



GUILD OF HANDICRAFT, LIMITED.

CHIPPING CAMPDEN.

A Successful Experiment in the Application of Art to Industry.

BY permission of the Guild of Handicraft, Limited, we are enabled to include in "Industrial Gloucestershire" a brief sketch of the origin and aims of that organisation. In the limited space allowed us here we can but present a few of the more interesting features connected with the origin and development of the Guild and of the work it is accomplishing.

In several respects the works operated by the Guild in Chipping Campden have proved to be a noteworthy addition to Gloucestershire's industries. Not only have they brought to the county a number of skilled artisans, who have greatly improved the appearance and condition of one of our most picturesque villages, but the high standard of their productions gives a character to our manufactures of the best type. Not less important is the educational value of the methods employed by the Guild; for, apart from practising their various crafts under unusually favourable conditions, and along co-operative lines, they are daily proving that art and industry may be successfully united. The unique lines along which the work of the Guild is carried out, as well as the very high standard of every production which comes from their workshops, has made it the subject of several descriptive articles in the Press of this country and America.

The Guild of Handicraft owes its existence to the teachings of Ruskin, and is an evidence that that author's theories are as practical as they are inspiring. In 1886-7 Mr. C. R. Ashbee, the architect, and present managing director of the Guild) was conducting classes at Toynbee Hall for the reading of Ruskin and the study of design, these classes leading to a desire on the part of the pupils to apply the knowledge thus gained to practical work. The result was the formation of a Guild and School of Handicraft in 1888, the Guild consisting of three craftsmen in wood, metal work and decorative painting, who, as an adjunct to their art work, taught in a school of some fifty pupils.

At first the top floor of a warehouse in Commercial Street, London, was used, the Guild and School being removed two years later to Essex House, a fine old Queen Anne mansion in Mile End Road, Bow. The work of the Guild constantly progressed, the scope of its activities keeping pace with its prosperity. To-day it employs upwards of 100 men and boys, and is doing cabinet work, wrought iron, jewellery, enamelling, silver and copper work, and printing, engraving and book-binding. In all of these arts they have achieved equal success, the beauty of their work having gained wide recognition, both throughout Great Britain and abroad.

In 1902 it was decided to remove the Guild from London to the country, where better environment, simpler living, and the opportunity afforded each craftsman of having his own garden would inevitably lead to healthier families and happier lives, and consequently to better work. Chipping Campden—a delightfully situated village on the Cotswold Hills midway between Stratford-on-Avon and Broadway—was selected as the Guild's new home. Here the craftsmen not only gain the benefit of a pure and invigorating air, but of picturesque scenes which cannot fail to influence

their art. It may not be generally known that this little village was at one time one of the most important wool-marts in the kingdom, and that at a later date it was a silk-weaving centre, both of which industries have long since been transferred to other localities. Its former wealth and importance have left an enduring mark, and the main village street (which is of great dignity and nearly a mile in length) is lined with seventeenth century mansions of striking beauty. Indeed, it has been said by observant travellers that this street is one of the most picturesque in England. Chipping Campden is doubly fortunate in becoming the scene of an industry carried on by artists and craftsmen, who have preserved the village's old-world charm and at the same time improved its material condition.

At Chipping Campden the Guild secured an old silk mill for the workshops, which they thoroughly remodelled and adapted to their needs. As may be seen from the accompanying engraving, the main building is a large three-floor stone structure, substantially constructed and well lighted. It is surrounded by two acres of land, which is carefully cultivated. In the rear of the grounds is a new building where the



Handicraft Guild Workshops, Chipping Campden.

rough timber required is stored and sawn, and where is generated the electricity with which the premises are lighted. Other buildings in the village include the Essex House Bindery, the Craftsman's Club, and the Guest House.

On the ground floor of the building shown in the illustration is the printing room; on the central floor are the metal shops where work the jewellers, silversmiths, and enamellers; and on the upper floor the carving and cabinet making are done. While some necessary machinery is used in the different departments, nearly all the varied productions are made entirely by hand. In another respect the work is totally different from that produced in the ordinary modern factory, the specialisation or sub-division of labour being not a feature; on the contrary, each craftsman produces, as far as possible, the whole of an article, and the endeavour is that it shall leave his hands as the expression of his own individuality. In the workshops the conditions of labour are all that could be desired, and the visitor could not fail to be impressed, not only with the order and

admirable arrangement of the various departments, but also with the spirit of contentment and cheerfulness which prevails among the craftsmen.

This method of production not only permits the cultivation of artistic tastes which are discouraged in the ordinary factory operative, but it results in a product of greater intrinsic beauty. The productions of the Guild have been exhibited in a number of the largest towns in Great Britain, and in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Frankfort, Turin, Cape Town, and other places abroad, everywhere eliciting flattering comment. The Guild maintain permanently a gallery and sales rooms in London, at 16, Brook Street, Bond Street, and 67A, New Bond Street. They also publish illustrated descriptive catalogues, which will be posted to any address upon request. The attractive illustrations in these catalogues give some idea of the excellence of the design of the various articles described, though no illustration could convey a true impression of their thorough workmanship and exquisite finish.

As has been stated, the Guild is conducted along co-operative lines, each craftsman receiving, in addition to his wage, a proportion of the profits, and having a direct voice in the management of affairs. To maintain the uniform high standard of work, Mr. C. R. Ashbee, as architect and chief designer, passes upon most of the designs, rejecting those which are not of sufficiently high standard. The Guild have also found it desirable to employ a trained and competent secretary and manager (Mr. W. J. Osborn) to attend to the many business details involved in so large an industry. This system of government has been justified by the event, and from the date of the Guild's inception to the present time perhaps as satisfactory a co-operation between labour and capital as can be looked for in these days has been realised. It is but just to say that the personality of Mr. C. R. Ashbee, who has from the beginning devoted himself unremittingly to the work of the Guild, has no doubt had much to do with its marked success.

We regret that we have not been able to give a more than brief outline of what the Guild of Handicraft has accomplished, and is accomplishing. Those who wish to learn more of this unique and interesting organisation or its productions will, upon application to the secretary at Chipping Campden, be given any information desired. It should be added that arrangements may be made by visitors for board and lodging for any desired period at the Guild Guest House, where anyone interested in the Guild's work will be made welcome. We could suggest no greater pleasure than a day spent in the village, which would be a much more popular resort for the cultured tourist were its charms more generally known.

It but remains for us to acknowledge the courtesy of the Guild in giving us the information embodied in the foregoing lines and in permitting an inspection of their unique and very interesting works.

