

the soul of his vassal with too much purchasing power.

After the world failed to end in the year 1000 A.D., as all Christendom expected, the upsetting thought entered some rebel heads that a Christian might own himself. A flight to freedom began and continued for centuries. The cities grew by a process of natural selection. The runaways were, no doubt, the less homeloving and churchly, but by no means country riffraff. On the contrary, as Lewis Mumford wrote, "the Medieval city gathered to itself the more skilled, the more adventurous—probably the more intelligent—part of the rural population." These, the distinctly successful types, formed the guilds. In Queen Elizabeth's time, we know that a large number of the guild apprentices in London were younger sons of the country nobles. There never were many guildsmen.

As the guilds rolled into their great days, the ordinary Tom and Jerry had no more chance to get into the organization than into the Duke's iron pants. Even the journeyman who had completed his apprenticeship waited long for his chair in the almighty lodge and often never made it. The guilds' ruthless control over wages, competition, apprenticeships, and prices make our ideas of monop-

oly today look like galloping socialism. The guilds had power. Sometimes they chivied the king or queen into passing laws which decreed exactly what guild-manufactured garments people in this or that class must wear!

While the guilds perfected their legal squeeze on the pocketbook of the citizen, feudal society fell apart under the pressure of new ideas and a new agriculture. Former serfs flocked to the towns by the thousands, many driven from the land by the "enclosures" and the demand for wool from Holland.

A truly Oriental destitution became the normal life for myriad folk. A quarter of the city people of Europe were casuals and beggars; half of the citizens of Paris were no better than that. Begging was an accepted way of life. The most brutal police action could not control piracy and crime. Before science and industrialism changed the earth, smells of vast burden lurked in city ways and dirty death flowed in the open sewer that was the street. For centuries bands of outcast syphilitics roamed Europe in despair and rags, criminals and beggars without a choice. It was considered a nice pastime, when the guildsmen had their power, to slip a couple of hard-boiled eggs into your pocket and go to watch the public torture of criminals. There were 200 capital crimes in

English law. Even as late as the nineteenth century, women and children labored in English coal mines, naked as Hottentots. The guilds had perished before that—in the eighteenth century—in a rolling boil of public hatred.

The simple fact is, the factory system—and later, mass production—abolished far more human drudgery than they created. Dragging an oar in a trireme, chopping cotton, carrying the hod, keeping an overstuffed Victorian house clean, loading coal by bucket or barrow, plowing with your wife in the ox-yoke, and many another old unhappy burden has been lifted from man's shoulders by the machine. The factory has created incredible abundance and has lessened the problem that was never to be completely solved—poverty. When Aristotle, poking fun at liberal ideas, stated that men would be able to free slaves "when the shuttle wove by itself," he *knew* what was possible and what was not. But what would Aristotle today think of nylon stockings, not only on the limbs of queens and court ladies but also on the weaver and her daughter as well! We do the impossible today and slavery has vanished from the civilized world. In many ways the machine has made all of us free men.

It has done more than that. For

where do the children of today's counterparts of the old guildsmen go for their apprentice training—along with many a son of the shanty and many a son of the manor? To college, of course! Indeed, we have not changed the guildsman into a faceless robot; we are changing him into a doctor, a flight engineer, a research chemist, a lawyer, a teacher—and, sometimes a second fiddle in a symphony or a third baseman for the "Giants." I'm sure that none but a mass-production economy could give 20 million citizens a freshman's dink to wear for a while. Nor could any less productive system provide for 6,448,000 in the professional, artistic, technical, etcetera, category.

A Realistic Appraisal

Those who quarrel with American materialism from far away and little ken should stare at this figure and let its significance really sink in. For it shows, as specifically contrasted with the guildsman's craft accomplishment, a shift of desire and fulfillment from material production to the direct promotion of the art of living. A Gothic cathedral is a great achievement in man's aspirations, but it is not greater than an electronic brain, a philharmonic orchestra, or a well-baby clinic. Certainly, following Abou Ben Adhem,