

AMERICAN HANDICRAFTS IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

EXTRACTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE FEDERAL BOARD, DECEMBER, 1918

THE reëducation of the disabled, the revival of agriculture, of industry, higher education, and the raising of the standard of life, all depend on the right use of the handicrafts and on the full use of the energies of our craftsmen at the present juncture. The basis of training, of healthy agriculture, prosperous industry, and commerce, is provided by the handicrafts. They are invaluable as training and preparation for any form of industry, and even if the whole world is given over to automatic machinery, the crafts will be needed as a field for experiment, a relief from monotony and as an enrichment of life.—Inter-Allied Conference, May, 1918.

“Life without industry is guilt; industry without art is brutality.”—*Ruskin.*

The significant feature of the industrial arts is the association of art and labor, and the effort to bring creative ability into the routine of specialized processes. It is the ideal which aspires not only to give dignity and individuality to an age of machinery, but also to convert work of hand and brain from work that is sordid and mean to work that is noble and imaginative.

Ex-President Eliot, of Harvard, has said:

“I have lately had occasion to think a good deal about conditions of labor in our American cities, and the saddest thing I have learned is the lack of the happy spirit of labor in American industry. That is the most pathetic and lamentable thing. What is the cure for this prodigious evil? It is the bringing into American industries the method and spirit of the artist.”

It may not be possible to bring this spirit into industry itself, but it can be brought into the lives of the workers by education and resources such as the crafts offer. The more mechanical a man's work, the more necessary it is for him to use his creative faculties in his leisure time. As shorter hours of work and labor-saving devices are increasing the hours of leisure, a problem of no small concern is the proper direction of that leisure. Automatic machinery and specialized processes demand little inventive genius or creative ability. The rounded life of the workman demands self-expression. He needs it to enjoy his leisure, and his employer will find him the better workman for hand and mind training. His broader interests, the exercise of a certain inventive genius and stimulation to the mind, make him in the end a better workman, and that which was intended as a resource does in fact have a socializing and educational influence.

The crafts have a definite educational value. Not only do they develop manual dexterity, but they train the mind through the hands. This method has long been recognized as sound educational training. It is supported by modern psychology.

The balance between conception and muscular coördination, which is so important when the crafts are used for therapeutic purposes, has the underlying educational principle that in the adjustment of these two, in mental growth and manual skill, lies the secret of a thorough and practical education.

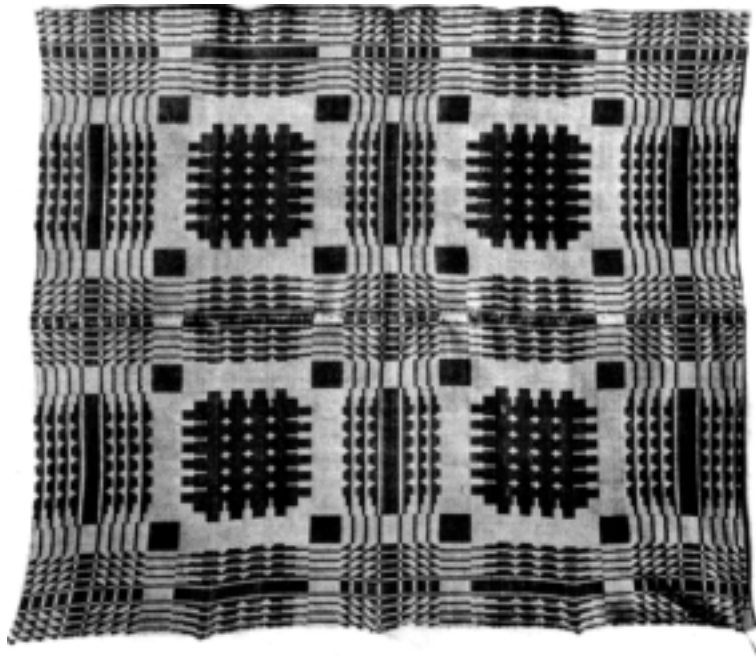
In the forecast of the reorganization of industry and manufacture after the war, it is predicted that articles formerly imported because of superior art quality will be produced in this country. This will mean a keen competition of quality and design, as well as workmanship, both between nations and between manufacturers within the nation. It is in preparation for this new industrial era that France, Switzerland and the Central Powers are already making use of their artists and craftsmen.

"Switzerland, in concert with the alertest brains in France, has within the past few months begun a campaign for the revival of industrial and decorative arts in all her cantons. . . . Industry cannot be renewed without a new spirit; as the promoters of reform in France have said, 'Henceforth the spirit of artistry must inspire everything we do.'"—Inter-Allied Conference, May, 1918.

This means not only a new vocational opening for trained designers, but it means the appreciation of design and the craftsman's care in execution.

The craftsman differs from the ordinary workman only by the intensity of his concern for the quality of his work.

The arts and crafts movement as an economic movement has succeeded only moderately, as must any movement which neglects to take into account the industrial tendencies of the time. In a few isolated communities, arts and crafts may survive, as have the hand industries in North Carolina and Massachusetts; but the moment these are successful, their products will be manufactured on a large scale. Any such plan of commercially occupying the disabled soldier is economically of very limited possibilities, but it is expedient that the educational value of craft work be used to increase the industrial efficiency of the worker.



COVERLET IN OVERSHOT WEAVING

WEAVES FROM THE SHUTTLE-CRAFT LOOMS, BASIN, MONTANA