

ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY,
and WESTMINSTER ABBEY. BY
WILLIAM MORRIS.

EX LIBRIS UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA



JOHN HENRY NASH LIBRARY

◆ SAN FRANCISCO ◆

PRESENTED TO THE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

ROBERT GORDON SPROUL, PRESIDENT.

◆ BY ◆

MR. AND MRS. MILTON S. RAY

CECILY, VIRGINIA AND ROSALYN RAY

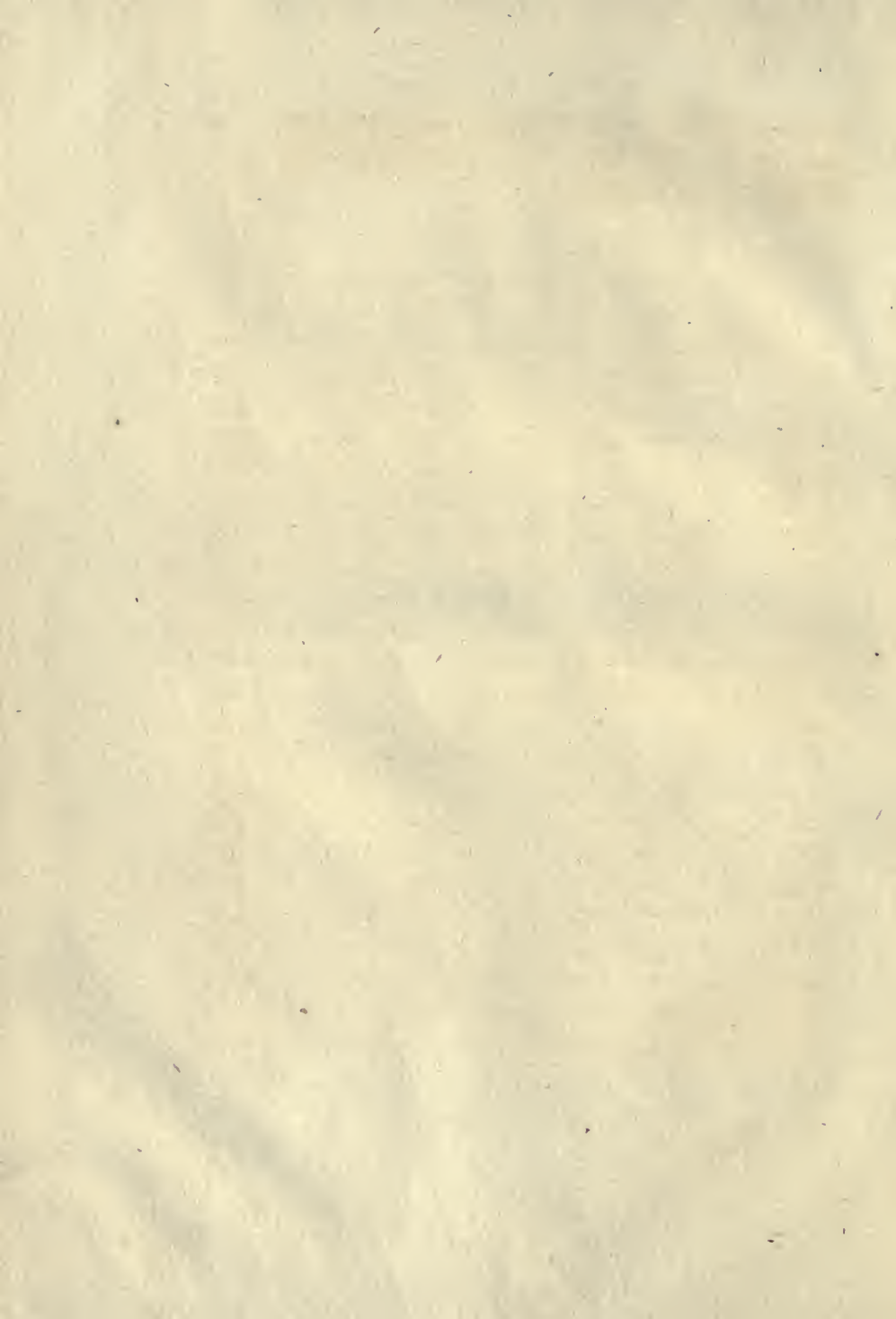
AND THE

RAY OIL BURNER COMPANY

SAN FRANCISCO

NEW YORK





ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY, and WESTMINSTER ABBEY. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

When the history of the architecture of the
middle and late middle ages is written
it will be found that the history of the
middle ages is the history of the
middle ages. It is not only that it is to read the
middle ages and to read the middle ages
middle ages, it is only that the middle ages
middle ages, but the middle ages of the middle
of the middle ages, which should give us
middle ages, a middle ages, that the middle ages
middle ages, French history, a middle ages
middle ages, a middle ages, which should
middle ages, but a middle ages, that
a part of the middle ages, which should
middle ages, which should be, that
middle ages, which should be, that
middle ages, which should be, that
middle ages, which should be, that

ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY
OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY BY
WILLIAM MORRIS



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY. A
PAPER READ BEFORE THE SO-
CIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF
ANCIENT BUILDINGS, ON JULY 1,
1884. BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

We of this Society at least know the beauty of the weathered and time-worn surface of an ancient building, and have all of us felt the grief of seeing this surface disappear under the hands of a 'restorer;' but though we all feel this deeply enough, some of us perhaps may be puzzled to explain to the outside world the full value of this ancient surface. It is not merely that it is in itself picturesque and beautiful, though that is a great deal; neither is it only that there is a sentiment attaching to the very face which the original builders gave their work, but dimly conscious all the while of the many generations which should gaze on it; it is only a part of its value that the stones are felt to be, as Mr. Ruskin beautifully puts it, speaking of some historic French building, now probably changed into an academic model of its real self, that they are felt to be 'the very stones which the eyes of St. Louis saw lifted into their places.' That sentiment is much, but it is not all; nay, it is but a part of the especial value to which I wish to-day to call your attention, which value briefly is, that the untouched surface of ancient architecture bears witness to the development of man's ideas, to the continuity of history, and, so doing, affords never-

Lecture IV. ceasing instruction, nay education, to the passing
Architecture generations, not only telling us what were the as-
and History. pirations of men passed away, but also what we
may hope for in the time to come.

You all know what a different spirit has animated history in these latter days from that which used to be thought enough to give it interest to thinking men. Time was, and not so long ago, when the clever essay writer (rather than historian) made his history surrounded by books whose value he weighed rather by the degree in which they conformed to an arbitrary standard of literary excellence, than by any indications they might give of being able to afford a glimpse into the past. So treated, the very books were not capable of yielding the vast stores of knowledge of history which they really possessed, if dealt with by the historical method. It is true that for the most part these books were generally written for other purposes than that of giving simple information to those to come after; at their honestest the writers were compelled to look on life through the spectacles thrust on them by the conventional morality of their own times; at their dishonestest, they were servile flatterers in the pay of the powers that were. Nevertheless, though the art of lying has always been sedulously cultivated by the world, and especially by that part of it which lives on the labour of others, it is an art which few people attain to in its perfection, & the honest man by the

use of sufficient diligence can generally manage to see through the veil of sophistry into the genuine life which exists in those written records of the past; nay, the very lies themselves, being for the most part of a rough and simple nature, can often be dissolved and precipitated, so to say, into historical substance, into negative evidence of facts. But the academical historians of whom I have spoken were not fitted for the task; they themselves were cursed with a fatal though unconscious dishonesty; the world of history which they pictured to themselves was an unreal one; to them there were but two periods of continuous order, of organized life: the period of Greek & Roman classical history was one, the time from the development of the retrospection into that period till their own days was the other; all else to them was mere accidental confusion, strange tribes and clans with whom they had no relation, jostling against one another for no purpose save that of a herd of bisons; all the thousands of years devoid of creation, laden only with mere obstruction, and out of that, as I said, two periods of perfection, leaping fully equipped like Pallas from the brain of Zeus. A strange conception, truly, of the history of the 'famous men and our fathers that begat us,' but one which could not hold out long against the natural development of knowledge and society. The mists of pedantry slowly lifted and showed a different picture; inchoate order in the remotest times,

Lecture IV. varying indeed among different races & countries, Architecture but swayed always by the same laws, moving forward ever towards something that seems the very and History. opposite of that which it started from, and yet the earlier order never dead but living in the new, and slowly moulding it to a recreation of its former self. How different a spirit such a view of history must create it is not difficult to see. No longer shallow mockery at the failures and follies of the past, from a standpoint of so-called civilization, but deep sympathy with its half-conscious aims, from amidst the difficulties and shortcomings that we are only too sadly conscious of to-day; that is the new spirit of history: knowledge I would fain think has brought us humility, and humility hope of that perfection which we are obviously so far short of.

Now, further, as to the instruments of this new knowledge of history, were they not chiefly two: study of language and study of archæology? that is, of the expression of men's ideas by means of speech, & by means of handiwork, in other words the record of man's creative deeds. Of the first of these instruments, deeply as I am interested in it, and especially on the side which, tending towards comparative mythology, proclaims so clearly the unity of mankind, of this I lack the knowledge to speak, even if I had the time; on the second, archæology, I am bound to speak, as it is above all things the function of our Society to keep before

people's eyes its importance as an instrument of the study of history, which does in very truth lead us towards the solution of all the social and political problems over which men's minds are busied.

I am all the more bound to speak on this subject because, in spite of the ascendancy which the new spirit of history has over cultivated minds, we must not forget that many minds are uncultivated, and in them the pedantic spirit still bears sway; and you will understand that when I speak of uncultivated minds, I am not thinking of the lower classes, as we uncivilly, but too truly, call them, but of many of those who are in responsible positions, and responsible especially as to the guardianship of our ancient buildings; indeed, to meet one conceivable objection, I can understand a man saying that the half-ignorant, half-instructed, & wholly pedantic way of dealing with an ancient building is historical also, and I can admit some logic in the objection. Destruction is, alas! one of the forms of growth; indeed those pedantic historians I have been speaking of had their share also in history, and it is a curious question, which I cannot follow at present, as to how far their destructive pedantry was a sign of strength as compared with our reasonable research and timidity; I say that I cannot follow this question up, though I think it would lead to conclusions astonishing to some people, and so will content myself with saying that if the narrowness, the vulgarity of mind (I know no

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

other word), which deals with our ancient monuments, as if Art had no past & is to have no future, be an historical development (and I don't gainsay it), so also is the spirit which animates us to resist that vulgarity: 'for this among the rest was I ordained.'

Now, I am sure that, so far I have carried you with me as members of our Society; you cannot doubt that in one way or other the surface of an ancient building, the handling of the old handicraftsman that is, is most valuable and worthy of preservation, and I am sure also that we all feel instinctively that it cannot be reproduced at the present day; that the attempt at reproduction not only deprives us of a monument of history, but also of a work of art. In what follows I have to attempt the task of showing you that this impossibility of reproduction is not accidental, but is essential to the conditions of life at the present day; that it is caused by the results of all past history, and not by a passing taste or fashion of the time; and that consequently no man, and no body of men, however learned they may be in ancient art, whatever skill in design or love of beauty they may have, can persuade, or bribe, or force our workmen of to-day to do their work in the same way as the workmen of King Edward I. did theirs. Wake up Theodoric the Goth from his sleep of centuries, & place him on the throne of Italy; turn our modern House of Commons into the Witen-

agemote (or meeting of the wise men) of King Alfred the Great; no less a feat is the restoration of an ancient building.

Now, in order to show you that this is necessary and inevitable, I am compelled very briefly to touch upon the conditions under which handiwork has been produced from the classical times onward; in doing so I cannot avoid touching on certain social problems, on the solution of which some of you may differ from me. In that case I ask you to remember that though the Committee has ordered me to read this paper to you, it cannot be held responsible for any opinions outside the principles advocated in its published documents.

The Society should not be regarded as dangerous, except, perhaps, to the amusements of certain country parsons and squires, and their wives and daughters.

Well, it must be admitted that every architectural work is a work of co-operation. The very designer, be he never so original, pays his debt to this necessity in being in some form or another under the influence of tradition; dead men guide his hand even when he forgets that they ever existed. But furthermore, he must get his ideas carried out by other men; no man can build a building with his own hands; every one of those men depends for the possibility of even beginning his work on someone else; each one is but part of a machine; the parts may be but machines them-

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

selves, or may be intelligent, but in either case they must work in subordination to the general body. It is clear that men so working must be influenced in their work by their conditions of life, & the man who organizes their labour must make up his mind that he can only get labour of a kind which those conditions have bred. To expect enthusiasm for good workmanship from men who for two generations have been accustomed by the pressure of circumstances to work slovenly would be absurd; to expect consciousness of beauty from men who for ten generations have not been allowed to produce beauty, more absurd still. The workmanship of every piece of co-operative work must belong to its period, and be characteristic of it. Understand this clearly, which I now put in another form: all architectural work must be co-operative; in all co-operative work the finished wares can be no better in quality than the lowest, or simplest, or widest grade, which is also the most essential, will allow them to be. The kind and quality of that work, the work of the ordinary handicraftsman, is determined by the social conditions under which he lives, which differ much from age to age.

Let us then try to see how they have differed, and glance at the results to Art of that difference; during which inquiry we shall have much more to do with the developed Middle Ages, with the work of which our Society is chiefly concerned, than with any other period.

In the classical period industrial production was chiefly carried on by slaves, whose persons & work alike belonged to their employers, and who were sustained at just such standard of life as suited the interests of the said employers. It was natural that under these circumstances industrialism should be despised; but under Greek civilization, at least, ordinary life for the free citizens, the aristocracy in fact, was simple, the climate was not exacting of elaborate work for the purposes of clothing & shelter, the race was yet young, vigorous, and physically beautiful. The aristocracy, therefore, freed from the necessity of rough & exhausting work by their possession of chattel slaves, who did all that for them, and little oppressed with anxieties for their livelihood, had, in spite of the constant brawling and piracy which forms their external history, both inclination & leisure to cultivate the higher intellectual arts within the limits which their natural love of matter of fact & hatred of romance prescribed to them; the lesser arts, meantime, being kept in rigid, and indeed slavish subordination to them as was natural. May I break off here to ask you to consider, in case any Athenian gentleman had attempted to build a Gothic cathedral in the days of Pericles, what sort of help he would have had from the slave labour of the day, and what kind of Gothic they would have produced for him?

Well, the ideal of art established by the intellect

Lecture IV. of the Greeks with such splendid and overwhelming success lasted throughout the whole Roman Architecture and History. period also, in spite of the invention and use of the arch in architecture, or rather in building; and side by side with it chattel slavery, under somewhat changed conditions, produced the ordinary wares of life; the open-mouthed contempt for the results of industrial production expressed by the pedant Pliny, whether it were genuine or artificially deduced from the conventionalities of philosophy, well illustrates the condition of the slave-produced lesser arts of the later classical period.

Meantime, and while Pliny was alive, the intellectual arts of classical times had long fallen from their zenith, and had to wade through weary centuries of academicalism, from which they were at last redeemed by no recurrence of individual genius to the earlier and human period, but by the break-up of classical society itself; which involved the change of chattel slavery, the foundation of classical society, into serfdom or villeinage, on which the feudal system was based. The period of barbarism or disorder between the two periods of order was long doubtless, but the new order rose out of it at last, bright and clear; and in place of the system of aristocratic citizen and chattel slave without rights, dominated by the worship of the city (which was the ideal, the religion of classic society), was formed a system of personal duties and rights, personal service and protection

in obedience to preconceived ideas of mankind's duties to and claims from the unseen powers of the universe. No doubt, as was natural in this hierarchical system, the religious houses, whose distinct duty it was to hold the hierarchical ideal up as a banner amongst imperfect men, fulfilled towards the arts in the earlier Middle Ages, amidst the field-serfs and their lords, the function which in classical times the cultivated Greek free man fulfilled amidst his crowd of enslaved menials. But the serf was in a very different condition from the chattel slave; for, certain definite duties being performed for his lord, he was (in theory at least) at liberty to earn his living as he best could within the limits of his manor. The chattel slave, as an individual, had the hope of manumission, but collectively there was no hope for him but in the complete and mechanical overturn of the society which was founded on his subjection. The serf, on the other hand, was, by the conditions of his labour, forced to strive to better himself as an individual, and collectively soon began to acquire rights amidst the clashing rights of king, lord, and burgher. Also, quite early in the Middle Ages, a new and mighty force began to germinate for the help of labour, the first signs of secular combination among free men, producers, and distributors.

The guilds, whose first beginning in England dates from before the Norman Conquest, al-

Lecture IV. though they fully recognized the hierarchical conditions of society, and were indeed often in early times mainly religious in their aims, did not spring from ecclesiasticism, nay, in all probability, had their roots in that part of the European race which had not known of Rome and her institutions in the days of her temporal domination. England and Denmark were the foremost countries in the development of the guilds, which took root latest and most feebly in the Latinized countries.

The spirit of combination spread; the guilds, which at first had been rather benefit societies or clubs than anything else, soon developed into bodies for the protection & freedom of commerce, and rapidly became powerful under the name of merchant guilds; in the height of their power there formed under them another set of guilds, whose object was the regulation and practice of the crafts in freedom from feudal exactions. The older merchant guilds resisted these newer institutions; so much so that in Germany there was bloody and desperate war between them; the great revolt of Ghent, you will remember as an illustration of this hostility, was furthered by the lesser crafts, as Froissart calls them; and again remember that Ghent, the producing city, was revolutionary, Bruges, the commercial one, reactionary. In England the merchant guilds changed in a more peaceable manner, and became in the main the corporations of the towns, and the craft-guilds took their

definite place as regulators and protectors of all handicrafts. By the beginning of the fourteenth century the supremacy of the craft-guilds was complete, and at that period at least their constitution was thoroughly democratic. Mere journeymen there were none, the apprentices were sure, as a matter of course, to take their places as masters of their craft when they had learned it.

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

Now before we go on to consider the decline and fall of the guilds, let us look at the way in which the craftsman worked at that period: and first a word as to his conditions of life: for I must tell you very briefly that he lived, however roughly, yet at least far easier than his successor does now. He worked for no master save the public, he made his wares from beginning to end himself, & sold them himself to the man who was going to use them. This was the case at least with nearly all, if not all, the goods made in England; some of the rarer goods, such as silk cloth, did come into the chaffering market, which had to be the case all the more for this, that the materials of any country were chiefly wrought into goods close to their birthplace. But even in the cases of these rarer goods they were made primarily for home consumption, and only the overplus came into the hands of the merchant; concerning which latter you must also remember that he was not a mere gambler in the haphazard of supply and demand as he is to-day, but an indispensable distributor

Lecture IV. of goods; he was paid for his trouble in bringing
Architecture goods from a place where there was more than
and History. was needed of them to a country where there was
not enough, and that was all; the laws against
forestallers and regratters give an idea of how this
matter of commerce was looked on in the Middle
Ages, as commerce, i.e., not profitmongering. A
forestaller was a man who bought up produce to
hold it for a rise; a regratter, a man who bought
and sold in the same market or within five miles
of it. On the advantages of the forestaller to the
community it is scarcely necessary to dwell, I
think: as to the regratter, it was the view of the
benighted people of the Middle Ages that a man
who bought, say, a hundredweight of cheese for
twopence a pound at nine in the morning & sold
it at eleven for threepence was not a specially use-
ful citizen. I confess I am sufficiently old-fashioned
and conservative to agree with them on that head,
although I cannot help perceiving that all 'busi-
ness,' properly so called, is now forestalling & re-
gratting, and that we are all the slaves of those
delightful and simple professions: so that the
criminals of one age have become the benevolent
masters of the next.

Well, anyhow, it followed from this direct inter-
course between the maker and the consumer of
goods, that the public in general were good judges
of manufactured wares, and, in consequence, that
the art, or religion rather, of adulteration was

scarcely known; at least, it was easy to win the fame of a confessor, if not a martyr, of that noble creed.

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

Now, as to the manner of work, there was little or no division of labour in each craft; that I think is some mitigation of the evil, for I look upon it as such, of a man being bound down to one craft for his life long (as he is now also), some mitigation, because, after all, there was plenty of variety in the work of a man who made the whole of a piece of goods himself, instead of making always one little piece of a piece. Also you must note that the freemen of the guilds had their share in the pasture lands of the country, as every free man had. Port Meadow, at Oxford, for instance, was the communal pasture of the freemen of that city. These were the conditions of life and work of the English craftsmen of the fourteenth century. I suppose most of us have declined to accept the picture of him which we have had presented to us by the half ignorant & wholly misleading pedants of whom I have spoken before. We who have studied the remains of his handicraft have been, without any further research, long instinctively sure that he was no priest-ridden, down-trodden savage, but a thoughtful and vigorous man, and in some sense, at least, free. That instinct has been abundantly confirmed by painstaking collectors of facts, like Mr. Thorold Rogers, and we now know that the guild craftsman led the sort of life

Lecture IV. in work and play that we should have expected
Architecture from the art he produced. He worked, not for the
and History. profit of a master, but for his own livelihood,
which, I repeat, he did not find it difficult to earn,
so that he had a good deal of leisure, and being
master of his time, his tools, and his material, was
not bound to turn out his work shabbily, but could
afford to amuse himself by giving it artistic finish;
how different that is from mechanical or trade
finish some of us, at least, have learned, maybe,
by the way of Weeping Cross. Well, that artistic
finish or ornament was not venal, it was given
freely to the public, who, I rather think, paid for
it by interest in and sympathy for the work itself,
which, indeed, I consider a good payment in times
when a man could live otherwise without payment
more gross and material. For here I must make
the confession that what is called in modern slang
the 'wages of genius,' were much neglected by the
builders of our ancient buildings; for art, as Mr.
Thorold Rogers justly says, was widespread; the
possession of some skill in it was the rule and not
the exception. As a rule, those who could afford
to pay for a building, were able to do the necessary
planning and designing, obviously because they
would naturally find help and harmonious intel-
ligence among the men they had to employ. For
instance, the tower of Merton College Chapel at
Oxford was carried out by ordinary masons, un-
der the superintendence of the Fellows of the Col-

lege. Well, judging from the wretched tinkering that the present Fellows have allowed to be perpetrated on their beautiful succursal house, St. Albans' Hall, I would not venture to trust the most respectable Fellows of that ancient House with such a job now.

So it followed from this widespread skill in the arts, that those poor wretches who had skill and taste beyond their fellow-workmen, and who in consequence had pleasanter work than they, had to put up with a very moderate additional wage, & in some cases with nothing additional; it seems they could not make good the claim now preferred for that much sinned against, and much sinning, company, men of genius, that the conformation of their stomachs and the make of their skin is different from that of other men, and that consequently they want more to eat and drink and different raiment from their fellows. In most sober earnest, when we hear it said, as it often is said, that extra money payment is necessary under all circumstances to produce great works of art, & that men of special talent will not use those talents without being bribed by mere gross material advantages, we, I say, shall know what to reply. We can appeal to the witness of those lovely works still left to us, whose unknown, unnamed creators were content to give them to the world, with little more extra wages than what their pleasure in their work and their sense of usefulness in it might bestow on them.

Lecture IV. Well, I must now say that it seems to me that a
Architecture body of artificers, so living as we have seen, & so
and History. working, with simple machines or instruments,
of which they were complete masters, had very
great advantages for the production of architec-
tural art, using that word at its widest; and that
one would, reasoning a priori, expect to find in
their work that thoughtfulness and fertility of re-
source, that blended freedom and harmonious co-
operation, which, as a matter of fact, we do find in
it. Nevertheless, in spite of this free intelligence
of the mediæval workman, or even because of it,
he was still compelled to work only as tradition
would allow him to do. If it could ever have oc-
curred to any man's mind to build some new Par-
thenon or Erechtheum by the banks of Thames,
or Wharfe, or Wensum, in the fourteenth century,
how far do you think his fellow-workman's skill
would have been able to second his folly?

But we must leave the fourteenth century awhile,
and hurry on in our tale of the workman's lot. I
have said that the constitution of the craft guild
was at first thoroughly democratic or fraternal,
but it did not long remain so. As the towns grew
bigger and population flowed to them from the
enfranchised field-serfs and other sources, the old
craftsmen began to form a separate and privileged
class in the guilds with their privileged appren-
tices, and the journeyman at last made his appear-
ance. After a while the journeymen attempted to

form guilds under the master crafts, as the latter had done under the merchant guilds; but the economic conditions of the time tending now more and more towards manufacturing for a profit, beat them, and they failed. Nevertheless, the conditions of work did not change much, the masters were checked by laws in favour of the journey-men, and wages rather rose than fell all through the fifteenth century; nor did division of labour begin till much later; everywhere the artisan was still an artist.

The beginning of the great change came with the Tudors in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, during which time England, from being a country of tillage cultivated for livelihood, became a grazing country farmed for profit. He who runs may read the tale of this change & its miseries in the writings of More and Latimer. All I need say about it here is, that it had a very direct influence upon the conditions of life and manner of work of the artisans, for the crafts were now flooded by the crowds of landless men, who had nothing but the force of their bodies to live upon, and were obliged to sell that force day by day for what those would give them who certainly would not buy the article labour unless they could make a profit by it. The brutal rapine with which the change of religion in England was carried out; the wanton destruction of our public buildings which accompanied the stealing of our public lands, doubtless

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

played its part in degrading what art was still possible under the new conditions of labour.

But the Reformation itself was but one of the aspects of the new spirit of the time produced by great economical changes, and which dealt with art and its creator, labour, far more completely than any series of accidents could do, however momentous they might be. The change in the conditions of labour went on speedily, though there was still a good deal of what may be called domestic manufacture; the workmen in the towns got to be more dependent on their employers, more & more mere journeymen, and a great change was coming over the manner of their work; the mere collection of them into big workshops under one master, in itself merely gave economy of space, rent, fire, lighting, and the rest, but it was the prelude to a much greater change; division of labour now began, and speedily gained head. Under the old mediæval conditions the unit of labour was a master craftsman who knew his business from beginning to end; such help as he had was from mere apprentices who were learning their business, and were not doomed to life-long service. But with the new system of master and men came this change, that the unit of production was a group, each member of which depended on every one of the others, and was helpless without them. Under this system, called the division of labour system, a man may be, & often is, condemned for

the whole of his life to make the insignificant portion of an insignificant article of the market. I use the present tense, because this system of division of labour is still going on side by side with the last development of manufacturing for profit, of which more anon.

Now, it is necessary for you to understand that the birth and growth of this division of labour system was no mere accident, was not the result, I mean, of some passing and inexplicable fashion which caused men to desire the kind of work which could be done by such means; it was caused by the economical changes which forced men to produce no longer for a livelihood as they used to do, but for a profit. Almost all goods, all except those made in the most domestic way, had now to go through the market before they reached the users' hands. They were made for sale, not primarily for use, and when I say 'they,' I mean the whole of them; the art in them as well as their mere obvious utility was now become a marketable article, doled out according to the necessities of the capitalist who employed both machine-workman and designer, fettered by the needs of profit; for by this time, you understand, the division of labour had so worked, that instead of all workmen being artists, as they once were, they were divided into workmen who were not artists, and artists who were not workmen.

This change was complete, or nearly so, by the

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

middle of the eighteenth century: it is not necessary for me to trace the gradual degradation of the arts from the fifteenth century to this point. Suffice it to say that it was steady and certain; only where men were more or less outside the great stream of civilization, where life was rude, & production wholly domestic, did the art produced retain any signs of human pleasure: elsewhere pedantry reigned supreme. The picture-painters who were wont to show us, as through windows opened by them, the longings and lives of the saints and heroes, nay, the very heavens & city of God hanging over the earthly city of their love, were turned, what few of them were aught else than pretentious daubers, into courtly flatterers of ill-favoured fine ladies and stupid supercilious lords. As for the architectural arts, what could you expect to get of them from a set of human machines, co-operating indeed, but only for speed and precision of production, and designed for at best by pedants who despised the life of man, & at worst by mechanical drudges, little better in any way than the luckless workmen? Whatever might be expected, nothing was got but that mass of foolish toys and costly ministrations to luxury & ostentation, which has since those days been most worthily contemned under the name of upholstery.

Is that the end of the story of the degradation of the arts? No, there is another act to the drama; worse or better according as to whether you are

contented to accept it as final, or have been stimulated to discontent, that is, hope for something better. I have told you how the workman was reduced to a machine, I have still to tell you how he has been pushed down from even that giddy eminence of self-respect.

At the close of the eighteenth century England was a country that manufactured among other countries that manufactured: her manufactures were still secondary to her merely country life, & were mixed up with it; in fifty years all that was changed, and England was the manufacturing country of the world, the workshop of the world, often so called with much pride by her patriotic sons. Now this strange and most momentous revolution was brought about by the machinery which the chances and changes of the world, too long a tale even to hint at here, forced on our population. You must think of this great machine industry as though on the one hand merely the full development of the effects of producing for profit instead of livelihood, which began in Sir Thomas More's time, yet on the other as a revolutionary change from that of the mere division of labour. The exigencies of my own work have driven me to dig pretty deeply into the strata of the eighteenth-century workshop system, and I could clearly see how very different it is from the factory system of to-day, with which it is commonly confounded; therefore it was with a ready sympathy that I read

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

the full explanation of the change & its tendencies in the writings of a man, I will say a great man, whom, I suppose, I ought not to name in this company, but who cleared my mind on several points (also unmentionable here) relating to this subject of labour and its products. But this at least I must say, that whereas under the eighteenth-century division of labour system, a man was compelled to work for ever at a trifling piece of work in a base mechanical way, which, also, in that base way he understood, under the system of the factory and almost automatic machine under which we now live, he may change his work often enough, may be shifted from machine to machine, and scarcely know that he is producing anything at all: in other words, under the eighteenth-century system he was reduced to a machine; under that of the present day he is the slave to a machine. It is the machine which bids him what to do on pain of death by starvation. Yes, and by no means metaphorically so; the machine, for instance, can, if it pleases, if it chooses to hurry, make him walk thirty miles a day instead of twenty, & send him to the workhouse if he refuses.

Now if you ask me ('tis a by question) which is the worst off, the machine workman of the eighteenth century or the slave to the machine of the nineteenth, I am bound to say that I think the latter is. If I gave you my reasons, few of you would agree with me, and I am not sure that you would

allow me to finish this discourse: at any rate they are somewhat complicated. But the question as to which set of workmen produced the better work can be answered with little complication. The machine workman had to be well skilled in his contemptible task at least, the slave to the machine needs but little skill, and, as a matter of fact, his place has been taken by women and children, and what skill is needed in the work goes to the overlooking of the labours of these latter. In short, the present system of the factory and its dominating machine tends to do away with skilled labour altogether.

Here, then, is a strange contrast, which I most seriously invite you to consider, between the craftsman of the Middle Ages and him of to-day. The mediæval man sets to work at his own time, in his own house; probably makes his tool, instrument, or simple machine himself, even before he gets on to his web, or his lump of clay, or what not. What ornament there shall be on his finished work he himself determines, & his mind & hand designs it & carries it out; tradition, that is to say the minds and thoughts of all workmen gone before, this, in its concrete form of the custom of his craft, does indeed guide and help him; otherwise he is free. Nor must we forget that even if he lives in a town, the fields and sweet country come close up to his house, and he at whiles occupies himself in working in them, & more than once or twice in his life

Lecture IV. he has had to take the bow or brown-bill from the
Architecture wall, & run his chance of meeting the great secret
and History. face to face in the ranks of battle; oftenest, indeed,
in other men's quarrels, yet sometimes in his own,
nor wholly unsuccessfully then.

But he who has taken his place, how does he work and live? Something of that we all know. There he has to be at the factory gates by the time the bell rings, or he is fined or 'sent to grass.' Nay, not always will the factory gate open to him; unless the master, controlled himself by a market of which he knows little & the 'hand' nothing, allows him space to work in and a machine to work at, he must turn back & knock about the streets, as many thousands are doing to-day in England. But suppose him there, happy before his machine; up and down he has to follow it, day in, day out, & what thoughts he has must be given to something else than his work. I repeat, 'tis as much as he can do to know what thing the machine (not he) is making. Design & ornament, what has he to do with that? Why, he may be tending a machine which makes a decent piece of work, or, on the other hand, may be an accomplice (a very small one) in turning out a blatant piece of knavery and imposture; he will get as much wages for one as the other, nor will one or the other be in the least degree within his control. All the religion, morality, philanthropy, & freedom of the nineteenth century, will not help him to escape that disgrace. Need I say how and

where he lives? Lodged in a sweltering dog-hole, with miles & miles of similar dog-holes between him & the fair fields of the country, which in grim mockery is called 'his.' Sometimes on holidays, bundled out by train to have a look at it, to be bundled into his grimy hell again in the evening. Poor wretch!

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

Tell me, then, at what period of this man's working life will you pick him up & set him to imitating the work of the free crafts-guildsman of the fourteenth century, and expect him to turn out work like his in quality?

Well, not to weaken my argument by exaggeration, I admit that though a huge quantity of would-be artistic work is done by this slave of the machine at the bidding of some ridiculous market or other, the crafts relating to building have not reached that point in the industrial revolution; they are an example of my assertion that the eighteenth-century division of labour system still exists, and works side by side with the great factory and machine system. Yet here, too, the progress of the degradation is obvious enough, since the similar craftsmen of the eighteenth century still had lingering among them scraps of tradition from the times of art now lost, while now in those crafts the division of labour system has eaten deep from the architect to the hod-man, and, moreover, the standard of excellence, so far from its bearing any relation to that of the free workman of the guilds, has sunk far below

Lecture IV. that of the man enslaved by division of labour in
Architecture the eighteenth century, and is not a whit better
and History. than that of the shoddy-maker of the great indus-
tries; in short, the workman of the great machine
industry is the type of labour to-day.

Surely it is a curious thing that while we are ready to laugh at the idea of the possibility of the Greek workman turning out a Gothic building, or a Gothic workman turning out a Greek one, we see nothing preposterous in the Victorian workman producing a Gothic one. And this, although we have any amount of specimens of the work of the Renaissance period, whose workmen, under the pedantic and retrospective direction of the times, were theoretically supposed to be able to imitate the ancient classical work, which imitation, as a matter of fact, turned out obstinately characteristic of their own period, and derived all the merit it had from those characteristics, a curious thing, and perhaps of all the signs of weakness of art at the present day one of the most discouraging. I may be told, perhaps, that the very historical knowledge, of which I have spoken above, & which the pedantry of the Renaissance and eighteenth century lacked, has enabled us to perform that miracle of raising the dead centuries to life again; but to my mind it is a strange view to take of historical knowledge and insight, that it should set us on the adventure of trying to retrace our steps towards the past, rather than give us some glim-

mer of insight into the future; a strange view of the continuity of history, that it should make us ignore the very changes which are the essence of that continuity. In truth, the art of the past cycle, that of the Renaissance, which flickered out at last in the feeble twaddle of the dilettantism of the latter Georges, had about it, as I hinted above, a supercilious confidence in itself, which entirely forbade it to accept as desirable any imitation of style but one, which one was that which it regarded as part of itself. It could make no more choice in style than Greek or Gothic art could; it fully, if tacitly, admitted the evolution of history, accepted the division of labour workman, and so, indeed, did its best, and had a kind of life about it, dreary as that life was, & expressive enough of the stupid but fearless middle class domination which was the essence of the period.

But we, I say, we refuse to admit the evolution of history. We set our slave to the machine to do the work of the free mediæval workman or of the man of the transition period indifferently. We, if no age else, have learnt the trick of masquerading in other men's cast-off clothes, and carry on a strange hypocritical theatrical performance, rather with timid stolidity than with haughty confidence, determined to shut our eyes to everything seriously disagreeable, nor heeding the silent movement of real history which is still going on around and underneath our raree show.

Lecture IV. Surely such a state of things is a token of change, of change, speedy perhaps, complete certainly; of Architecture of the visible end of one cycle & the beginning of another. For, strange to say, here is a society which and History. on its cultivated surface has no distinct characteristics of its own, but floats, part of it hither, part thither, this set of minds drifting toward the beauty of the past, that toward the logic of the future, each tacitly at least believing that they need but count of heads on their side to establish a convention of many, which should rule the world, despite of history and logic, ignoring necessity which has made even their blind feebleness what it is. And all the while beneath this cultivated surface works the great commercial system, which the cultivated look on as their servant and the bond of society, but which really is their master and the breaker-up of society; for it is in itself and in its essence a war, and can only change its character with its death: man against man, class against class, with this motto, 'What I gain you lose,' that war must go on till the great change comes whose end is peace and not war.

And what are we, who are met together here after seven years of humble striving for existence, for leave to do something? Mere straws in that ocean of half-conscious hypocrisy which is called cultivated society? Nay, I hope not. At least, we do not turn round on history & say, This is bad and that is good; I like this and I don't like that; but

rather we say, This was life, and these, the works of our fathers, are material signs of it. That life lives in you, though you have forgotten it; those material signs of it, though you do not heed them, will one day be sought for: & that necessity which is even now forming the society of the time to be, and shall one day make it manifest, has amongst other things forced us to do our best to treasure them, these tokens of life past and present. The society of to-day, anarchical as it is, is nevertheless forming a new order of which we in common with all those who, I will say it, have courage to accept realities and reject shams, are and must be, a part; so that in the long run our work, hopeless as it must sometimes seem to us, will not be utterly lost. For, after all, what is it that we are contending for? The reality of art, that is to say, of the pleasure of the human race. The tendency of the commercial or competitive society, which has been developing for more than three hundred years, has been towards the destruction of the pleasure of life. But that competitive society has at last developed itself so far that, as I have said, its own change and death is approaching, & as one token of the change the destruction of the pleasure of life is beginning to seem to many of us no longer a necessity but a thing to be striven against. On the genuineness and reality of that hope the existence, the reason for existence of our Society depends. Believe me, it will not be possible for a small knot of cultivated

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

Lecture IV. Architecture and History. people to keep alive an interest in the art & records of the past amidst the present conditions of a sordid and heart-breaking struggle for existence for the many, and a languid sauntering through life for the few. But when society is so reconstituted that all citizens will have a chance of leading a life made up of due leisure and reasonable work, then will all society, and not our 'Society' only, resolve to protect ancient buildings from all damage, wanton or accidental, for then at last they will begin to understand that they are part of their present lives, and part of themselves. That will come when the time is ripe for it; for at present even if they knew of their loss they could not prevent it, since they are living in a state of war, that is to say, of blind waste.

Surely we of this Society have had this truth driven home practically often enough, have often had to confess that if the destruction or brutification of an ancient monument of art & history was 'a matter of money,' it was hopeless striving against it. Do not let us be so feeble or cowardly as to refuse to face this fact, for, for us also, although our function in forming the future of society may be a humble one, there is no compromise. Let us admit that we are living in the time of barbarism betwixt two periods of order, the order of the past & the order of the future, & then, though there may be some of us who think (as I do) that the end of that barbarism is drawing near, and others that it is far

distant, yet we can both of us, I the hopeful and you the unhopeful, work together to preserve what relics of the old order are yet left us for the instruction, the pleasure, the hope of the new. So may the times of present war be less disastrous, if but a little; the times of coming peace more fruitful.

Lecture IV.
Architecture
and History.

1847
1848
1849

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...
...the ... of ...

WESTMINSTER ABBEY. A PAPER
WRITTEN FOR THE SOCIETY FOR
THE PROTECTION OF ANCIENT
BUILDINGS IN JUNE, 1893.

We feel ourselves compelled to call the attention of the public to the present condition and immediate prospects of the Church of St. Peter at Westminster: and this seems to us to be all the more necessary, because the public have scarcely understood the really important considerations which should be kept in mind in dealing with this piece of national property. The idea that is current in most people's minds seems to be that, apart from its function as a place of worship, it is to be used in some way or other as a kind of registration office for the names of men whom the present generation considers eminent in various capacities: the method of so registering them being the placing of a monument to their honour in the church and sometimes burying their corpses beneath the pavement. That this strange notion, which seems to have first taken root about the end of the seventeenth century, and was in full vigour all through the eighteenth and the earlier part of this century, is still alive in most men's minds, is clear from this fact, that now, when even the Dean and Chapter of Westminster have declared that burials in the Abbey must cease, & when it is clear to the most casual observer that the Church is crowded to absurdity with specimens of the gravestone-cutter's

Westminster
Abbey.

art, the public still think that the corpses of notorieties should be buried & their memories noted, if not in the Abbey, yet at any rate in some building contiguous to it, which is, if possible, to make a pretence of being a part of it. The result of this feeling in the public has been that more than one scheme has been elaborated for providing space for this registration of notables in connection with the Abbey; of which it may be said that the best of them seemed likely to do not much harm to the remains of the ancient Abbey outside the Church, and that the worst intended the actual destruction of part of the Church itself by pulling down the wall of the north aisle in order to foist a nineteenth-century imitation of thirteenth-century architecture on to us as a part of the ancient building.

Moreover, it must be said that the ordinary visitor to the Abbey goes there not to see the Church, but the monuments of all kinds that it contains, and the Dean and Chapter understand this so well, that while they throw obstacles in the way of those who want to study the architecture, they arrange for the following the round of the monuments, mostly in the company of a showman after the fashion of Mrs. Jarley.

It must be said furthermore that the building suffers from the neglect of the most ordinary measures for keeping it clean and neat, and though it is true that it is difficult to struggle with London filth, yet its worst evils might at least be minimized. If the

revenues of the Chapter are insufficient for dealing with this disadvantage, a public subscription might be opened for the purpose. Westminster Abbey.

We fear, therefore, that in following out this curious superstition of the last two centuries, that it is necessary that Westminster Abbey should serve the purpose of a 'National Valhalla,' the public have neglected all other uses to which this building might serve, except that of a place for the decent celebration of the services of the Church of England; and that they are careless of what damage the Church may suffer, so long as it fulfils these two offices. But this carelessness, as a matter of course, extends to the injury which Westminster Abbey may receive at the hands of those who do see another use for it, viz., the literal reconstruction of lost or damaged features of the architecture of its earlier life; the 'restoration,' as it has been called, of the art of a period very different from ours.

Externally at least, this great Church has, from one reason or another, suffered more from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than most others of its size and dignity: being situated in the centre of government of this country, it has not enjoyed the advantages of boorish neglect which have left so much of interest in mediæval buildings in remoter parts of the country. Every generation, after the decay of living organic art, has added its quota to the degradation of the building.

Westminster Abbey. Setting aside the destruction of furniture and decorations which as a matter of course took place under the two Puritan upheavals, and which was not so complete here as in some churches, the repairs or renewals done at different periods before our own, by men who had no sympathy with the original work, have been sufficiently disastrous to the exterior. The heavy hand of the academical classical architect has been more or less all over the building outside. The north transept, which in the time of Hollar, if one may judge from his curious nondescript engraving, was in a genuine condition, though possibly needing repair greatly, was reduced to the due commonplace ugliness which was then thought to be impressively respectable; the western towers omitted by the mediæval builders were supplied in the same style, having been probably designed by Wren & carried out by Hawksmoor, & remain in good condition, as monuments of the incapacity of seventeenth and eighteenth-century architects to understand the work of their forefathers; and perhaps one might say that they furnish a wholesome lesson to future ages not to attempt the imitation of a past epoch of art. If the architect or architects of these towers had left the Gothic alone & had built the new towers in the queer style of driven-into-a-corner Classic, which is that of the City church towers of or about that date, they certainly would not have jarred our sense of congruity so much as

the quasi-Gothic existing ones do, & also, which Westminster
is a great point, they would not have been so ugly. Abbey.

Wren's 'restoration' of the south clerestory also, was to be seen a year or two ago; this had to do with the ornamental features of the windows, which were reduced to the Bible and Prayer-book style of the period, but left the main surface of the walling alone.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw an important degradation, in the rebuilding of the exterior of Henry VII.'s Chapel by Wyatt; the type of the architects of the first period of Gothic knowledge, who were far more destructive than those of Gothic 'ignorance,' and moreover had no style of their own, & give us examples of the very extreme of academical lifelessness. Mr. Wyatt managed to take all the romance out of the exterior of this most romantic work of the late Middle Ages, and has left us little more than a *caput mortuum*, an office study of the exterior of the Chapel.

Blore began in 1809 the recasing of the north aisle of the Church, a work which was finished by Gilbert Scott: the two between them completely destroyed all trace of the handiwork of the mediæval masons in this part of the Church.

All these degradations belong to the time before the genuine 'restoration' mania fell upon Westminster Abbey; they are well meant, ill-conceived, and disastrous pieces of repair of various degrees

Westminster of stupidity, culminating in the last mentioned
Abbey. wholesale destruction of the thirteenth-century
masons' work.

Sir Gilbert (then Mr.) Scott was appointed architect of the Abbey in 1849, by which time the second period of architectural Gothic 'knowledge' had arrived. He 'carefully restored' the Chapter House, that is, he made it (we are speaking of the exterior now), a modern building, imitating with about as much success as is possible in such cases the work of the thirteenth century. It has no longer any claim to be considered a work of art; it is the architect's architecture, the work of the office, in which the executants are in no degree taken into council.

The work of 'restoring' the exterior of the Church was carried on by Mr. Pearson. His work on the south side of the Church is now pretty much complete, and is of the same quality as Sir Gilbert Scott's. But not satisfied with the eighteenth century transmogrification of the north transept (who could be?) and driven by the necessity of making some structural repairs, he carried on the idea of making a conjectural restoration of the north transept, which was begun by Sir Gilbert Scott. This work has now been accomplished, & he who runs may read.

The result is most unsatisfactory. Admitting that the eighteenth-century work was in no way good as an independent work of architecture, it was

nevertheless done by men who put some of their own thought into it, poor as that was; moreover, they had not learned how to forge thirteenth century architecture, and they had retained the outline of the old work, so that between what the eighteenth century left & what it produced, it was of some historical value at least. Its artistic value chiefly lay in the fact, that owing to the action of wind and weather, the surface of it was not unpleasant; & altogether it was so little distracting, that it was no bad preparation to the visitor for the solemn beauty of the interior of the Church.

The work that has taken its place is, as it was bound to be, with such ideas leading its architects, another example of the dead-alive office work of the modern restoring architect, overflowing with surface knowledge of the mediæval work in every detail, but devoid of historic sympathy & true historical knowledge, and with no other aim in view than imitating the inimitable. But this example of the error is made more palpable & absurd by the fact that it is an imitation of very ornate thirteenth century work, including abundance of figure sculpture. Now we must remind our readers that the free carved ornament of the Middle Ages (whether of figures or not) was the handiwork of artists, & whatever their shortcomings might have been, they were expected to, and did express their own conceptions with their own hands; they were undoubtedly the best artists of their time for the work

Westminster in hand; they belonged to no inferior rank of
Abbey. artists, that is, but were the leaders of their art;
there were no artists above them, doing work
more intellectual and educated. Their produc-
tions, therefore, were always genuine works of art,
whatever their relative merits might be.

Nor is that all; they were working under the full
influence of traditions unbroken since the very first
beginnings of art on this planet; they were entirely
unable to feign themselves other than they were,
artists of their own day: any real artist of the pre-
sent time will at once be able to see what an advan-
tage this was to them; that the bond of tradition
was so far from being a fetter, that it left them truly
free to give form to their thought according to their
own wishes. Their works still speak for them, and
show us what a great body of artists of the highest
skill and sense of beauty was at work amidst the
scanty populations of mediæval Europe.

It is clear then that the mediæval architect, master
builder, abbot, or whoever else planned the build-
ing, could never have been at a serious loss for
skilful men to decorate his building according to
the fashion of the time. Let us turn the page and
see how it stands with us now in this matter. There
are undoubtedly many clever sculptors (or mod-
ellers, rather, for they do not as a rule carve their
own work), in civilized countries; but the capacity
for designing and executing the subsidiary forms
of carved ornament has completely departed from

those countries on the one hand, while on the other, the sculptors aforesaid are divorced from architectural or ornamental work, and most of them would consider themselves treated with less than due consideration if they were asked to undertake it. The few instances in which they have timidly attempted to get into some relation with architecture have had such poor results as clearly to show how difficult it is for them to produce any work which is not merely isolated and unornamental.

This is so obvious to the architects in need of carved work for their imitative restorations that they never even attempt to employ artists on their work; but a supply has sprung up to meet the demand, & workmen are employed to produce imitative Gothic sculpture in which they have no interest, & of the spirit of whose prototypes they have no understanding; the tangible result of this being what is called ecclesiastical sculpture, so utterly without life or interest that nobody who passes under the portal of the church on which it is plastered, treats it as a work of art any more than he does the clergyman's surplice within the building. The restoring architect therefore is in this dilemma, that what there is of skilful and original sculpture is not fit for his purpose, and will not make ornament; and that what he can have, and which professes to be ornament, has no artistic value. What is to be done in such a case? The common-sense view of it would be that he had better forgo

Westminster the ornament. But here he is met by the difficulty
Abbey. that he has set out to make a scientific imitation
of, say, a French portal of the thirteenth century,
and such portals always had sculpture of such and
such subjects on them, so that his restoration will
not be thorough unless he has the due amount of
quasi-ornament to show. Therefore in the teeth
of reason and logic he is compelled to accept the
makeshift for the real thing, and as a consequence
to leave his work bedizened rather than orna-
mented.

That this has necessarily been the case with the
new front of the north transept at Westminster
must be obvious to any one who understands art;
and in spite of all the knowledge and skill of the
architects it could not have been otherwise, con-
sidering the point they started from. If any such
person doubts this, let him compare the new im-
agery of the porches with the angels high up in
the transept within; or let him look at any piece
of genuine carving there and compare it with the
subsidiary work in the porch; and he will surely
see in every line of the first the vigour & pleasure
of the hand of the workman, and in the other a
joyless putty-like imitation that had better have
been a plaster cast.

To sum up then the case of the outside of West-
minster Abbey; a long series of blunders of various
kinds, all based on a false estimate of the true value
of the building, have damaged it so vitally, that

scarcely any of its original surface remains, and we Westminster
have nothing left us but a mere outline, a ghost, Abbey.
so to say, of what it was. A great misfortune truly,
and an irreparable one. What else is left us of the
Abbey Church that is still so valuable that we are
in a trouble of anxiety lest this also should be taken
away from us?

In a few words the interior of the Church is left to
us; and this, while the exterior has suffered so
grievously as to have been all but entirely destroy-
ed, has been less damaged than many other great
churches. In fact, were it not for the result of the
mania for monuments, that as aforesaid has been
so recklessly indulged in up to the present mo-
ment, the interior of the Abbey Church would be
comparatively in a very good condition, & would
leave little to be desired save the clearing away of
the imitative and unoriginal stained glass which
has got into the windows at various times, to the
great damage of the effect of the church. As to the
monuments once more, the burden of their ugly-
ness must be endured, at any rate until the folly
of restoration has died out. For the greater part of
them have been built into the fabric, and their re-
moval would leave gaps, not so unsightly indeed
as these stupid masses of marble, but tempting to
the restorer, who would not be contented with
merely patching them decently, but would make
them excuses for further introduction of modern
work. In short, disastrous and disgraceful as these

Westminster pieces of undertaker's upholstery are, and though they make us a laughing-stock among nations for our folly in having permitted them to blemish the Church, they protect us from the still greater disaster of the platitudinizing of the whole interior by a 'thorough restoration.'

It is the rumour of the contemplation of this 'thorough restoration' which makes this memorandum of our Society necessary, and we shall have presently to recur to it: but we must first write a few words of recapitulation and of definite explanation of the position of our Society in regard to this matter.

We have stated that amidst the neglect of the general public which Westminster Abbey lies under, there are two views taken of it. The first that it is a convenient receptacle for the monuments of the notorieties that rise up, wax, wane, and set from time to time.

The second that it is a good piece for the exercise and exhibition of the skill of the modern architect, and his scientific knowledge of the methods of design and building of the Middle Ages, which is so complete that it enables him to surmount at one stride the difficulties created by the long lapse of years, and the complete change in ideas and the structure of society, which it has brought about: that in short, Westminster Abbey can be renewed in our time, and that, being renewed, it will be the same Westminster Abbey which the

eyes of Chaucer beheld when he was yet in the flesh. Those we say are two views: is there no third? Yes, there is the view of this Society, which can be stated easily and shortly. It is this: Westminster Abbey in spite of all injuries is a great work of art, valuable to all succeeding generations as long as it holds together; and it can by patience, pains & good judgment be held together for an indefinite time. Moreover the art of it is inextricably interwoven with the history, which has in fact produced it. It may seem strange to some that whereas we can give some distinguished name as the author of almost every injury it has received, the authors of this great epic itself have left no names behind them. For indeed it is the work of no one man, but of the people of south-east England, working in the manner which the traditions of the ages forced upon them. And that is the reason why we must accept as irreparable those injuries which it has received, & which we lament so much. It was the work of the inseparable will of a body of men, who worked as they lived, because they could do no otherwise, and unless you can bring those men back from the dead, you cannot 'restore' one verse of their epic. Rewrite the lost trilogies of Aeschylus, put a beginning and an end to the 'Fight at Finsbury,' finish the Squire's tale for Chaucer, even if you cannot

'call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,'

Westminster and if you can succeed in that, you may then 're-
Abbey. store' Westminster Abbey.

But though you cannot restore it, you can preserve it. And we must tell you that to do less than this is to involve yourselves in a great national stupidity, a national crime in fact. For this at least you can do, whatever the condition of the arts among us may be. Care and commonsense will enable you to do that without the expenditure of any great faculty for the production of art.

Lastly, if we are asked if it be worth while to take this trouble, and what is the importance of this piece of architecture, as architecture, or what rank Westminster Abbey takes as a work of art, we can only say, that apart from all the glamour which history & tradition have cast over it, it is a building second to none amongst all the marvels of architectural beauty produced by the Middle Ages. Like all such buildings, its beauty is convincing, and sets criticism aside. And the man who is not moved by it must have resigned the human faculty of letting his eyes convey ideas to his brain.

We must now mention the rumour of 'restoration' of the interior which has alarmed us. Something is certainly in contemplation: but what it is, whether it be needful repair or destructive restoration, we cannot tell you. And this for a very definite reason. Having, in common with the rest of the public, heard the rumour, we thought that we were bound by our position before the public to refuse to accept

mere hearsay, and to obtain definite, detailed, reliable information from the delegated guardians of the Abbey, the Dean and Chapter. We wrote to that body, then, simply as a part of the public that wished for information, and we were met by a refusal to give any information. We must suppose, because the Dean & Chapter misunderstood us, and thought we considered them responsible to us, and not to the public at large, as we certainly do consider them. We can only express a hope that they will tell the public what they intend doing with what is really, if not legally, a piece of national property, as speedily and as directly as they can.

It is in this hope that we have delayed calling public attention to the matter for so long; but we feel that it will not admit of indefinite delay, and accordingly put our views before the public.

If we are asked what should be done, our reply is very simple. We believe that one architect, however distinguished and learned, is too heavily burdened by having the sole charge of the Abbey in his hands. We think that a consultation should be called of the best practical architects, builders, and engineers, and that they should report as to the stability of the fabric and what means should be taken to render it thoroughly secure; and, a satisfactory scheme having been agreed on, funds should be obtained from Parliament, or if that were not possible, by subscription from the public at large, for carrying it out without delay. But we

Westminster Abbey. are also sure that such a scheme should disclaim most emphatically any intention of meddling with the ornamental features of the building.

The structural stability having been secured, the Abbey should be kept clean, and otherwise not be touched at all. That is the only thing to do, and there is no second course which would not lead to fresh disaster. Let bygones be bygones, but do not let us enter on a second series of alterations and improvements, which will deprive us at last of all that is now left us of our most beautiful building.

Printed at the Chiswick Press with the Golden type designed by William Morris for the Kelmscott Press, and finished on the fourteenth day of September, 1900. Published by Longmans & Co. 39, Paternoster Row, London.



NA2560
M67

