KONSUL OSCAR EKMAN, FOREMOST WORKER
FOR SWEDISH SOCIAL BETTERMENT

HOW SWEDEN SELECTS AND ADAPTS TO HER OWN NEEDS THE RESULTS OF WORLD-WIDE SOCIAL EXPERIMENT: BY MARY RANKIN CRANSTON

WEDEN is the most truly progressive country of the old world, developing at the same time the artistic, educational, social and industrial life of her people, among whom there is relatively greater interest in social service than is found in other European countries. It has been well said that Sweden, although isolated, is not insular. Her very remoteness enables her to perceive foreign institutions in the true perspective, showing clearly the good and bad, and so making it not difficult to choose the desirable and reject the unsuitable. She has had the wisdom to sift out the best features of social experiments in other countries and has adapted them, with modifications sometimes, to her own needs and institutions. This discrimination, by placing the proper estimate upon various kinds of social work, has resulted in methods wisely chosen.

The Swedes, the "Frenchmen of the North," as they are called, possess a composite character embracing the sincerity of the English, the urbanity of the French, the worth of the Germans, the artistic sense of the Italians and the adaptability of the Americans, added to certain racial traits and characteristics which they have preserved to an extraordinary degree, namely, an indescribable charm of manner, broad-mindedness, hospitality and generosity. Moreover, the country and people are clean and good to look upon. The men are tall, well proportioned and handsome, the women intelligent and vivacious. Compared with dirty London and some continental cities, Stockholm has the appearance of a city freshly scrubbed from end to end.

The useful and the beautiful go hand in hand in Sweden, every thing bears the stamp of the artistic. The Central Public Bath in Stockholm is in a park; the interior is decorated in green, the right shade of lavender and white; the little dressing-rooms are daintily furnished; the swimming pools bordered with palms and growing plants, with a little island of them in the center, and on the top floor are two large halls for indoor tennis, dances, or other public amusements. One of the most artistic places in the city is a tiny restaurant in a department store. In appearance it is like a miniature French *salon,*

with deep cream walls, white woodwork and green and white muslin curtains. The table-linen and silver are such as would be found in an American high-class hotel; the thin china, green and white, shows a design of long-stemmed, graceful violets; the delicious, ridiculously inexpensive food is served by neat, well-gowned, good-looking maids. There is a bank unexcelled for beauty, even though its very excuse for being is connected with life's material affairs—money-getting, barter and trade. The white marble interior is impressive in its simplicity; the crystal chandeliers scintillate prismatic brilliancy from hundreds of electric lights; gates and doors of massive bronze and mahogany woodwork give richness and harmony to the whole.

Home life is characterized by simple elegance, comfort and lack of ostentation. Utility is never sacrificed to beauty, but is made another channel for its expression; even so inartistic a thing as a heating stove becomes as attractive as it is necessary. Made of glazed tiles reaching almost to the ceiling, and having small brass doors always highly polished, the Swedish stove is a decorative piece of furniture, instead of the ugly abomination a stove is so apt to be.

Sweden has her artists of national and international fame—Prince Eugene, Von Rosen, Kronberg, Cederström, and Hasselberg, the sculptor, all of whom must be passed over with the barest mention where there is so much to tell of social Sweden.

SO LONG ago as 1837 influential people in Stockholm interested themselves in social work. The leading spirit in the first association for social betterment was Konsul Oscar Ekman, who organized the Society for Temperance and Education. Konsul Ekman has lived to see the results of his work, and to-day at the ripe old age of ninety-four years has the satisfaction of witnessing much good which has been accomplished through the association he founded sixty-nine years ago.

At that time Sweden had the unhappy distinction of being an exceedingly intemperate and immoral country. Preventive measures were imperative. The Society for Temperance and Education, together with other associations and individuals, finally evolved the best system for the regulation of the liquor traffic which has yet been tried. This is called the Gothenburg system, because the plan was first tried in that city.

The Gothenburg system is state ownership and control of liquor. The saloons are practically restaurants, decently furnished and managed, where no intoxicating liquors are advertised and only one tiny glass sold with a meal, none at all without it. Tea, coffee, food and soft drinks may be advertised, and the proprietor receives a profit upon them only, all profits from the sale of liquor going to support public utilities and toward the reduction of taxes.

The society's work for education has been no less valuable, since, through lectures and judicious distribution of literature, it has done much to arouse public opinion and to educate it upon social questions.

Under the leadership of *Froken Cecilia Milow the society has recently engaged in work for street boys by forming a boys' club modeled after those in America. The club takes boys over sixteen years of age, and younger sometimes, and is the good influence such clubs always are when well managed. Froken Milow's method of work is typical of Swedish thoroughness. Before taking any step in the matter she visited America and England for the purpose of studying boys' clubs. After seeing the best types she returned to Stockholm and organized her own. The opinion of so wide a traveler and so keen an observer is valuable, so Froken Milow was asked to state the difference between social England and social America. She replied, "The hopelessness in England and the hopefulness in America."

THE newest organization is the Central Bureau for Social Workers, formed in 1903 by a group of the workers with Mr. Ernst Beckman, jurist, literary man, social student and member of the Swedish Parliament, as president. The Bureau collects and distributes literature upon social conditions and gives advice to those wishing to engage in social work or study social questions. Upon certain evenings of the week an architect and a lawyer may be found there for consultation free of charge by those unable to pay. Through newspaper letters and lectures interest is created and sustained in present-day questions of importance. In furnishing its rooms the Bureau has kept clearly in mind two things—simplicity and the artistic in color scheme, arrangement and decoration. The curtains and rugs

*Married women have the title Froke, unmarried women are called Froken.

are hand-woven, the furniture made by the peasants, and the place serves, to a certain extent, as a model for young couples about to set up housekeeping for themselves.

As in all other countries, even in Sweden, where there are few cities, the serious social question is the housing of the working classes, with this difference, however, that no sooner did the problem appear than the Swedes set to work to solve it, instead of waiting for the situation to become critical, as in New York, London and other large cities. This is being done, as in all cities, by the formation of housing associations, which build improved tenements and place them in the care of friendly rent-collectors, who keep an eye upon the family life of the tenants in addition to the work of collecting the rents promptly and seeing that the property is kept in good repair. Froken Lagerstadt was the pioneer Scandinavian rent-collector, and has done much to improve life in the tenements put in her charge.

Equal in importance with the housing question is the street-child problem, and here especially may Sweden serve as a model, for her method of caring for neglected children is closely connected with her public-education system and could easily be adopted by other countries.

Nowhere else, unless we except America, is education so universal as in Sweden. Every child must go to school between the ages of seven and fourteen, unless the parents can show that they are being privately educated. There are about twelve thousand common schools in Sweden, even the thinly populated districts having "ambulatory schools," held in various parts of the district. When this is the case the school term is reduced to about half the ordinary duration.

Children who have good homes and parents live protected lives as they do the world over, but the neglected and those who might become delinquent are safeguarded by being sent to the "cottage work schools," as they are called. Each parish has the necessary number of work schools, supported partly by the parish, partly by the state, supplemented by gifts from individuals. Manual training only is taught, from eleven to one and from five to seven—that is, after the morning and afternoon regular sessions. Children under sixteen who would be apt to run in the streets, and who are liable to mischief because their parents are at work or lack control over them, are sent to the work schools, upon the recommendation of the teachers.

BOYS STUDYING CARPENTRY IN A SWEDISH COTTAGE WORK-SCHOOL

AN EXCHANGE FOR SWEDISH PEASANT HANDICRAFT—A PERMANENT EXHIBITION

In addition to the manual training, the children are given a plain but wholesome dinner, or supper. The pupils are never told they are naughty, but that the reason they are sent there is because it is well for everybody to know how to do good work with the hands. Meals are not given in the spirit of charity, but as a reward for work well done. The teachers are in thorough sympathy with this fine preventive work. As one of them said, "They are not really bad boys and girls, but just full of too much spirits and needing a guiding hand."

ANOTHER important and more valuable work is also done in connection with the schools. The idea of it originated with Froken Anna Whitlock, a teacher, and a true Swede, in spite of her very English name, which is quite common in Sweden. Deeply interested in social work, doing much of it herself, and a valued member of progressive women's associations in Stockholm, Froken Whitlock several years ago conceived the idea of a course of lectures upon social service for the pupils of the higher classes. During her years of teaching she had observed many young people leave school who manifested great enthusiasm for service of some kind, but whose total ignorance of what was going on around them resulted in waste of time and energy. Froken Whitlock rightly thought it would be a wise thing if these young people could be informed about social conditions in their native land, at least, and so be prepared to step immediately into some form of social activity—in other words, to make education a true preparation for life.

The lectures are given at stated times, in school hours, by specialists engaged in some form of social work, and are attended by boys and girls from the higher grades. The following week the lecturer takes those who wish to go, to see the institutions which have been mentioned. For instance, one lecture in last winter's course was about some of the child-saving institutions in and near Stockholm. The speaker took advantage of the opportunity to touch upon delicate questions concerning fatherhood and motherhood, but so simply, so naturally, that a close observer failed to detect the slightest expression of surprise or shocked delicacy upon the faces of the audience, boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years.

University extension, as carried on by the universities at Upsala and Lund, is very popular. A recent development of peculiar interest

may be called guide studies in Stockholm, the object being to make known to people of small means, in town and country, the educational resources of their capital. The schoolhouses unused in vacation are converted into dormitories, with beds at eight cents a night; special arrangements with certain restaurants enable students to obtain good food for little money. The courses, of two weeks each, comprise lectures and visits to places of interest with competent instructors as guides. Six hundred students have been accepted at a time, about seventy per cent. of them women.

SWEDEN is the home of the handicrafts. In addition to manual training taught in schools, the most exquisite hand weaving, lace making, brass work, even pottery, is done by the peasants. Each district has its own patterns, which the peasants make and wear, deeming it unpatriotic to have aught to do with patterns of other localities.

The establishment of a permanent exhibition and exchange for the peasants' handicrafts originated in a beautiful way. Several years ago the Laplanders suffered from a severe famine. Froken Lilli Zickerman, knowing of the work done by these people in their cottage homes, interested certain persons, who sent her through the Lap country to collect from house to house every saleable article the peasants wished to part with. Taking these to the city, a bazar for the sale of them was held just before Christmas. The fair was liberally patronized, with the result that a considerable sum of money was sent to the Laps, who by this means were given relief without a suggestion of charity. A good market was found in this way for these cottage industries, and since that time a regular business has been conducted for the peasants. It would be interesting to know how far this has been instrumental in keeping the people contented in their country homes and so deterring them from herding in the cities.

The Friends of Art Needlework, or *Handarbetets Vanner,* to give the name in the vernacular, does a great deal to encourage the handicrafts. This society, in addition to maintaining sales and exhibition-rooms, conducts classes for weaving, lace making and embroidery. The work of the students brings high prices and finds ready sale among foreigners as well as among their own people.

Because of the handicrafts Sweden has not many textile factories, although there are some where conditions of work are, for the most

part, good. The people, however, are encouraged to continue hand weaving and to hold to their time-honored industrial customs rather than to take the risk of a disturbed economic order due to a market glutted with shoddy trash. In all Sweden there are to-day only about ten thousand factories of all kinds, employing in all a little more than two hundred and sixty-five thousand workmen—not a great number out of a total population of more than five million.

The amount of preventive work which is done obviates the necessity for an elaborate system of charity. Where it is undertaken, it receives intelligent direction and is chiefly for the relief of neglected children and the aged and infirm.

An excellent charity is the *Mjölkdroppen,* or milk distribution, founded in 1903 by a physician. This has its local habitation in what was formerly one of the worst saloons—a low dive. To-day it is a place of spotless purity, childish innocence and anxious motherhood. Infant mortality has been greatly reduced by the pure milk given to those who come or send for it.

THE activity of Swedish women has undoubtedly been an important factor in the rational development of social service. The Frederika Bremer Union, named for Sweden's celebrated champion of women's rights, has for its object the advancement of women, and combines the work of a woman's club, a woman's suffrage association and a business institution. It has charming rooms, where guests and visitors from other lands are entertained; it publishes an excellent periodical; it lends money to women who wish to study art, literature or social work in European countries; it does a great propaganda work for woman's suffrage. There are many other organizations of women, perhaps the most important, the Idun Club in Stockholm.

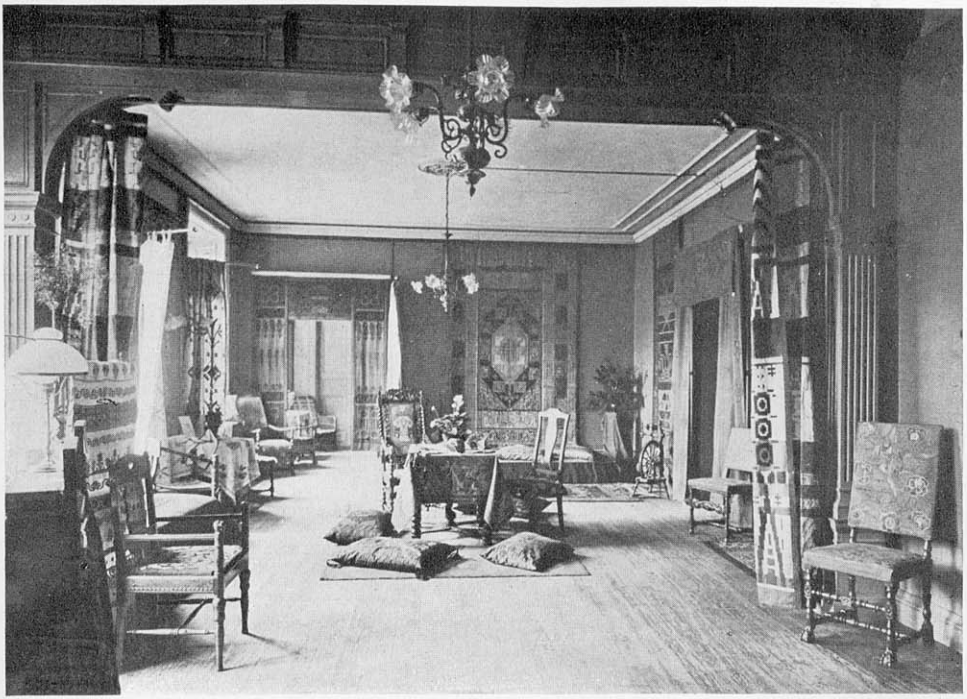
Sweden's freedom from many of the distressing social conditions which disturb other countries may be accounted for in large measure by a simplicity of life which has no false standards and by the dignity of labor which comes from arts and crafts well done. Nor is the attitude toward work confined to the working people; it extends to the higher classes as well. A charming Swedish gentleman, in showing a visitor one of the frescoes in a high school in Stockholm, said, "This is very fine, as you see, and was done by Prince Eugene, the king's youngest son, who is an artist by trade."

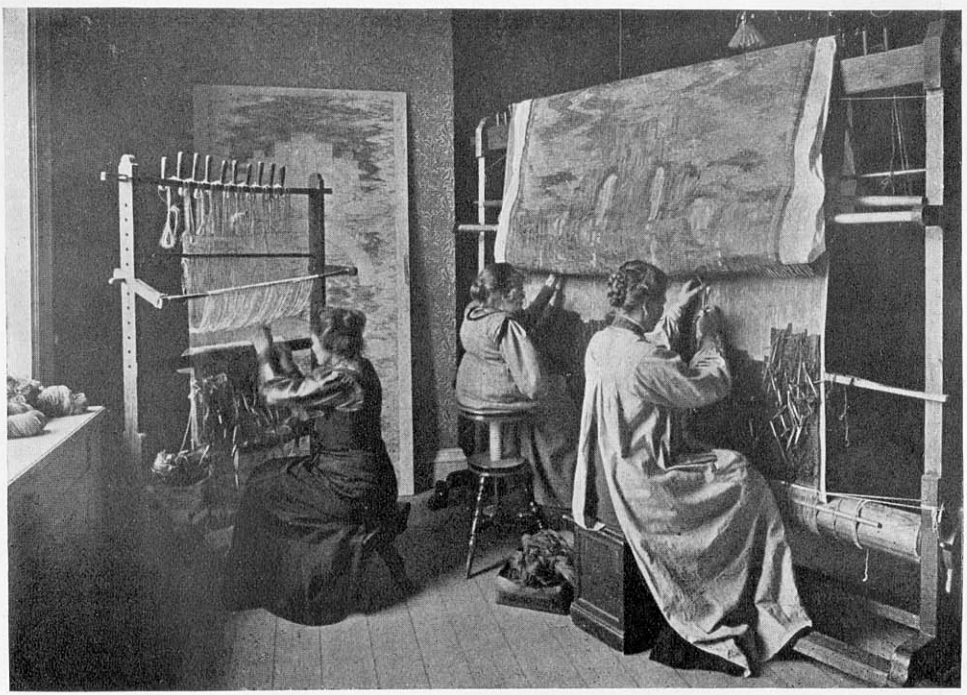
Swedish gymnastics, world-renowned for their excellence, are probably responsible in large measure for the physical development of the people, giving them sane minds and sound bodies. Since the day in 1805 when Henrik Ling appeared in Lund as a university fencing-master, the Swedes have made athletics a part of daily life. Taught in all the schools, from the universities down to the common schools, it has naturally become second nature almost to breathe properly and to walk correctly.

In the normal schools those qualifying to become teachers are required to take a thorough course in gymnastics along with other studies to enable them to lead such classes in the schools. In addition to the school gymnastics there are many private athletic organizations for both men and women.

Even the disabled in Sweden are encouraged to develop whatever ability they may possess in order that they may become self-supporting rather than public charges. Working Schools for Disabled People have been in existence for twenty years. In 1884 a Congress of Physicians was held in Copenhagen. The Danish Society for the Care of Disabled and Maimed People arranged an exhibition where visitors could see them at work. When the Swedish physician who had attended the Congress returned home he succeeded in interesting others in the idea, with the result that a small school was open by private philanthropy in 1886. Since that time several organizations have been formed and schools opened, all working on the same plan and giving practically the same sort of instruction, although as yet not one of them receives State aid. Consequently each school finds it necessary to restrict the classes to those of its own parish or neighborhood.

The largest School for the Disabled is in Gothenburg, established in 1885, having received in seven years one hundred and ninety-five pupils. Twenty of these had only one arm, twenty-seven paralyzed and others partially helpless through various bodily defects. Pupils are taught carpentry, shoe, basket and brush making, wood-carving, lettering, and the women, sewing, art-needlework, weaving and stocking-knitting. The lessons are free of charge, sewing-machines being provided for the women. When the work is sufficiently well done to find a sale the worker receives the full price for it, minus the cost of materials. Free baths are given and free dinners to those unable to pay.





SALESROOM OF HANDARBETEN VANNER

WEAVING CLASS OF HANDARBETEN VANNER