EARLY every American traveler who has visited the different countries of Europe cherishes a more or less comprehensive collection of souvenirs in the form of hand-made articles, each one of which bears the stamp of the locality in which it was made and so expresses the native art of the country that anyone at all familiar with the subject can tell at a glance just where it belongs and what people made it. Home industries and peasant handicrafts exist in every country in Europe, and so expressive are their products of the traditions, tastes and pursuits of the people that such a collection forms the most vivid reminder of the salient characteristics of the several countries from which the souvenirs were gathered. There are homespun and hand-woven textiles of wonderfully interesting weave, embroideries that vary as widely in design and workmanship as do the customs of the places where they are produced, quaint household furnishings and farm utensils made from native woods, shaped, carved or painted according to the tastes or traditions of the makers, and brass and copper vessels that bear the marks of the tool and almost the impress of the hand, so eloquent are they of the personality of the worker.

But the European traveler in America looks in vain for such expressions of the tastes and pursuits of the American people. There is hand-work being done by various arts and crafts workers, but it does not seem to be in any way expressive of American life or character, as both design and workmanship seem almost invariably to be derived either from foreign sources, or from a desire to make something that shall be distinguished merely for novelty or eccentricity. In fact, the traveler who has a fancy for picking up characteristic souvenirs of the land through which he is passing, in this country would have to confine himself to articles of Indian design and workmanship, as they seem to be the only American handicrafts so far that are made to supply everyday needs and that therefore are a genuine expression of primitive art.

Yet, there would seem to be no good reason why America cannot show examples of work derived from the traditional handicrafts of
nearly every country in Europe, brought here as a matter of course by the immigrants who for many decades have been pouring into the country in thousands. These people are of the class that is most proficient in home industries, and yet it is the very marked exception when an individual or a family continues to do any sort of hand-work. To one who has some knowledge of the industrial conditions and modes of life in both the old world and the new, the universal abandonment of handicrafts seems to be due purely to the altered standards which are acquired by the immigrant after a very short residence here, and also to the pressure of the new industrial system of which he becomes a part. In Europe the peasant who makes a definite occupation of some form of handicraft does so for one of two reasons: either he is a skilled worker who can make a good living by means of a particular craft, or he has some regular occupation which does not take all his time and fails to furnish him with an adequate living, and so ekes out his income by the pursuit of some home industry. When this man comes to America he does so with the sole idea of bettering his fortunes. The only way to make money is to obtain employment, and he soon discovers that it is impossible for him to work in the accustomed leisurely fashion of the old country, as the work for which he receives wages takes all his time, strength and energy, leaving him only leisure enough for the rest that is necessary to his strength. He finds that he can earn more money than he could at home and support his family in what he considers a better style, and soon it seems clear that the small sum which he or his wife and children could add to the family income by handicraft would hardly pay for the time and money spent in procuring the necessary raw materials and tools in a country where the conditions are so different from those to which he has always been accustomed. Also, as a rule, the whole family aspires to become Americanized as quickly as possible. As a matter of course they discard the peasant clothing which they have always worn in favor of cheap ready-made garments which to them look fashionable, and the same sense of imitation leads them to despise the hand-made peasant work as much inferior to the showy factory-made articles they find in America. On the other hand, the skilled worker who could make a living at home by his handicrafts finds that there is no room here for the kind of work he can do. Conditions are entirely different, and, even if he were familiar with the language and knew how to grasp such opportunities as he may find, he could not, single-handed and without aid, pursue here the handicraft with which he was familiar and hope to find a
WORK ROOM AND BEDROOM FOR A YOUNG GIRL: DESIGNED BY E. TOROCZKAI AND M. UNDI; EXECUTED BY G. PAAL.

DINING ROOM: DESIGNED BY FEHÉRKÚTHY AND DÓSA; EXECUTED BY JÓZSEF MÓCSAY.
ARTIST'S DINING ROOM: DESIGNED BY EDE VIGAND; EXECUTED BY JÓZSEF MÓCSAY.

NURSERY: DESIGNED BY G. WESZELY; EXECUTED BY THE FIRM OF HEGYBÁNYA - SZÉLAKNA.

Courtesy of "The Hungarian Art Industry."
PROFITABLE HANDICRAFTS

market that would afford him daily bread. Therefore, the handicraft work is neglected and forgotten, and the first effort of the worker is to find employment in some factory or at some form of daily labor that will afford him a daily wage.

LOOKING at the subject of the American Arts and Crafts movement from the viewpoint of a foreigner who is accustomed to a well-organized system of handicrafts in his own country, it seems to me that, with the exception of the Indian work I have already mentioned, there are no distinctive American handicrafts. There are groups of individual craft workers, but, from all I can learn, the articles made by them meet no general requirements, nor do they find a real market. I have observed that in the majority of cases the best customers of these workers are wealthy patrons or philanthropists who may be interested in the personality of the worker or who may desire to encourage handicrafts as a means to develop some form of art that shall be characteristic of this country. If these customers are wanting, most of the products of such workers remain in their studios, as the high prices put upon them by the makers place them beyond the reach of the ordinary purchaser of moderate means, and their lack of any definite and practical usefulness places them in the class of luxuries rather than that of necessities. With the exception of the exhibit rooms maintained for the purpose of showing articles made by the members of some craft society and of certain Women’s Exchanges and similar places, there is hardly any place where examples of the handicrafts can be seen collectively or purchased by the buyer in search of some unusual and characteristic bit of furnishing or adornment.

There is some protest against the lack of any general recognition of handicraft work in America, but it seems to me that such recognition cannot be claimed until the uncontrolled individuality now cherished so proudly by the several workers gives place to a recognized standard of excellence. This is shown by the record of those centuries which we call the Golden Age of handicrafts. There were great numbers of artists and craftsmen, but to very few of these was given the distinction of originating schools of art or work which have borne the impress of their own individuality. Rather, the great majority were simple workmen, skilled in their chosen trades and doing good work because they put their hearts into it. History shows us that to be successful handicrafts must conform to certain standards which are set by the few who are really entitled to be called
master workmen. For example, it is not enough for the textile worker to know that the interchanging weft and warp will produce a fabric and from that point to consider himself at liberty to exercise his fancy in the matter of weave and texture; he must have a thorough understanding of good weaving, a full knowledge of the kinds of material that give the best results in practical usage, and the skill of hand that can put into practice all he has learned before it is possible for him to weave textiles fit to compete with machine-made goods or having qualities that will prove really satisfactory to the buyer. It must be admitted from the start that in the matter of price it is impossible for hand-made goods to compete with the product of the machines. Therefore it seems that the only way in which this difficulty can be overcome is by giving the hand-made article a quality of interest, beauty and durability that makes it superior to factory-made goods, and this quality can never be gained unless workers conform strictly to certain recognized standards governing designs, materials and workmanship. The success of Continental handicrafts proves not only that concession to such standards creates for hand-made goods a market which is not artificial, but well-founded and lasting, but also that such concessions in no way hamper individuality, because personal ideas and tastes find ample room for expression within the limits of all necessary rules.

One amazing feature of the work done in this country is the existence of the two extremes of over-individuality as regards handicrafts, and over-specialization on the part of the manufacturers, whose one aim seems to be to eliminate all individuality in favor of the dead level made possible by the machines. And yet the tendency toward specialization is the same in both cases, the only difference being that one is a well-ordered system and the other a series of scattered individual efforts. In the factory there is always the leading brain which knows the requirements of the market and fills them by uniting into a whole the specialized work of hundreds, but in handicrafts there is no such unifying force, and can be none unless some means can be discovered of fixing recognized standards and requiring all workers who wish to command a market for their products to conform to them. This should not be a difficult matter, for, speaking from the viewpoint of one who has given much attention to the subject here and abroad, I can see no reason why, with the large number of intelligent and able craftsmen already in the field inspired by the indomitable American spirit and in possession of the best raw materials, great results could not be achieved in what relatively would
be a very short time, by a consistent and well-directed Arts and Crafts movement that would be national in its scope, as in some of the European countries.

The question is being agitated just now as to whether there could be in this country a successful alliance of handicrafts and petty agriculture. To this I can answer with an emphatic "Yes," and with the direct assertion that, difficult as the task might prove at first, there ought to be found ways and means to accomplish it. The experience of the ages has proven that the backbone of any country is its agricultural population. Of all classes of people the farmer alone represents stability and reality. Financial, commercial and manufacturing depressions may hurt him to some extent, but they cannot down him, for he always has a place in which to do his work and always is certain of obtaining some return for it. The farmer is the real personification of independence. Nevertheless, it is necessary that this backbone be kept in a fit and healthy condition; otherwise the whole country suffers. In Europe, we regard this question as worthy of our most serious consideration, but here there seems to be a prevailing impression that it is the duty of the different societies formed to promote social welfare to limit their work to the cities and manufacturing centers. It is not that the tiller of the soil is forgotten, but the idea seems to be that as he works in the pure open air, unhampered by crowded or unhealthy conditions, he is not in need of any consideration from the workers for social welfare.

This is right in one sense, but it is being carried too far. No one seems to consider that the work of the farmer is largely routine, and that routine work must be followed by recreation and distraction if brain and body are to be kept in healthy condition. The city dweller, as soon as he leaves shop or factory, finds plenty to divert him from his daily toil, and even if he goes straight home, a glance out of his window will show him the ever-moving panorama of city life with its thousand small happenings and its unending interest. But what relief has the farmer? What does the community at large do to help him kill the monotony of the long winter evenings? During two-thirds of the year he works so hard and for such long hours that he has no time to think of anything but his work. For the other months there is much idle time to be disposed of, and then is when he needs something to guard against the harmful inactivity of body and brain. Reading rooms or a library form some slight diversion, but these are possible only when the farmer lives in or near a village.
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Besides, there is always the objection that either one would prove expensive or inadequate if maintained by the farmers themselves, while, if maintained or donated by others, they would come perilously close to charity, which no one who wishes to preserve the independent spirit of a nation would care to introduce into its most self-reliant communities.

From the experience gained in my own country, I can safely say that the only solution for this problem is the introduction of handicrafts and home industries. In times of the year when the farm work slackens it provides interesting and remunerative work for the older members of the family and is a valuable factor in the education of the children. Furthermore, the pursuit of almost any one of the home industries would be not only inexpensive but a great saving, because the only cost to the workers is the price of the raw materials and their own time. The returns from such work are twofold, for not only is there a clear addition to the family income by the sale of the articles made, but a great saving in the ability to make for home needs articles for which otherwise cash must be paid. Of course, the supplying of home needs would come first, for only after the workers became proficient and acquired some understanding of the requirements of a market would it be practicable to take steps to provide such a market. The immediate benefit resulting from the work would be the awakening of interest in the doing of something that is creative and not compulsory,—which demands brain activity and furnishes distraction from the daily routine and which also provides articles of a certain monetary value to be used in the home or exchanged for other commodities in the neighborhood.

I speak with the confidence of conviction, because of my personal knowledge of what the Hungarian government has done to promote handicrafts and home industries among the farmers in my own country. The results speak for themselves, for the Hungarian handicrafts received from the International Jury of Awards at the Paris Exposition in nineteen hundred, one grand prize, three gold medals and several silver and bronze medals. At the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, held in St. Louis, in nineteen hundred and four, Hungary received for similar exhibits two grand prizes, nine gold medals, six medals of silver and two of bronze. In addition to this foreign recognition of the excellence of our handiwork, there is the silent testimony of the fact that articles thus produced are in daily use all over Hungary, being possessed by all classes of people from the wealthiest and noblest in the land to the simplest peasants, with a
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canstant demand from the great mass of the people who are in moderate circumstances. In St. Louis the embroideries of our home workers found a ready sale, in spite of the handicap of our inability to deliver purchased articles before the close of the exposition, and not only the embroideries, but the pottery made by the peasants, sixty-four cases in all, was all sold before the exposition closed. The fact that such a market exists for us seems to me to be a pretty fair indication that it requires only a little well-directed effort to make it exist for American craft workers.

ONE question will naturally come in answer to what I have said concerning the success we have had in directing and extending handicrafts and home industries in Hungary, and that is: Why do your people then come in such large numbers to the United States? The answer is simple. Hungary has twenty millions of inhabitants. Of these over seven millions are engaged in agricultural pursuits or dependent on them, while as yet only half a million agricultural workers attempt to add to their incomes by the pursuit of handicrafts. We cannot compel them to engage in home industries. Where they have done so it has been successful, but so far only a comparatively small percentage of them have realized the value that lies in the practice of their traditional craft. On the other hand, the peasants know that one dollar saved in America represents five crowns in Hungary. They hear much of the large sums earned in America and sent home,—sums which they cannot earn, still less save, under ordinary conditions in their own land. They never hear of those who do not succeed; they lose sight of the fact that the immigrant in general, coming to America without knowledge of the customs or the language of the country, has to work in the mines and at the most dangerous places in the factories; they do not know how many perish annually in these occupations, and even if they did know of these facts, it is only human to expect to succeed in places where others have failed, especially when they see before them the vision of untold riches. To them the word “America” means only “success.” In former years this dream brought over great numbers of the population of Great Britain, Germany, France, Sweden and Norway. It reached us a few years ago. We are at the high tide of Hungarian emigration, and at present we are helpless before it. We cannot prevent it, because the remedy is not one that can be applied instantly, but must make itself felt after many years of patient and hard work.

Our experience in introducing handicrafts to the agricultural
population in Hungary has taught us many lessons, of which the most important proved to be that expressed by the old Latin saying, *festina lente* (make haste slowly). It is useless to try to decide offhand what industry is best to offer this or that section of the country. There are some industries to which the population of a given region will not take, no matter how earnest the effort made to introduce and establish it. This is a matter for gradual adjustment, aided by wide knowledge and fine discrimination. Another lesson we have learned is that it is useless to try to promote a home industry which cannot compete under any circumstances with the factory. This is true mostly of the cheapest textile goods, which can be made much better by the machine than by hand, and which have no special quality derived from hand-work to recommend them.

We have found that the establishing of markets forms the only practical way to the intensive and extensive development of home industries, and it is my belief that those who wish to further the cause of handicrafts in America will find themselves confronted with precisely the same necessity. Also, a thorough investigation of the form of work with which we have achieved success in foreign countries shows that the articles in demand were those which showed a special national character and also which were purchasable at moderate prices. These not only obtain a ready market, but hold it, and we speedily found that articles of luxury to command a sale had to be transformed into articles of practical use.

**LIFE**

*W*E CANNOT hope to know or understand  
The fullness of Life's mystery unrevealed;  
Since Man, a wandering atom lost in worlds,  
Can find no trace of whence he came or why:  
Only at times some glimmering consciousness,  
Some vague, mysterious sense of primal being  
Lived in the night of things, constrains him  
To walk in ways he neither sees nor knows.  
From out the abysm of time infinite,  
From nebulous ethers, formless, lost in space.  
Yet potent with prophecy of future worlds,  
Was drawn the Genius of the shaping years:  
Eternal as creation’s dateless birth;  
A partner of the ages’ changing forms.

F. W. DORN.