
WHEN it is urged that the social and industrial conditions that are now so unsettled, and even menacing, because of the growing riches and power of the employer as opposed to the helplessness, poverty and uncertainty of the average man or woman who works for daily wages, could be permanently relieved by the organization on a national scale of a system of practical and profitable handicrafts allied with agriculture, the first questions naturally raised in objection are: How can things made by hand compete on anything like equal terms with the same kind of goods made much more cheaply and quickly by machinery in the factories? and: How, with living expenses at their present scale, can the workman expect to live without an assured wage for his daily work, during the time that he is perfecting his skill in some one handicraft and finding a market steady enough to afford him a livelihood?

Without a reasonably satisfactory answer to both these questions, no man could be expected to take the step, to him so hazardous, from the factory and his regular weekly income,—so long as the factory keeps open and he can hold his job,—to the farm and freedom coupled with uncertainty as to his daily bread. With reference to the matter of competition between hand-made and factory-made goods I can only say that the result of long experience in making both has satisfied me that there can be no competition as it is commonly understood, because they are not measured by the same standard of value nor do they appeal to the same class of consumer. Hand-made articles have a certain intrinsic value of their own that sets them entirely apart from machine-made goods. This value depends, not upon the fact that the article is made entirely by hand or with primitive tools,—that is not the point,—but upon the skill of the workman, his power to appreciate his own work sufficiently to give it the quality that appeals to the cultivated taste, and the care that he gives to every detail of workmanship from the preparation of the raw material to the final finish of the piece. He may call in the aid of machinery to expedite the doing of such parts of the work as it would be a waste of time and energy to do by hand, he may use the most modern methods and appliances, but if he gives per-
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sonal thought, care and skill to every part of the work, the article will surely have that indefinable quality of individuality and intrinsic worth which is never found in the stereotyped and overfinished product of the machine, and will as surely appeal to the large and steadily-increasing class of people who know the difference and who are able and willing to pay a good price for the thing which has the same quality that is so eagerly sought and so highly prized in heirlooms and antiques.

It would not be desirable, even if it were possible, for handicrafts to attempt to take the place of the factories or to compete with them for the same class of trade. With the demand that necessitates the immense production of goods of all kinds, the labor-saving machinery and efficient methods of the factories are absolutely essential, just as they are essential in the general economic scheme because they furnish employment to thousands of workers who ask nothing better than to be allowed to tend a machine with the certainty of so much a day coming to them at the end of the week. The place of home and village industries is to supplement the factories by producing a grade of goods which it is impossible to duplicate by machinery,—and which command a ready market when they can be found,—and to give to the better class of workers a chance not only to develop what individual ability they may possess, but to reap the direct reward of their own energy and industry in the feeling that they are free of the wage-system with all its uncertainties and that what they make goes to maintain a home that is their own, to educate their children and to lay up a sufficient provision against old age,—all of which is next to impossible for the average workman of today, burdened by unreasonably heavy living expenses and under the double domination of the employers and the unions.

The question of competition with the factories, however, although the first that usually comes up, is not the first in importance when we consider the practicability of actually introducing handicrafts in connection with small farming; for the second, that of assuring a livelihood to the worker, touches what is really the vital point of the whole subject, for it brings up the questions of organized effort to obtain government recognition and aid, of the kind of instruction that is necessary before success can be assured either in handicrafts or farming, and, above all, of an entire change of our present standards of living as well as workmanship.
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There is no denying that handicrafts, as practised by individual arts and crafts workers in the studios, do not afford a sufficient living to craftworkers as a class, and also there is no denying that small farming, as carried on in our thinly-populated districts, is neither interesting, pleasant nor profitable. To connect the two, and carry them on upon a basis that will insure permanent success, it is necessary not only to get rid of the artificial standards of quality and value that we have come to adopt as a result of the predominance of showy and commonplace factory-made goods, but to change our standards of living. We all realize that in this country both wages and living expenses conform to a scale that is artificially and absurdly high. The thrifty foreigner comes here because he can make more money in a few years than he could in his own country in a lifetime, but he makes it because his custom for generations has been to keep his living expenses down to the minimum by the strictest economy and by turning everything to account. The native American,—and even the foreigners take only one generation, or two at most, to become native Americans,—has no real understanding of economy in the sense of making a little go a long way. He lets the little go as far as it will, and then discontentedly goes without the rest. He is miserly and apprehensive because the rent is so high, food so dear and clothing so expensive that he has no chance to save anything and get ahead, but the one remedy he sees is to get higher wages for his work, not realizing that the increased income inevitably brings increased expenditure as the pinch of poverty slackens, and that in the end the result is the same. If things are thus equalized upon an artificial scale of income and expenditure, why not try the experiment of adjusting them so that they will equalize upon a lower and more natural scale, in other words, to balance a lessened money income by expenditures lessened as much or more by a different and more reasonable way of living? In this period of false standards and inflated values we have lost sight of the principle that economy means wealth, and that comfort and happiness in living do not depend upon the amount of money we can make and spend, but upon pleasant surroundings and freedom from the pressure of want and apprehension.

THIS vitally necessary change can be brought about only by a return to cultivating the soil as a means of obtaining the actual living,—by looking to garden, grain-patch, orchard, chicken-yard and pasture, instead of to the grocery, bakery and butcher
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shop, for the vegetables, fruit, eggs, fowls and meat consumed by the family. If properly cared for and cultivated according to the modern methods that are now everybody's for the learning, a little farm of five or ten acres can be made not only to yield a living for the family, but a handsome surplus for the markets, thus serving the double purpose of stopping the outflow and adding to the income of actual money, as well as providing home comfort and healthful work and surroundings free from the bugbear of rent day and the dreaded possibility of being out of work.

But to make such a return possible it is necessary not only that government aid be given, as in Hungary, by purchasing large estates and neglected or abandoned farms, parceling them out into small farms of a few acres each and selling them to settlers on easy terms and at cost price, but that a definitely organized effort be made by different communities interested in the movement to establish small centers of industrial and social life, where thoroughly competent instruction in both handicrafts and agriculture may be had, and where all the social interchange and recreation so necessary to normal man may be easily obtained. It would be the height of impractical absurdity to recommend that a few workmen who have grown restless under the factory system and want to try something else should go out and try to buy or rent farms somewhere far enough from the city to bring land within their means, and then essay to make a living by farming and the incidental practice of some trade or craft for the product of which there might or might not be a sale. And it would be equally absurd to expect men and women who are dragging out their lives in the dreary drudgery of the ordinary life on a farm in some remote and isolated country district, to suddenly awaken to an enthusiasm for handicrafts and modern intensive agriculture. The only way to inaugurate such a movement as we recommend is to begin a definite and carefully-considered campaign; first,—to provide the land on such terms that it will be possible for the average workman to buy it; second,—to establish villages where there shall be some opportunity for social life and mutual aid; third,—to provide adequate instruction by means of well-qualified teachers and inspectors who will give what personal attention is necessary and who will also work through local clubs and associations of farmers and handicraftsmen, and fourth,—to take steps to organize a system by which the cost of living and of raw materials may be reduced to the lowest possible figure.

In order to keep out the element of speculation on the one hand
and that of charity on the other, it is necessary that the government recognize and stand back of this plan as it stands back of the campaigns to save our forests, to reclaim our arid lands and to improve our methods of agriculture. Local organizations and arts and crafts societies that really wish to do practical work for the common good could render much assistance, but it would be necessary to proceed on some recognized basis of action that in all essentials would be the same all over the country. Other countries are already showing us what may be done in the way of lessening the cost of living and of raw materials for working by means of practical and intelligent coöperation in buying in large quantities and distributing at cost price plus the small charge made for transportation, storage and handling. Take, for example, the Vooruit in Belgium, which buys its flour in Minnesota by the shipload and distributes it direct to the consumers at wholesale prices. The same principle would easily obtain with regard to every necessity that, under such a system, could be purchased more economically than it could be made at home. Through such coöperation, not only could such provisions as were not easily raised on the farms be obtained at the lowest cost, but also materials for clothing and other household necessities, as well as raw materials such as lumber, iron and other metals, yarn, cotton or linen thread, leather and the like, which could be brought in quantities to the central depot and sold to the workers at cost, while the same central organization could market the finished product so economically that it would be possible for the larger part of the profit to go to the producer. A certain number of these village depots could also combine in maintaining a store in some one of the large cities where goods could be displayed for sale and orders taken.

By such means not only would the cost of living be greatly lessened and its conditions correspondingly improved, but handicrafts as a definite form of industry would be made possible. The relief from the strain of meeting each day’s burdensome demand for ready money to provide the barest necessities of life, and the certainty that every industrious and skilful worker would be sure of all the work he could do,—whether in the shop or on the farm,—would go far toward bringing about that attitude of confidence in himself and interest in doing good work which means so much to the intrinsic value of hand-work and adds so largely to the earning power of the worker. Also, the direct method of marketing goods and receiving orders would tend to bring the producer into
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direct contact with the consumer instead of the dealer,—an association which in early times did more for the development of good craftsmanship than any other one thing. Not only does such contact and the exchange of ideas tend to raise the standard of taste in the consumer, but the suggestions he receives in carrying out orders form a source of constant inspiration to the worker to go on doing directly creative things, and the sense of power and independence that comes from being able to control his own product instead of delivering it over to the tender mercies of a dealer gives him a confidence in his own ability and in the quality of the work that soon produces a keen discrimination in the matter of what appeals to the public and what does not. In short, he is working as a man, not as a machine.

With me this is not theory, but a fact proven by my own experience as well as by observation. I know that when a man works only for the dealer,—when he takes another man’s orders concerning what he shall make, how he shall make it and what he shall sell it for, he works half-heartedly and in doubt. But when he works directly for the people who use the things he makes, and who know what they want as well as he knows what he delights in making, every evidence of appreciation,—every proof that he has “hit the mark,”—is just so much food for that inspiration and enthusiasm which is the main element in success. It was under these conditions and in this spirit that the old craftsmen worked,—and the things they made are treasured like jewels today. It is this element that must enter into modern handicrafts if they are to possess real value and achieve lasting success.

A NOTHER element that is vitally necessary to the production of the sort of work that will command its own market, entirely aside from the question of factory competition, is that of thorough knowledge. Skill in actual workmanship goes far, but it is not enough. Take the cabinetmakers of a generation ago in this country. Their skill of hand was wonderful, but they had no skill of brain. They could model most delicately with spokeshave and scraper, but they could make nothing for which they had not precedent. The most simple thing which they had not been in the habit of doing was beyond them. They were little more than human machines. So with the French and English cabinetmakers of today. They are individual workers, buying their lumber and wheeling it home on a pushcart to their own little shops, and making there
by hand the furniture or furniture frames which they then sell to the dealer, but in their work there is no element of real handicraft because it adheres rigidly to tradition. They know nothing except what has been done, and even if, by some rare chance, they should attempt to work directly for the consumer on some special order calling for something out of the beaten track, the chances are that not one workman in five hundred would be able to do it. These men make everything by hand, but they are not handicraftsmen. They are sweatshop workers, toiling day by day under conditions far more oppressive than those of the factories, absolutely at the dealer’s mercy for an opportunity to sell their goods, and compelled to make what he dictates and sell at the price he fixes, or starve.

These men have all a skill of hand that is little short of marvelous, but they are living in cities, under city conditions, and are dependent for their daily bread upon what they make from day to day. The fact that their work is done by hand, and extremely well done, contains no element of hope for the bettering of their condition, for they have neither the interest nor the knowledge that would enable them to use their brains. They know nothing of design, nothing of the principles of construction, nothing of drawing, and without some knowledge of all three it is difficult for even the most experienced workman to take the one step beyond mere mechanical reproduction to the beginning of direct creative work. In the training of the handicraftsman the foundation should be laid with a thorough knowledge of that branch of drawing which relates to constructive design, for such knowledge is fundamental and does more than anything else to give a man the right sort of confidence in himself and the ability to appreciate the quality of his own work when it is good and to realize its shortcomings when it is inferior. Without it he lacks the greatest incentive to the creative thought and interest which alone stimulates advance.

Therefore, in starting an industry,—almost any industry that can be included under the name of handicrafts,—one of the first things to be considered in the way of instruction is a general working knowledge of drawing, to go hand in hand with the actual manual training in any particular craft. Here is where the artists who are interested in craft work can make a most practical use of their own skill and that of such of their pupils as have proven themselves fairly competent in design. Each school of handicrafts would require a good teacher of drawing, and the results probably would be well worth while. In addition to the drawing teacher, there should be,
as suggested by Mrs. Albee in The Craftsman last month, teachers for each craft who would stay in one place long enough to train advanced pupils so that they would be able in turn to give instruction to others. These teachers might be men or women who have learned and worked at the craft they teach as an actual trade. For example, a skilled weaver, or cabinetmaker, or carpenter, or printer, or bookbinder would be best qualified to teach as well as to work at each particular trade, when carried on as a farm or village industry under the conditions we have described, and an experienced workman, in the event of there being no school within reach, might easily teach his own family or his neighbors to become proficient in the work in which he is skilled. A more practical turn could also be given to the manual training departments in public schools, so that the training gained by learning to use the hands could be carried one step farther into the actual doing of practical work with the idea of making it a profitable industry.

I HAVE already suggested the way in which coöperation might be utilized in obtaining raw material at low cost, and also in marketing the goods. While I do not believe it is advisable to attempt to carry coöperation too far, it would be an excellent plan with reference to another common need, that of the necessary machinery for the first rough preparation of materials for working. For example, in a village where cabinetmaking or any form of woodworking formed the chief industry, it would be not only advisable, but necessary, to have a few machines, such as a cut-off saw, rip saw, band saw and buzz planer, to shape and plane the wood to such dimensions as would meet the requirements of each individual cabinetmaker. Nothing is added to the value of a hand-made piece by doing such work by hand, as it is so tedious and laborious as to be a foolish waste of time that might be spent in more important work. Such machines could be owned in common, like a threshing machine in a farming community, and the power to run them could be supplied by water power where it was available, or by electricity from a central plant that could also be utilized for lighting and for furnishing power to other industries.

Cabinetmaking, considered as a handicraft, opens a field of unusually wide and varied interests, as the making of things so closely associated with our daily life and surroundings is a form of work that is peculiarly fascinating as well as profitable. This is the one craft above all others in which I am personally very much interested,
and I speak of it with the knowledge born of lifelong experience. I know exactly what I am talking about when I say that we are fast outgrowing the taste for the tawdry, overornamented furniture produced by the factories, and that plain, simple furniture, designed on good structural lines, made from carefully selected wood and finished so that the double purpose of revealing the natural beauty of the wood and bringing the piece into harmony with the general color scheme of the room in which it is to stand, is fulfilled, will find a ready and constant sale at good prices. Especially would this be the case if each piece were made to order and modified to the exact use to which it was to be put and to the personal taste and need of the purchaser, as was the case with the best of the old furniture. It is in the doing of this kind of work that a knowledge of drawing and of the principles of construction is absolutely necessary, for with it the workman is free to modify or change existing designs, or even create new ones in carrying out the wishes of the purchaser, with little danger of going wrong and every chance of doing good original work. In this connection, also, there is a chance for the wood-carver who has the knowledge as well as the initiative to devise forms of decoration that seem inevitable, so exactly are they suited to the requirements of the piece and the characteristics of the wood that is used.

In countries where handicrafts have flourished for centuries, or where they have died out and been revived, it is almost an axiom that no form of handicraft takes permanent root in a locality too far from the base of supplies for raw material. Thus, woodworking flourishes in a part of the country where the kinds of wood required are close at hand and easily obtainable at low cost; spinning and weaving in a locality where sheep are raised or flax grows, and so on. Whether or not this rule would hold good in this country of varied resources and quick transportation, I do not know. I should imagine, with the purchasing of raw material carried on systematically with the idea of obtaining large quantities at low prices, the actual nearness to the base of supplies would not count for as much as it might under more primitive conditions. In the case of a community where cabinetmaking formed the chief industry, it would be necessary to have an adequate organization for supplying the different kinds of wood that were needed, properly kiln dried and at practically wholesale prices, but, while the expense would of course be less if the wood grew near at hand, it could easily be brought from different parts of the country and delivered as it is to the factories.
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In direct connection with cabinetmaking would be the dressing, coloring and decorating of leather, an industry that offers almost as many possibilities as working in wood. When leather is treated so that the surface is soft and inviting, and is possessed of a rich, soft color quality as well as of all the characteristics that belong to leather, it is one of the most generally satisfactory materials for upholstering furniture and is effective for many uses. There is a chance for the weaver and the needleworker, too, for very few fabrics, as well as very few decorative designs, are suited to the upholstering of simple furniture, and in the making and designing of such there is endless opportunity for originality combined with keen artistic perception of the right thing.

Weaving occupies a territory of its own, and is one of the most important and necessary of the handicrafts, for a hand-woven fabric, to be interesting and individual, must have other qualities than are given merely by weaving ordinary threads on a hand loom. Many enthusiasts for hand-weaving seem to believe that all that is required is the throwing of the shuttle by hand instead of machinery, and this theory is responsible for the production of much material that differs only from the machine product in not being quite so good. My experience along these lines has proven to me beyond question that the superior interest of a hand-woven fabric is not so much a question of the method of weaving,—although that is of course to be considered,—as it is of the way in which the material is treated, and particularly the way in which the thread is spun. The preparation of the thread is an industry in itself, and one that is absorbing in its interest as well as most important to the finished product, for above all things it requires the care, interest and knowledge that should always be devoted to the preparation of the raw material if the products of handicraft are to have the intrinsic value that should by right be theirs. We all know the charm that is found in the hand-woven fabrics made by peasants in foreign countries, and we also know how seldom it is attained by the craft-workers here. The difference lies in the way they handle the flax or wool, the way the thread is spun and dyed, and the way the quality of each is preserved in the weaving. This matter of the preparation of the thread I have found to be of such vital importance to the quality of hand-woven fabrics, that I purpose to devote several months of the coming spring and summer to making a special study of the methods employed in several of the European countries, with
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a view to ascertaining the practicability of introducing them here. When I have found out just how they do it, the knowledge I have gained will be put freely at the disposal of craftworkers here.

IRON work and metal work of all kinds occupy a high place in the list of practical and profitable handicrafts. Here, also, a knowledge of the principles of design is necessary, for no craft offers wider opportunities for originality and the quality of individuality in design and workmanship. A preliminary training in good hard blacksmithing offers an excellent foundation for the doing of admirable things in structural iron work and articles for household use, provided it is supplemented with a working knowledge of constructive design. A little shop in the back yard, with the ordinary equipment of a small country blacksmith shop, is sufficient, and it would require by no means exhaustive training to fit any good blacksmith for such work as the needs of the consumer will suggest. The same principle applies to work in brass or copper, and skill along these lines will be in demand so long as people appreciate and desire individual and beautiful lighting fixtures, fire sets, andirons, door hinges, knobs and pulls, serving trays, jugs, and the hundred and one metal things that, if interestingly designed and beautifully made, add so much to the distinctiveness of any scheme of household decoration. Metal work is above all things a handicraft, and in no form of work does the care, leisure and interest which the worker devotes to it show to greater advantage or command more general interest.

Another industry of equal importance is the making of handtufted rugs from coarse wool yarn,—such as are now woven in Ireland, Germany and Austria. In all of these countries this industry has grown to large proportions, and its products command a ready sale at good prices. In this country, under the right conditions and with proper direction, there would be almost no limit to the development of such an industry, which would be especially favored by the present almost prohibitive tariff on woollen goods of all kinds. There is always a demand for the right kind of rugs, and these are peculiarly adapted to harmonize with the simple style of building and furnishing that is becoming so popular because it is so characteristic of the better element among the American people. The method of weaving these rugs is the same as that employed for the fine and costly Turkish rugs, and, owing to the fact that each thread must be separately knotted in by hand, they can never be made by ma-
chines. Owing to the coarseness of the yarn used, and the bolder and simpler forms of the designs that are best adapted to our use, the work is much less laborious and more rapidly done than in the case of the Oriental rugs, and consequently the price is not so high. They can be woven on coarsely constructed and inexpensive looms by women and girls, and during the summer months the work can be done in open sheds, where the workers are practically out of doors.

A simpler rug is the farm rug, known among farmers as the old-fashioned rag rug. These are woven on inexpensive hand looms with a warp of fine twine, and meet with a ready sale when made of the proper materials and in effective designs and color combinations. They are easily cleaned and very durable, being especially desirable for use in bedrooms, on verandas and in summer homes in the country. Also a modern development of an old-fashioned home industry is the hooked rug, like those made by Mrs. Albee and her workers in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. No loom is required for these, only a frame that is much like a quilting frame, and they can be made by the less experienced workers who may not wish to take the training that is necessary for the making of the hand-tufted rugs. These are beautiful rugs, especially in the smaller sizes, for they have almost the color effect of jewels in a room that is furnished in a quiet color key. Also, they give wide opportunity for the exercise of individual taste in design, as they are not made from cartoons like the hand-tufted rugs, but from smaller designs that are less exact and more suggestive in character.

All the industries mentioned are sure to command a market, for they are confined to the making of such household furnishings as are always required, and which are now in most instances commonplace and unsatisfactory because little is made in this country except the stereotyped factory goods. In the same list might be included the making of willow furniture in good, simple designs that would harmonize with the darker and heavier forms of the wood furniture and furnish a delightful contrast. Pottery also comes within the list of necessary things, as well as the ornamental, and a separate industry might be developed from the designing and making of tiles. Basketry has its place, and also the weaving of straw and raffia hats in quaintly individual shapes and color effects, but these are more in the nature of side issues or lesser industries. Needlework, block-printing, dyeing and lace-making all have their market value as handicrafts, although they come more in the purely
ornamental class, but in book-binding and printing there is a great chance for the development of paying industries. A printing establishment, carried on under the conditions described, where skilled printers might have the opportunity and the leisure to do the best work that was in them, would soon make a place for itself with all publishers who care to make a specialty of beautiful typographical effects, and could command all the work it needed at good paying prices.

Naturally, everything said on this subject at present must be more in the nature of suggestion than of outlining any definite plan of action. Still, even at this stage we have a practical and workable theory to start on and conditions that are more than favorable for its development. When the start is once made the rest will follow easily enough. The next utterance in The Craftsman upon this subject will be a series of articles upon intensive agriculture, by an expert who has given much time to the subject and has proven his theories by practical experience. We will also take up each handicraft in turn, making the articles definitely instructive, and handling each subject in detail with reference to the practicability of the craft for the purposes we have described.

**VALUE OF MANUAL LABOR TO SOCIETY**

"M**AN is made to work with his hands. This is a fact which cannot be got over. From this central fact he cannot travel far. I don’t care whether it is an individual or a class, the life which is far removed from this becomes corrupt, shriveled, and diseased. You may explain it how you like, but it is so. Administrative work has to be done in a nation as well as productive work; but it must be done by men accustomed to manual labor, who have the healthy decision and primitive authentic judgment which comes of that, else it cannot be done well. In the new form of society which is slowly advancing upon us, this will be felt more than now. The higher the position of trust a man occupies, the more will it be thought important that, at some period of his life, he should have been thoroughly inured to manual work; this not only on account of the physical and moral robustness implied by it, but equally because it will be seen to be impossible for anyone, without this experience of what is the very flesh and blood of national life, to promote the good health of the nation, or to understand the conditions under which the people live whom he has to serve."  

Edward Carpenter.