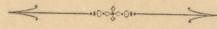
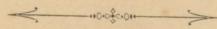


¶ BIRMINGHAM ▷
→ SOCIETY OF ARTS & SCHOOL OF DESIGN. ←



LABOUR AND PLEASURE,
VERSUS
LABOUR AND SORROW.



— AN —

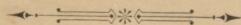
¶ ADDRESS ▷

BY

WILLIAM MORRIS, ESQ., M.A.,
PRESIDENT,

→ IN THE TOWN HALL, BIRMINGHAM, ←

¶ 19TH FEBRUARY, 1880. ▷



¶ BIRMINGHAM : ▷
→ CUND BROS. PRINTERS. LONDON WORKS. MOOR STREET. ←

LABOUR AND PLEASURE,

VERSUS

LABOUR AND SORROW.

*“And the men of labour spent their strength in daily
strugglings for breath to maintain the vital strength
they laboured with: so living in a daily circulation
of sorrow, living but to work, and working but to
live, as if daily bread were the only end of a
wearisome life, and a wearisome life the only
occasion of daily bread.”*

DANIEL DEFOE.

A D D R E S S.



STAND before you this evening weighted with a disadvantage that I did not feel last year ;—I have little fresh to tell you ; I can somewhat enlarge on what I said then ; here and there I may make bold to give you a practical suggestion, or I may put what I have to say in a way that will be clearer to some of you perhaps ; but my message is really the same as it was when I first had the pleasure of meeting you.

It is true that, if all were going smoothly with art, or at all events so smoothly that there were but a few mal-contents in the world, you might listen with some pleasure, and perhaps advantage to the talk of an old hand in the craft concerning ways of work, the snares that beset success, and the shortest road to it ; to a tale of workshop receipts and the like : that would be pleasant talk surely between friends and fellow workmen ; but it seems to me as if it were not for us as yet ; nay, maybe we may live long and find no time fit for such restful talk as the cheerful histories of the hopes and fears of our workshops : anyhow to-night I cannot do it, but must once again call the faithful of art to a battle wider and more distracting than that kindly struggle with nature, to which all true craftsmen are born ; which is both the building-up and the wearing-away of their lives.

As I look round on this assemblage, and think of all that it represents, I cannot choose but be moved to the soul by the troubles of the life of civilised man, and the hope that thrusts itself through them ; I cannot refrain from giving you once again the message with which, as it seems, some chance-hap has charged me : that message is, in short, to call on you to face the latest danger civilisation is threatened with, a danger of her own breeding : that men in struggling towards the complete attainment of all the luxuries of life for the strongest portion of their race should deprive their whole race of all the beauty of life : a danger that the strongest and wisest of mankind, in striving to attain to a complete mastery over nature should destroy her simplest and widest-spread gifts, and thereby enslave simple people to them, and themselves to themselves, and so at last drag the world into a second barbarism more ignoble, and a thousandfold more hopeless than the first.

Now of you who are listening to me, there are some, I feel sure, who have received this message, and taken it to heart, and are day by day fighting the battle that it calls on you to fight : to you I can say nothing but that if any word I speak discourage you, I shall heartily wish I had never spoken at all : but to be shown the enemy, and the castle we have got to storm, is not to be bidden to run from him ; nor am I telling you to sit down deedless in the desert because between you and the promised land lies many a trouble, and death itself maybe : the hope before you you know, and nothing that I can say can take it away from you : but friend may with advantage cry out to friend in the battle that a stroke is coming from this side or that : take my hasty words in that sense, I beg of you.

But I think there will be others of you in whom vague discontent is stirring : who are oppressed by the life that surrounds you, confused and troubled by that oppression, and not knowing on which side to seek a remedy though you are fain to do so : well, we, who have gone further into those troubles, believe that we can help you : true we cannot at once take your trouble from you ;

nay, we may at first rather add to it ; but we can tell you what we think of the way out of it ; and then amidst the many things you will have to do to set yourselves and others fairly on that way, you will many days, nay most days, forget your trouble in thinking of the good that lies beyond it, for which you are working.

But again there are others amongst you (and to speak plainly, I daresay they are the majority), who are not by any means troubled by doubt of the road the world is going, nor excited by any hope of its bettering that road : to them the cause of civilisation is simple and even common-place : wonder, hope and fear no longer hang about it ; it has become to us like the rising and setting of the sun, it cannot err, and we have no call to meddle with it, either to complain of its course, or to try to direct it.

There is a ground of reason and wisdom in that way of looking at the matter : surely the world will go on its ways, thrust forward by impulses which we cannot understand or sway : but as it grows in strength for the journey, its necessary food is the life and aspirations of *all* of us : and we discontented strugglers with what at times seems the hurrying blindness of civilisation, no less than those who see nothing but smooth unvarying progress in it, are bred of civilisation also, and shall be used up to further it in some way or other, I doubt not : and it may be of some service to those who think themselves the only loyal subjects of progress to hear of our existence, since their not hearing of it would not make an end of it : it may set them a thinking not unprofitably to hear of burdens that they do not help to bear, but which are nevertheless real and weighty enough to some of their fellow men, who are helping, even as they are, to form the civilisation that is to be.

The danger that the present course of civilisation will destroy the beauty of life—these are hard words, and I wish I could mend them, but I cannot while I speak what I believe to be the truth.

That the beauty of life is a thing of no moment, I suppose few people would venture to assert, and yet most civilised people act as if it were of none, and in so doing are wronging both

at first

themselves and those that are to come after them ; for that beauty, which is what is meant by *art*, using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, no mere accident to human life, which people can take or leave as they choose, but a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to ; that is, unless we are content to be less than men.

Now I ask you, as I have been asking myself this long while, what proportion of the population in civilised countries has any share at all in that necessity of life ?

I say that the answer which must be made to that question justifies my fear that modern civilisation is on the road to trample out all the beauty of life, and to make us less than men.

Now if there should be any here who will say ; it was always so ; there always was a mass of rough ignorance that knew and cared nothing about art ; I answer first, that if that be the case, then it was always wrong, and we, as soon as we have become conscious of that wrong, are bound to set it right if we can.

But moreover, strange to say, and in spite of all the suffering that the world has wantonly made for itself, and has in all ages so persistently clung to, as if it were a good and holy thing, this wrong of the mass of men being regardless of art was *not* always so.

So much is now known of the periods of art that have left abundant examples of their work behind them, that we can judge of the art of all periods by comparing these with the remains of times of which less has been left us ; and we cannot fail to come to the conclusion that down to very recent days everything that the hand of man touched was more or less beautiful : so that in those days all people who made anything shared in art, and all people who used the things so made : that is, *all* people shared in art.

But some people may say ; and was that to be wished for ; would not this universal spreading of art stop progress in other matters, hinder the work of the world ? Would it not make us unmanly ? or if not that, would it not be intrusive, and push out other things necessary also for men to study ?

*very close to
Ruth*

Well, I have claimed a necessary place for art, a natural place, and it would be in the very essence of it, that it would apply its own rules of order and fitness to the general ways of life: it seems to me, therefore, that people who are over-anxious of the outward expression of beauty becoming too great a force among the other forces of life, would, if they had had the making of the external world, have been afraid of making an ear of wheat beautiful, lest it should not have been good to eat.

But indeed there seems no chance of art becoming universal, unless on the terms that it shall have little self-consciousness, and for the most part be done with little effort; so that the rough work of the world would be as little hindered by it, as the work of external nature is by the beauty of all her forms and moods: this was the case in the times that I have been speaking of: of art which was made by conscious effort, by the individual striving towards perfect expression of their thoughts by men very specially gifted, there was perhaps no more than there is now, except in very wonderful and short periods; though I believe that even for such men the struggle to produce beauty was not so bitter as it now is. But if there were not more great thinkers than there are now, there was a countless multitude of happy workers whose work did express, and could not choose but express some original thought, and was consequently both interesting and beautiful: now there is certainly no chance of the more individual art becoming common, and either wearying us by its over abundance or, by noisy self-assertion, preventing highly cultivated men taking their due part in the other work of the world; it is too difficult to do: it will be always but the blossom of all the half-conscious work below it, the fulfilment of the shortcomings of less complete minds: but it will waste much of its power, and have much less influence on men's minds unless it be surrounded by abundance of that commoner work, in which all men once shared, and which, I say, will, when art has really awakened, be done so easily and constantly, that it will stand in no man's way to hinder him from doing what he will, good or

evil. And as on the one hand I believe that art made by the people and for the people as a joy both to the maker and the user would further progress in other matters rather than hinder it ; so also I firmly believe that that higher art produced only by great brains and miraculously gifted hands cannot exist without it : I believe that the present state of things in which it does exist, while popular art is, let us say, asleep or sick, is a transitional state, which must end at last either in utter defeat or utter victory for the arts.

For whereas all works of craftsmanship were once beautiful, unwittingly or not, they are now divided into two kinds, works of art and non-works of art : now nothing made by man's hand can be indifferent ; it must be either beautiful and elevating, or ugly and degrading ; and those things that are without art are so aggressively, they wound it by their existence, and they are now so much in the majority, that the works of art we are obliged to set ourselves to seek for, whereas the other things are the ordinary companions of our everyday life ; so that if those who cultivate art intellectually were inclined never so much to wrap themselves in their special gifts and their high cultivation, and so live happily, apart from other men, and despising them, they could not do so : they are as it were living in an enemy's country ; at every turn there is something lying in wait to offend and vex their nicer sense and educated eyes : they must share in the general discomfort,— and I am glad of it.

So the matter stands : from the first dawn of history till quite modern times, art, which nature meant to solace all, fulfilled its purpose ; all men shared in it : that was what made life romantic, as people call it, in those days ; that and not robber-barons and inaccessible kings with their hierarchy of serving-nobles and other such rubbish : but art grew and grew, saw empires sicken and sickenened with them ; grew hale again, and haler, and grew so great at last, that she seemed in good truth to have conquered everything, and laid the material world under foot. Then came a

change at a period of the greatest life and hope in many ways that Europe had known till then : a time of so much and varied hope that people call it the time of the New Birth : as far as the arts are concerned I deny it that title ; rather it seems to me that the great men who lived and glorified the practice of art in those days, were the fruit of the old, not the seed of the new order of things : but a stirring and hopeful time it was, and many things were newborn then which have since brought forth fruit enough : and it is strange and perplexing that, from that time forward the lapse of time, which, through plenteous confusion and failure, has on the whole been steadily destroying priviledge and exclusiveness in other matters, has delivered up art to be the exclusive priviledge of a few, and has taken from the people their birthright ; while both wronged and wrongers have been wholly unconscious of what they were doing.

Wholly unconscious—yes, but we are no longer so : there lies the sting of it, and there also the hope.

When the brightness of the so-called Renaissance faded, and it faded very suddenly, a deadly chill fell upon the arts : that New-birth mostly meant looking back to past times, wherein the men of those days thought they saw a perfection of art, which to their minds was different in kind, and not in degree only, from the ruder suggestive art of their own fathers : this perfection they were ambitious to imitate, this alone seemed to be art to them, the rest was childishness : so wonderful was their energy, their success so great, that no doubt to commonplace minds among them, though surely not to the great masters, that perfection seemed to be gained : and, perfection being gained, what are you to do ; you can go no further, you must aim at standing still—which you cannot do.

Art by no means stood still in those latter days of the Renaissance, but took the downward road with terrible swiftness, and tumbled down at the bottom of the hill, where as if bewitched it lay long in great content, believing itself to be the art of

Edward Morris

Michael Angelo, while it was the art of men whom nobody remembers but those who want to sell their pictures.

Thus it fared with the more individual forms of art: as to the art of the people, in countries and places where the greater art had flourished most, it went step by step on the downward path with that: in more out-of-the-way places, England for instance, it still felt the influence of the life of its earlier and happier days, and in a way lived on a while; but its life was so feeble, and, so to say, illogical, that it could not resist any change in external circumstances, still less could it give birth to anything new; and before this century began, its last flicker had died out. Still, while it was living, in whatever dotation, it did imply something going on in those matters of daily use that we have been thinking of, and doubtless satisfied some cravings for beauty: and when it was dead, for a long time people did not know it, or what had taken its place, crept so to say into its dead body—that pretence of art, to wit, which is done with machines, though sometimes the machines are called men, and doubtless are so out of working hours: nevertheless long before it was quite dead it had fallen so low that the whole subject was usually treated with the utmost contempt by everyone who had any pretence of being a sensible man, and in short the whole civilised world had forgotten that there had ever been an art made by the people for the people as a joy for the maker and the user.

But now it seems to me that the very suddenness of the change ought to comfort us, to make us look upon this break in the continuity of the golden chain as an accident only, that itself cannot last: for think, how many thousand years it may be since that primæval man graved with a flint splinter on a bone the story of the mammoth he had seen, or told us of the slow uplifting of the heavily-horned heads of the rein-deer that he stalked: think I say of the space of time from then till the dimming of the brightness of the Italian Renaissance! whereas from that time till popular art died unnoticed and despised among ourselves is just but 200 years.

*Decorative
Renaissance*

11

manifestation at the
beginning of arts
by five thousand writers and
in five months

Strange too, that very death is contemporaneous with new-birth of something at all events; for out of all despair sprang a new time of hope lighted by the torch of the French Revolution: and things that had languished with the languishing of art, rose afresh and surely heralded its new birth: in good earnest poetry was born again, and the English Language which under the hands of sycophantic verse-makers had been reduced to a miserable jargon, whose meaning if it have a meaning, cannot be made out without translation, flowed clear, pure, and simple, along with the music of Blake and Coleridge: take those names, the earliest in date among ourselves, as a type of the change that has happened in literature since the time of George II.

With that literature in which romance, that is to say humanity, was re-born, there sprang up also a feeling for the romance of external nature, which is surely strong in us now, joined with a longing to know something real of the lives of those who have gone before us; of these feelings united you will find the broadest expression in the pages of Walter Scott: it is curious as showing how sometimes one art will lag behind another in a revival, that the man who wrote the exquisite and wholly unfettered naturalism of the Heart of Midlothian, for instance, thought himself continually bound to seem to feel ashamed of, and to excuse himself for his love of Gothic Architecture: he felt that it was romantic and he knew that it gave him pleasure, but somehow he had not found out that it was art, having been taught in many ways that nothing could be art that was not done by a named man under academical rules.

I need not perhaps dwell much on what of change has been since: you know well that one of the master-arts, the art of painting has been revolutionised. I have a genuine difficulty in speaking to you of men who are my own personal friends, nay my masters: still since I cannot quite say nothing of them I must say the plain truth, which is this; never in the whole history of art did

poor But Raphaelite, buck
C. M. with

any set of men come nearer to the feat of making something out of nothing than that little knot of painters who raised English art from what it was, when as a boy I used to go to the Royal Academy Exhibition, to what it is now.

It would be ungracious indeed for me who have been so much taught by him, that I cannot help feeling continually as I speak that I am echoing his words, to leave out the name of John Ruskin from an account of what has happened since the tide, as we hope, began to turn in the direction of art. True it is, that his unequalled style of English and his wonderful eloquence would, whatever its subject-matter, have gained him some sort of a hearing in a time that has not lost its relish for literature; but surely the influence that he has exercised over cultivated people must be the result of that style and that eloquence expressing what was already stirring in men's minds; he could not have written what he has done unless people were in some sort ready for it; any more than those painters could have begun their crusade against the dulness and incompetency that was the rule in their art thirty years ago, unless they had some hope that they would one day move people to understand them.

Well, we find that the gains since the turning-point of the tide are these: that there are some few artists who have, as it were, caught up the golden chain dropped two hundred years ago, and that there are a few highly cultivated people who can understand them; and that beyond these there is a vague feeling abroad among people of the same degree, of discontent at the ignoble ugliness that surrounds them.

That seems to me to mark the advance that we have made since the last of popular art came to an end amongst us, and I do not say, considering where we then were, that it is not a great advance, for it comes to this, that though the battle is still to win, there are those who are ready for the battle.

Indeed it would be a strange shame for this age if it were not so: for as every age of the world has its own troubles to confuse

it and its own follies to cumber it, so has each its own work to do, pointed out to it by unfailing signs of the times ; and it is unmanly and stupid for the children of any age to say : we will not set our hands to the work ; we did not make the troubles, we will not weary ourselves seeking a remedy for them : so heaping up for their sons a heavier load than they can lift without such struggles as will wound and cripple them sorely. Not thus our fathers served us, who, working late and early, left us at last that seething mass of people so terribly alive and energetic, that we call modern Europe ; not thus those served us, who have made for us these present days, so fruitful of change and wondering expectation.

The century that is now drawing to an end, if people were to take to nick-naming centuries, would be called the Century of Commerce ; and I do not think I undervalue the work that it has done : it has broken down many a prejudice and taught many a lesson that the world has been hitherto slow to learn : it has made it possible for many a man to live free, who would in other times have been a slave, body or soul, or both : if it has not quite spread peace and justice through the world, as at the end of its first half we fondly hoped it would, it has at least stirred up in many fresh cravings for peace and justice : its work has been good and plenteous, but much of it was roughly done, as needs was ; recklessness has commonly gone with its energy, blindness too often with its haste : so that perhaps it may be work enough for the next century to repair the blunders of that recklessness, to clear away the rubbish which that hurried work has piled up : nay even we in the second half of its last quarter may do something towards setting its house in order.

You, of this great and famous town, for instance, which has had so much to do with the Century of Commerce : your gains are obvious to all men, but the price you have paid for them is obvious to many—surely to yourselves most of all : I do not say that they are not worth the price ; I know that England and the world could very ill afford to exchange the Birmingham of to-day for the

Birmingham of the year 1,700: but surely if what you have gained be more than a mockery, you cannot stop at those gains, or even go on always piling up similar ones. Nothing can make me believe that the present condition of your Black Country yonder is an unchangeable necessity of your life and position: such miseries as this were begun and carried on in pure thoughtlessness, and a hundredth part of the energy that was spent in creating them would get rid of them: I do think if we were not all of us too prone to acquiesce in the base byword 'after me the deluge,' it would soon be something more than an idle dream to hope that your pleasant midland hills and fields might begin to become pleasant again in some way or other, even without depopulating them; or that those once lovely valleys of Yorkshire in the 'heavy woollen district,' with their sweeping hill-sides and noble rivers should not need the stroke of ruin to make them once more delightful abodes of man, instead of the dog-holes that the Century of Commerce has made them.

Well, people will not take the trouble or spend the money necessary to beginning these sort of reforms, because they do not feel the evils they live amongst, because they have degraded themselves into something less than men; they are unmanly because they have ceased to have their due share of art.

For again I say that herein rich people have defrauded themselves as well as the poor: you will see a refined and highly educated man now-a-days, who has been to Italy and Egypt, and where not, who can talk learnedly enough, (and fantastically enough sometimes) about art, and who has at his fingers' ends abundant lore concerning the art and literature of past days, sitting down without signs of discomfort in a house, that with all its surroundings is just brutally vulgar and hideous: all his education has not done more for him than that.

The truth is, that in art, and in other things besides, the laboured education of a few will not raise even those few above the reach of the evils that beset the ignorance of the great mass

of the population : the brutality, of which such a huge stock has been accumulated lower down, will often show without much peeling through the selfish refinement of those who have let it accumulate. The lack of art, or rather the murder of art that curses our streets from the sordidness of the surroundings of the lower classes, has its exact counterpart in the dulness and vulgarity of those of the middle classes, and the double-distilled dulness and scarcely less vulgarity of those of the upper classes.

I say this is as it should be ; it is just and fair as far as it goes ; and moreover the rich with their leisure are the more like to move if they feel the pinch themselves.

But how shall they and we, and all of us move ? What is the remedy ?

What remedy can there be for the blunders of civilisation but further civilisation ? You do not by any accident think that we have gone as far in that direction as it is possible to go, do you ?—even in England I mean ?

When some changes have come to pass, that perhaps will be speedier than most people think, doubtless education will both grow in quality and in quantity ; so that it may be, that as the nineteenth century is to be called the Century of Commerce, the twentieth may be called the Century of Education. But that education does not end when people leave school is now a mere commonplace ; and how then can you really educate men who lead the life of machines, who only think for the few hours during which they are not at work, who in short spend almost their whole lives in doing work which is not proper for developing them body and mind in some worthy way ? You cannot educate, you cannot civilise men, unless you can give them a share in art.

Yes, and it is hard indeed as things go to give most men that share ; for they do not miss it, or ask for it, and it is impossible as things are that they should either miss, or ask for it. Nevertheless everything has a beginning, and many great things have had very small ones ; and since, as I have said, these ideas are already abroad

in more than one form, we must not be too much discouraged at the seemingly boundless weight we have to lift.

After all, we are only bound to play our own parts, and do our own share of the lifting ; and as in no case that share can be great, so also in all cases it is called for, it is necessary. Therefore let us work and faint not ; remembering that though it be natural, and therefore excusable, amidst doubtful times to feel doubts of success oppress us at whiles, yet not to crush those doubts, and work as if we had them not, is simple cowardice, which is unforgivable. No man has any right to say that all has been done for nothing, that all the faithful unwearying strife of those that have gone before us shall lead us nowhither ; that mankind will but go round and round in a circle for ever : no man has a right to say that, and then get up morning after morning to eat his victuals and sleep a-nights, all the while making other people toil to keep his worthless life a-going.

Be sure that some way or other will be found out of the tangle, even when things seem most tangled, and be no less sure that some use will then have come of our work, if it has been faithful, and therefore unsparingly careful and thoughtful.

So once more I say, if in any matters civilisation has gone astray, the remedy, lies not in standing still, but in more complete civilisation.

Now whatever discussion there may be about that often used, and often misused word, I believe all who hear me will agree with me in believing from their hearts, and not merely in saying in conventional phrase, that the civilisation which does not carry the whole people with it, is doomed to fall, and give place to one which at least aims at doing so.

We talk of the civilisation of the ancient peoples, of the classical times : well, civilised they were no doubt, some of their folk at least : an Athenian citizen for instance led a simple, dignified, almost perfect life ; but there were draw-backs to happiness perhaps in the life of his Slaves : and the civilisation of the ancients was founded on Slavery.

Indeed that ancient society did give a model to the world, and showed us for ever what blessings are freedom of life and thought, self-restraint and a generous education : all those blessings the ancient free peoples set forth to the world—and kept them to themselves.

Therefore no tyrant was too base, no pretext too hollow for enslaving the grandsons of the men of Salamis and Thermopylae : therefore did the descendants of those stern and self-restrained Romans, who were ready to give up everything, and life as the least of things, to the glory of their commonweal, produce monsters of licence and reckless folly. Therefore did a little knot of Gallilean peasants overthrow the Roman Empire.

Ancient civilisation was chained to slavery and exclusiveness, and it fell ; the barbarism that took its place has delivered us from slavery and grown into modern civilisation ; and that in its turn has before it the choice of never-ceasing growth, or destruction by that which has in it the seeds of higher growth.

There is an ugly word for a dreadful fact, which I must make bold to use—the residuum : the first time I noticed the word much it was used by a great man, whose name I must not mention here, I suppose ; nor do I wish to shelter myself behind his name : but ever since his fearless eloquence called my attention to it, that word has had a terrible significance to me, and I have felt from my heart that if this residuum were a necessary part of modern civilisation, as some people openly, and many more tacitly assume that it is, then this civilisation carries with it the poison that shall one day destroy it, even as its elder sister did : if civilisation is to go no further than this, it had better not have gone so far : if it does not aim at getting rid of this misery and giving some share in the happiness and dignity of life to *all* the people that it has created, and which it spends such unwearying energy in creating, it is simply an organized injustice, a mere instrument for oppression, so much the worse than that which has

gone before it, as its pretensions are higher, its slavery subtler, its mastery harder to overthrow, because supported by such a dense mass of commonplace well-being and comfort.

Surely this cannot be: surely there is a distinct feeling abroad of this injustice: so that if the residuum still clogs all the efforts of modern civilisation to rise above mere population-breeding and money-making, the difficulty of dealing with it is the legacy, first of the ages of violence and almost conscious brutal injustice, and next of the ages of thoughtlessness, of hurry and blindness: surely all those who think at all of the future of the world are at work in one way or other in striving to rid it of this shame.

That to my mind is the meaning of what we call National Education, which we have begun, and which is doubtless already bearing its fruits, and will bear greater, when all people are educated, not according to the money which they or their parents possess, but according to the capacity of their minds.

What effect that will have upon the future of the arts, I cannot say, but one would surely think a very great effect; for it will enable people to see clearly many things which are now as completely hidden from them as if they were blind in body and idiotic in mind: and this, I say, will act not only upon those who most directly feel the evils of ignorance, but also upon those who feel them indirectly,—upon us, the educated: the great wave of rising intelligence, rise with so many natural desires and aspirations, will carry all classes along with it, and force us all to see that many things which we have been used to look upon as necessary and eternal evils are merely the accidental and temporary growths of past stupidity, and can be escaped from by due effort, and the exercise of courage, goodwill, and forethought.

And among those evils, I do, and must always, believe will fall that one which last year I told you that I accounted the greatest of all evils, the heaviest of all slaveries; that evil of the greater part of the population being engaged for by

far the most part of their lives in work, which at the best cannot interest them, or develope their best faculties, and at the worst (and that is the commonest, too), is mere unmitigated slavish toil, only to be wrung out of them by the sternest compulsion, a toil which they shirk all they can—small blame to them. And this toil degrades them into less than men ; and they will some day come to know it, and cry out to be made men again, and art only can do it, and redeem them from this slavery ; and I say once more that this is her highest and most glorious end and aim ; and it is in her struggle to attain to it that she will most surely purify herself, and quicken her own aspirations towards perfection.

But we—in the meantime we must not sit waiting for obvious signs of these later and glorious days to show themselves on earth, and in the heavens, but rather turn to at the commonplace, and maybe often dull work of fitting ourselves in detail to take part in them if we should live to see one of them ; or in doing our best to make the path smooth for their coming, if we are to die before they are here.

What, therefore, can we do, to guard traditions of time past that we may not one day have to begin anew from the beginning with none to teach us ? What are we to do, that we may take heed to, and spread the decencies of life, so that at the least we may have a field where it will be possible for art to grow when men begin to long for it : what finally can we do, each of us, to cherish some germ of art, so that it may meet with others, and spread and grow little by little into the thing that we need ?

Now I cannot pretend to think that the first of these duties is a matter of indifference to you, after my experience of the enthusiastic meeting that I had the honour of addressing here last autumn on the subject of the (so-called) restoration of St. Mark's at Venice ; you thought, and most justly thought, is seems to me that the subject was of such moment to art in general, that it was a simple and obvious thing for men who were anxious on

the matter to address themselves to those who had the decision of it in their hands ; even though the former were called Englishmen, and the latter Italians ; for you felt that the name of lovers of art would cover those differences : if you had any misgivings, you remembered that there was but one such building in the world, and that it was worth while risking a breach of etiquette, if any words of ours could do anything towards saving it : well, the Italians were, some of them, very naturally, though surely unreasonably, irritated, for a time, and in some of their prints they bade us, look at home ! that was no argument in favour of the wisdom of wantonly rebuilding St. Mark's façade : but certainly those of us who have not yet looked at home in this matter had better do so speedily, late and over late though it be : for though we have no golden pictured interiors like St. Mark's Church at home, we still have many buildings which are both works of ancient art and monuments of history : and just think what is happening to them, and note, since we profess to recognize their value, how helpless art is in the Century of Commerce !

In the first place many and many a beautiful and ancient building is being destroyed all over civilised Europe as well as in England because it is supposed to interfere with the convenience of the citizens, while a little forethought might save it without trenching on that convenience ; but even apart from that, I say that if we are not prepared to put up with a little inconvenience in our life-times for the sake of preserving a monument of art which will elevate and educate, not only ourselves, but our sons, and our sons' sons, it is vain and idle of us to talk about art—or education either. Brutality must be bred of such brutality.

The same thing may be said about enlarging or otherwise altering for convenience sake old buildings still in use for something like their original purposes : in almost all such cases it is really nothing more than a question of a little money for a new site ; and then a new building can be built exactly fitted for the uses it is needed for, with such art about it as our own days can

*progress of building
at
Woolfelin?*

furnish ; while the old monument is left to tell its tale of change and progress, to hold out example and warning to us in the practice of the arts : and thus the convenience of the public, the progress of modern art and the cause of education are all furthered at once at the cost of a little money.

Surely if it be worth while troubling ourselves about the works of art of to-day, of which any amount almost can be done, since we are yet alive, it is worth while spending a little care, fore-thought, and money in preserving the art of by-gone ages, of which (woe worth the while !) so little is left, and of which we can never have any more, whatever good-hap the world may attain to.

No man who consents to the destruction or the mutilation of an ancient building has any right to pretend that he cares about art ; or has any excuse to plead in defence of his crime against civilisation and progress, save sheer brutal ignorance.

But before I leave this subject I must say a word or two about the curious invention of our own days called Restoration, a method of dealing with works of by-gone days which though not so degrading in its spirit as downright destruction, is nevertheless little better in its results on the condition of those works of art : it is obvious that I have no time to argue the question out to-night, so I will only say this :

That ancient buildings being both works of art and monuments of history must obviously be treated with great care and delicacy : that the imitative art of to-day is not, and cannot be the same thing as ancient art, and cannot replace it ; and therefore if we super-impose this work on the old, we destroy it both as art and as a record of history ; lastly that the natural weathering of the surface of a building is beautiful, and its loss disastrous.

Now the restorers hold the exact contrary of all this : they think that any clever architect to-day can deal off-hand successfully with the ancient work ; that while all things else have changed about us since (say) the thirteenth century, art has not changed, and that our workmen can turn out work identical with that of

the thirteenth century : and lastly that the weather-beaten surface of an ancient building is worthless, and to be got rid of wherever possible.

You see the question is difficult to argue, because there seems to be no common grounds between the restorers and the anti-restorers : I appeal therefore to the public, and bid them note, that though our opinions may be wrong, the action we advise is not rash : let the question be shelved awhile : if, as we are always pressing on people, due care be taken of these monuments, so that they shall not fall into disrepair, they will be always there to ‘restore’ whenever people think proper : I say let the question be shelved, till art has so advanced among us, that we can deal authoritatively with it, till there is no longer any doubt about the matter.

Surely these monuments of our art and history, which, whatever the lawyers may say, belong not to a coterie, or to a rich man here and there, but to the nation at large, are worth this delay : surely the last relics of the life of the ‘famous men and our fathers that begat us’ may justly claim of us the exercise of a little patience.

It will give us trouble no doubt, all this care of our possessions : but there is more trouble to come ; for I must now speak of something else, of possessions which should be common to all of us, of the green grass, and the leaves, and the waters, of the very light and air of heaven, which the Century of Commerce has been too busy to pay any heed to. And first let me remind you that I am supposing everyone here present professes to care about art.

Well, there are some rich men among us whom we oddly enough call manufacturers, by which we mean capitalists who pay other men to organize manufacturers ; these gentlemen, many of whom buy pictures and profess to care about art, burn a deal of coal ; there is an act in existence which was passed to prevent them sometimes and in some places from pouring a dense cloud of smoke

over the world, and, to my thinking, a very lame and partial act it is: but nothing hinders these lovers of art from being a law to themselves, and making it a point of honour with them to minimize the smoke nuisance as far as their own works are concerned, and if they don't do so, when mere money, and even a very little of that, is what it will cost them, I say that their love of art is a mere pretence: how can you care about the image of a landscape when you show by your deeds that you don't care for the landscape itself? or what right have you to shut yourself up with beautiful form and colour when you make it impossible for other people to have any share in these things?

Well, and as to the smoke act itself: I don't know what heed you pay to it in Birmingham,* but I have seen myself what heed is paid to it in other places: Bradford for instance: though close by them at Saltaire they have an example which I should have thought might have shamed them; for the huge chimney there which serves the acres of weaving and spinning sheds of Sir Titus Salt and his brothers is as guiltless of smoke as an ordinary kitchen chimney. Or Manchester: a gentleman of that city told me that the smoke-act was a mere dead letter there: well, they buy pictures in Manchester and profess to wish to further the arts; but you see it must be idle pretence as far as their rich men are concerned: they only want to talk about it, and have themselves talked of.

I don't know what you are doing about this matter here: but you must forgive my saying, that unless you are beginning to think of some way of dealing with it, you are not beginning yet to pave your way to success in the arts.

Well, I have spoken of a huge nuisance, which is a type of the worst nuisances of what an ill-tempered man might be excused for calling the Century of Nuisances, rather than the Century of Commerce. I will now leave it to the consciences of the rich and

*Since perhaps some people may read these words who are not of Birmingham, I ought to say that it was authoritatively explained at the meeting to which I addressed these words, that in Birmingham the law is strictly enforced.

*C.
Dwight*

influential among us, and speak of a minor nuisance which it is in the power of every one of us to abate, and which, small as it is, is so vexatious, that if I can prevail on a score of you to take heed to it by what I am saying, I shall think my evening's work a good one. Sandwich-papers I mean—of course you laugh; but come now, don't you, civilised as you are in Birmingham, leave them all about the Lickey hills and your public gardens and the like? If you don't, I really scarcely know with what words to praise you. When we Londoners go to enjoy ourselves at Hampton Court, for instance, we take special care to let everybody know that we have had something to eat; so that the park just outside the gates, (and a beautiful place it is,) looks as if it had been snowing dirty paper. I really think you might promise me one and all who are here present to have done with this sluttish habit, which is the type of many another in its way, just as the smoke-nuisance is. I mean such things as scrawling one's name on monuments, tearing down tree boughs and the like.

I suppose 'tis early days in the revival of the arts to express one's disgust at the daily increasing hideousness of the posters with which all our towns are daubed. Still we ought to be disgusted at such horrors, and I think make up our minds never to buy any of the articles so advertised. I can't believe they can be worth much if they need all that shouting to sell them.

Again, I must ask what do you do with the trees on a site that is going to be built over? do you try to save them, to adapt your houses at all to them? do you understand what treasures they are in a town or a suburb? or what a relief they will be to the hideous dog-holes which (forgive me!) you are probably going to build in their places? I ask this anxiously, and with grief in my soul, for in London and its suburbs we always begin by clearing a site till it is as bare as the pavement: I really think that almost anybody would have been shocked, if I could have shown him some of the trees that have been wantonly murdered in the suburb in which I live (Hammersmith to wit) amongst them some of those magnificent

cedars, for which we along the river used to be famous once.

But here again see how helpless those are who care about art or nature amidst the hurry of the Century of Commerce.

Pray do not forget, that anyone who cuts down a tree wantonly or carelessly, especially in a great town or its suburbs, need make no pretence of caring about art.

What else can we do to help to educate ourselves and others in the path of art, to be on the road to attaining an *Art made by the people and for the people as a joy to the maker and the user?*

Why, having got to understand something of what art was, having got to look upon its ancient monuments as friends that can tell us something of times bygone, and whose faces we do not wish to alter, even though they be worn by time and grief: having got to spend money and trouble upon matters of decency, great and little; having made it clear that we really do care about nature even in the suburbs of a big town—having got so far, we shall begin to think of the houses in which we live.

For I must tell you that unless you are resolved to have good and rational architecture, it is, once again, useless your thinking about art at all.

I have spoken of the popular arts, but they might all be summed up in that one word Architecture; they are all parts of that great whole: if we did not know how to dye or to weave; if we had neither gold, or silver, or silk, and no pigments to paint with, but half a dozen ochres and umbers, we might yet frame a worthy art that would lead to everything, if we had but timber, stone, and lime, and a few cutting tools to make these common things not only shelter us from wind and weather, but also express the thoughts and aspirations that stir in us.

Architecture would lead us to all the arts, as it did with earlier men: but if we despise it and take no note of how we are housed, the other arts will have a hard time of it indeed.

Now I do not think the greatest of optimists would deny that, taking us one and all, we are at present housed in a perfectly

shameful way, and since the greatest part of us have to live in houses already built for us, it must be admitted that it is rather hard to know what to do, beyond waiting till they tumble about our ears.

Only we must not lay the fault upon the builders as some people seem inclined to do: they are our very humble servants, and will build what we ask for: remember, that rich men are not obliged to live in ugly houses, and yet you see they do; which the builders may be well excused for taking as a sign of what is wanted.

Well, the point is we must do what we can, and make people understand what we want them to do for us, by letting them see what we do for ourselves.

Hitherto, judging us by that standard, the builders may well say, that we want the pretence of a thing rather than the thing itself; that we want a show of petty luxury if we are unrich, a show of insulting stupidity if we are rich: and they are quite clear that as a rule we want to get something that shall look as if it cost twice as much as it really did.

You cannot have Architecture on those terms: simplicity and solidity are the very first requisites of it: just think if it is not so: How we please ourselves with an old building by thinking of all the generations of men that have passed through it! do we not remember how it has received their joy, and borne their sorrow, and not even their folly has left sourness upon it? it still looks as kind to us, as it did to them. And the converse of this we ought to feel when we look at a newly-built house if it were as it should be: we should feel a pleasure in thinking how he who had built it had left a piece of his soul behind him to greet the new-comers one after another long and long after he was gone:—but what sentiment can an ordinary modern house move in us, or what thought—save a hope that we may speedily forget its base ugliness?

But if you ask me how we are to pay for this solidity and extra expense, that seems to me a reasonable question; for you must

dismiss at once as a delusion the hope that has been sometimes cherished, that you can have a building which is a work of art, and is, therefore, above all things properly built, at the same price as a building which only pretends to be this: never forget when people talk about cheap art in general, by the way, that all art costs time, trouble and thought, and that money is only a counter to represent these things.

However I must try to answer the question I have supposed put, how are we to pay for decent houses?

It seems to me that by a great piece of good luck the way to pay for them, is by doing that which alone can produce popular art among us: living a simple life I mean. Once more I say that the greatest foe to art is luxury, art cannot live in its atmosphere.

When you hear of the luxuries of the ancients, you must remember that they were not like our luxuries, they were rather indulgence in pieces of extravagant folly than what we to-day call luxury; which perhaps you would rather call comfort: well, I accept the word, and say that a Greek or Roman of the luxurious time would stare astonished could he be brought back again and shown the comforts of a well-to-do middle-class house.

But some, I know, think that the attainment of these very comforts is what makes the difference between civilisation and uncivilisation, that they are the essence of civilisation. Is it so indeed? Farewell my hope then:—I had thought that civilisation meant the attainment of peace and order, of good-will between man and man, of the love of truth, and the hatred of injustice, and by consequence the attainment of the good life that these things breed, a life free from craven fear, but full of incident: that was what I thought it meant, not more stuffed chairs and more cushions, and more carpets and gas, and more dainty meat and drink—and therewithal more and sharper differences between class and class.

If that be what it is, I wish I were well out of it, and living in a tent in the Persian desert, or a turf hut on the Iceland hill-side.

But however it be, and I think my view is the true view, I tell you that art abhors that side of civilisation, she cannot breathe in the houses that lie under its slavery.

Believe me if we want art to begin at home, as it must, we must clear our houses of troublesome superfluities that are for ever in our way ; conventional comforts that are no real comforts, and do but make work for servants and doctors : if you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it :

'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.'

And if we apply that rule strictly, we shall in the first place show the builders and such-like servants of the public what we really want, we shall create a demand for real art, as the phrase goes ; and in the second place, we shall surely have more money to pay for decent houses.

Perhaps it will not try your patience too much if I lay before you my idea of the fittings necessary to the sitting-room of a healthy person : a room, I mean, in which he would not have to cook in much, or sleep in generally, or do any very litter-making manual work. First a book-case with a great many books in it: next a table that will keep steady when you write or work at it: then several chairs that you can move, and a bench that you can sit or lie upon : next a cupboard with drawers : next, unless either the book-case or the cupboard be very beautiful with painting or carving, you will want pictures or engravings, such as you can afford, only not stopgaps, but real works of art, on the wall ; or else the wall itself must be ornamented with some beautiful and restful pattern : we shall also want a vase or two to put flowers in, which latter you must have sometimes, especially if you live in a town. Then there will be the fire-place of course, which in our climate is bound to be the chief object in the room.

That is all we shall want, especially if the floor be good ; if it be not, as, by the way, in a modern house it is pretty certain not to be, I admit that a small carpet which can be bundled out of the

room in two minutes will be useful, and we must also take care that it is beautiful, or it will annoy us terribly.

Now unless we are musical, and need a piano, in which case, as far as beauty is concerned, we are in a bad way, that is quite all we want: and we can add very little to these necessaries without troubling ourselves, and hindering our work, our thought, and our rest.

At the least these things ought not to cost much; and they are so few, that those that could afford to have them at all, could afford to spend some trouble to get them fitting and beautiful: and all those who care about art ought to take great trouble to do so, and to take care that there be no sham art amongst them, nothing that it has degraded a man to make or sell. And I feel sure, that if all who care about art were to take this pains, it would make a great impression upon the public.

This simplicity you may make as costly as you please or can, on the other hand: you may hang your walls with tapestry instead of whitewash or paper; or you may cover them with mosaic, or have them frescoed by a great painter: all this is not luxury, if it be done for beauty's sake, and not for show: it does not break our golden rule: have nothing in your houses which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.

All art starts from this simplicity; and the higher the art rises, the greater the simplicity. I have been speaking of the fittings of a dwelling-house; a place in which we eat and drink, and pass familiar hours; but when you come to places which people want to make more specially beautiful because of the solemnity or dignity of their uses, they will be simpler still, and have little in them save the bare walls made as beautiful as may be. St. Mark's at Venice has very little furniture in it, much less than most Roman Catholic churches: its lovely and stately mother St. Sophia of Constantinople had less still, even when it was a Christian Church: but we need not go either to Venice or Stamboul to take note of that: go into one of our own mighty Gothic naves (do any of you

remember the first time you did so?) and note how the huge free space satisfies and elevates you, even now when window and wall are stripped of ornament : then think of the meaning of simplicity, and absence of encumbering gew-gaws.

Now after all, for us who are learning art, it is not far to seek what is the surest way to further it : that which most breeds art is art : every piece of work that we do which is well done, is so much help to the cause ; every piece of pretence and half-heartedness is so much hurt to it : most of you who take to the practice of art can find out in no very long time whether you have any gifts for it or not : if you have not, throw the thing up, or you will have a wretched time of it yourself, and will be damaging the cause by laborious pretence : but if you have gifts of any kind you are happy indeed beyond most men ; for your pleasure is always with you, nor can you be intemperate in the enjoyment of it, and as you use it, it does not lessen, but grows : if you are by chance weary of it at night, you get up in the morning eager for it ; or if perhaps in the morning it seem folly to you for a while, yet presently, when your hand has been moving a little in its wonted way, fresh hope has sprung up beneath it and you are happy again. While others are getting through the day like plants thrust into the earth, which cannot turn this way or that but as the wind blows them, you know what you want, and your will is on the alert to find it, and you, whatever happens, whether it be joy or grief, are at least alive.

Now when I spoke to you last year, after I had sat down I was half afraid that I had on some points said too much, that I had spoken too bitterly in my eagerness ; that a rash word might have discouraged some of you : I was very far from meaning that : what I wanted to do, what I want to do to-night is to put definitely before you a cause for which to strive.

That cause is the Democracy of Art, the ennobling of daily and common work, which will one day put hope and pleasure in the place of fear and pain, as the forces which move men to labour and keep the world a-going.

If I have enlisted anyone in that cause, rash as my words may have been, or feeble as they may have been, they have done more good than harm ; nor do I believe that any words of mine can discourage any who have joined that cause or are ready to do so : their way is too clear before them for that, and everyone of us can help the cause whether he be great or little.

I know indeed that men, wearied by the pettiness of the details of the strife, their patience tried by hope deferred, will at whiles, excusably enough, turn back in their hearts to other days, when, if the issues were not clearer, the means of trying them were simpler ; when, so stirring were the times, one might even have atoned for many a blunder and backsliding by visibly dying for the cause : to have breasted the Spanish pikes at Leyden, to have drawn sword with Oliver : that may well seem to us at times amidst the tangles of to-day a happy fate : for a man to be able to say, I have lived like a fool, but now I will cast away fooling for an hour, and die like a man—there is something in that certainly : and yet 'tis clear that few men can be so lucky as to die for a cause, without having first of all lived for it. And as this is the most that can be asked from the greatest man that follows a cause, so it is the least that can be taken from the smallest.

So to us who have a Cause at heart, our highest ambition and our simplest duty are one and the same thing : for the most part we shall be too busy doing the work that lies ready to our hands, to let impatience for visibly great progress vex us much ; but surely since we are servants of a Cause, hope must be ever with us, and sometimes perhaps it will so quicken our vision that it will out-run the slow lapse of time, and show us the victorious days when millions of those who now sit in darkness will be enlightened by an *Art made by the people and for the people, a joy to the maker and the user.*

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