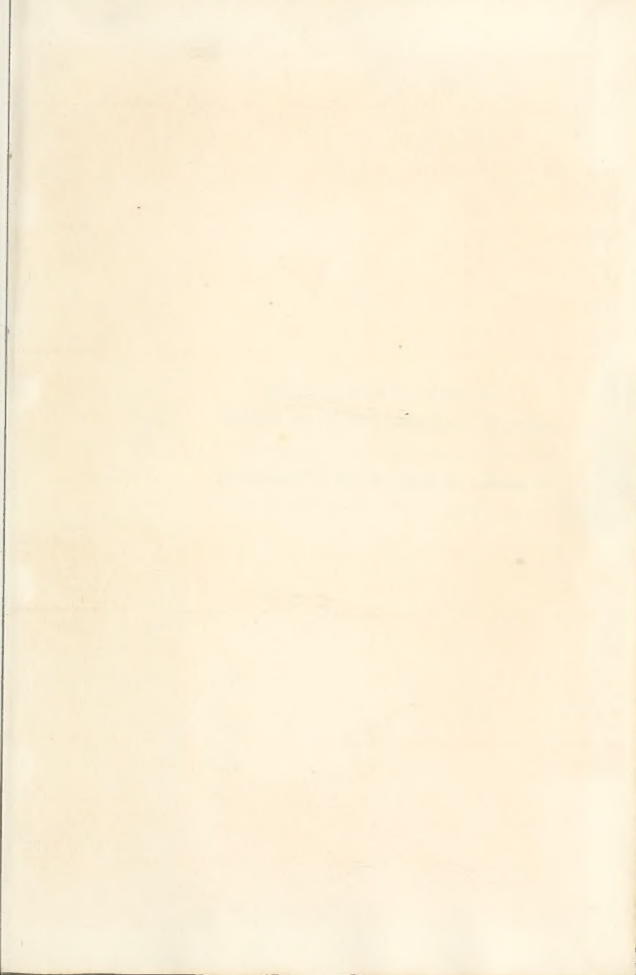
'And here I will make an end. And if I have done well and as is fitting the story, it is that which I have desired: but if slenderly and meanly it is yet that which I could attain unto.'

It may be, indeed, that I have all the while been describing some other movement, & not that of the Arts and Crafts at all; some movement that has been taking place in my own

mind, as I have had the possibilities of man's being and doing brought home to my imagination 'in thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men': for in the Introduction to the Lectures on 'Art & Life,' to which reference has been made in support of the Vision, it is stated that the Lectures are not to be taken, nor is any of them to be taken, as the official expression of the aims of the Society!

But be the official expression of the aims of the Society what it may be, it is the VISION, *some* VISION, which imports your good,—which I urgently commend to your attention. WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH.

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