The craftsman. Vol. I, No. 3 December 1901

Eastwood, N.Y.: United Crafts, December 1901

Cover page
is not
available

VOL. I December, MDCCCCI NO. 3

The Craftsman

"The lyf so short
the craft so
long to
lerne"

THE GILDS of The MIDDLE AGES

Published on the first day of each month by THE UNITED CRAFTS at EASTWOOD NEW YORK

Price 20 cents the copy

THE CRAFTSMAN

DECEMBER MDCCCCI

CONTENTS

The articles written by Irene Sargent.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

¶ SUBSCRIPTIONS: Subscription price $2.00 the year, in advance, postpaid to any address in the United States or Canada, and to begin with any desired number.

¶ REMITTANCES: Remittances may be made by Post Office money order, bank cheques, express order, or in postage stamps.

¶ CHANGE OF ADDRESS: When a change of address is desired, both the old and the new address should be given, and notice of the change should reach this office not later than the fifteenth of the month, to affect the succeeding issue. The publishers cannot be responsible for copies lost through failure to notify them of such changes.

The United Crafts, Publishers, Eastwood, New York.

FOREWORD

THE editors of "The Craftsman" proceed to the third issue of their magazine with increased courage and enthusiasm. The kindness and appreciation with which the Morris and the Ruskin monographs were received, have revealed to them the spirit of a wide public willing to be inspired by the example of earnest minds and great hearts.

The subject of the present number, "The Gilds of the Middle Ages," is presented in the hope of giving in popular form information regarding one of the most interesting features of a period of active, aggressive municipal life. A period of decentralization when interests were conflicting, and partisanship bitter, but when every craft was an art, when the hand that labored was honored equally with the hand that wrote, and when the merchant was often a diplomat—sometimes even a statesman.

The writers upon whose statements the article is based, are Villari, Lambert and Gross, each of whom is a recognized authority upon some one phase of the subject.

The article is offered in the hope that it may awaken in those who may chance upon it, a personal desire to aid in restoring the dignity of labor and the pleasure that formerly accompanied the life of toil.

The January issue will be devoted to a study of textile fabrics considered from both the historical and the economic point of view.

The Editors further acknowledge the receipt of a valued letter from Mr. H. M. Hyndman, a friend and the co-laborer of William Morris in the cause of Socialism; portions of which letter they purpose later to publish in "The Craftsman."

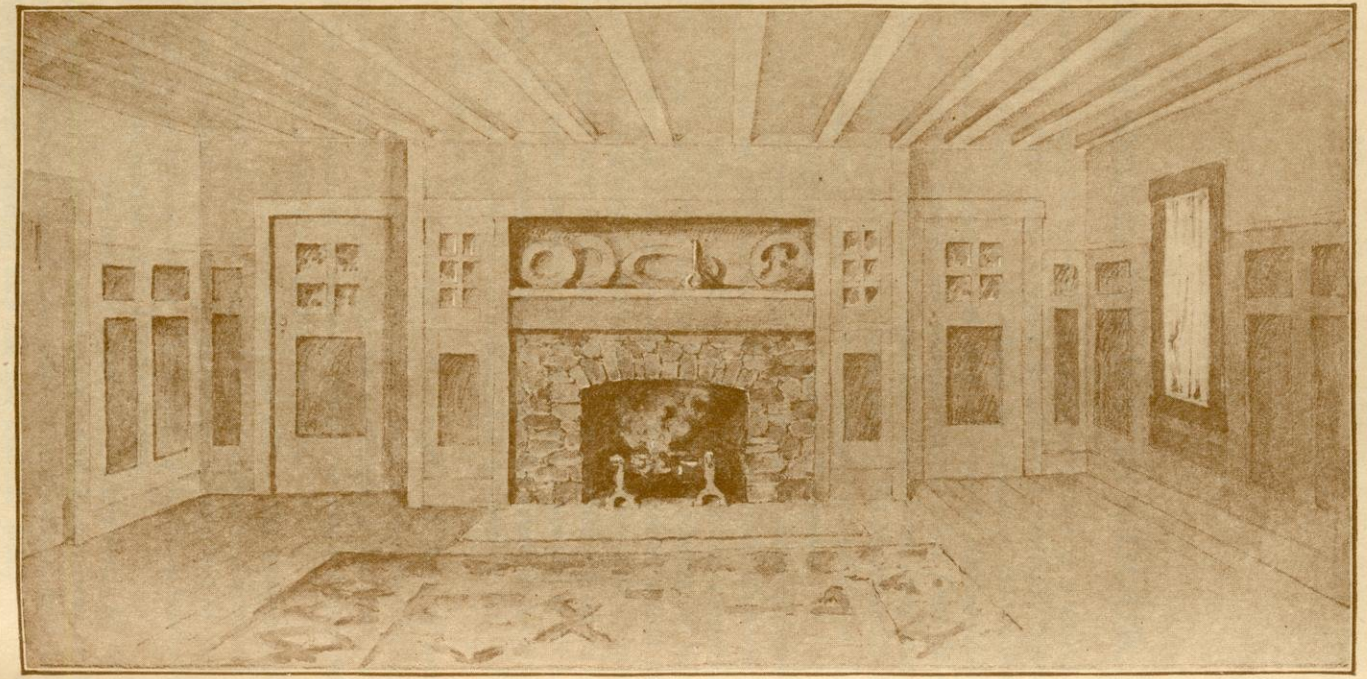
CONCERNING CHOICE IN COLOR.

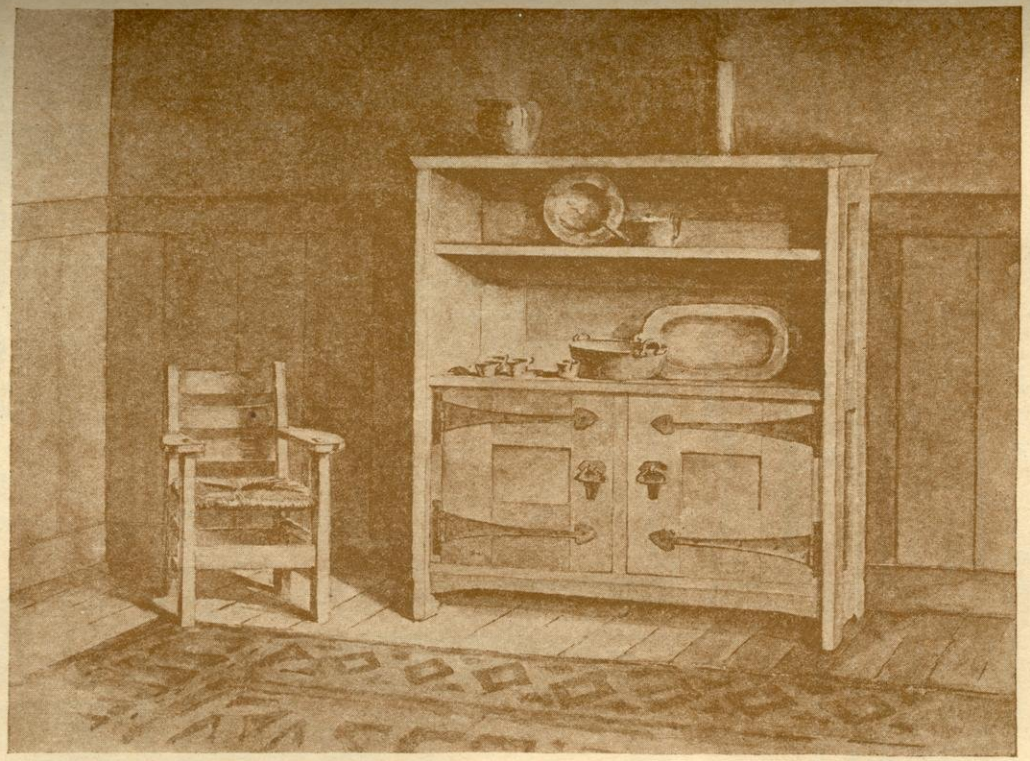
THE pleasure-element in the wise economy of nature is a strong and subtle one. Color was designed to afford a healthful degree of excitement to the vision, and so to relieve the tension of the mind fixed upon the problems of existence. A fine color-sense distinguishes the civilized man from the savage, the well-developed adult from the child and the feeble-minded: the highly-organized retina alone being sensitive to subdivided gradations and complex harmonies. To illustrate this point it will only be necessary to recall the effect produced upon different classes of individuals by the color-schemes of Puvis de Chavannes. It has been observed in France by competent judges that peasants show no interest in the mural paintings of this master, although the subjects illustrated are pastorals, miracles, allegories; all of which make strong appeal to the imagination. The explanation of the fact lies in the absence of primary colors and such tones as elude the uneducated sense: azure, which among the Greeks, ranked as no color; violet, which in the color-scale corresponds to the highest violin notes in sound; dark green, which acts as an opiate to the senses. In connection with the last named, it perhaps is not out of place to note that a modern Italian poet, with that scientific accuracy so often born of the acute artistic perception, has referred to the "divine green silence of the plains."

In following snch thoughts as these it becomes apparent that we owe a not inconsiderable share of our happiness or of our discomfort to the objects by which we are surrounded; that we are disturbed by the aggressiveness of material things, or that we may imagine them as offering us a mild and pleasing sympathy.

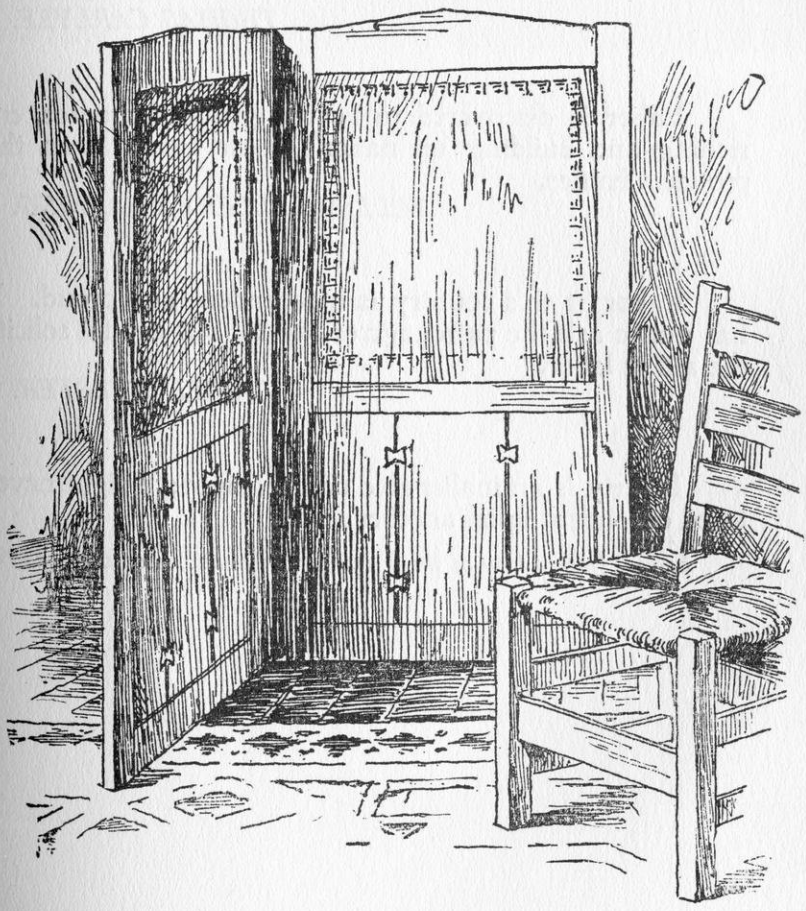
To ensure the latter effect, the modern architect puts forth his best efforts in the composition, structural and decorative, of rooms that are habitually occupied or frequented by numbers of persons; a case in point being offered by the illustration of a dining room, which appears in the current number of "The Craftsman."

The room, situated in a country house by the sea, repeats the green and gray of the scene upon which its windows open. It is finished in whitewood, which susceptible to subtle stains, here assumes a beautiful soft green soliciting both the eye and the touch. The walls





and doors are paneled with the green leather of the United Crafts, the undulating surface of which retaining every original mark of the pelt, offers a play-ground for lights and shadows. The fire-place is built of field-stones, and is flanked by cupboards, divided like the doors into upper and lower compartments; the upper being provided with panes of water-green glass; the lower with leather used in the construction of the panel, and not afterward applied as a mere decoration. The frieze space and the ceiling, which is divided by open rafters, are in gray plaster, upon which the trowel marks have been left, in order to ensure a diversified surface. The floor is laid in edge-grain Georgia pine, and completes a whole simple, unified and most attractive: altogether a room to frequent and to enjoy during that large part of the year which reaches from the greenness of spring to the dull gray of late autumn.



IN PRAISE OF LABOR AND LIBERTY

The great men of old time understood how to reconcile manual labor with affairs of state.

JOHN LOCKE.

Venerable to me is the hard hand, crooked coarse, wherein notwithstanding, lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Labor is discovered to be the grand conqueror, enriching and building up nations more surely than the proudest battles.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

Labor in this country is independent and proud. It has not to ask the patronage of capital, but capital solicits the aid of labor.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

Liberty is an inalienable natural right; a right never to be dependent upon another's will.

Extract from a law of the Florentine Republic, August 6, 1289.

THE GILDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES: THEIR PARALLELS AND ANALOGUES

OUR title is, in its way, a conjurer's formula. For at the mention of these old civic associations, thought is at once turned away from the modern, work-a-day world. A vista opens into the past, and we see Hans Sachs, sitting at a cobbler's bench in old Nuremberg, exercising his craft with forthright honesty, pouring from his lips the while a continuous flood of that song and poetry which has ever been one of the strongest factors of German brotherhood and unity. Or again, mediaeval Florence displays in the great square, before the Old Town Hall, a company of the Major and Minor Arts, each marching under its own standard: a proud, turbulent throng, vivid with color, dramatic in gesture, shouting for Giano and Dante, the champions of liberty and progress. Or it may chance that the Low Countries first present themselves to our imagination. In the teeming, industrious towns we hear the looms gossiping in the high-gabled houses, or see gathered on 'change the concourse of those merchants, whose name of Easterlings or Sterlings, given them in England, passed into our language as the synonym of absolute honesty and value. By the aid of Rembrandt's powerful characterization, we can enter into a council of the Cloth Syndics, or mingle in the ranks of a great fraternity celebrating the festival of its patron saint. Or we may picture in mediaeval splendor, the old mile-long City of London, stretching from the Tower to Temple Bar, gay with the pageant of the Twelve Livery Companies, as they participate in the Lord Mayor's Show.

Such glimpses into the past we gather largely from art and romance. But the idea of which these galas were but the superficial expression, possesses a deep social and economic significance which

has, until recently, been ignored by the historian and serious student. Contemporaneous jealousies and the strenuous, violent life of the Middle Ages suppressed or made fragmentary the records of the Gilds, so that their origin is lost in obscurity. But their opportune work in promoting the civic spirit and true socialism: that is the idea of brotherhood and companionship; the constant and joyous occupation which they gave to the middle and lower classes, until idleness became an almost unknown disease; the great belt of communication with which they circled Europe; their furtherance of wise commercial and industrial schemes and their diffusion of advanced ideas commend them especially to the new century into which we are just entering. For they are the distant parallels of movements which are agitating the life and thought in which we ourselves are the participants.

Within the past two decades, investigations into these companies or fraternities have been made by eminent scholars, who have classified the gilds and, from existing data, have sought to re-establish an entire evolutionary series of organizations, beginning in Greek and Roman antiquity, and extending into civilizations other than those of Indo-Germanic origin. These scholars have advanced theories historical and sociological as to the origin and development of the gild idea, but at the present point of their labors, they are perhaps no farther advanced than the ordinary man of thought, who can readily find the reason and motive for such an impulse in the gregarious nature of man.

The gild-idea belongs then to no particular time, or place. It is found to exert an influence in the China of to-day along similar lines and somewhat the same in extent, as in the Mediterranean cities of late Hellenic civilisation and the towns of mediaeval Europe. It is seen to curb the selfishness and brutality of oriental life; substituting therefor virtues hard to believe possible in a society existing for the most

part without religious sanction. So too, in the Europe of four or five centuries ago, the same idea of association appeased the jealous, warring spirit of peoples just emerging from the torpor of the dark ages and reaching forth untried powers, with the querulousness of self-distrust. At that time, conditions were most favorable for the diffusion and development of the gild-idea, since it best flourishes where centralized government is weakest. Therefore, when barbaric influence had destroyed the cult of the world-capital, Rome, then individualism asserted itself, and gilds were multiplied over the northern and western districts of the continent; there to build up, at countless points, what an eminent Englishman has called a religion of industry; to create a form of secular life higher than any other attained before or since.

The gild-idea being understood as the spirit of association uniting individuals for common profit and preservation, it becomes evident that although the conception belongs to no one time, or place, it is yet peculiar to any society at a fixed stage of development: being most valuable when the growing state is threatened by violence and competition from without; being least useful when the body politic has provided itself with administrative powers sufficient to enforce contracts and to protect its poorest members in their rights. The gild is consequently found practically the same and equally flourishing among peoples differing most widely from one another. It is found also at periods separated by hundreds and even by thousands of years: in the Greek-speaking colonies established by Alexander the Great; in antique Rome, throughout its history, from the age of the kings to that of the late emperors; in the Britain of Claudius' time, where that emperor recognized by decree, as "legitimate and old," a corporation, or craft-gild of blacksmiths; in Constantinople under the Byzantine princes, as well as in the Turkey of the present Sultan; among the thirteenth-century Chinese, where Marco

Polo caught glimpses of highly developed burgher-life, as well as among the same industrial people of our own day, who deeply, albeit in a restricted sense, understand the economic laws governing work and wages, and are keenly alive to the disturbing effects of labor-saving machinery; as is evidenced by the anecdote of the native clerk at Swatow, who, when shown a contrivance that crushed more sugar-cane than ten laborers with their buffaloes could prepare within the same time, cried out angrily: "How fashion those men get their chow-chow?" A sentence memorable in its way, since it condenses a whole volume of economic doctrines.

It is more particularly the pure craft-gild with its necessary ally the "gilda mercatoria," or commercial league, which comes within the scope of the present article; although secular organizations created by religious impulse can not be here disregarded; nor can those baleful brotherhoods, like the *Vehmgericht*, or the *Mafia*, escape without comment.

The gild, whatever may be its specific and secondary object, of necessity fosters localism. It is an affair and interest of the neighborhood rather than of a greater social unit. It therefore struck deep roots into the life of the Middle Ages; thriving in the Italian towns, feeding and fanning, throughout the Peninsula, the flame of that home-enthusiasm which the native historians so picturesquely call "*lo spirito di campanile:*" an excessive and distinctive localism which marked the citizens of each separate commune and gathered them, in admiration of their own institutions and art, around the tower of their cathedral, or their civic palace. But although jealous, irritable and seeking strife, these citizen-groups were yet rich in the possibilities, and even in the attainments which constitute the ideal members of a fully perfected state. The spirit of association,—as manifested in their gilds, or companies, or confraternities, as they were variously called, according to the special cause or object repre-

sented by them,—this spirit set up an ideal higher than personal interest and material gain; it taught that the main object of town residence is the cultivation of respect and regard for one's neighbor, not as a hollow dogma of morality, but as one of the most ordinary and agreeable habits of life. So it may be seen that the gild differs from the State and the Church—the other two great conceptions and expressions of the spirit of association—in that it appeals to the strictly social phase of man's nature; in that it is a voluntary organization, and one restricted within limits which command acquaintanceship and intercourse; finally, in that it provides for such every-day needs and pleasures, as are essential alike to spiritual, to mental and to physical health. The idea of the State organizes peoples into towns, provinces and nations for the furtherance of a broad system of public welfare. The Church and the great Christian or secret orders have as their object the pursuit of a religious, moral or equitable thought touching the hearts of men without regard to race, language, or nation. But the gild benefits the member in his individual capacity, providing him with work and pleasure, and mingling these two elements of his life so intimately that neither can be accepted or rejected separately. The gilds, as industrial or commercial organizations, reacted against the violence of the Middle Ages, drawing the artisan and the merchant away from criminal thoughts, and attaining for society still more positive results in progress and civilization, by enforcing industry, honesty and a strict observance of promise and contract.

As the highest and most attractive development of the gild-idea falls within the mediaeval period, it is to that division of history which we must turn for enlightenment upon a subject possessing a vital and pressing modern interest; since it is a duty awaiting whoever is willing, to aid in freeing the handicrafts from the arrogant contempt with which they are now regarded by the ignorant and the careless: a con-

dition paralleling the attitude of Rome toward her artisans, in those later times when slavery had largely supplanted free labor; the difference to-day being that the laborer has changed masters; that he is no longer attached, as a chattel, to the person of a superior individual, but that he is become the slave of the machine which he operates.

Lessons drawn from the past are never without value, and furthermore it will be pleasurable to penetrate, even if but superficially, into a period of strong municipal, industrial and social life. We must first recognize that this life in its entirety, if we except the industry of agriculture, moved within the circle of the gild; that this burgher-merchant or craftsman derived from this wide-spread system his wealth, his intelligence and his executive ability; so that individually he often came to equal the man whose importance rested on noble birth and high deeds of arms; while collectively, through his gild, or his league, he defied the power of princes, invented economic schemes which directed and fixed the currents of history, assured the permanence of parliaments and the preponderance of his own class in the world's gravest affairs. The power of the gilds lay as much in their close connection with the conduct and details of every-day life, as in their relations to national or continental enterprises. They were no mere formal organizations for purposes which began and ended with commerce and industry. The warm blood of the Middle Ages circulated and pulsed through them. To borrow some graphic words of description: "Their members sat together at the feast, stood by one another's honor in the mart, lived in the same quarter, shared the same purchase, marched side by side in the pageant, acted together in the play, and fought together in the part of the city walls committed to their care. The merchant lived in his warehouse, which was also his factory as well as his shop. The apprentice sat at his master's table for seven years, somewhat after the manner of an adopted son, and

on attaining the membership of the gild, he gained a recognized and honorable position in the land."

To inform ourselves specifically upon the subject of gild power and influence, we have but to consult the history of Florence, with the certainty of obtaining the same satisfactory result, whether we select for our researches the ingenuous narratives of the old chroniclers like Dino Compagni, or yet again the accurate and philosophic work of the still living Villari. For however and by whom it may be presented, the glory of the Tuscan capital is seen to rise from the toil of human brain and hand; while it repeatedly suffers eclipse from the strife of noble against noble, or when, lured by vanity, or as the victim of false promises, the popular party unites with some faction of the aristocracy.

The time best suited for illustration is the latter half of the thirteenth century, after the final defeat of the Ghibellines, when there came into effect a new constitution bitterly opposed by the nobles, and having for its chief articles measures relative to the organization and conduct of the gilds which became the basis of Florentine law. Associations of arts and trades had existed throughout Italy from a very early date, and had attained a greater development in inland Florence than in the communes seated on the coasts and more naturally fitted for commerce. Within these associations, the whole life of the people became concentrated, during the time when Ghibelline or patrician tyranny had excluded the people from participation in the government of the city. Therefore, it now remained for the reformers only to embody naturally evolved results in a more regular and legal form. From this time forward, the gilds assumed great political importance, the nature of which can best be understood by devoting our attention to that organization which was first and foremost in the race.

In the thirteenth century, Italian manufactures dictated the laws of taste to the world, and

secured the rapid development of the so-called *Calimala* trade. This was the art of dressing foreign cloths—imported from Flanders, France and England—and dyeing them with colors known to Florence alone. In their finished state, these stuffs were sent to all the European markets stamped with the mark of the Calimala Gild; which mark was accepted as a guarantee against any falsification of material, and as showing that the exact length of the pieces had been verified in Florence. In this way, the Calimala craftsmen and merchants rapidly gained universal trading relations, and interests extending to every place where luxury was known. Therefore, to the furtherance of its objects, the Calimala, upon the inauguration of the reforms of 1266, and in common with the other greater gilds, became constituted on the lines of a miniature republic; its organization being similar to that of the other city companies, and then assuming a final form, which is described by Villari as follows:

"Every six months—June and December—the heads of warehouses and shops held a meeting, and this Union—exercising much the same function in the gild as that of the parliament in the Republic—chose the electors to be charged with the nomination of the magistrates. First came four consuls who administered justice according to the statutes, acted as representatives of the gild and ruled it with the assistance of two councils, one being a special council with a minimum of twelve members, and the other a general assembly often varying in number and sometimes limited to eighteen. With the consent of these councils the consuls were even empowered to alter the statutes. They carried the banner of the gild, and, in emergencies, the citizens assembled at arms under their command. Then there was the *Camarlingo*, or chamberlain, holding office for one year, who administered the revenue and expenditure of the association. And as the Republic had a foreign magistrate in the person of the *Podesta*, so the gild had one also in the

person of its notary, likewise appointed for one year. He was chosen by the council-general, and was qualified to speak in both councils as the representative of the consuls. He was often employed on missions for the gild and was especially charged to enforce scrupulous observation of the statutes, with the power of inflicting severe punishment on all violators of the same, were they even the consuls themselves. All these officials were sworn adherents of the Guelph, or popular party. The notary's stipend was fixed from year to year. The consuls were bound to accept office if elected, and they could not be re-elected under the interval of one year; their salary was first fixed at an insignificant sum of money (ten lire) and the product of certain fines; but it was afterward reduced to several pounds of pepper and saffron, and a few wooden baskets and spoons. The *Camarlingo* or chamberlain—he who administered the revenue and expenditure of the association—was remunerated even more slightly, and much in the same way. Three accountants were chosen every year to investigate the actions of the outgoing consuls, chamberlain and other magistrates. Twelve statutory merchants were similarly elected, with authority to revise and improve the statutes of the gild; but all reforms suggested by them were to be approved, first by both councils, and then by the Captain of the People. The consuls took part in the councils of the Captain (the head of the popular party) and the Podesta (chief of the patricians), and they were pledged to protect the interests of the gild and to advocate laws in its favor.

"The statutes for the good of the gild, enforced by so many magistrates, prescribed hard and fast rules for the exercise of trade. Very severe punishments were inflicted when the merchandise was of inferior quality, defective, or counterfeit. Every piece was labelled, and any stain or rent unrecorded by this label entailed the punishment of the merchant concerned. Above all, there was great strictness as to accuracy of

measure. The officers of the gild frequently inspected the cloth, and made a bi-monthly examination of the measures used in all the shops. Models of the prescribed measures were exhibited to the public at certain fixed points of the city. Furthermore, the consuls appointed delegates to every counting house, to verify the merchants' books and accounts, and they severely punished any deviation from the established rules. Every gild had a tribunal composed either solely of its own members, or jointly with those of another, for the settlement of all disputes connected with the trade, and enforced severe penalties on all who referred such disputes to the ordinary courts of justice. The punishments were usually fines, and persons refusing to pay them, after receiving several warnings, were excluded from the gild and practically ruined. For from that moment, their merchandise, being unstamped, was no longer guaranteed by the association, and they themselves were unable to continue their work in Florence, and not often elsewhere.

"Outside the State, vice-consuls were deputed to guard the interests of the gild, and often ambassadors from the body were sent to the courts of foreign governments."

From this detailed account compiled from the records of the *Calimala*, by the first living Italian authority upon the subject, we may gain an idea of the thorough honesty, the perfection of system and the local pride characterizing the typical gild. And when we consider that these same principles were the governing rules of six other bodies, similar to the association of the cloth-dressers, we may venture the statement that the wonderful commercial prosperity, the artistic and industrial supremacy, the intellectual acumen of the mediaeval Florentines were the outcome of the gild system. The citizens each and all took a continuous and eager share in political life, inasmuch as every gild was an independent self-ruling institution, with separate magistrates,

laws, statutes and councils. As a consequence of such varied political and economic training, the gild-members were quick to grasp suddenly presented situations; they were adroit in diplomacy and parliamentary practice; they were accurate in business methods. Furthermore, the effect of decentralization: that is the division of the citizens into a not inconsiderable number of gilds and the distribution of the offices of the gild itself among a large number of members was to develop individualism. So that almost any one of these merchants and craftsmen, chosen at random, was capable of governing the Republic, of fulfilling with honor to himself and his city, the most delicate foreign missions, and, above all, of commanding a respectful hearing from pope, emperor and king; since his knowledge of the world, of men and of society prevented him from falling a dupe to court subtlety, while, at the same time, it rendered him equal to all the requirements of court etiquette. Again, these gilds, strongly constituted, disciplined, and well armed, were able, as it was practically proven, to assume the provisional government of the Commune, at moments of civic disturbance. They succeeded, through the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity inculcated by their societies, in destroying every vestige of feudalism in Florence, and of achieving the highest degree of freedom known in the Middle Ages. And out of this democracy there grew up a literature and an art differing from those of other mediaeval peoples; for while in Germany, France and England, the patricians rose to fame in the field of culture, the poets and artists of Florence were largely the offspring of traders or laborers. These men of the gilds contributed largely to the discovery of the principles of modern society and civilization, and, again to quote Villari: "Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the narrow Tuscan township seemed a small point of fire shedding light over the whole world." Exactly six centuries before the outburst of the French

Revolution, the Florentine Government issued a decree, assuring to the peasants, who earlier were serfs attached to the soil, a full and complete liberty; the document being, to a degree, a prophecy of the American Declaration of Independence: announcing liberty to be a natural and inalienable individual right, never dependent upon another's will; annulling every species of bondage, together with all contracts infringing upon personal freedom; creating the third estate—the people—by whom alone modern society could be evolved from the chaos of feudalism.

Another law, passed with the clearly expressed aim of repressing the wolfish rapacity of the nobles (volentes lupinas carnes salsamentis caninis involvi), prohibited recourse to any tribunal, or magistrate, save to the authorities of the Commune, such as the Captain, the Podesta, or the judges in ordinary. It thus excluded the claims of the pope, the emperor, the House of Anjou—of any individual indeed who should press pretended seigneurial rights. And as we read this old law among the state archives of Florence, we find in it that antique sense of liberty, which the Italians, as the nearest of kin to the Romans, received in heritage. We find in it too a strong sense of relationship with the reply given by the jurists of Bologna to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, when he sought from them justification for his feudal exactions in Italy: the levy of the fourth part of the wages of every Italian workman, and the taxation of the birth of every Italian child. "Am I indeed lord of the world?" questioned the Emperor. And the jurists replied: "Yes, lord as the law incarnate upon earth; but not lord in the sense of ownership."

From these documents, therefore, and from collateral evidence, we are convinced that the citizen-spirit lay at the root of the turbulence of the Italian communes of the Middle Ages, and that although failure and disaster resulted from the strife, yet the basic

idea was the germ from which have developed our own most advanced political and economic principles. We are convinced also that Florence, the typical gild-city, occupies an unique place among the factors of civilization; second indeed to that of Athens in certain phases of pure thought and in certain manifestations of supreme art, but first in all that makes for healthy intellectuality, for high thinking and plain living, for practical honesty and for the proper understanding of the world-problems of commerce and industry.

Thus, at the end of the thirteenth century, when in the north of Europe mediaevalism and all that it implies of splendid art and literature was smitten with sudden blight, Italy produced the great ideas and the great men that gave her one of the few supreme places in history, and Florence the chief seat of the new culture, was subject to the rule of the gilds. Therefore, as these trade associations constituted the chief strength and nucleus of the city, it is both interesting and useful closely to investigate their organization.

Their number, variously estimated, has been fixed by Villari at twenty-one; among these, seven being regarded as of great importance, and being known under the collective name of "The Greater Gilds." They were:

1. The Judges and Notaries.
2. The Dressers of Foreign Cloth (Calimala).
3. The Gild of Wool.
4. The Gild of Silk, or of Porta Santa Maria.
5. The Money Changers.
6. The Doctors and Druggists.
7. The Skinners and Furriers.

From this list it will be seen that the professions, crafts, and industries were combined in these companies in a way at least surprising, if not distasteful to modern ideas. But in the case of the judges and notaries, it is to be observed that they were

continually employed in the service of the gilds to whose advancement they largely contributed; offering in their functions a parallel to the corporation-lawyers of the present day. Together with the consuls, they constituted the court, or tribunal of every gild, and gave judgment in all commercial suits which were there tried. They prepared contracts, suggested penalties, drew up, reformed and enforced the statutes. By the extent and variety of the demands made upon them, they became one of the most influential of Florentine gilds, and they were reputed as the best-skilled in their profession in the world. At public functions, their proconsul, or chief officer, took precedence over the consuls of all the gilds and came directly after the chief magistrate of the Republic. In characterizing them, a contemporary historian quaintly writes:

"They may be considered as the parent stem of the notarial profession throughout Christendom, inasmuch as the great masters of that profession have been leaders and members of this gild. Bologna is the fountain of doctors of the law, Florence of doctors of the notariat."

The four gilds next in order commanded the largest portion of Florentine commerce and industry. These were the Cloth Dressers (Calimala), the Wool and Silk Gilds, and the company of Money-changers, or, in modern parlance, the Brokers. Of these the Wool Gilds merit especial attention, as evidencing the peculiar talents and shrewdness of the people among whom they were developed, for it was by overcoming the most serious obstacles that the industries which they represented, were made practicable and remunerative. These obstacles were in part natural, in part artificial. The soil of Tuscany, adapted, as we know, to the culture of olives, vines and cereals, is deficient in grazing lands. As a consequence, the wool in these districts was originally small in quantity and

poor in quality. Beside, it was the impulse of the Republic to crush agriculture, as the State was governed by artisans who, after their victory over the feudal lords, had risen to prominence. Indeed, this tendency was so strongly marked that the same Italian scholar whom we have so often quoted, observes:

"All laws and decrees of this period relating to trade are filled with good sense and foresight, while all concerning agriculture seem dictated by prejudice and jealousy."

Confronted by so serious a problem, the Florentines evaded the difficulty. They could not produce fine cloth from inferior wool; nor could they procure raw material from distant countries, without losing all profits in the cost of transportation. They therefore conceived the idea of importing the woolen stuffs of Holland, Brabant and Flanders,—which had nothing to recommend them save the excellence of the yarn of which they were woven—and of changing them from ill-dressed and ill-dyed textiles into highly finished and delicately tinted fabrics. And in this way, the lack of original material was not only supplied, but foreign products were made subservient to the interests of Florentine trade.

The history of the gild allied to that of the Cloth-dressers (Calimala), is also most suggestive and instructive. This association was known as "L'Arte della Lana," or the Gild of Wool. Therein the industry was developed, equally by private individuals and by judicious decrees of the Commune. It originated among a handful of Lombards, who in the eleventh century, as exiles in North Germany, there learned the very ancient craft of wool-weaving, and returned home a united body of workmen. A few years later, they decided to constitute themselves into a religious body, and, being admitted to the priesthood, they no longer worked as craftsmen. But engaging laymen for the

actual labor, they gave much attention to the improvement of the industry and to its development in all districts in which they founded houses. They so distinguished themselves by executive ability that they came to be employed in the different city republics, as treasurers of the public revenue, and, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, they were invited to establish a branch of their order within the limits of the Commune of Florence; since the government, with its usual economic sagacity, considered the houses of this brotherhood of weavers in the light of industrial schools. This measure proved to be one of the most successful ever adopted for the furtherance of Florentine prosperity. The woolen fabrics manufactured in Florence, gradually took rank above all others in the European market, and the Wool Gild which received its impetus through the labors of the *Umiliati* (Humble Brotherhood), accumulated immense wealth and became a great commercial power; insomuch that when joined with the Calimala, or Cloth-dressers, in any economic scheme, it grew so formidable that the home-government dared not oppose its decisions.

According to the statement of Villani, the chronicler, the Florentine Wool Gild, before the middle of the fourteenth century, "supplied a living to thirty thousand persons," and the chief profits of the trade were obtained by perfection of manufacture. This association and the Calimala afterward made a division of labor; so that while the latter gild was prohibited by statute from dyeing any save foreign stuffs, the Wool Gild had dyers of its own, who formed a dependent association. These dyers deposited with the superior gild a considerable sum of money, from which fines were deducted in case the fabrics delivered were soiled or imperfectly dyed; as every piece of stuff was subjected to close examination, and the slightest defect in color, quality, or measure exposed the workman to heavy penalties. This interdependence of crafts extended to

many classes of workmen, causing the Wool Gild to number among its associates all grades of labor, from carders of the rough material to the dyers and finers of the most costly textiles.

By this breadth of organization, the Gild covered every detail of manufacture, and the various craftsmen comprising it being banded together, no one division of the industry could raise its prices to the injury of the others. The Gilds of the Dressers and Weavers maintained a European supremacy, until toward the close of the fifteenth century, when the Flemings and the English took measures to prevent the exportation of their wool and their undressed woolen fabrics. Then, the Florentine gilds exercising these trades fell into decline, but their place in the economy of the Republic was filled by the Silk Gild, which had slowly risen to the degree of importance formerly occupied by them.

This trade, of very ancient origin in the East, was carried to Constantinople during the reign of the Emperor Justinian, in the sixth Christian century. From the Byzantine Empire it was introduced by the Arabs and Mohammedans into Greece and Sicily, and from the latter region into Lombardy and Tuscany; the city of Lucca, first of the Italian communes, raising the culture of the worm and the weaving of silk fabrics to a notable degree of perfection; while, as yet, the Florentines were pursuing the lucrative wool industry. And there is reason to believe from the silence of Villani, the chronicler, that, up to the middle of the fourteenth century, the Silk Gild was of small importance in the Commune. But in the measure that the wool craft suffered decline, the silk craft rose, and the intelligent, alert people, possessed alike of artistic instinct and of technical capability, again carried their manufactures to unrivaled excellence: the gold and silver brocades, the velvets, satins and taffetas of Florence holding, during the fifteenth century, the first place among

these fabrics in the world's market. The Silk Craft, taking its name from the quarter of the city in which it was established—the Porta Santa Maria—was one of the longest to be preserved in Florence, and its traditions still haunt the modern shops of the same historic locality.

The Gild next in order upon our list is that of the Money-changers, or Brokers. This was an enterprise representing the peculiar talent and energy in which the Florentines stood alone in the period of which we are treating. The merchants of the Commune, as we have seen, had early established relations with all the markets of the West and the East, in this way, putting into circulation large quantities of specie. They brought into extensive use, if they did not actually invent, letters of exchange for the speedy transmission of capital, and they were familiar with the greater part of the complicated operations of our modern bankers. They managed the state finances upon principles similar to those in use among modern governments. They daily assembled under the Arcades of the New Market to speculate on the rise and fall of values, just as the brokers of Paris or New York gather at the boards of the Bourse or the Stock Exchange.

The Florentines gained signal advantages in all banking operations from the fine quality of their coinage, which being of gold, twenty carats fine, was in eager demand at the commercial centers of Europe and the Orient. With their characteristic shrewdness, they succeeded in becoming the bankers of the popes; thus obtaining control over the largest floating capital in the world. A fortunate moment for them occurred at the opening of the fourteenth century, when the Papal See was removed from Rome to Avignon, and again, some seventy years later, when it was restored to Rome; these events causing great displacement of capital and the necessity for large cash remittances, which they effected, as we have before said, through the medium of letters of

exchange. In these transactions, they displayed such brilliant ability that they came to be recognized as the first financiers of the times. Henceforward, they were often invited to direct the mints and to fix the monetary standards of various European countries. With them the kings of England and of France, and the heads of the great orders of knighthood negotiated enormous loans; so bringing the names of the Bardi, the Peruzzi and the Alberti into a prominence equal to that of the modern Rothschilds. Thus the Money-Changers' Gild of Florence controlled in large measure and for a not inconsiderable space of time the fortunes of Europe: furnishing "the sinews of war," upholding tottering thrones and arranging the marriages of sovereigns. Scathed by Dante, these Florentine lenders or usurers will be held in memory as long as mediaeval literature shall be prized, and the London financier of to-day, in dating his commercial paper from Lombard Street, is forced to recognize the traces left by them in the present monetary capital of the world.

The list of the greater gilds of Florence is completed with the mention of the Doctors and Druggists, the Skinners and Furriers. These, although of less commercial importance than those already described, had yet a great influence in promoting Italian trade in the eastern ports of the Mediterranean; whence, in exchange for the splendid brocades, velvets and silks, the fine fabrics of the Calimala and Wool Gilds, for wine, oil and pitch, the traders received drugs and spices; also, many varieties and qualities of furs, which formed some of the choicest articles of luxury known in the Florentine market. The eastern trade, which has always supplied the principal source of the wealth of European nations, was eagerly coveted by Florence, although it was slowly and with great difficulty attained: the struggle occupying the entire fourteenth century, and showing the ruling policy of the Florentines to have been the extension of

their power through the development of commerce and industry. Their wars, if investigated, are found, for the most part, to have had a commercial motive and to have ended with commercial treaties. Their political friendships were sagaciously formed, with the same intention, were interrupted, at the slightest sign of a dangerous rivalry, and often turned to the most bitter and persecuting hatred, as in the case of the Genoese whom the Florentines flattered, favored and aided, until such time as the former had overcome the Pisans who occupied the approaches to the sea.

In view of these and the other examples of Florentine policy before quoted, we find the history of the Commune far more logical and consequent than it would at first appear to be. The turbulence is

seen to be superficial, concealing beneath its eddies, deeply underlying principles: patient ambition, adroit adaptation of means to end, and above all an enduring obstinacy superior to all obstacles and defeat. The spirit of the typical craftsman, absorbed in his work, bending every energy to the accomplishment of a perfect object, taking a violent pleasure in his labor, may be received as the epitome of the Gild-City. The Commune was but the multiplication of the individual.

We are now to turn from the story of the Greater Gilds, as revealed in their constitution and their external policy. It will be instructive from the modern. as well as from the historic point of view to note the attitude of the different classes of Florentines toward them. They had enemies from above and below; since the Republic comprised three classes of citizens and three separate parties. The combined efforts of the craftsmen and traders—of the Greater and Lesser Arts—had conquered the nobles and cast out feudalism from the Commune, but the stronger associations were not disposed to grant the weaker a part in the government which the latter had helped to establish. To begin with, here lay injustice which was repaid with jealousy and petty injuries, such as always come from the oppressed. The Greater Gilds were recruited from the so-called *popolani grassi* (rich commoners); while the men of the Lesser were artisans of the rougher grades of labor, numbering among their divisions shoemakers, masons, carpenters, builders, bakers, inn-keepers, and other trades. The difference between the two classes of associations was not merely one of degree, as regarded their prospective wealth and power; but they necessarily pursued radically differing policies. The members of the Greater Gilds were pledged to important foreign schemes—such as wars to assure Florence an unbroken highway to the sea, or the maintenance, through diplomacy, of full communication with the North and the East, in order that rival

commonwealths might not unawares gain trade advantage over the Republic. To effect these objects the rich craftsmen were willing to subject themselves and the Commune to unlimited sacrifice. Their minds being given wholly to important general interests, they were, as a consequence, simple in their lives, abstemious in their habits. They pursued their ends much as Napoleon prosecuted his campaigns: with entire political ruthlessness and a savage contempt for personal consequences.

On the contrary, these external interests touched but slightly the men of the Lesser Gilds whose membership was drawn from the populace. It concerned these last that Florence should be a splendid, luxury-loving city, in order that they might build its palaces and supply means of gratification to artificial wants. The populace, too far removed from the nobles to note the uselessness of extravagance and pomp, were dazzled by external brilliancy; while the Greater Gildsmen, the superiors of the nobles in intelligence, fortitude and all that makes for citizenship, maintained a simplicity that was early Roman, or rather patriarchal in character. They it was who were behind the laws forbidding luxury in dress, restricting the number and choice of foods at banquets, and excluding gold and silver plate from private tables. Their policy and purpose had so mastered them that they were willing to cast therein their persons, their lives, and their pursuit of happiness.

To take advantage of these differences between the *popolani grassi* and the populace was the line of action pursued by the nobles. And this for class interests. The arguments used by them to convince their humble adherents, were similar to those of modern demagogues. They represented to the mob that whereas all the gilds were equally engaged in trade and commerce, a large number of them had no share in the power; that the greater gildsmen were monopolists both political and financial; that in order to ensure happiness,

public and private, the power of the great craftsmen and merchants must be brought to nothing.

These efforts and arguments, the last of a dying aristocracy, were too feeble to produce direct and rapid results upon the democracy of the city. And yet they awakened revolutionary passions in the mob, and provoked a class strife which kept the Republic divided and which finally caused its fall.

The Lesser Gilds at last obtained a share in the government, only to use their power against the greater associations. Always ready for attack, they unloosed the spirit of anarchy in all councils, tribunals, and public gatherings; inflaming the disaffected in order to serve their own ambitious ends, bringing about bloody revolts, and preparing the rule of the Medici. But for the two centuries in which Florentine affairs were practically concentrated in the hands of the *popolani grassi*, the Commune offered an example until now unparalleled in history. We may imagine it as an immense commercial house situated in the center of Tuscany and surrounded by others bitterly competing with it for success. Unaided by international law and equity,—for these principles were unknown in the Middle Ages,—it makes an inveterate fight for existence and for credit, until, at last, it is forced to succumb to claims pressing from without and within.

Neither nations nor individuals can divorce themselves from the spirit of the times in which falls their active period of existence. Mediaevalism—that is: isolation, exaggerated individualism, selfishness—was as yet too strong to permit that permanent success and prosperity should remain on the side of the gilds. Two bitterly opposed systems were at war with each other in every Italian commune—most of all in Florence. The City as an abstract idea was the primitive atom, the germ-cell, as it may be called, of Roman society. The idea became a cult, a religion, and Rome

with all that it implied of majesty, received the name of Eternal. It was the idea of law uniting men in socialism, if the primitive meaning of that word: companionship, be taken at its value. The Italians received the idea as a rightful heritage, and were always more or less subject to it. Hence their sectional patriotism: *"lo spirito di campanile,"* owing to which each city-republic struggled to annihilate its neighbors and rivals, and to build up anew at least the semblance of the old glory. But the traces of the barbarians were everywhere apparent over the length and breadth of Italy. The early Teutons had known nothing of citizen life. They were nomadic by principle, and passing from place to place, they willingly burned their embryo towns. Each count ruled over his district, according to his personal ideas of justice, oftentimes with primitive violence. Wide tracts of country were inhabited only by serfs who tilled the soil. Everywhere there prevailed a tendency among the people to segregate, to divide into groups. The descendants of the Teutons inherited an exaggerated sense of personality, which made it difficult for them long to submit to a common authority. The factional element which is so marked in the history of the Italian communes is therefore the manifestation and legacy of the Teutonic principle: individualism, as opposed to Latin sociability; while the latter principle was preserved, in large measure, through the *scholae,* or associations of craftsmen, which, having their origin in antique Rome, survived throughout the Middle Ages, continuing the classic tradition, and, when other aid failed, protecting the inhabitants of cities, and guarding, as well as they might, the public welfare. The gilds themselves finally fell apart, but not before they had proven to the world the benefits accruing from the spirit of association: leaving behind them the work of the cathedral builders as exemplified by the *magistri comacini,* or Gild of Como Masons; bequeathing to the annals of commerce and trade a story of perfect integrity,

as typified in the Wool Gilds of Florence; creating in Germany a national fund of art too great ever to leave her people poor in that which makes for the immaterial pleasures of life; filling the towns of the Netherlands and the old City of London with the memories of lives in which labor, art and recreation were so discreetly mingled, that they did not, as now, represent distinct and reciprocally hostile elements, but rather concurred in a harmony sweet and indissoluble.

We have, up to this point, regardcd Florence as the typical gild-city and followed the various steps in her civic development: the enactments of 1266 which gave a definite and final form to the Greater Gilds and prepared their supremacy in the Commune; the recital by the government of a political creed, which is as the germ of the American Declaration of Independence, preceding it by five centuries; the great extension of the power, political, financial, and social of the Republic, due to the wise constitution and the constant policy of the gilds; the splendid maturity of "the narrow Tuscan township," attributable in great part to these same trades and crafts association; finally the decline of the city-republic occasioned by class-strife between the Greater and the Lesser Arts.

If now we turn our glance northward we shall find that the thirteenth century has everywhere the same organic, constructive character; that the gild-idea, or spirit of association, is universally active and productive. In that century, the parliament and the university are developed; the Church produces a succession of her greatest spiritual princes; the European nations are constituted, as we now know them, and great kings rise to rule over them: kings who are at once firm supporters of the people against the nobles, wise framers of constitutions and charters, students of scientific law, promoters of learning, patrons of art, and, from every point of view, constructors and organizers rather than

destroyers, or negative forces. The kings and the burghers now divide the inheritance of feudalism: the kings growing strong through alliance with the wealth, intelligence and energy of the people; the citizens welcoming the kings as the representatives of civilization, peace, and good government. Now, also, are the towns developed, since they represent the spirit of association. At the end of the thirteenth century, Europe is scattered broadcast with municipal groups, which bear the seeds of all modern developments, political, economic, and intellectual. Among them, we note the powerful free cities of the Rhine, the Danube, the Elbe, and the Baltic, the wool cities of East England, the industrial towns of the Netherlands and the river cities of France.

In the last named country, the gild shows itself to have had a continuous life, from the period of the Roman Empire, through the Gallic town to the Middle Ages, when it attained its highest development. Gallo-Roman collegia existed in Amiens, Arles and Orleans, and in these towns, as in their similars, the chief gild prepared the way for a more advanced form of municipal government, and took the foremost place in the administration. Thus, for instance, at Rouen, the "*Marchants de l'eau*" (river traders) preceded the establishment of the Commune. In Paris, the "*Marchants de la Seine,*" for centuries were confused with the municipality. These gildsmen stood in the same relation to their respective towns as the "*popolani grassi*" to the Commune of Florence, in that they constituted the aristocracy of commerce. Their one steadfast purpose was to increase the wealth, to further the political importance and the artistic glory of their town. Although widely removed from the self-consciousness, and the theories of modern sociologists, they yet felt that the life which they led within the walls of their fortress-city, gave the type and measure of their civilization. These northern gildsmen, as well in Germany, Flanders and

England, as in France, were more spiritually-minded than the purely intellectual Florentines. There was among them the same love for good work as good work, and further they were inspired by a deep sense of social duty and personal faithfulness. These statements apply especially to the Flemings, the Dutch and the English, among whom it would be most interesting to linger; since the peoples of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon origin seem to have typified the principles of the ideal gild: because their conception of the same included the elements of good-fellowship and conviviality, which were, to a degree, ignored by the abstemious and grave Florentines.

It can not be too often asserted that one of the strongest principles of the gild—the one indeed which most contributed to its continued existence—is this same social element; since it provided for the demands of every-day life, inspired the gildsmen with the idea of their personal worth and met the wishes of "every man in his own humor." Still another element of permanence found in the gild lies in the fact that it was a voluntary association; each member entering the body because he so desired, contributing to the common expenses, being conscious of a strong sense of membership and, as a consequence, maintaining the always pleasurable and suggestive mood produced by self-respect.

These essential principles to which mention more or less vague has been made in this paper, are formulated by Lambert in his highly-prized work, "Two Thousand Years of Gild Life." He thus gives them:

1. Fellowship confirmed by an oath or promise.
2. Regular contributions.
3. Special care for the funeral rites of a member and commemoration by masses for his soul.
4. Periodical feasts.
5. Rules for preserving courtesy and order.
6. The application of the fellowship or associ-

ation to the most pressing need of the society of the day, whether mutual insurance against theft or fire, facilitation of trade, or, in an imperfectly organized society, for purposes of police.

The first five of these principles are the most important and invariable. They can be traced in the associations of Rome from the early days of the monarchy to the later days of the empire in Greece, Asia Minor and in Romanized Gaul. They re-appear in the mediaeval gilds and are reflected in the modern crafts and trades organizations of Eastern peoples.

It would seem therefore that the very nature of the gild provided first of all for the common good; that it made personal affairs subservient to schemes and movements of general interest; that it accomplished for mediaeval Europe the same good results that are effected in modern China through similar associations: the decrease of blood-violence and selfishness, the prevention of dishonesty and trickery, the substitution of large for petty interests in an imperfectly organized society. But theory runs counter to practice, and it must be confessed that the gilds in England and on the continent did not always fulfil the mission and serve the ends for which they were created. Such is the criticism of Dr. Gross, the first world-authority upon English municipal organizations. This author, in his standard work, "The Gild Merchant," writes thus:

"If, in viewing the past, one's vision is not impaired by the rose-hued glasses of sentimentality, one must perceive that the mediaeval gildsmen were not always animated by lofty motives of brotherly love and self abnegation in their behaviour toward their fellow-men. Indeed, the desire for gain or self-advantage, which, from the outset, was the *raison d'etre* of the Gild Merchant and many other gilds, degenerated at times into the most reprehensible forms of selfishness. The gildsman may have been kind and loving toward those of

his own fraternity, but he was too often harsh and oppressive toward non-gildsmen."

These statements made regarding the "Gilds Merchant" of English towns are corroborated by the Statutes of the Realm, in which, during the reigns of Edward Third, Richard Second and Henry Seventh the gilds frequently meet with severe condemnation. Reference is therein made to their exactions "after their own sinister mind and pleasure;" to the "outrageous hardships" which they impose upon the people; to unreasonable ordinances passed "for their owne singler profite and to the comen hurte and damage of the people."

But even against this strong evidence, the Gild Merchant must still be regarded as an almost unalloyed good, although the organization be construed in its most restricted sense, and taken to mean a concession of the exclusive right of trading within a given borough. In that case even, the gild constituted that department of town administration whose duty it was to maintain and regulate trade monopoly; in fact, an early early form of our modern Chamber of Commerce.

By this and other resemblances more or less superficial, we are led to institute parallels and comparisons between the mediaeval gilds and the modern trade combinations. Also, to seek lessons from the past for the prophecy and guidance of the future; that is; to bring the elements of the industrial problem into relief.

The first point of interest to be noted is that the Trades Union of to-day can only very partially recognize its ancestor in the mediaeval gild; this statement being made in a general sense and with allowance for the country of the older gild supplying the first member of the comparison.

The trades union is a combination of artisans or laborers among themselves; the em-

ployer of labor being outside the union and entering into separate combination with other employers. On the contrary, the old English gild up to the eighteenth century was an association of all the workers in the craft; whereas the old French gild more nearly resembled the modern union, in that employers were excluded from it, and that a general and secret fraternity, or *compagnonage* of the crafts existed for the whole country. In England, every craft, from the most to the least important, was completely organized in itself, so that the interests opposing it were not hired laborers and employers, but other crafts and the public. In this way, the social phase, that is class-antagonism, was excluded from the problem; leaving only the economic element, that is: the question of supply and demand for the products of the craft. Admittance to the fraternity was made dependent upon a seven years' apprenticeship; allied trades were restricted to their own departments; no carpenter being allowed to do the work of a shipwright, no cobbler to make shoes, and no intruder from another town to exercise his calling. Restrictions to these otherwise dangerous influences were made by admitting every fraternity of craftsmen to a position in the larger, political corporation of the town; this public recognition entailing public control of the craft; the trade ordinances being incorporated into the by-laws of the town, but all the actions of the fraternity being subject to the supervision of the mayor.

Were we to follow the details of the organization and workings of the gild thus outlined, we should realize that to restore it, or even to imitate it, would be impossible. It belongs to another and narrower world.

In England, the gild was local, and in nowise connected with similar organizations existing in other towns. The work done by it was accomplished by handicraft, manufacture was carried on by traditional methods and dependent for its degree of perfection

upon the individuality of the craftsman. The system was complete, productive of honest and refined work, but ill-adapted, even hostile to expansion. How different are the present conditions governing labor, supply and demand! This is the age of machinery and mechanical device, of scientific methods of manufacture, of a complicated but universal system of finance, of fluidity of capital, of the railway and the steamship which practically annihilate time and space. Localism is destroyed, and no financial methods can prevail, without the approval of the entire trading world. The isolation in which each town stood self-sufficient, has been replaced by the conditions of a forced and more or less complete universal co-operation. To form a union of labor as symmetrical as that of the old gild system would be for economists a most difficult, if not indeed an impossible task, since such a union would be conditioned by a degree of permanence in the materials and methods of production: a state of things inconceivable in view of the constant improvements in machinery, discoveries in chemistry and the natural development of trade.

The most important factor of the industrial problem—the one most difficult to deal with—relates to the division of labor. The lack of stability in the kinds and methods of work and the rapid increase in the number of workmen forced to earn their bread, but apprenticed to no special trade, constrain large classes of individuals to devote themselves to some small detail of manufacture, some minute subdivision of labor. Thereby skill and rapidity of production are developed in the workman to a high degree, but as the process, through increasing repetition, becomes mechanical with him, he grows cramped in body and mind, and reduced to the level of a human machine. Under the old gild system, which also, to a degree, included division of labor, such results were impossible; the market being too restricted to demand unduly rapid production and the unhappy consequences

thereon dependent; the craftsman producing his wares for the use of his friends and neighbors, rather than for the consumption of an indefinite "market;" the life of the craftsman being made up of combined work, recreation and pleasure, the combination of which has been lost in modern times.

The remedy for the actually existing conditions can not therefore be found by looking backward. It lies rather in the grasp of our legislators and educators. The mass of the people must receive a thorough technical, a primary general training, which, while it does not preclude skill in any one department of craftsmanship, yet affords, in emergencies, the basis for change of direction and application. The hours of labor and the means of recreation must be such as shall allow the healthy development of all, rather than of one set of faculties; so that the cramping effect of devotion to one series of mechanical acts may be counteracted.

Still another phase of the industrial problem relates to class representation, which the craftsmen of the Middle Ages obtained in certain times and places. Far back, as we know, in the mediaeval period, a certain element among the serfs withdrew from the tilling of the fields to form the towns and constitute a division of society hitherto unknown, as the artisan class of antiquity, being enslaved, can not enter into comparison. Much later, when the European nations, as we now know them, developed, when the kings and the people united for mutual protection of rights, property and person against the nobles, then, the Parliament arose; first occurring in embryo form in Sicily and Spain, and gradually asserting itself throughout Europe, with the result that the common people became a political and economic power. The towns, the gilds, the universities, commerce and the crafts developed side by side. Codes, constitutions and charters came into existence, and one sovereign of the period—Edward First—gained for himself the title of the English

Justman. As we have before seen, the English gild obtained a recognized position in the larger corporation of the borough, and, on the continent, in many towns, the crafts became *estates*, or divisions of the governing bodies, sitting by means of class representation in the Town's Chamber. A similar representation is attempted to-day in England, France and America, when elections to public office are made of members of the so-called Labor Party. But such holders of public trusts are too often demagogues in the true sense: leaders of the mob seeking notoriety and pursuing personal interests, rather than the good of the high cause which they so grievously misrepresent. The dignified, prudent, self-respecting artisan is a fast failing species, that will soon become extinct, unless the nations by wise forethought shall prevent so grave and significant a disaster. The impending trial of strength between the immense social forces of Labor and Capital must be averted by restoring in the life of the craftsman certain beneficent, nourishing elements which have been lost in the passage of the world from mediaeval to modern times. The gild-spirit must be fitted to a new environment.

A NEW IRISH INDUSTRY.

AN industry promising important results, both artistic and economic, has lately been established in the Western Highlands of Ireland. And as America will be benefited by the products of the newly-founded workshops, it would seem well to popularize information regarding the region, the craftsmen and the labor.

The enterprise has its seat at Kilcar, Donegal, and its object is to produce hand-woven, or "tufted" rugs and carpets, of the kind known as Persian or "Turkey." The impetus of this industry, the methods therein employed, and even the name given to the fabrics are due to William Morris, who, it will be remembered, revived the art of tapestry-making in England, some two or three decades since. The establishment of the industry is due to a firm of noted Scotch manufacturers of artistic textiles, and the opening of the workshops was an occasion of rejoicing for the peasantry of the region, who assembled to hear addresses from the Head of the Company, from the Lord Bishop of Raphore, and others who are laboring for the success of the undertaking.

In order to appreciate the significance and value of the plan proposed, it is necessary to become familiar with the natural characteristics of the district, as well as with the economic condition of the people thereon dependent.

From Donegal to Galway, and even farther south, there is no richness of soil. There is also a complete absence of those mineral products, coal and iron, which have made the world so wealthy in modern times.

These stubborn facts have long been deplored by such as have recognized that even beneficent laws for Ireland would be less effectual in doing away with her poverty and suffering, than the development of active industries, which should provide the means

of life, encourage thrift, and so promote happiness among her people. But up to the present time, possessed only of meagre resources, the peasantry have struggled with barren rocks and bogs, in order to gain the most primitive and insufficient food and shelter. The great number of these unfortunates is proven by the cotters' huts which the traveler sees thickly scattered over the hills in all directions; and this fact argues much for the inherent and independent attractiveness of the region, which seems to hold the love and faith of its children, much in the way that Switzerland retains her population in spite of the advance of modern ideas and of the everywhere increasing desire for wealth, comfort and luxury. Furthermore, the natural characteristics of the Donegal-Galway district render it a fitting place for the experiments of the new school of economists, who are also philanthropists: legislators, clergymen, artists, art-critics and novelists, all intent upon relieving the congestion of the city-tenement, of alluring recreant farmers back to the soil, and of raising the status of rural life.

It is said by those whose knowledge of the Donegal region entitles their opinion to respect, that one stroke of a McCormick machine in Colorado yields a greater amount of food material than the Celtic peasant is able to produce with his spade in the round year. Indeed, the hills are so frankly hostile to tillage that the very tourist seeking solely his own pleasure, is startled from his pursuits to ask himself if there exist anything which these peasants can give in exchange for some slight portion of the outside world's fruitfulness.

This question, however serious and insistent in the past, will soon cease to arise; for the new industry, furthered by the sharp wits of the native population, is expected to furnish for this poor and barren region a sufficiency of the necessities, together with a few of the comforts of life.

The craft of Turkey carpet-

weaving, upon which these alluring hopes are founded, does not entail hard labor, and, wherever it is exercised, employs large numbers of young people, both boys and girls. Its one great principle and demand is hand-production. Its processes can be briefly described:

The "tufts," or "mosaics of small woolen squares," as William Morris called them, are knotted by the fingers into longitudinal warps, which are stretched between two long parallel beams. The design is placed in front of the weavers, and girls varying in number from three to twelve, according to the size of the carpet, select, row by row, the colors indicated. The worsteds are then tied, bound down by "shoots" of woolen weft drawn across the entire width, and finally beaten firm by small iron-toothed hammers. The work is rich in variety and interest; permitting, even requiring, individuality and taste. Altogether, the industry is perfectly suited to mountainous and grazing lands, where the foes of prosperity and contentment are isolation, sterility and the human despair consequent upon the avarice of Nature. In such regions, the industry is greatly promoted by otherwise deplorable conditions, since, as in Donegal, the scheme is then made to include the rearing of sheep which shall meet all requirements of raw material used in manufacture. In the case of the West Ireland industry, the dependent arts of spinning and weaving have been added to the principal craft, with the view of lessening the cost of production, and also with that of sending forth distinctive Irish fabrics, which shall command respect and create a demand in the markets of the world.

The economic and financial possibilities of the enterprise have been thoroughly studied. It is estimated that one girl employee will consume in one year the wool of two hundred, twenty-five sheep; so that when the industry shall demand the labor of one thousand girls—as is expected will be the case within a few years—it will also necessitate the annual consumption

of more than twenty thousand fleeces: therefore, the division among the local sheep-growers of fifteen thousand pounds sterling. Again, in the spinning, dyeing and weaving of this wool the families of these same farmers, or small holders, will earn in wages from twenty to thirty thousand pounds; making a total of perhaps forty thousand pounds circulated annually among the inhabitants of the Donegal hills.

Confining their first efforts wholly to the Donegal district, the promoters of the enterprise are building workshops at Killybegs, capable of accommodating four hundred workers; this number being available within a radius of two miles from the village, which having an ideal harbor, as well as a branch of the Donegal Railway, is selected as the central depot for the wool, and also as the point at which spinning and dyeing shall be done for the entire industry. Branches for weaving only will be established in a number of villages, from which collections of products will be made to the central depot for finishing and shipment. In order to place the more distant and inaccessible villages within the circle of the new activity a simple device has been invented by means of which the girls having learned the craft, may take the frame-loom to their homes, and weave the rugs, or tapestry panels, either within their dwellings, or as they tend the sheep grazing on the hillsides.

Those who have seen the Donegal carpets concur in the opinion that they have a distinct commercial, as well as a high artistic value; that they need not appeal to sympathy and sentiment in order to obtain a recognized and secure place in the world's work. Nor is it desirable that they should receive attention beyond that which is due them by reason of honesty of material, beautiful color and fine qualities of design. Otherwise, they will quickly fall into the number of those enterprises which, sustained awhile by a borrowed sentimental value, fail utterly when once this support is with-

drawn from them, through the caprice of a fickle public. But the merit of the Donegal carpets is inherent. It lies in the difference which distinguishes thoughtful, intelligent labor from purely mechanical processes; the Donegal carpet bearing the same relation to the ordinary smoothly-shaven, power-loom fabric that the real picture occupies toward the "smart" colored lithograph. And it is interesting to note that the promoters of the Donegal industry have been and are now the successful manufacturers of many varieties of power-loom carpets; further, that they have been turned backward to the primitive art of weaving by the demand of art-loving patrons who desired fabrics which can not be exactly reproduced to an endless number of specimens. The real article has that dignity which comes from the human thought inwoven and ingrained in the threads and colors: an indefinite quality which never fails to arrest and hold the educated eye.

With the pursuit of the industry and the passage of time, much will be accomplished for the benefit of both makers and purchasers: the makers will progress in technical processes, manual skill and artistic perception; the purchasers, through familiarity with the work, will become expert judges of dyes, texture and design, with the consequence that ugly, crude and cheap fabrics will be expelled from the market. The same quality of individual art has maintained the supremacy of Oriental carpets for generations, or rather for centuries. It stamped as well the textiles produced at Hammersmith by William Morris, although the latter were largely deprived of their educative power through their extreme richness and exclusiveness.

The workers chosen for the Donegal enterprise show admirable aptitude for their task. The girl weavers prove that hereditary influences are strong in them. They have a dexterity of hand and a sharpness of vision that are most probably the outcome of

the lace and "homespun" industries which have been carried on for generations in Ireland. They have moreover taken up the weaving with a spirit and pleasure that encourage as well as astonish the promoters of the scheme. Altogether, the work, even as it now stands near its beginning, is an object-lesson in economics. It turns to profit the natural disadvantages of a region, converting them into a source of public wealth. It affords a means of healthful activity to a large number of individuals who otherwise were isolated and idle through no fault of their own; giving them a sense of sharing in the world's work, and thereby increasing their self-respect and courage. It contributes materially to the progress of art by changing a staple and necessary article of consumption from a thing of ugliness into a thing of beauty. It is worthy of imitation and multiplication wherever similar conditions of soil, climate, or over-population press hard upon the people.

OUR ILLUSTRATIONS

A NUMBER of the illustrations contained in the present number of "The Craftsman" need a word of comment and explanation.

The cover displays a border of interlaced lines adapted from a French ecclesiastical manuscript of the thirteenth century. But the design, as here shown, points to a much earlier origin. It was developed in France and other continental countries from "motives" of the Celtic art which flourished in the eighth and ninth centuries, notable examples of which are the famous "Book of Kells," and the Runic crosses found in the island of Iona. The design consists of two elements, the dragon and the knotted rope; the former of which represents the serpent, dragon, or "worm" of the Nibelungen Lied, of late years made so familiar by the Wagner opera of Siegfried. The knotted rope is the power which overcomes and strangles the beast. This mythological interpretation of the symbol, borrowed from the Eddas, was abandoned by the Christianized people of Europe. The slaying of the dragon Fafni is often represented on the doors of early churches, and on wayside stone crosses in Norway, Sweden and England; but in these cases the legend assumes the form of a Christian lesson, and figures the triumph of the redeemed soul over Satan. With the development of Northern art, the symbol was lost in ornamentation. Fafni, the dragon, is often seen passing into a maze of beautiful scroll-work, and on the Hatton Cross in Lancaster, he is solely represented by a twisted knot. This last phase did not appear until the legend had lost its force over the minds of the people; but as the animal form (dragon or wolf) offered alluring possibilities, the artists continued to employ it in carvings and bookmaking, subjugating it into the angles, curves and scrolls of symmetrical repetition, until the idea was totally lost and nothing remained of the ornament but a mass of con-

trasted curves and finely balanced scrolls. Occasionally, in these designs, the human figure replaced the dragon, in some cases being prominent and easily traced, in others, as in various Pre-Norman carvings found in England, being a mere succession of knots disposed vertically, with loops elongated at the top to form the head, and single strands at bottom fringed and frayed to figure, or rather to suggest the feet. In our drawing, the animal form has been retained as offering a more suggestive phase in the history of the design than would have resulted from the employment of the pure Celtic motive. The mediaeval effect of the border is supplemented by heraldic devices copied from the records of the Livery Companies of London; the arms being those of the Joiners and the Cordwainers, chosen because of their fitness to represent the principles maintained by "The Craftsman" and the gild of which it is the organ. These old joiners were the makers of "cubbord bedsteads," chairs and settles, which still remain firm and solid, while generations of showy and veneered suites have had their brief day, and passed to their reward in the serene heaven of the attic. The cordwainers derived their name from being originally workers in Spanish, or Cordovan leather. They tanned and dressed goat skins, or split horse hides, and their craft was one of the most usual in mediaeval towns. All their processes were conducted with great care, and their finished goods, having been approved by Wardens and Searchers, were stamped with a mark, just as was a ship when it had passed the shipwright's inspection. Thus the old crafts and commercial gilds taught a lesson of honesty, thrift and wise forethought, whenever they found opportunity and their memory can not be too often or too greatly honored.

The illustration set opposite the first page of the account of the gilds of the Middle Ages

is a copy of the so-called "Night Watch of Rembrandt." This ill-fitting name, borne by one of the world's masterpieces, indicates that the richly appareled company, peopling to overflowing the picture, is none other than a civic guard filling its office, as the representative of peace and order. The error in name arose from the artist's peculiar treatment of light, by which he produced a "spotty" canvas; with the high-light concentrated at a single point, and the shadows enveloping, almost obscuring the remainder of the picture. The true subject and inspiration of the work is now known to have been a gild of musketeers marshalled under their banners, and proceeding by full day light to a festival in honor of their patron saint. The picture is here introduced as an example of that strong spirit of brotherhood which formerly bound together those exercising the same art or craft, and led them to a community of interests, pleasures and life.

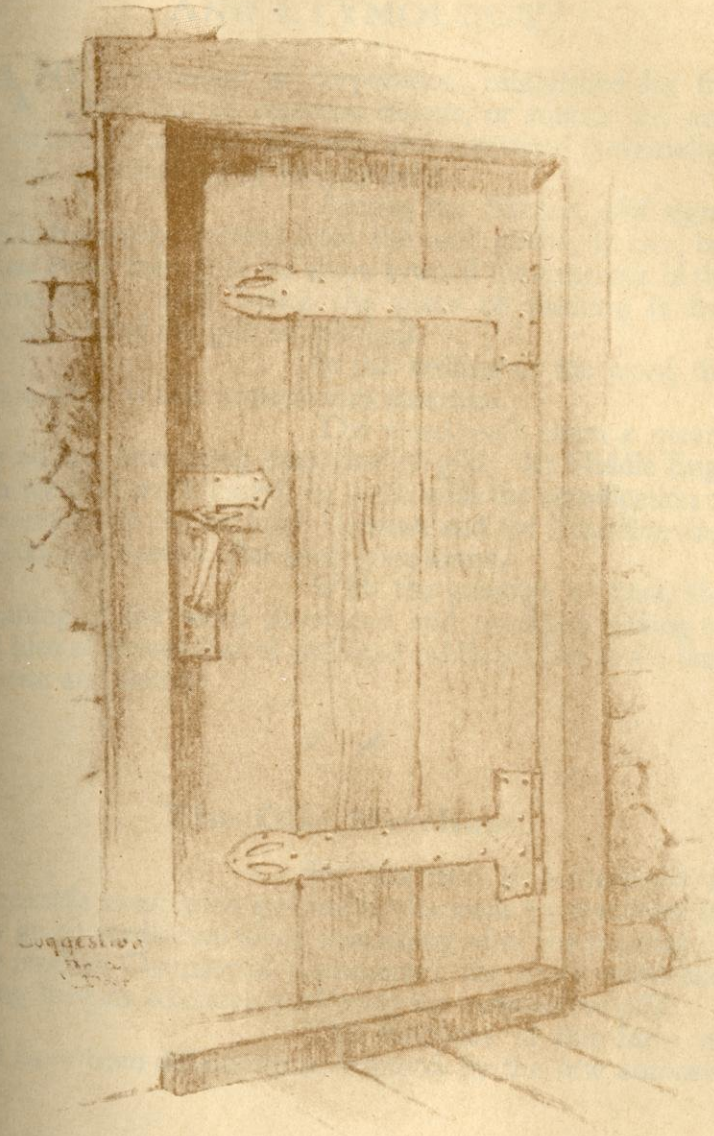
Midway in the course of the principal article, there appears the head of a Florentine craftsman of the fourteenth century. His rudely chiseled face is seen in profile, and he wears a garment of much historical interest. It is the *bardocucullus,* or hood with attached cape, which was worn by the Gallic peasants in the time of Julius Caesar. This curious but practical and comfortable garment developed into the monk's cowl, and continued, almost in its primitive form, to be the combined hat and cloak of the country people; as we may learn from the costume of Shakspeare's clowns and rustics. It is also found in variation in the peculiar pointed capuchon, or hood of the harlequin or fool. Finally, it was adopted by the lower classes in general, as a garment affording a great degree of comfort as a minimum expense. In Florence, this union of the head covering with a garment was most usual among the citizens. At the period

of which we write, a long hooded robe was worn by all those who were entitled to enter the public palace and sit in the councils of the Republic. This garment was made of crimson cloth, dressed and dyed by the Calimala craftsmen, and it is known to students of Italian history under the name of *lucco*, and also as one which Dante is always represented as wearing.

Simplicity of dress was one of the many characteristics of the Florentines which deserve to be imitated in modern times. Sumptuary laws, severe and exclusive, were enacted through the agency of the Greater Guilds, and Dante deprecates the least departure from the austerity of the times of those virtuous citizens "who went clad in leather." Fashions changed but slowly in an age of the world when, according to the statement of a well-known authority, it required a hundred years for a book to become popular. It is therefore within the limits of probability to picture "the first martyr of Italian unity" in our portrait of a fourteenth century Tuscan craftsman. For in the reign of the Emperor Charles Fifth, toward the middle of the sixteenth century, an artisan of Lucca, Francesco Burlamacchi by name, conceived and died for a governmental scheme in all general outlines similar to the one now prevailing in the Peninsula. And to him, late in the nineteenthc entury, the Italian authorities decreed that a monument should be erected in a public square of his native city.

The last illustration to be noted is the tail piece appearing at the end of the article upon the mediaeval gilds. It is a musical phrase taken from the score of Wagner's "Mastersingers of Nuremberg," and known as the "master-singers' march." When at different stages of the opera this motive emerges from the sea of Wagnerian harmony, and its pompous, strongly-

marked measures resound through the auditorium, the listener is led to expect the arrival in the flesh of a company of old gildsmen, re-incarnate from those times of strong municipal organization, when the workshop occupied a place inside that of the school, and a life of manual labor attracted the most gifted youth.



THE WORD GILD: ITS DEFINITION AND ETYMOLOGY

ANY association or corporation, established for the promotion of common objects, or mutual aid and protection in common pursuits, and supported (originally) by the contributions of its members.

Among the Saxons, *gild* signified a fraternity, derived from the verb *gildan,* to pay, because every man paid his share toward the expenses of the community. And hence the place of meeting is frequently called the gild or gild-hall.

In the writing of the word, the *u* is a modern and unnecessary insertion.

The word *craft* offers a meaning no less interesting than that of gild. In Middle English we find *craft, craeft,* or *creft,* with the signification of power; while the old high German and the Scandinavian divisions of speech offer analogous forms.

With the passage of time, the meaning of the word developed and modified, adding to the idea of power that of skill and subtlety; last of all, that of ruse and deceit.

The Gild Merchant

By this title is understood a mercantile association governing the trade transactions of any given mediaeval town, something after the manner of our modern Chamber of Commerce; the word *merchant* being here an adjective qualifying the substantive *gild.*

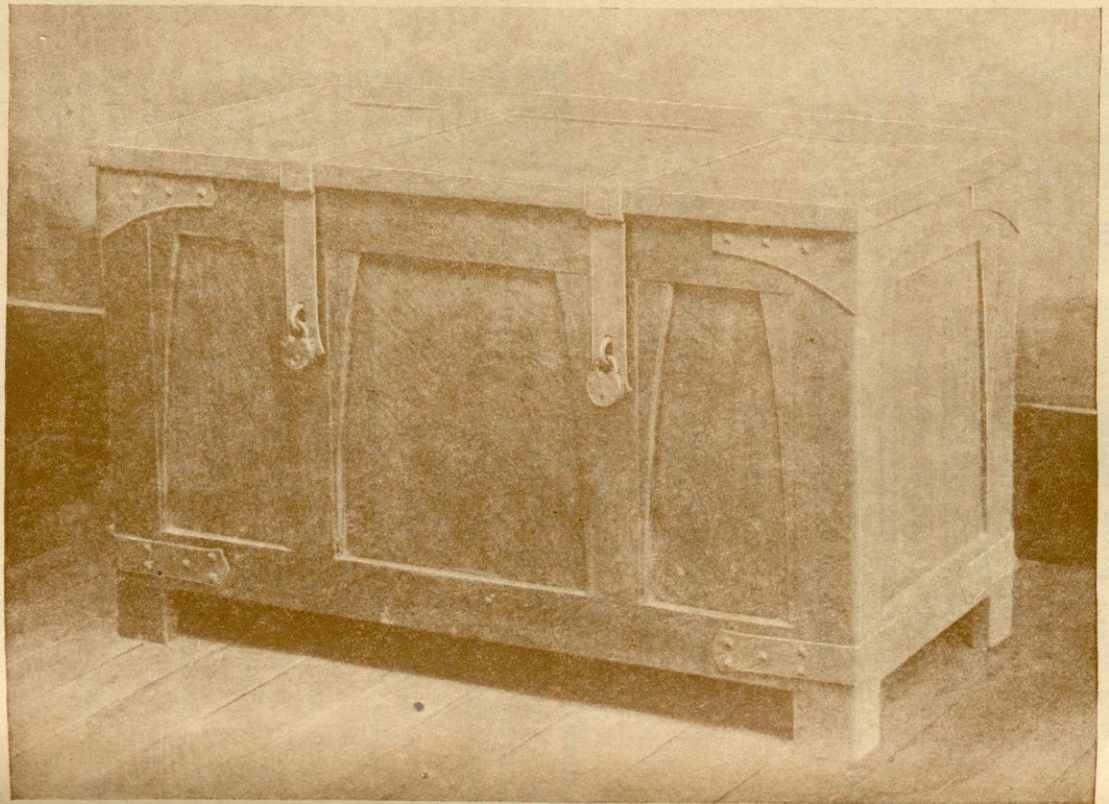
The functions of this form of gild have been differently understood by the few authori-

ties upon the subject: several writers holding that it was an ordinary mercantile organization, devoid of all public power. But the weight of evidence is upon the side of Dr. Gross, who, in his learned work, "The Gild Merchant," states with much emphasis that, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the fraternity was already an official civic body, an organic and constituent part of the municipal government. Again, other students regard the body as identical with the borough constitution as a whole; maintaining that it was not a mere adjunct of a town community, but that "it occupied the whole area of municipal government, with the president of the gild for head of the borough, and the gildsmen for burgesses.

Later Mercantile Companies

An Extract from "The Gild Merchant" by Dr. Charles Gross.

"During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in England we find the old Gild Merchant resolved into the general classes of crafts, mysteries, arts or occupations, namely: those wholly of a mercantile character, and those in which the artisan still figured prominently. The former consisted exclusively of all dealers who bought and sold what others made or produced; while the latter embraced workers, who either did not sell any wares at all or only such as they manufactured with their own hands. The mercantile societies, may, in turn, be subdivided into those that dealt in only one particular line of goods, such as the drapers, leather-sellers, vintners, etc., and those that traded in a variety of articles; that is the common merchants, whose companies, in most cases, seem to have been made up mainly of grocers and mercers. The old Gild Merchant embraced both merchants andartisans; the later company of merchants contained merchants only."



Bride's Chest, in dark fumed oak; bound with wrought iron.

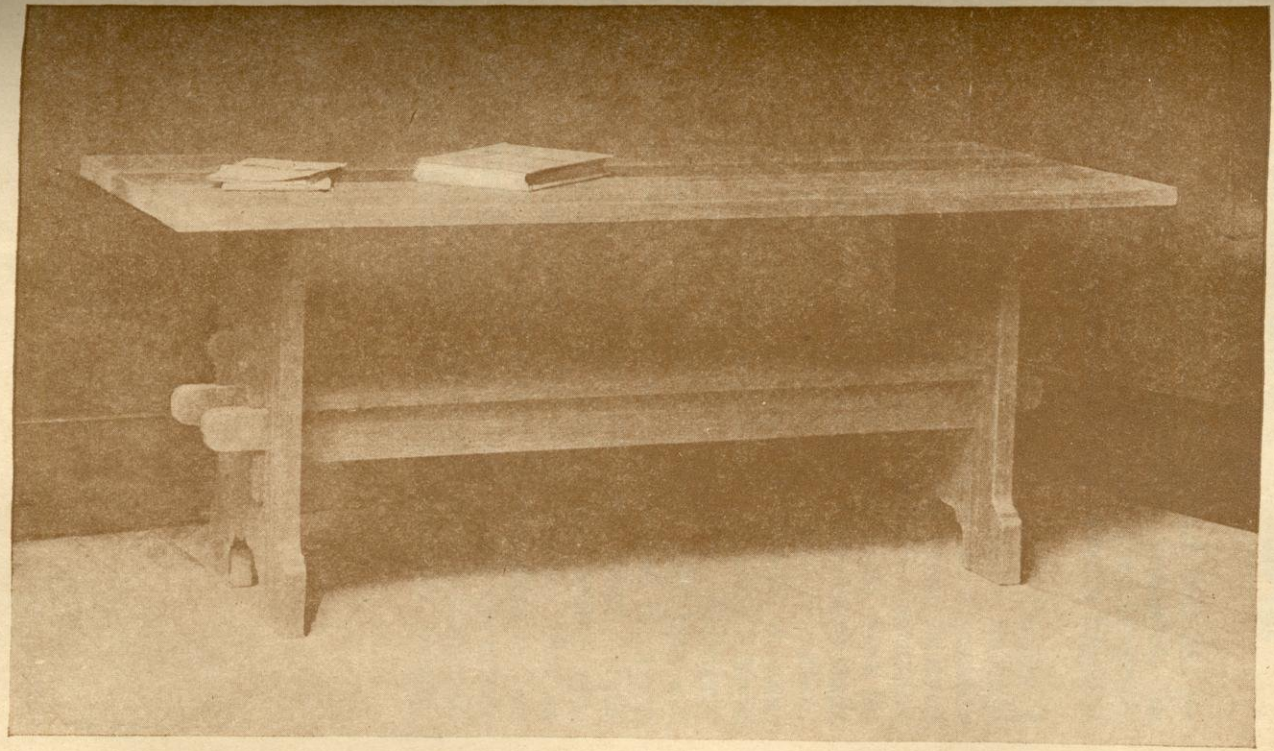


Table for the Hall, or the Living Room.

The Qualifications of a Mediaeval Gildsman

During the period included between the thirteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the would-be merchant or craftsman, was subjected to certain examinations which were practically the same in England and on the continent of Europe.

Before a man could become a merchant, a trader, a shopkeeper, or an artisan, he must be a burgess of the town. Before he was an apprentice he must show that he was a native of the town, he must be registered, and when he had completed his apprenticeship, must be enrolled a burgess before he could work independently as a journeyman, or master. Over every trade the mayor, or burgomaster, stood as the source of authority, and the ultimate referee in cases of dispute or complaint. Even the companies which had obtained a royal charter were, to a degree, dependent upon him. Strangers wishing to become traders must first settle with him and pay a fine more or less heavy, for the trade of the town was the right of the townsmen and none other. This organization, however, was in reality based upon a system which was analogous to that of the realm. Just as Lords, Churchmen and commoners formed distinct "estates"—deliberated apart under one head, while the whole formed the Constitutional Government—so was it in each town by itself. Each trade had its gild, fraternity, society, or company.

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSEHOLD ART

WITHIN thirty years, the appointments of the American middle-class home have passed through several rapid stages of evolution. The decade 1870-1880 was the period of heavily-gilt mirrors, velvet carpets in luxuriant flower-designs, Brussels lace draperies and Louis Fourteenth models of chairs, sofas and tables: the whole producing a cheerless, brilliant, repellent interior quite comparable in its way to the hard-visaged person whom we avoid except upon occasions of ceremony.

During the ten years following, the influence of the great craftsman, William Morris, became dominant in the household art of England, and slowly spread with refining power to America. But, at the same time, the caricature of the Morris movement, the so-called "aesthetic craze," seized upon the half-educated and the artistically unbalanced, producing deplorable and even ludicrous results.

At that time, pomegranate reds, peacock blues and Veronese greens overflowed the dye-pots of our country, staining the cheapest fabrics with the tints reserved by the English master for the richest and most artfully wrought products of the loom. This was the time also when the sun-flower and the marsh-flag took deep root in the American fancy, as the representatives of the higher artistic culture. It was then an interesting study to visit the drawing-rooms and libraries of one's friends in the sea-board towns; for it was there that the waves of the "aesthetic craze" beat with most imperious force. The Louis Fourteenth glories were not wholly obliterated, but existed in fragments only, as an older earth-formation pierces, at certain points, the crust of a later development.

In direct antagonism to the views of Morris and Burne-Jones, utility in household fittings became a despised principle. Ornament over-ran all the furnishings and the utensils necessary to every-day life, until the so-called art concealed the articles themselves. Even the Pompeians who adorned their jelly-molds with figures of gods and heroes, were left far behind in the race toward supposed suggestiveness and beauty. Down to the conveniences applied to the simplest household

and kitchen tasks, each article was inscribed with its motto or legend, or painted with its shocking color-design.

Later ensued a period of inquiry and study regarding the requirements of a simple, comfortable, and artistic home. The open veranda was developed, the French drawing-room gave place to the living-room, and the bed-room resisted the entrance and assimilation of foreign elements, which having worn themselves out in the salon, were once passed on by a tyrannical government to a safe place of retirement.

The insistent demands for increased comfort enforced solidity and structural excellence in household furnishings. To-day, a school of craftsmen is developing, pledged to the production of things made to use, to keep, and to cherish, after the manner of those which were wrought centuries ago in the workshops of the old gildsmen.

As belonging to this class of objects, "The Craftsman," in the current issue, offers the designs of a reading-table and a bride's chest; both articles maintaining the principles evident in all the work of the United Crafts: the prominence of the structural idea; the development of the material employed, to the limit of its artistic possibilities; best of all, the abandonment of all applied ornament.

The examples of cabinet-making shown in this magazine are from the workshops of the United Crafts, Eastwood, N. Y.

THE United Crafts, recognizing that the opening century is bringing with it the sense of a finer social economy, are pledged to support the new spirit and to combat all that represents the waste of wealth, resource, invention, implements and life. And as the family is the building-unit of society, so the home must indicate the maximum social attainment of the times. Household art must parallel that economy which employs the subtle and hitherto largely idle force, electricity, against the waste of natural supplies and of vital energy. For the fitting and adornment of the home, materials until now overlooked or despised, are used to compose an environment so responsive to the needs of every-day life, as to preclude desire for change. To produce things made to use and to keep is the ideal of the truly modern and honest craftsman. Forms and materials once deliberately and well chosen, must not be made subject to the vagaries of fashion. They are to be modified only so far as to maintain a constant progress in utility, simplicity and beauty.