

MAKING A NATION OF ARTISTS



The Movement for Creating the Beautiful That Is Making Such Headway in Sweden

By Henry Goddard Leach

Instructor in Scandinavian at Harvard University.

WILL America ever have a great school of art? Will our painters equal the Italian masters, our architects raise structures eclipsing in beauty the cathedrals of France?

We are a great money-making nation, but that does not mean that we shall not some day become also an art-loving nation and produce works worthily representative of America.

Friends of art in the United States realize already what must be done. They see that art must be fostered first in the homes of the people.

Many thoughtful Americans are looking across the sea to Sweden, a nation where thirty years ago there arose a movement for artistic employment in the home, which spread the length of the land, until the Swedish farmer's wife was devoting all her free hours to lace and beautiful handiwork, and the Swedish working man his evenings to carving and hammering brass and beautifying his home.

And what is the result? Sweden today is producing paintings and sculpture unsurpassed by the work of living artists in any other land.

THE Household Industrial Art Movement in Sweden began in the seventies, after machinery and machine-made articles had driven out many of the ancient crafts of the home.

Before the advent of the machine the Swedish peasant, just as the country people of America in the good old colonial days, had a feeling for the decorative, for color and form, in the everyday utensils of domestic life. From the middle ages textiles of a rare quality had been woven on the humblest looms, where also peasant laces were made, and articles such as furniture, basket work, metal work and pottery, combining beauty with utility. And their fondness for decoration was manifested by the picturesque "national" costumes of Sweden, each province, and often each village, having its own distinctive dress.

In the last century, however, with the introduction of machinery, cheap shop-made articles took the place of the decorative handwork of the home. Lovers of art in Sweden saw with alarm that the old handicrafts were becoming extinct.

CRUSADE OF WOMEN

At last a group of public-spirited Swedish women began a crusade to revive the old art industry of the household, and in 1874 they formed in Stockholm an association which they named "Handarbetets Vänner" ("The Friends of Handiwork"), with the motto: "The elevation of industrial art in the home, artistic and national."

The Friends of Handiwork began by collecting what articles remained of the old art industries. A school was organized, where these products were studied and copied, and teachers were trained, who later went out into the country districts to arouse enthusiasm and revive the crafts. When they found an old woman, anywhere back in the hills, who remembered how to weave an ancient "lansen" or "gobelin" tapestry, they set her to work teaching her granddaughters and their friends.

Within a few years the society was distributing patterns and designs throughout Sweden, encouraging the farmers' wives to make their own clothes, their own table linen and wall hangings, and finding a market for the sale of those articles which they could make in excess of their own needs, affording them in this way a comfortable livelihood.

Numerous other home-art societies have followed the Friends of Handiwork. In 1899 a great friend of the Swedish people, Prince Eugene, founded the Swedish Domestic Industry Association. Prince Eu-

gels is a brother to the king, and himself one of Sweden's greatest painters.

The object of the association is to extend the industrial art movement to homestead articles of every description. The association discovers workmen of high artistic merit, advises them and furnishes them with designs. In Stockholm it maintains a salesroom for homestead linen, hangings, carpet, furniture, lace, baskets, table and kitchen utensils, andirons, china and pottery.

The work of the Domestic Industry Association is being pressed most energetically at the present time under the public-spirited leadership of the artist-prince, and the association is supported financially by the Swedish government and nearly all the county councils in the kingdom.

The movement today has won the home and the school. Every Swedish mother is teaching her children to use their hands in making objects of more or less beauty in line and color, and industrial art, or sloyd, as it is called in Sweden, is being taught, as it has been for a number of years, in the public schools. This last phase of the movement has spread to other lands, and sloyd—the very word is Swedish—in a somewhat modified form, has been widely introduced into schools in the United States.

I can best show the practical workings of the industrial art movement in Sweden by describing a few homes of widely different character, each of which I visited recently in Sweden.

The first of these dwellings was an ancient farm among the hills of Mora. We entered the house, my guide and I, without knocking, the Swedish way, and found ourselves in one great room, serving evidently as kitchen, dining room, living room and parlor, where many people, most of them women, were engaged in a variety of pursuits.

A robust girl of about 18, with flaxen hair and sun-burned cheeks, stopped stirring a kettle on the crane in the great corner fireplace and came forward to receive us. She was attired in the pretty Mora costume, a white muslin underwaist with long flowing sleeves, a vestlike bodice of scarlet and a black woolen skirt, the front of it having the appearance of a red apron with yellow cross lines at the bottom. In her hair, according to the correct and ancient custom of Mora, recently revived by the crafts movement, was braided a crimson ribbon. Margot's costume, I learned, every stitch of it, from growing the wool and preparing the dyes, was made on the farm.

Margot presented me to her mother, who "was sitting on a bench, sewing together strips of carpet, and then took me over to the furthest corner of the room, where the old grandmother sat, surrounded by children, to whom she was reciting sagas and ballads. But this was not her only employment; on a little table, in front of her stood a pillow for making lace, and her fingers were busily tossing the bobbins, developing a delicate white border of Mora lace.

When I was allowed to look about the room, I saw that from the oaken rafters about hung rows of cooking utensils—brasses, coppers and pewters—in artistic curves, with dragon handles, hammered out by home toil. All these articles, I was informed, were for daily use, and hung up as ornaments when idle.

The larger pieces of woodwork, as well as the furniture, were carved by hand. The walls were bare, boards, covered here and there with strips of tapestry. These strips, I learned, were damaged pieces which the family could not sell, all excepting one, a moth-eaten hanging depicting the scene of a bear hunt from one of the old Swedish ballads, with the appropriate

verses woven on the margin. This weaving had been handed down in the family from time out of mind.

They knew that if sold in Stockholm it would bring the price of a farm, and still they kept it as a sort of insurance for coming generations of the family.

From the house Margot conducted us across the courtyard to the barn, where the horizontal loom stood in a cleared space between two racks of hay. The border of a tapestry hanging was then on the loom, and Margot wove in a few threads of blue while we stood by.

Here, she explained, the women of the household took their turns, when their services were not needed for the cooking and the milking and the farm routine. Here they wove textiles for sofa covers, carpets and hangings, in the traditional Mora patterns, and sent them several times a year to the salesrooms of a co-operative arts and crafts society in Stockholm, and the profits formed no inconsiderable part of the family income.

IN JOYFUL CONTENTMENT

Grandmother meanwhile confined herself to lace-making, while grandfather, who was also growing feeble, stayed indoors, rainy days, hammering copper kettles in his corner of the living room.

A quiet and joyful contentment pervaded this home, as though the inmates were glad for their work—very different from the nervous hustle and resulting weariness I have observed on many farms in the United States. I could not help comparing this interior with the more pretentious parlor, the art showroom, of a New England farm which I have often visited. With its large-framed ingrain carpet, closed piano, hanging lamp, well-protected plush sofa, and its walls decorated with a "chromo" depicting "Moses in the Bulrushes," a "steel engraving" of "The Flood" and the framed photograph of the tombstone of a remote ancestor. How little to suggest American "national" forms, or even the personal taste or skill of individual members of the family!

Before describing the next home, the abode of a mill hand, I must explain that in recent years a national movement in Sweden has provided so that working men can purchase homes of their own in the country, near the great industrial centers, to take the place of the old crowded city tenements.

Colonies of these working men's cottages are made easily accessible by steamboat and trolley. It was to one of them that I accompanied a Stockholm wire drawer, returning home to the country, a summer evening, from his day's task in a city factory.

The path from the road led up a hillside, through a grove of aspen, until we came to a garden and the content little Elizabethan cottage one could imagine, full of quaint twelve-paned windows. Madame, the wife of the wire drawer, received us on the porch, attired in neat white muslin with the two boys, just returned from school.

"And what have you been doing today, dear?" the husband asked.

She laughingly held up two hands, showing the indelible stains of many colors.

"Dyeing my yarns," she said, and she led us to the kitchen, where skein after skein of yarn was hanging, still wet and glistening—reds, blues, greens, purples, yellows and blacks. She explained to me with pride that these dyes were all vegetable colors, that she had made them all herself, from plants she had grown in her garden and from wild herbs she had gathered in the forest.

The interior of this house was, of course, more modern than that of the farmhouse in Mora. The walls were plastered and tastefully papered, and adorned with photographs and color prints of the works of great Swedish artists.

After a simple but substantial supper of bread, cheese and smoked salmon, the two boys played us a duet with guitar and violin—the family could not yet afford the luxury of a piano—and after I had asked the name of the author of the composition, the lady promptly informed me that "father had written it." I then ventured to ask if he had made the instruments also. The father replied that he had made the guitar, but confessed that the violin was a gift.

After visiting this wire drawer's homelike palace of art, I was entertained at the city residence in Stockholm of a map of wealth, Thorsten Laurin. Mr. Laurin is married to an American girl, Miss Elizabeth Emery, of Cambridge, Mass., and both Mr. and Mrs. Laurin have entered enthusiastically into the cause of household art in Sweden. The paintings in their mansion are by the great modern Swedish artists. The furniture has been carved by skilled artisans. The linen, the curtains, the rugs, have been woven by peasant women known to Mrs. Laurin for their exceptional skill. In practically every detail of the beautiful Laurin home, even to the kitchen utensils, the anonymous products of the machine have been supplanted by the works of individual artists.

HOME OF ANDERS ZORN

And finally, let me describe the home of a real artist, and return to the village of Mora, the home of Anders Zorn. As a painter and etcher, Zorn's reputation is international, evidenced by the medals he has won at the World's Fair in Chicago and the leading capitals of Europe.

Zorn is a product of the industrial art movement. He was born a farmer's son in Mora, and a "man of Mora" he has remained, the master passion of his life being the reviving and improving of the old arts of the home.

Under Zorn's inspiration Mora has again adopted the beautiful homestead costume, and a Mora girl would not venture into Zorn's presence without the distinctive red ribbon braided in her hair. Zorn himself, on public occasions, affects the blue knickerbockers and white leather apron of the man of Mora.

While his wife goes abroad among the farms, giving the women friendly advice at their looms, Zorn himself goes to the blacksmith's shop and shows the smith how to fashion a new pair of fire dogs, or to the cabinetmaker's and draws him a design for the back of a chair.

In his own home Zorn is his own architect, his own gardener, his own cabinetmaker, coppersmith, sculptor, musician and tapestry designer. On Zorn's property, in addition to his modern dwelling house, which follows old Swedish architecture in its steep roof and jutting beams, there are several log structures, centuries old, which Zorn has succeeded in moving down from the hills and setting up as his workshops. They are full of ancient homestead articles, from violins and wooden statuettes to moth-eaten table covers and silver drinking bowls, which Zorn studies and from which he gets his inspiration for the beautiful objects with which he is filling his home. In his garden Zorn has recently placed a fountain, his own design, for which three Mora girls, all sisters, posed as models. Zorn is par excellence the artist-artisan.

And many other artists are growing up with the national crafts movement in Sweden. Among them, Prince Eugene has yielded precedence to a great trio of painters who are truly sons of the people—Zorn, the son of a farmer; Liljefors, the son of a shopkeeper; and Carl Larsson, the son of a day laborer!

Since 1900 a host of younger Swedish painters has arisen, whose works are winning recognition in the art centers of Europe. The industrial art movement, spreading among the rank and file of the people, has discovered dormant genius and enlisted it. As a by-product has come, together with the industrial arts, a sudden and unexpected outburst of the fine arts, of painting, sculpture and architecture. New statues and new public buildings are rising everywhere in Sweden today, testifying to her renaissance.

In the Royal Museum of Art at Stockholm the visitor may see the inspired Carl Larsson decorating the walls with his gigantic mural paintings, depicting the history of Swedish art, rapidly working, as Kipling

would say, "with brushes of comet's hair." And in the public and private galleries he will be impressed, not as in the art collections of other countries, by the works of the old masters, but by the productions of living artists, in whose freshness and virility lie the promise of a glorious future.

What Sweden has accomplished in one generation in effecting a union of utility and beauty shall we not do in America on a larger scale? Arts and crafts societies have already been established in several of our large cities, to sell the artistic products of the home, while drawing and manual training in our schools is year by year becoming more important.

Public sentiment in America, in the course of time, will become educated to esteem it greater riches to possess a few treasures well and artistically made than to be surrounded by any number of objects of inferior workmanship.

Hours of well-guided industry with the needle, the loom, the hammer, the knife and the brush will, more and more, bring joy and satisfaction in work and enrichment of life to the worker. When this is achieved, we, too, will produce a national school, an American renaissance in art.

"In Dreams We Are Always Reasoning"

A GAIN there has come an important contribution from science on the subject of dreams. This time it is from the noted English authority, Havelock Ellis, whose investigations and writings on the subject of sex have given him an international reputation.

"In dreams we are always reasoning," is the conclusion to which he has arrived. But to put his technical language into popular form, we are in a sense playing mental tag with ourselves. That is, our visions, however fantastic, merely fantasize our brains, which are aware of the incongruity of what the mind's eye is seeing, and reason even while the dream is in progress.

With the actual fact most people are conversant from experience. As to the causes which lead to that fact, Mr. Ellis has made some interesting observations, as follows:

"To take a commonplace example, a lady dreamed that she was visiting an acquaintance who wished to send a small sum of money to Ireland. On arriving home she began to repent her promise, as the weather was extremely wild and cold. She began, however, to make preparations for dressing warmly, and went to consult an Irish friend, who said she would have to be floated over to Ireland tightly packed in a crab-basket!

"On returning home she fully discussed the matter with her husband, who thought it would be folly to undertake such a journey, and she finally relinquished it, with great relief. In this dream—the elements of which could all be accounted for—the association between sending money and the postoffice, which would at once occur to waking conscious dress, was closed; consciousness was a prey to such suggestions as reached it, but on the basis of these suggestions it reasoned and concluded quite sagaciously."

PUZZLED DURING VISION

"I dreamed that I was in the large plaza of a Spanish city (Famplona, possibly), furnishing the elements of the picture, and that the governor emerged from his residence facing the square and began talking in English to the subordinate officials who were waiting to receive him. The real reason why he talked English, was, of course, of course, that he spoke the language native to the dreamer. But in my dream I was extremely puzzled why he should speak English. I looked carefully into his face to assure myself that he was not really English, and I finally concluded that he was speaking English in order not to be understood by the bystanders."

"Once more I dreamed that I was looking at an architectural drawing of a steeple, of quite original design, somewhat in the shape of a cross, but very elongated. I attempted in my dream to account for this elongation, and concluded that it was intended to neutralize the foreshortening caused when the steeple would be looked at from below."

"There is, we here see afresh, a fundamental split in dreaming intelligence. On the one side there is the subconscious, yet often highly intelligent combination of imagery along rational although often bizarre lines. On the other side is concentrated the conscious intelligence of the dreamer, struggling to comprehend and explain the problems offered by the pseudo-external imagery thus presented to it. "One might almost say that in dreams subconscious intelligence is playing a game with conscious intelligence, offering it problems and bidding it guess the solution. So that in the world of dreams, it may be said, we are once again 'the process' which, James Hinton was accustomed to say, we see in the universe of our waking life: God or nature playing with man, compelling him to join in a game of hide and seek, and setting, him problems which he must solve as best he can."