ARTIST AND ARTISAN.

As a Workman Sees it.

To be a labourer, and to earn by dint of bodily or mental exertion that subsistence which predominating capitalism at present condemns the worker to receive, is considered by our nosubiish plutocratic society of to-day to be something very contemptible and vulgar. But, on the other hand, the man who is an artist—that is to say, the man who obtains very often a very comfortable living by stint of hand and gruel of conception, is looked upon by the illiterati of society as an extraordinary being, and received everywhere with adulation and respect. This opinion unfortunately is shared by many working men. They look upon the artist—something more than the veneration due to them as individuals—is due to them as individuals and certainly does dwell towards making life more beautiful and happy. In short, while the artist is despised as an unthinking drudge—as one of the common tolling men,—he is looked upon, as a matter of course, with a certain respect. Let us devote a short time in endeavouring to discover who is the most necessary, the most useful and essential to the well-being of society. We will assume to elucidate this point, a man placed upon an uninhabited island, totally devoid of both the necessities of life. Suppose such a man approached by a person who offers upon the one hand a number of priceless artistic treasures: statues by Canova, Michael Angelo; paintings by Ruben, Holbein, and Vandyck; or poems by Byron and Shelley, and on the other hand offers a loaf of bread, a homely garment, a spade, etc., some of the simple products of the toil of the ordinary artisan, and see which he will choose. A man at once and automatically turn to the latter. Why so? Because they are the primary necessities of existence, and without them he cannot live. It will at once be seen, therefore, that the art, the art of the community in which he dwells, inasmuch as he provides the necessities of life; whereas the artist is simply of secondary importance, he simply producing articles of luxury. Without labour men could not live. Without art life could be possible, although I confess that life without any of that pleasure and delight which is caused by artistic effort would be very unpleasant, and in fact almost unbearable. The artisan makes life possible; the artist makes life beautiful. Let us return to our ground upon which the artisan should be regarded with the same amount of honour as the artist; for while the artisan makes things, the artist beautifies them. Both as a rule, really useful to society, both should be socially equal. Until this conclusion is arrived at, and as long as men will despise the labourer and the products of his labour, meanwhile worshipping the artist and art, the achievement of a state of social equality—that great object of Socialists is endeavouring to obtain remains unaccomplished.

Jim Allman.

As an Artist Sees It.

I have nothing to object to in our comrades' remarks, but a word or two may be pardoned in explanation of the fact that an artist is looked upon as a gentleman (a sort of one), and sometimes receives a certain portion of the respect accorded to that class, which, however, is out so much more liberally to the mere money-maker in other trades; to the landowner, manufacturer, contractor, stockjobber, or what not; in short, it is dealt out to members of the proprietor class exactly in proportion to the obviousness of their living by outraign wealth, a worse if it is not creating it. In other words the less pretence they make to be more than mere thieves, the more they are honoured. Without labour men could not live. If artists are to receive any of the art, which has been inspired by the most noble and generous instincts that exist, let it be paid out to the common man; let it be distributed to the public at all, do as hangmen or share in the plunder won by the class to which which, if our workmen knew it, they are admitted somewhat grudgingly. Now, it must be admitted by all, that the point of the so-called conventional flattery of the intellect, which is conventionally sup- posed to be a separate and specially worshipful quality, to be the main- spring of the artist's capacity, is both stupid and hateful. But, like all the rest of our capitalistic systems, it is founded on false principles; it is a birth of the individualistic commercial system which we are at work combating to-day, with good hope of seeing it disappear. It is that system which has produced the old craftsman, the two, artist and artisan. For, before the rise of capitalism in the eighteenth century, the artisan did not differ in kind from the artist; all craftsmen who made anything were artists of some kind, they only differed in degree, and only a few of those who had very special gifts of hand and brain have so much as left their names behind them. No one knows, e.g., the name of the man who designed Westminster Abbey, although it rose up amongst the King's Court, and doubtless was talked about enough in its time; and even Cuypers or Voss or blacksmith was doing his share of work towards the pleasure our commonplace feels is necessary to the life of man, and never dreaming of receiving any reward for his labours, no more have the artist, without doubtless he received the unconventional and genuine praise and thanks of his neighbours for it, just as he gave it to his neighbour craftsman. With the growth of the historic sense which is a gain of knowledge, and consequently with the growth of the institutions which we have now learned, we have come to a conscious knowledge that the intellect of man works co-operatively and collectively; but along with the growth of the individual, of the personality, of the form of this fact, they were happier than we are in this respect, that they preserved that co-operation in their production of beauty; whereas we, as long as we are under the domination of the profit-grinders, cannot do so; and the result has been that I have so often spoken of, that art is a skinny drowry skeleton amidst the stir and enormous riches of modern civilization; and that too in an age, which as I have just said, has discovered that it was the collective people, and not a few miraculous individuals who have produced all worthy, that is all genuine, art in the past. I say when art is hopeful and progressive there is plenty of it for every one, and every one is in some sense an artist, and those who produce beauty are not demi-gods but men, and all can understand them; it is only when beauty produced by man becomes rare that we take to defying its producers. There is little that is mysterious about the plagiarists and compilers of the Augustan age of Rome; these, like the moderns, did not produce as much as we do, and, besides, we have the convenience of remaining very, very like the Norman spring of stupidity, are well known and amply ticketed. But modern research has made Homer a dim and doubtful shadow to us, while it has added cleanness to our vision of the life of the people of that time, why were not artists of those heroic poems. Beowulf, the first and the best poem of the English race, which they bore hither across the seas with them, has no author but the people. No other authors wrote anything so splendid as the Iliad, and literature of latter days has no poet who can stand alongside of the old comrade-tellers the world has seen, through whom we can to-day live with the people of Northern Europe in the tenth century, and know them, not as puppets of chivalric romance, but good fellows such as our comrades are. Have the artist and the artisan were united in the past, and not divided as at present. It is the dustlike, and not the dandified, that is the typical representative of the society of the modern artist; the artist is the comrade of the people, the artisan is the fellow of the people, the honest artisan is the comrade of the people, and is the true artist; and the dandified, the artist of the society of the modern. The contrast of this is well marked. The dandified artist is the man of all the people, the dandified personage of the society of the modern. The contrast of this is well marked. 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