THE GOTHIC REVIVAL [II]¹

In my last lecture I gave you my ideas as [to] the origin of the art of medieval Europe and the ways by which it spread over the various countries; I told you what to my mind was the spirit of the art, and pointed out how the change befall which brought it to an end, and supplanted it by an art which was retrospective in spirit, and therefore narrow and cumbered with pedantic pride: I showed how after a brief period of brilliancy owing to the individual genius of those great men who were given to the world at the beginning of the Renaissance period, that Renaissance fell lower and lower till at the end of the 18th century the arts of civilization were as far as beauty, invention, and imagination are concerned at a standstill: I concluded by hinting at the rise of that revolt against pseudo-classical stupidity, which took place as I think first in literature rather than in the manual arts.

This was necessarily the natural course since even the most individual and intellectual of the latter depends of necessity on processes which are the result of tradition of some sort however blind it may be; and this tradition is very difficult to shake off and can scarcely be shaken off indeed in the lifetime of any one person. However, the feeling for history and the attraction more literary and sentimental than artistic and critical towards Gothic art did show itself side by side with the revival of literary romance, though its results were at first feeble and even ridiculous, being little more than the perpetration of certain buildings in that queer style of Carpenter's Gothic of which one yet stumbles across specimens now and then, amongst which however one must stop to note the almost miraculous phenomenon of a painter of that period who had a real and strange genius for the decorative or beautiful side of the art, Blake to wit, who visionary as he was understood not only the power of words in verse but also the power of form and colour to delight the eye at the same time that it exalts the mind. Of course the Carpenter's Gothic aforesaid was attempted long before anything approaching accurate knowledge of the styles was current; it was the time when all round-arched architecture was spoken of as Saxon, and all pointed lumped together as florid; which distinction was in itself however a considerable advance over the knowledge of the previous years, which generally affected to speak of the architecture of seven or eight centuries of European history by the not very inclusive or explanatory name of monkish. However real and careful antiquaries soon got to work on the history of Gothic art when interest in it was once awakened, and Rickman at last discriminated the styles of English Gothic architecture with remarkable clearness,² and from that time forward real knowledge of its details was gained: details by the way that appealed so little to the understanding of the 18th century that it is not very long before Rickman's time that the draughtsmen of architecture could give any idea of the general appearance of a Gothic building.

Now about the time when Gothic architecture began to be somewhat understood, as if to give some countenance to the queer name of "ecclesiastical" architecture by which the general

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¹ The text of this lecture is taken from B.M. Add. MS. 45931(11), which is entirely in Morris's hand. For background information see footnote 1 to "The Gothic Revival [I]," p. 54.

² See Thomas Rickman, An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture from the Conquest to the Reformation (2nd ed.; London, [1819]).
public used to know it until quite recently, there came as an ally to the study of the arts the movement in the English Church which has since got the name of ritualism, which I think on the whole one may put down as a part of the general tendency to protest against the blank stupidity of the 18th century, or if you will part of the general tendency towards mediaevalism: anyhow by the time that this movement was well under way Gothic art began to receive a great [deal] of attention, and to vindicate its title to ecclesiastical art, or Christian Art as Pugin\(^a\) with little more logic used to call it, by getting itself used as an imitative style for the building of churches everywhere at least in England: till at last almost every church which was built had to be built in this style such as it was; people not seeing as they don’t altogether see even today the queer incongruity of building their houses in one style and their churches in another. With this the first act of the Gothic revival looked at in its narrower sense may be said to have ended: it triumphed as an exotic ecclesiastical style; and by this time was fairly well understood in an archaeological way by several of the leading architects. I must just mention here to return to it afterwards one very luckless result of this alliance of quasi-art with quasi-theology: a mishap expressed by the word restoration, and which I am inclined to think we might have partly at least escaped if one side of the newborn interest in mediaeval history had not been dominated by theology: as it was the most frightful ravages were wrought by this pest while yet people’s ideas about I won’t say the essence, but the mere differentia of Gothic were very crude indeed, and the worst of it is that this enthusiasm for thoroughly mediaevalising in the theatrical way a building already mediaeval in reality has formed a habit of restoration in the country clergy who for the most part have as yet not so much as heard that there is such a thing as popular art: a habit which the worthy guardians of our national architectural antiquities would seem to exercise almost unconsiously like the hebdomadal sermons, and by which they play into the hands of archeologically-minded architects, who find it difficult to resist the temptation of beginning to tamper with an ancient building: and when once they begin find that it is very difficult to know where to stop. All which would be laughable indeed if it were not so woefully tragic: there is something quite sickening to a lover of art to think that an ancient building, a lovely piece of art in itself, the growth of the very soul of the country; the outcome of many centuries of thought; the witness of a state of society and methods of handicraft long passed away, after having escaped so many dangers of change and violence and accident and mere lapse of time should be liable to sudden, wanton destruction brought on it by a whim arising in the head of a half-educated man, who has not even grasped the fact that the workmen of today are in a different position to those of the Middle Ages: I say that it is sickening that this should be the case and that the public should have no protection against the whim of an individual and no appeal to anything else save his ignorance and prejudice: as to the architects who are the other factor in this bad business, it must be said of them, that while some are most honourably distinguished both by their knowledge and their disinterestedness, it is a matter of course under the present unhappy arrangement of society that the greater number should look upon such schemes as business matters and treat them accordingly.

Well the first act of the Gothic Revival, brought us I say to imitation Gothic triumphant as an ecclesiastical style, to a fairly accurate archeological-architectural knowledge of the construction and details of mediaeval building, and most unhappily to restoration. In the next act the knowledge of the style has much increased, and it is even perceived that it is founded on principles, that there is a life and spirit in it: from which perception it followed as a matter of course that those who knew anything about it proclaimed its fitness not only for ecclesiastical buildings but for all buildings: this perception one may say in passing had been much helped about this time by the growing study of foreign and kindred styles especially the architecture of Italy, Professor Ruskin’s unrivaled eloquence and wonderful ethical instinct leading the way in this branch of the study of art as in

\(^a\) Augusta Welby Pugin (1812–1852), perhaps the most famous of the architects of the Gothic Revival, was an associate of Sir Charles Barry in the designing of the present Houses of Parliament. He wrote, among other works, An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England (London, 1843).
many others. It was a necessary consequence of this more intimate study of the spirit of Gothic art that men should find themselves drawn specially towards its earlier periods; already in the first act of the Revival archaeologists had marked pretty clearly the periods of birth, growth, maturity, and decrepitude, but it was not till this time when the subject was considered scientifically almost, that they formed the hope of founding a new style of architecture on the vigorous organic period of Gothic: the period when still bearing obvious traces of all the history which had produced it, it looked forward ever to fresh progress and continuous change into something still more desirable, the period of its greatest hope when it looked forward confidently from past struggles to future perfection.

Once again even from this reasonable study of the best and most characteristic epoch of an art came in the hands of feeble and illogical people confused by their little knowledge fresh misfortune for us in the shape of the foe Restoration: for many of the newly-made-wise archeologists—architects in their enthusiasm for purity of style, could see nothing worth attention or preservation in the works of the ages that followed the period of purity; genuine though they were and instinct with the history and aspirations of the people of the later middle ages: and seeing nothing worthy of preservation after the 14th century they did (and do I am sorry to say) not attempt to preserve later work, but on the contrary destroy it, supplanting it by such feeble copies of the purer work as they could compass in the present day: with the result that we have been deprived of a great bulk of art which no age of the world could have afforded to lose, and which to this age ridden by the nightmare of commercial ugliness has been a grievous loss indeed.

With the third act of the revival came greater and more intimate knowledge of the art of the Gothic period; and with a spread of the knowledge of the conditions of life at that time without which knowledge indeed mere archeology, though useful, is only useful as building up storage for reference. And now it did seem to many people that architecture and the arts which went with it had a real chance of a second new birth: several talented architects quite broke with the mere pedantry of imitation and set themselves seriously to build as a mediaeval builder would have done with his principles and instinct if he had been a member of our present society: it now became obvious that the Middle Ages did not come to a sudden end in 1320 and that an abundance of excellent works had been wrought as late as two centuries after that: many good buildings were the result of this closer study; buildings which if they had depended wholly on the architects’ design and superintendence would have been of very great excellence. I may also be allowed to mention that some time in this act some of us thought that the revival might be extended to the accessory arts, and made I assure you desperate efforts to revive them: in which process we have at least amused and instructed ourselves a good deal, and even done what is called “lived on” our efforts; in other words have extracted a good deal of money out of the public by them: allow me to excuse ourselves for that brigandage by saying that the public will have these accessory arts, or some pretence of them, and that if I am not quite blinded by vanity ours are at any rate prettier [than] those which went before them.

Before I go further I ought to note one part of the Gothic revival which most of you will I doubt not think of more importance than these spasmodic attempts to build a new style of architecture and decoration on the remains of the older styles: that part of it I mean which has to do with the art of picture-painting: in which I must be understood not to be speaking of landscape art which has I suppose only been affected by the revival so far as it has tended to make it more realistic and honest: as to imaginative painting it has been affected by it much as literature has been that is in point of fact it has been reborn from its influence as could hardly fail to be the case; since on the one side the revival found it the reality of passion and sentiment instead of the obvious imitation of them, and on the other hand it found it ornamental scope, or in other words the aim at beauty of form and colour which the old pedantry despised and was ignorant of.

And now out of this third act of the Revival we may be said to

have passed into the fourth which has strengthened the hope of many people that a new style of art is forming which will be at once beautiful and at the same time fitting to the life of our own times: strange to say, though, amidst all this, there has been a sort of reaction against that very Gothic art which began the architectural revival and at one time seemed to be the end all and be all of it: this reaction seems to be the legitimate issue of that new-found knowledge that there is something admirable in mediaeval architecture after its highest point of purity had been attained: perhaps also some of the worthy people who started with regenerating the arts by imitating the 13th century have grown older and have more or less sunk their ideals and are prepared to put up with the quaint bourgeois trimness of a Queen Anne house as good enough to make us in this age of ugliness forget the poetry and beauty of a 14th century grange. In truth there is something to be said for the exchange of an almost as good as real Queen Anne house, instead of a very far from as good as real 14th century one. To step from a very well done outside of Chaucer's time into an interior of afternoon tea and the music of the future is certainly a very prodigious shock; more of a shock, it must be admitted than finding a Queen Anne house inhabited by schoolboard ladies or gentlemen enthusiastic on sanitary reform: the days of Prestonpans are easier for us to understand than those of Crécy: and yet not easy, for after all Queen Anne is dead: and moreover imitating the whimsical ghost of a style of the 18th century has the special disadvantage of forcing us to spend time and sometimes talent in imitating whims which were absurd even in those days, imitating things which were not founded on any principle: it forces us in fact to affect an affectation. And to finish with this last freak of the Gothic revival, I must remind you again that whatever was admirable about the quaint old houses of the middle of the 18th century was simply a survival of the Gothic

times; the rest was mere insanity, a mere token of a narrow, pinched bourgeoisdom.

So much on what may be called the external history of the architectural Gothic revival: which arising as a necessary consequence of the historical revival and allying itself to an ecclesiastical-historical movement has in its limited way attained such a success as to be now undergoing a reaction: you may think perhaps I have treated this stir in art somewhat lightly; and to say the truth if I did not feel it to be the sign of something deeper than itself, I should scarcely think it worth much attention; for it is confined within very narrow limits, and cannot even be said to have altered perceptibly the external appearance of our towns, where in spite of all the talk among Artistic people, the real style of the day, Victorian Architecture, is in full swing; or in other words miserable squalor and purse-proud, rampant vulgarity divide our Architecture between them. But if it is not of much importance in itself it is of some importance as a token of men's minds being turned toward the historic method of looking at life and the hopes for the future of mankind: for us as I have before hinted there is no longer a brief period of perfection dropped down into a world no one knows how or why, an island in a dark sea of before and after, in which alone a rational man can find anything worthy of his attention; all reason and order [inside of it] unreason and anarchy outside of it; one thing to be imitated always, nothing else to be even looked at. In spite of the trumpery little reaction I have been speaking of just now, we have done with all that for ever, and have grasped the idea of the unity and continuous life of man, in which change and growth are always present, so that although we dare pick out one period and say it is bad, or another and say it is good, we cannot say this is great and that is little, for it is all growth together—that is to say life. As soon as this is felt by men it must at once influence their aims and hopes in an art like architecture, and it has been this feeling I am sure and not a mere arbitrary liking for some special forms as the pointed-arch or what not which has produced the Gothic Revival: it was felt that the mere imitation of classical models itself once a genuine historical development, had gone as far as it could go

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*Prestonpans is a small town in East Lothian, Scotland, on the Firth of Forth, where the Battle of Prestonpans was fought on Sept. 21, 1745. In the battle the Scottish forces under Prince Charles Edward Stewart completely routed the English forces under Sir John Cope. See P. Hume Brown, History of Scotland (Cambridge, 1911), III, 255-38.*
and that we were face to face with a dead wall of pedantry: this imitation then had to be abandoned, and we were compelled to seek for a style which had in itself the elements of further growth, that could only be found in Gothic art which after the fall of the old classicism had become the universal style: at first we imitated the outward aspects of it without understanding its spirit much as the Renaissance artists had done with the old classical art, but without infusing any of the spirit of our own times into it as they had done so as to make a living style: even this however is now to a certain extent being attempted owing to the knowledge of history having spread among us till we are beginning to be conscious of that growth and unity of mankind of which I have just spoken.

This to my mind is the meaning of the Gothic revival; and so looked upon it becomes I think a movement of great importance and not a mere expropriation of dilettantism: so that we may well ask what practical use can be made of it in civilizing the surroundings of life, which I fancy we most of us here present are in grievous need of being civilized.

The question is then what hopes for the future of art lie in the present condition of the Gothic revival? It is a difficult question and to answer it fully I should have to deal with the main questions of the day, nor indeed will it be possible for me to avoid touching on them before I have done. As far as I can however I will keep that for the end of my discourse and will now try to point out to you certain shortcomings in our neo-Gothic buildings: only you will understand I shall be thinking of the best of them, not of the worst; of those where the architect to some extent understands his style, and would build Gothic if he could, and not of those which are a mere collocation of certain well-known forms put together in a thoroughly modern way; that is to say the Carpenter's Gothic of our day.

Well in considering these good specimens of the Gothic revival one thing is bound to strike us from the first—they are very florid. There is a determination in them to have a great deal of ornament—of some sort. Now you will hardly suspect me, an ornamentalist of underrating the pleasure which ornament can give us, but in this case I will go so far as to plagiarize on my friend W[illiam] B[lake] R[ichmond] and say that as things are at present 'tis better to be chary of ornament; don't have any cheap ornament at all: for real ornament cannot be cheap; at present I say build big and solid and with an eye to strict utility: you will find that will be expressive work enough, and will by no means be utilitarian. But let us look into this matter of modern ornament, and see why you are to be chary of it, and why it is cheap—and nasty.

Allow me to illustrate my views on the subject by means of an actual building which I have seen: some four years ago I went into a church (in the country) built by a friend of mine, an architect who knows Gothic architecture thoroughly, and I admired it very much: I think if I had gone into it in the dusk I should really have taken it for a genuine building of the 15th century. Well it was a costly building and there was lots of ornament in it especially in the chancel: the great ornament of which was a big reredos of carved stone all over the east wall, a mass of niches and imagery, and at first sight it looked very beautiful; but as I looked at it I began to get tired of it although I could find no fault with its design at all; and why was that? Well there were dozens of figures in the niches, which indeed filled their places: but when you looked at them you knew very well what they were; they were carving not sculpture. That is we have today to use two words which mean the same thing to indicate two different things: so I say they were carving, that is they were done by men who really had nothing to do with the design of them who cut them unfeelingly and mechanically without troubling their heads as to whom they represented, with no trace in

6 W. B. Richmond, R.A., was the successor to John Ruskin in the Slade Professorship of Fine Art at Oxford. He was closely associated with Morris in many artistic and social endeavors, including the S.P.A. and the arts and crafts exhibitions of the eighties and nineties. On his friendship with Morris, which dates from the days immediately following Morris’s Oxford career, see A. M. W. Stirling, The Richmond Papers (London, 1926), pp. 157, 194-65, 271, 314.

7 “Cheap and Nasty,” a phrase very popular among the pre-Raphaelites and other art reformers, was first popularized by Charles Kingsley in 1850 in a pamphlet entitled Cheap Clothes and Nasty. Its title was the tailor’s own slang for garments made under sweatshop conditions.” Moreover, “much of Alton Locke is a dramatization of Cheap Clothes and Nasty. . . .” See Margaret Farrand Thorp, Charles Kingsley, 1819-1875 (Princeton, 1937), pp. 67, 78.
them of my friend the architect’s enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, by men who would just as soon have cut 18th century grave-stone cherubs, or apples and amoretter\(^4\) in a new club house; in short they were just mechanical dolls nothing more.

Now just consider what they were taking the place of: as it is they were I must say positively worthless; but if that reredos had been filled with genuine imagery of the 15th century it would have been full of entrancing interest: it is likely that the figures would have been rudely cut, that they would have shown no great knowledge of anatomy, that the extremities would have been clumsy and ugly, the heads disproportionately big, the faces not of a high type, the pose of the figure not very graceful and so forth: in short doubtless they would have plenty of obvious faults, but that very fact to start with is comparatively in their favour, for it shows that you would have been compelled to notice them, to look at them: you couldn’t look at the other stone dolls at all: with the genuine imagery there would have gone real thought and invention although the quality of it might have been rude and not to our taste: every figure would have had something characteristic about it, something which would have shown you at a glance that the carver had enjoyed his work and would not under any compulsion, nay could not, work out of his style: and I say that the difference between such work and that of the mechanical dolls above-mentioned is infinite: one is something and the other nothing.

Now though this may be an extreme case yet the illustration is applicable to every bit of ornament about a building: concerning which you must ask the question is it done by an artist or a machine—whether of flesh and blood or brass and steel matters nothing to our present purposes—if it is the latter have nothing to do with it: it will be worth [a] great [deal] less than nothing: if the former, well and good, only you must be very particular to see that it is done by an artist’s hand, executed that is to say thoughtfully and with pleasure: in that case it will, I am sorry to say, be rare, and I imagine expensive, as things go now; only it will at all events be worth something. Such a principle will somewhat restrict the exuberance of ornament, and as I said you will have to put up with solid plain buildings that will by reason of their obvious utility have a certain amount of dignity about them; which will have a double advantage to us: first they will be good in themselves, that at no time to come will they bring shame upon us at least; and next that our very restraint and carefulness in the matter will set us longing for real ornament since the desire for it is natural to the properly developed human being: whereas at present being surfeited with the sham stuff which is so common, we begin to loathe the whole thing, and scarcely look on what is really good either of our time or past times.

This remark leads me to speaking of the other shortcoming of the careful architectural works of today, it is soon said: there are too few of them: there are as I said not enough to make any impression on the general mass of our modern towns, where the most of the houses rich as well as poor make no pretence to being anything more than utilitarian hutches within the case of the rich ones a certain amount of quite sham ornament laid on simply at the commands of Mrs. Grundy\(^5\) without anybody but that impersonal Goddess even professing to be pleased by the transaction: so it comes to this as the shortcomings of the present learned and really architectural buildings, that as on the one hand their ornament when they have any is not genuine or spontaneous, so on the other they are not numerous enough to form a real style: which two objections to them taken together seem to me to point to the simple fact [that] though they are built in this century they are not of it: they are but exotics in fact: on which fact follows the question, are they likely to gain so much on the public as to be the prevailing style, in which case they might, I suppose compel the development of a due style of ornament exterior and interior? For my part I am compelled to answer that question in the negative: under the present conditions of life I cannot see the

\(^4\) The NED defines “amoretti” as “cupids.”

\(^5\) “Mrs. Grundy” had by the eighteen-eighties become for socialists of artistic temperament the personification of bourgeoise morals and philistine art. “The creator of the original Mrs. Grundy died in 1838, the year after Queen Victoria’s accession. He was Thomas Morton, the playwright, who invented the beldame in *Spend the Plough*, the most famous of his twenty-five dramas.” See Oehbert Burdett, *The Beardsley Period* (London, 1925), p. 41, note.
day when every little house, every small tradesman’s shop, every farm building even shall be without effort duly built, architectural, in a word beautiful; and I assert very strongly that until such a change comes about there will be no real modern architectural style; so that we may see what further lies in the assertion, let us return to the matter of the ornament again, and try to find out why we cannot get it genuine except under very rare conditions, unless in fact it is done by a man having the name and position as an artist: why cannot we get it from workmen?

The starting point of the answer is obvious: it is because there is such a division of labour in our occupations nowadays that there is a trenchant line of demarcation between artists and workmen, even when the latter are engaged on what are considered in some sense works of art: the artist is at least independent [and] can take a job or leave it according as he thinks it will do him credit or not: the workman lives from hand to mouth and is not at all independent: it would be dangerous work for him to play with his jobs, to take this and refuse that; or if he has so much genius and spirit as to do this, he presently finds himself in such a position that he can lift himself out of his class and become a gentleman artist; nor can anyone expect him to abstain from using his advantage; but take notice how this one thing makes it impossible for workmen as a body to become artistic, for I repeat that the possession of genius joined to ordinary thrift and industry will deprive the class of workmen of a good craftsman, and add to the class of gentlemen probably a poorish artist: therefore this elimination of talent from the workmen always going on the cultured architect of today has to depend for the execution of his work not on the intelligent cooperation of brother artists, but on the grudging obedience of trained drudges, from whom it is absurd to expect any approach to that excellence, thoughtfulness, and delicacy which Mr. Richmond has told some of you in this city is necessary to any ornament which is worth having.

You see we do not expect a mere workman to have any sense of beauty; that is a luxury which is now confined to the well-to-do, to the classes of leisure: but even if the workman by some extraordinary accident has that sense of beauty, it is certain that he will have no opportunity of expressing it in his work: if there is to be any pretence of beauty in the work which is to pass through his hands it will have been arranged for him by some one else’s mind, and all his mind will have to do with the execution of it will be to keep before him the fact that he has got to carry out his pattern neatly perhaps, but speedily certain under the penalty of his livelihood being injured: any thought he gives us as he carries out his task will be so much dead loss to him. Under such conditions how can you expect architecture to flourish; architecture which is emphatically the harmonious expression of the sense of beauty inherent in the whole people? Under such conditions nothing is possible in architecture but jerry-built hovels for the masses and vulgar Victorian architecture for the well-to-do and rich.

Now since we are thinking of the changes in the future of the Gothic revival I must ask you to allow me to contrast this condition of things [to] the condition of the workmen of that Gothic period whose art we have been trying to revive.

In their time however labour was divided into the occupations of men in general, and it was of course much less completely so than with us: in the crafts there was very little division of labour: every apprentice became a master as a matter of course, and when in the later Middle Ages the guilds had become less democratic, and contained a class of journeymen alongside of the privileged craftsmen, the journeyman was only below his master as to his privileges, not his skill; so that from beginning to end he had to know his craft and be master of it: furthermore at least before the end of the 14th century the workman was not working for a master but for himself and was therefore master of his time; and also his work being done there was little of the middleman’s office to take away a share of his earnings from him: the transaction between him and the public was simple: a piece of work was wanted, he did it and pocketed the price himself. So he could not be a machine in the first place; he was forced to think about his work or he could never have done it: in the second place he had leisure to do it as he pleased, and possession of creative skill and leisure are sure to make work pleasurable, and as in the third place he had but to deal with his customer as the user of his wares and there was no profit-squeezing middleman between
them he could afford to show his pleasure in the work of ornamenting it: which ornament springing from deliberate work and ample leisure showed manlike invention and imagination in it, controlled indeed by intercourse with his fellow men then alive, and by tradition, that is by the thoughts of those who had gone before him but not controlled by the sordid necessity of working to a pattern prescribed by an irresponsible master.

Now if you have followed me you will take note that these are the conditions under which artists work; and in fact the craftsmen of the middle ages were all artists, and art or the creation of beauty was a habit to them which they could not forego if they would; and hence happened then which I have said was necessary to a real style of beautiful architecture that all building was beautiful; which beauty if we now want we have at least to pay extra for, if indeed we get it by paying extra which is doubtful: it was once a free gift like the air of heaven; it is now a marketable article, and like all other marketable articles is much adulterated.

Here then I want you to understand once for all that the Gothic art which we have tried to revive was the work of free craftsmen working for no master or profit-grinder, and capable of expressing their own thoughts by means of their work, which was no mere burden to them but was blended with pleasure; that art or beauty was a necessary incident to all handicraft and was not paid for as a distinct article but was given in over and above just as the colour in an apple or the lovely drawing in a wheat ear is. On the contrary in reviving Gothic art the cultivated men who are striving to bring in a rational and popular style of architecture and decoration are condemned to see their work carried out by workmen who are working for a master who has to grind a profit out of them and so can afford them neither leisure nor thought in their work, and who are in consequence incapable of expressing their thoughts through their work; which is accordingly a mere burden to them unmingled with pleasure: from which it comes that so far from beauty being a necessary incident to all handi-

work, it is always absent from it unless it is bargained for as a special separate article having its own market value.

This then is the real bar to the success of the Gothic revival which aimed at bringing back reasonable, logical beauty to the life of man in civilized countries: it is not as some have supposed the difference in life otherwise, except so far as the stupid luxury of the rich and idle is founded on the oppression of the workers: it is the subjection of all labour to the necessities of the competitive market which stands in the way of the Gothic revival, as it was the beginnings of that subjection which brought about the degradation of art in the 16th century, and the development of the same tyranny which completed that degradation in the 18th.

And lest you should think as some men now seem to do that this Gothic revival or the revolt against tyranny in the arts is a light matter, and that it will henceforth be a sufficient compromise for our architects and us to make with the natural love of beauty, if from henceforward we agree to copy with as much delicacy of detail as we can the work of a period which does not profess to appeal to our feelings in any way, to copy some skillfully-designed but dull building—lest you should think that this will make a school of architecture or be an expression of our sense of beauty worthy of civilized times, lest you should think in a word that such a proceeding was worth doing at all, let me put before you the ideal of a school of architecture a school of popular art, an ideal which once approached fulfilment amid all the turmoil and superstition of the middle ages, and which should surely be easier of fulfilment now unless our boasts of civilization should turn out to be as I fear they may merely futile and empty words meaning nothing.

I beg you to consider those mighty and beautiful buildings raised by our forefathers in a land then scantily populated by a people without the mechanical appliances which we have gained since then, and to ask yourselves what gave to short-lived men

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10 Here the word "workmen" is rejected for "craftsmen" in the MS.
12 Here the words "such as once did exist" are deleted in the MS.
12 Here the words "completely fulfilled" are deleted in the MS.
the hope to begin and the courage and patience to carry out to an end from father to son such works as these. Was it fear of the jealous Gods and the hope of appeasing their wrath? Was it pride in the glory and mastery of a great nation? Do not think it: such motives might perhaps urge on a Pharaoh to build himself a Pyramid-tomb by means of slave-labour, but the teeming eventfulness and solemn mass of a Gothic Cathedral sprang from worthier thought that this: there have been nay are other means of satisfying such futile and disastrous passions as superstition and false patriotism which have used up men’s lives in crueler ways than the production of works of art. Surely the root cause for making whatever is noble and beautiful must always be the strong desire for the production of beauty; and these glorious works which were of necessity the creation of the whole people were created by the people’s aspirations towards nobility and beauty.

They are the outcome of corporate and social feeling, the work not of individual but collective genius, the expression of a great body of men conscious of their union: if their builders had striven for beauty mechanically, artificially, if they had been coaxed out of the people by the bribes of the rich or the tyranny of the powerful they would on the face of them have borne tokens of that corruption and oppression: they would have lacked the life which we all consciously or unconsciously feel which they possess and the love with which we have surrounded that life: they would by this time have become to us dead toys of time past, not living memorials of it: it was the art of the people which created them to live.

Now aspiration towards beauty, the hope of giving a lasting gift to the world, this of itself might you would think, be motive sufficient for the fashioning of a great work of collective art: but there was more motive power behind the workers than that and more direct power also: for it is of the essence of such works, of such gifts, that the labour necessary for their production should not be wasted in any way. It goes without saying that no work which can give lasting pleasure to the world shall be the work of slaves; now it is true that any enthusiasm of giving a work of art to posterity would take the workers on it out of the category of slaves: for if they sacrificed their lives and their ease to their work they would be doing so of their own free will: but, and this is most important to remember, even this free-will sacrifice is not asked for by art: for art cannot endure waste, and all sacrifice means waste, or the loss of some joy which we have a right to claim: free men don’t ask for martyrs: every martyr implies some thousands of sneaks.

In collective art therefore is no martyrdom: the men who build it up not only give their gift of free will, but give it joyfully day by day, and take as they give, to the extinction of moody pride, to the fostering of hearty goodwill: not martyrs—but friends and good fellows.

Take now some one great work of collective or popular art, and in some such way as follows I think it will have been done: the hope and desire for it moving in people’s minds stir up some master mind to plan it; but he is not puffed up with individual pride by finding himself ready for this creation; for he knows well that he could not even have thought of it without the help of those who have gone before him, and that it must remain a mere unsubstantial dream without the help of his fellows alive now and to live hereafter: it is the thoughts and hopes of men passed away from the world which, alive within his brain, make his plan take form; and all the details of that plan are guided, will he or will he not, by what we call tradition, which is the hoarded skill of man handed down from generation to generation. But, as he belongs to the past and is a part of it, so also he belongs to the present and the future: his plan must be carried out by other men living and to live, who share his thoughts, his memories of bygone times, and the guidance of tradition: through these men he must work, men it may be of lesser talent than himself; that is as it may be and matters not, but at any rate men of divers aptitudes, one doing this work, one that, but all harmoniously and intelligently: in which work each knows that his success or failure will exalt or mar the whole; so that each man feels responsible for the whole; of which there is no part unimportant, nor any office degrading: every pair of hands is moved by a mind which is in concert with other minds, but freely, and in such a way that no individual intelligence is crushed or wasted: and in such work, while the
work grows the workers' minds grow also: they work not like ants or live machines, or slaves to a machine—but like men.

So that every night when a man is reviewing his day's work he has not got to say: I have been weary, over-burdened, vexed, pained; I have lost forever some part of my vital force, some part of my intelligence, my memory, my hope in short; but I can bear it, for the world is the wealthier for my day's grief and loss. He has not got to say that, but this rather: I have worked today; I have been dealing with difficulties, but have conquered them: I have been troubled but am merry: I have given and taken, and gained something; I am more of a man than I was yesterday: the world has been made wealthier by my gain.

That is the way a free man works; Society uses him and keeps him; does not use him and throw him away: he is I say it again, not a martyr among a world of sneaks, but a friend amidst friends.

Now be sure of this; that Gothic Revival or revolt against pedantry and narrow-mindedness needs just such workmen as this, and that is its only need; for myself I think that amidst all the paltriness and blindness which has oppressed it, it has been seeking for this necessary aid: it has indeed failed to find it because it has been for the most part hitherto merely an aspiration of cultivated men seeking art through art instead of seeking it through the life of the people: if it can do no more than that it will pass like a pleasant dream of what might have been without making any impression on the life of men in the present, or their memory in the future.

Those who care for it or hope anything from it, that is to say those who expect to see a living school of art amongst us must make up their minds to one thing, that their cultivation will not help it forward one whit unless it is shared by all men. And if they think that that will be an easy thing to bring about they are wrong. For the division into the cultivated and the uncultivated classes, or to put the matter plainer into the civilized and uncivilized, is founded on the system of labour which sustains our commercial system: upper and lower classes, rich and poor, you needn't trouble yourselves about any other divisions, are absolutely necessary to the existence of that system: that division into upper and lower, rich and poor is necessary for the existence of the present commercial capitalist system; can never be done away with while it lasts, while at the same time it entirely forbids that universal cultivation, ease, and leisure which alone can produce popular art: but if art is not popular, if it is not of the people, it is an idle and worthless toy. Therefore the progress, nay the very existence of art depends on the supplanting of the present capitalist system by something better, depends on changing the basis of society.

Is art a little thing then, something which can be done without? It is not a little thing, for it means the pleasure of life: I am no prophet, so I will not say it cannot be done without, but at what expense? How can we forego the pleasure of life? It is not a little question to ask ourselves are we to have art or not? It is a question between barbarism and civilization, nay between progress and corruption—between humanity and brutality—nay I am wrong there; for the brutes are at least happy—but men without art will be unhappy.