The New Industrialism  Oscar Lovell Triggs

I

KNOW what you are thinking: you are saying to yourselves: “What right has a student and teacher of literature, who belongs, therefore, to a non-pecuniary profession, who is at the farthest remove from the work-a-day conditions of field and factory, what right has such a person, who is not even a sociologist, to discourse on the subject of Industrialism?” You conceive that you might learn something worth while from a “labor leader,” or from a “captain of industry,” or from a professional “sociologist,” but you are at a loss to understand what merit of instruction may attach to the words of a “man of letters.”

But perhaps it will appear that my treatment of the subject is justified for the very reason that I am not a president of a labor union, not the manager of a great business, and not a scientific sociologist. You will observe that my subject is The New Industrialism. It is quite possible that the new industrialism is something about which labor leaders and industrial captains and scientific sociologists know very little: these men will tell you of things as they are, of production and consumption, of competition, of the conflict between capital and labor, of strikes, of all the phenomena, in short, of the old industrialism. But who among them have dreamed dreams or seen visions? Who have insight into the obscure tendencies of the times? Who indulge in the hope of industrial betterment? Who believe in the doctrine of human perfectibility? Who have sufficient faith in humanity to believe that a social order will appear to be controlled by principles of good-will? When the need of prophecy arises, the exponents of the old order keep silence, must keep silence from lack of vision. Literature on the other hand is visionary, speculative. Imagination is the test of capacity with respect to what is hidden or far removed. The truest analysis of the industrial conditions of the present time has been made by Tolstoi, a novelist; the truest synthesis of the new tendencies in industry has been made by Zola, another novelist. John Ruskin the artist, not John Mill the logician, perfected the most complete system of political economy yet
The New Industrialism

devised for the upbuilding of a true social state. William Morris, a mere poet, inaugurated the most significant movement in the industrial world in recent history. It is clear, then, I think, that the new industrialism is a subject which need not be avoided by any poet, essayist, novelist, artist or educator. Indeed, and this is the whole point of my discourse, the new industrialism is coming into the world just because artists and educators are abandoning their own specialized pursuits and are undertaking to be constructive in the field of industry. In short, the new industrialism is a form of labor which aims to be artistic on the one hand and educative on the other. Art, education, labor: these are the three elements destined to coalesce that they may form a new industrial order.

II

In separation the activities represented by the three terms, art education, and labor, are highly specialized. Art and education are quite closely akin in their cultural significance; labor standing apart as distinctly non-cultural. But again these differ in respect to motive. The specialized artist has commonly a highly sensitized nature; he is sensitive emotionally and sensationally. Living the intensive life, absorbed in impressions, wrapped up in his visions, the artist tends to develop a strong individuality. He lives within and for self, and being thus non-social in his nature, he inclines toward un conventionality, and is frequently erratic. He asks from education a certain discipline and some few ideas, and from labor a modicum of physical energy. He asks from the world for himself only the barest necessities. Working apart in a room which he calls his studio, the artist is the purest type of free self-centered and non-social activity. The teacher leaves the studio for the school-room. At once he is brought into contact with other personalities to which he stands in the relation of master. His problem is, in part, like the artist's: one of expression; but lest he fail as a teacher, he must develop also the social qualities. The secret of teaching lies in sympathy. Knowledge he may have, force of character he may possess, but without the abil-
The New Industrialism

ity to understand others and to live according to social standards, he is wanting in the supreme quality which makes for his success. The educator, then, is the purest type of social activity. The artist works from personal motives, the teacher from social motives. If other motives intrude, if either is ambitious for fame, or position, or money, if he seek rewards outside of that satisfaction which inheres in self-expression with the one and in the consciousness of social service with the other, to that degree he loses the rewards pertaining to his own specialized activity. The true artist or the true teacher is never interested in money payment for his work, beyond, of course, what is needed for a decent living. The best work in art and education is never paid for in current coin. How often one reads of an author or artist what I saw stated recently of Maeterlinck: "Material success in life, fame, wealth: these things he passes indifferently by." This is as it must be. The intrusion of the motive of extraneous gain is always detrimental to success in these specialized fields. I must insist upon the recognition of this fact, because it furnishes the main distinction between artistic and educational motives and those which operate to-day in industry.

I have analyzed the artist and the teacher. Let us now turn to the workman. What are the springs of his activity? The workman has so long been regarded and employed as a mere agent in production that he is now reduced to accept the one reward which a mechanicalized system can give him: a money wage. He cannot, like the artist, take pleasure in his work, which is, indeed, as to its processes, almost intolerable. He cannot, like the teacher, take pleasure in observing the results of his labor. The social motive probably never enters his consciousness. By reason of the division of labor he is not even aware of the completed product. At no time can he say: "I am the maker of this thing. I made it after an image in my mind. I dedicate it to the service of mankind." The design was not his to start with; the product is not his to end with. He knows himself to be but one of innumerable agents cooperating in a result which he does not understand. Lacking, then, the rewards that pertain to art and education, he accepts
The New Industrialism

a money wage. Hating his work, he seeks to reduce the length of the working day. Loving his wages or the things his wages procure, he strives to increase the amount of his hire. His weapon is the strike, he strikes for less work and more pay. Behind his strife is perhaps the vague thought that he, too, if he had the will, would serve his own ends, or those of the social order. Here then the three men stand to-day in the form in which history has shaped them. Not one of them is really perfect; not one is fully integral; not one but is unhappy and discontented. The specialization of faculty has been carried in each one to an extreme. Peculiar dangers, therefore, attach to each class. The artist, living alone in his studio, grows unsocial and ceases to respond to the demands made upon him by life itself. The teacher is so subject to social control that he loses individuality and tends to become mechanicalized and conventional. The workman is so sunken in his wage-slavery that he is dehumanized altogether. What is needed at this juncture in history is a new synthesis of life, a bringing together: the correction of specialization by the cultivation of the numberless faculties possessed by man.

III

Let us try to think of a place which is studio, school-room and workshop in one. Let us conceive a person who is at once artist, student and workman. The place may be called a workshop, the person a craftsman. This synthetic workshop is like the studio, since its work is conducted in freedom. It is unlike the studio in so far as its productions are made for real uses and at social demand. The workshop is like the school in that it affords opportunity for community life. It is unlike the school in that it is more than instructional and seeks to be productive. The workshop is like the factory, inasmuch as it is devoted to real production. It is unlike the factory in that the nexus between the members is a natural one and is not dependent upon an extraneous wage. The craftsman is an artist because he works to the ends of self-expression; he is the designer and, so far as practicable, the maker of the form designed. The craftsman is an educator be-
The New Industrialism

cause his work, being free and pleasurable, is itself educative, to both the master and his apprentices. The craftsman is a workman because he directs machinery and applies physical energy to material things.

IV

The workshop I have described is not imaginary, nor is the craftsman referred to a fiction. Within my own lifetime I have observed these changes; I have seen many artists' studios transformed into workshops. I have seen many school-rooms set with work-benches and equipped with tools for manual training. I have seen more than one factory conducted for artistic and educational motives. And I have noted the conversion of one of the greatest of English poets into the finest craftsman in Europe. The place I select for special description is the Rookwood Pottery at Cincinnati. The building itself first attracts one's attention. In an old English dress, it faces the city at the edge of a bluff and is distinguished for its picturesqueness. It is clear that the site was chosen for other than "business" reasons. Sanitary, aesthetic, and probably social considerations were taken into account in the selection of the site. This of itself marks the place apart, since in most factories such considerations are commonly ignored; economy of work, not convenience of life, being their object. It is soon discovered that the pottery was established for ends other than private profit making. The motive of the founder, a high-minded and philanthropic woman, was to experiment with American clays in the hope of creating and perfecting a given artistic product. For over twenty years the motive, which may be termed both artistic and educational, has been in effect determining the output of the factory. While the business as such is a paying one, the business motive has been subordinated to higher cultural considerations. The sincerity and integrity which characterize Rookwood ware are an evidence of an ideal unity first achieved in the factory itself. Without further inquiry, one knows that as the business is not conducted strictly for money profit, so the work is not done solely for a money wage. Here,
The New Industrialism

then, in a single institution, artistic, social and industrial principles coalesce to form the purest type of the ideal workshop known to me.

For the ideal craftsman I turn back to William Morris, the "poet-upholsterer," as he was called in derision by an English lord, who probably had some admiration for poets, but none for upholsterers. Here was an upholsterer of a new type, an artistic type, and it is not surprising that English lords found it difficult to perceive the connection between art and craft. The significance of this man in the world's history continually increases. His was a strange career, quite unparalleled in the completeness of its evolution. Only Tolstoi among his contemporaries shows contrasts as violent. Only Ruskin among his associates had a history as varied and spiritual. The significance of Morris lies just at this point: he combines aristocracy and democracy, conservatism and liberalism; he unites capital and labor; he associates the arts and the crafts; he is individualistic, but also as strongly socialistic. You will pardon me if I tell again a well-known story and trace the thread of his personal history. He was born in 1834 of Welsh ancestry on his father's side. His boyhood was spent at Walthamstow and Marlborough, villages near London, where he attended school and began to take interest in art and archaeology. In 1852 he matriculated at Exeter college, Oxford, being intended by his mother for the church. At this time, Oxford was subject to a revival of mediævalism which took the form of a High Church movement in religion and of Preraphaelitism in art. Under these influences, Morris became a student of the past and sought to create for himself an ideal world of romance. Up to this time, his tastes were wholly aristocratic. He was an author of recognized merit; writing verses and stories of exquisite but remote beauty. Rumors of social disturbance descending from the Great Black Country left him unmoved. He had formed, however, an acquaintance with Ruskin and, though he did not then feel the social implications of "Modern Painters" and "The Stones of Venice," he was impelled instinctively to follow his great leader. Through the influence of Burne-Jones, his college friend, he abandoned his
The New Industrialism

plans for Holy Orders and resolved to devote his life to the service of art. On leaving Oxford, he entered the office of a London architect and learned the art of building and decoration. Thenceforth, his life developed along practical lines. In 1860, he built near London a home, the famous "Red House," designing and executing for it the decoration and furniture. The next year, with a group of other artists, he established at Merton Abbey the first genuine workshop of the new industrialism. Again we note the artistic and social motives involved in this workshop. These artist-craftsmen were resolved to join art and labor. They were to make objects of common use, but these objects were to be so made that pleasure would accrue to both the maker and the user. In all the arts of the hand, Morris himself worked with utmost patience and devotion. He learned the crafts of carving, weaving, dyeing, cloth-printing, embroidery, glass-staining or painting, tile-making, engraving, printing, and manuscript-illumination. He was skilled in all the work of the factory beyond the skill of the best of his fellow craftsmen, and beside being the master craftsman, he was also the firm's poet. In 1878, appeared one of the world's great epics, the Story of Sigurd. This, however, was the last of his important books on literary themes. From 1870 he was a militant social reformer, devoting his talents to a cause: a cause which may be defined as the socialization of art and the moralization of industry. Here, then, is the first great craftsman of the new industrial order. This craftsman was poet, artist, and socialist. He was impelled by cultural and human motives. The political economists had declared that love of money was the spring of human action. Here was a man who refuted in all his conduct everything the political economists had stated as true of mankind. It will be well at this time to examine the principles of the economy which accords with the practice of the new industrialism.

V

Our guide in this rather obscure field is John Ruskin. The beginning and end of economic activity, let us agree, is human life.
The New Industrialism

It is necessary to inquire always at the presentation of any problems what is best for man, not what is best for the raw materials, or for the machine, or for the completed product. The new social science is then, as Professor J. A. Hobson states it, "a science of the relation of efforts and satisfactions in a society": in other words, a science of human life in its social phases. The error of economists in the past has lain in their assumption that mercantile economy is identical with political economy. Wealth means well-being, and social well-being may or may not have anything to do with the accumulation and exchange of material products. "He is a rich man," declares Ruskin, "who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest and most helpful influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others." Wealth is spiritual as well as material. To secure wealth in the material sense may be the ambition of many, but quite as many are moved to action by motives of human affection. The "economic man," assumed to exist by the old economists, never has existed and never can exist. All men are conscious, rational and emotional, and possess what is called soul. As I have shown in the earlier part of this paper, the artist and the teacher are not mercantile in their instincts, or covetous in their desires. They possess wealth, but wealth of a non-marketable kind. They have rewards, but rewards not measurable in terms of a wage. The assumption that what is fundamental in man is hatred of work on the negative side and greed of gold on the positive side, is disproved by these two classes, at least, in every community. The organized system of industry is of course largely mercantile. Men are regarded as so many factors in production, implying so much salary for superintendence, or so much wage for labor. But now the query arises: Is it not possible for rational beings to organize a system of industry in which rewards shall be cultural, rather than mercantile? Instead of mechanicalizing society by applying industrial principles, is it not possible to humanize society by socializing industry? Are not honesty, friendship, temperance, intellectual taste, social culture, desirable for workmen? Is not a world of free men something we should
The New Industrialism

seek to attain? I can imagine nothing more frightful than a world conducted on the principle of greed, nothing more beautiful than the world at work, if the motive to work be pleasure in the work itself. The problem of carrying over into industrialism the motives which operate in art and education, the problem of making life integral: this is the problem that modern political economy is called upon to solve. The charge that sentimental elements are introduced into the question is of course well taken. The subject is, in truth, complicated, but it is believed that after all is said, the world is moved by sentiment, and not by the motives the political economists allege. Some of the maxims of the new philosophy may next be considered.

VI

The first is the well known saying of Ruskin: "Life without labor is guilt, labor without art is brutality." This statement contains practically all the issues at hazard. It involves first a principle of morality. He who lives without work, who subsists, that is, by the labor of others, whose splendid idleness is made possible by the painful overstrain of others' lives, this one is guilty of social theft. The worker, on his part, who is deprived of the natural solace of the work itself, whose toil is always painful and undesired, lives a life that is less than human. If society is ever to be moralized, two things must happen. There must be equality of obligation on the one hand, and, on the other, an equal opportunity to share in the results of civilization. A political economy that is not grounded in justice, that is not concerned with the common weal, is not worthy its name. "If there is any one point," wrote Ruskin in one of his famous prefaces, "which in six thousand years of thinking about right and wrong, wise and good men have agreed upon, or successively by experiment discovered, it is that God dislikes idle or cruel people more than others; that His first order is: 'Work while you have light,' and His second: 'Be merciful while you have mercy.'"

The second tenet of our philosophy is the saying of Morris: "One day we shall win back art to our daily labor; win back art, that is
The New Industrialism

to say, the pleasure of life, to the people.” Ruskin’s maxim is moral, involving the sense of justice. Morris’s maxim is social, implying a certain common condition of living. This second statement passes beyond the first in defining that most difficult word which is employed in both, the word art. Art: the pleasure of life. You have thought that art must be defined in terms of music or painting. How can it be a phase of common life? Does Morris mean that when life becomes pleasurable the world will be made up of poets, painters and musicians? Or does he mean that when the conditions of freedom and independence, which now pertain to an artist here and there, the special favorites of fortune, become universal, life will be pleasurable? Perhaps, again, you have thought that pleasure was something rare and unusual, pertaining to education, or art, or athletics, or the stage. How can it be a pleasure to live and work? Certainly, at the present time, pleasure does not attach to industry. It is doubtful if it even attaches to what we call “our pleasures.” True happiness is rarely possible to-day, because of the social disintegration incident to classes and institutions. Life is at no time truly integral: it is divided, isolated, and, therefore, artificial and forced and painful. Pleasure, someone defines, consists in the satisfaction of impulses and desires. Perhaps our most insistent desire is to be active, to be doing something. We are, indeed, forced to be active in the same way as ants and bees and the wild animals of the wood. And associated with this desire is an instinct which has been termed “the instinct of workmanship.” This is really the activity and impulse which we call art. At the present time, the free play of the instinct of workmanship is given to but few persons; hence art lives a poor, thin life among rare exceptional men who for the most part scorn the common laborers below them, wholly unaware that their very existence as a class hangs upon the right solution of a social problem. The future happiness of the human race is dependent upon the emancipation of labor. The problem of art is, therefore, primarily a social problem. Another very important principle of our system is formulated by Hobson: “It is to improved quality and character of consump-
The New Industrialism

ition that we can alone look for a guarantee of social progress.” These are the words of a professional economist; they seem more formal and accurate than those employed by Ruskin and Morris. But when their significance is perceived, their bearing is seen to be cultural and social. This principle involves the substitution of qualitative for quantitative methods of estimating the results of civilization. In explaining the maxim it will be well to turn at once to that field where its effects would be first noted: the field of machine-production. Perhaps you have wondered why Ruskin and Morris antagonized the machine so harshly. In part, of course, their criticism was directed not to the machine, but to the uses of the machine required in competitive commerce. This is the way Morris regarded the matter: “And all that mastery over the powers of nature which the last hundred years or less has given us: what has it done for us under this system? In the opinion of John Stuart Mill, it was doubtful if all the mechanical inventions of modern times have done anything to lighten the toil of labour: be sure there is no doubt that they were not made for that end, but to ‘make a profit.’ Those almost miraculous machines, which, if orderly forethought had dealt with them, might even now be speedily extinguishing all irksome and unintelligent labor, leaving us free to raise the standard of skill of hand and energy of mind in our workmen, and to produce afresh that loveliness and order which only the hand of man guided by his soul can produce,—what have they done for us now? Those machines of which the civilized world is so proud, has it any right to be proud of the use they have been put to by commercial war and waste?” The explanation of this attitude toward the machine is that Morris was interested in the kind, the quality, the character of civilization. The moment you adopt a human standard for economy, you no longer measure industrial agents or products by quantitative or statistical rules, but ask instead: “What is the relation of the machine to culture?” I think I know the main truths respecting the machine. The machines are not of course to be destroyed. Being an extension of the human frame, representing more and swifter hands and
The New Industrialism

feet, they have the same justification as hands and feet, providing they are controlled by rational will. Instead of destroying the machine, the secret of industrial progress is to improve the machine to such a degree that its action becomes completely automatic. The genius of the machine is routine. When once perfected, it will accomplish one monotonous task endlessly. As in biological and psychological evolution human progress consists in reducing from conscious to automatic action all those bodily processes which become so well established as to work harmoniously by themselves, whereby the mind is left free to range the true world of consciousness with free play and spontaneity, so social progress consists in consigning to machinery all those duties which relate to primitive and common needs: needs of food, clothing and shelter, but reserving for conscious and self-directive arts and crafts those interests which from very nature are individual. "Order," remarks Hobson on this point, "order, exactitude, persistence, conformity to unbending law, these are the lessons which must emanate from the machine. Machinery can exactly reproduce; it can, therefore, teach the lesson of exact reproduction, an education of quantitative measurements. The defect of machinery, from the educative point of view, is its absolute conservatism. The law of machinery is a law of statical order: that everything conforms to a pattern, that present actions precisely resemble past and future actions. Now the law of human life is dynamic; requiring order, not as valuable in itself, but as the condition of progress. The law of human life is that no experience, no thought or feeling is an exact copy of any other. Therefore, if you confine a man to expending his energy in trying to conform exactly to the movements of a machine, you teach him to abrogate the very principle of life." Now that is well and correctly said. Imagine the human world made up of automatic beings: suppose the offices of desire and thought and love were fulfilled with the same unthinking regularity as the winking of the eye-lids, what meaning would life possess? Try now to imagine the whole world mechanicalized: a world in which there is no room for individualized conduct, a world reduced to mathematical routine.
The New Industrialism

a world necessarily without arts, without crafts, without culture. Are you willing even to conceive the kind of world that would be? We want machinery. We want more and ever more of it. But when machinery has done its work, when all our common and primitive needs are satisfied by quantitative production, when everything that is really mechanical in conduct is mechanicalized, then we escape into a transcendent sphere where the will is free, where conduct is vital every moment. Turn back to the last quotation from Morris. Read till you come to the words: “leaving us free.” There is, then, a region where the machine is not calculated to operate. Yes! and the larger the mechanicalized world, the larger in circumference must be the purely human sphere outside of it. In the mechanical sphere all estimates are quantitative; in the human sphere they are all qualitative. It is true: all social progress comes by way of increase of character. Character in the man requires character in the things we use. In so far as industry is personalized, its field of endeavor will be that which I have described as the new industrialism. The quality of our spiritual resources is, in truth, as Hobson implies, “the guarantee of social progress.”

One final thought I approach with a certain quiet joy, for I perceive that in the new industrialism none of the evils of the old order inhere. The substitution of character for materials changes the whole aspect of life. The severity of competition, the reason of competition indeed, is due to the limitation of material things. In the lower order of industries there are more workers than places, more consumers than objects. There is a limit to quantities. And what one gets another must lose. Quantitative consumption is always selfish. But no limitation applies to qualities. See the painter’s few crude materials; then consider the value of the completed painting. I was reading recently in Thoreau's “Walden” the story of the farmer and the poet. The farmer supposed the poet had taken a few wild apples; in reality he had got the most valuable part of the farm. He had “fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk.” Yet the poet had 105
taken nothing measurable away. Thus variable are judgments in respect to material and spiritual properties. In a cultural society, generous emulation takes the place of fierce competition. The gain of one is the wealth of all. It is inevitable that those who enter the field of the higher industrialism develop the more sympathetic social motives. A worker who exercises his own individuality in work learns to respect the individuality of other workers. If he enjoys his work, at once his desire rises to bring others under the same conditions of enjoyment. This is the real explanation of the "socialism" of Ruskin, Morris, and Walter Crane. I am inclined to believe that the development of a fraternal commonwealth is dependent upon the dissemination of the principles of industrial art.

I will not now pursue the quest of maxims of political economy. This much is learned: the political economy of the future will be concerned not merely with questions of mercantile production and exchange, but also with problems of essential justice and of the common wealth.

Our own duty under the conditions is clear. When all is said, the control of industry is in the hands of consumers. At the present time, consumption is absolutely universal, while production is partial and confined to classes. By the exercise of choice in purchasing, by discrimination and compelling respect for one's own individuality and humor, it is possible for buyers ultimately to condition production. When culture and taste are observed among buyers, they will appear among workers. The people are responsible for the machine and the department store. Let us see about the making of a better system.