

FINE ARTS.

COLOURED DECORATIONS IN HOUSES.

THE want of colour in our architectural decorations is as notable a characteristic of this country as its foggy atmosphere: dirt and smoke are not more striking features of London than the dingy drab hue of its streets and houses. We are very Quakers in our taste: one would think that John Bull had as furious an antipathy to bright hues as his brute prototype for scarlet, so strongly does the horror of colour cling to him. Some hopeful symptoms, however, of an abatement of this chromophobia (not a natural disease of the country, but an affliction superinduced by ill treatment) have lately become manifest: the heavy wainscoting of sitting-rooms has given way to smart-paper-hangings, that, however ugly and monotonous, have at least the recommendation of cheerfulness; and the dull leaden hue of the plastered walls has been relieved by a faint tint of colour, and the introduction of panneling with scroll ornaments in the corners: library and dining-room curtains have been brightening into scarlet and crimson, and the chintz patterns of drawing and breakfast rooms have been keeping pace with the increased liveliness of Brussels carpeting and the lightness and elegance of the paper or silk hangings. The dining room, however, is still the stronghold of sombre blankness; and a portrait or two, in a gilt frame, keeping the chandelier in countenance, are the only bright ornaments of the room. The massive mahogany sideboard, and naked chairs of the same heavy wood, are in keeping with English roast beef and plumb-pudding; but as solid joints are now banished from the dinner table of fashion, we hope mahogany will never more show its mulatto-face clad in black hair-cloth in our sitting-rooms—such covering is fit only for offices.

This cheering improvement of our dwellings is owing to the increasing taste for pictures: engravings in black frames have given place to paintings in gilded ones; and to these are succeeding pannelings of pictures, set in the gold mouldings of the room. A higher refinement is now sprung up, in the revival of the coloured arabesques of Pompeii. The Duke of Beaufort is having a dining room decorated in the gayest style of arabesque, in imitation fresco, and the effect is delightful: not only does the room look lighter and more spacious, but it induces a feeling of cheerfulness; the bright colours in the wreaths of fruit and flowers, interspersed with animals and figures, start out from the delicate tint of the ground on every side. The transition from a wainscoted room painted in the ordinary way, with crude white picked out with a faint neutral tint of some cold hue, is quite enlivening; it is like entering a garden from a stone-paved court: when furnished and lighted up, the effect will be brilliant in the extreme—far surpassing in richness and elegance the most gorgeous display of gilding, which is oppressive and monotonous in its splendour, unless plentifully relieved by colour: it is, moreover, less expensive and more durable.

The extension of this style of decoration is greatly to be desired, not only on account of the scope it affords to the fancy and ingenuity of artists and artisans—opening up a wide field for the exercise of skill and taste, and almost creating a new class of intellectual labourers, the mechanic-artists—but for our comfort and enjoyment. The appearance of the room that we occupy, or the house that we inhabit, exerts a real influence upon our senses, a dark and gloomy apartment, or a simply dull room, depresses the spirits at the moment of entering, just as a light, airy, and cheerful one predisposes to serenity. The permanent influence of both on the habitual occupant is not the less sensibly felt for being unperceived. The numerous lights and lively draperies of a drawing-room animate and enliven the visiter, as much as the music and the company; they are the flowers and sunshine of artificial life.

This nascent fondness for colour is but a revival of our old likings: it is no new fancy, even in this country. In ELIZABETH'S time not only were the chambers hung with arras, but the ornaments of the rooms and the architectural decorations were coloured and gilded: even monuments in churches were adorned in this splendid style, till we substituted the cold repulsive black-and-white marble of the Low Countries for the attractive elegance of Italian art. That the fondness for colour is national, is proved by the painted bodies of our barbarian forefathers, no less than by the gorgeous doublets and coloured hose of our more civilized progenitors. The love of colour, indeed, is inherent in man, as all nature testifies; and those who, confounding beauty and gaudiness, call bright colour vulgar, will find an answer in every garden starred with dahlias, whose variety of hues is as endless as their fecundity. The fact is, our fastidiousness—not taste, but a poor negation of it—makes us take refuge from violent and discordant contrasts of colour in the neutral ground of drab: we have remained long enough on the threshold of elegance—mere aversion from showy deformity; and it is now time we enter into the sanctuary. Our lively neighbours the French, to whom show is a necessary of life, and who prefer bad combinations of colour to none at all, overdo as much as we fall short: the happy medium lies between the two extremes. The scarlet cloak of the country dame, and the red waistcoat or cap of the labourer, are indulgences of the same sense that drinks in the gorgeous hues of

sunset, and feasts on the lustrous splendours of a poppy-field, when its myriad of ruddy lamps are lit up by the sun-beams; and the rude taste is gratified by the uncouth daubs that relieve the bare whiteness of the cottage-wall, just as the enlightened connoisseur is with a picture by TITIAN or PAUL VERONESE.

Colour is also an essential part of architectural decoration, without which a building is not complete: the interior of St. Paul's for instance, looks cold, vacant, and tomb-like, not for want of pews, but of coloured ornament to fill the eye and satisfy the sense of beauty. The painted ceiling of the dome tends to make more evident the absence of any hue but the dingy tints of dust in the rest of the building. The artists offered to furnish it with pictures in WEST'S day; but the then prelate refused their proposal, on grounds that would equally justify the removal of all "graven ornaments" whatever, and render the *beau ideal* of a Protestant place of worship a barn with wooden benches. Coloured and gilded ceilings, heraldic blazons, and, above all, painted windows—sunlighted transparencies—are as much integral parts of Gothic, as the arabesque scrolls and honeycomb fret-work, harlequin-hued, are of the Moorish architecture. Not only did the Egyptians employ colour most lavishly on the exterior of their temples, as well as in the engraved pictures of the interiors, but the elegant Greeks painted the lily whiteness of their marble temples, and gilded the refined symmetry of the ornaments on them. The painter-architects of Italy have left in St. Peter's and the Vatican, splendid examples of the inseparable union of coloured adornments and architectural forms.

The arcades of the Hofgarten at Munich, as well as the Glyptothek and Pinakothek, are adorned with paintings in fresco—the true fresco of Italy, where pure water-colours are applied to wet plaster. The practice requires great dexterity and certainty of hand, as the effect is produced at once, and every separate portion of the picture is successively completed before the plaster dries. The advantages of fresco-painting consist in its durability, the permanent brilliancy of the colours, and their freedom from the gloss and yellowness of oil. The method adopted renders the style more applicable to ceilings and the walls of lofty buildings, where a powerful impression has to be produced from a distance than to smaller rooms; it is better suited for public halls and churches, and the saloons and lobbies of a palace, than to private dwellings. Fresco has got into disrepute in this country, owing to the bastard method employed in the Hall at Manchester and the Roman Catholic Chapel in Moorfields. This is called mezzo fresco: the basis is fresco, that is, the masses of colour are laid on with a water medium on the moist plaster, but the design is finished with distemper—colour mixed with size; which is easily acted on by damp, and consequently the beauty of the painting is soon destroyed. Mr. Latilla employs flatted oil colours on a composition ground, spread over ordinary plaster walls. These colours are almost equal to the real fresco, while the process is much easier and cheaper; for merely decorative purposes it is as effective and durable as oil paint, and it may be washed without injury.

To the Germans we are indebted also for the revival of the ancient practice of encaustic—that is, employing wax as the vehicle, and applying the colour in a warm state. The peculiar advantages of this method over fresco, consists, we believe, in the superior delicacy and high finish it admits of.

The subject deserves the consideration of artists and amateurs, especially with reference to the new Houses of Parliament. If it be not intended to ornament them with historical paintings, surely the introduction of coloured devices might be permitted. Any one who has lounged in the sumptuous cafés of Paris, must have experienced the influence of beautiful colour on the eye and the spirits. It is matter of surprise that, in a country pretending to taste, no allusion is made to pictorial or sculptural adornments for one of the noblest piles of building we shall have to boast of—in architectural magnificence rivalling Westminster Abbey.—*Spectator*.

A SONG OF THE SEASON.

"Out of the way, sir! or I will knock you into the middle of next week." "My dear sir, you could not possibly do me a greater favor; for how I am to take up my notes, and get safely over Saturday, is more than I can tell."—*Colloquy in Wall Street*.

The last day of summer is one of regret,
The first one of winter a harder day yet;
But another there is, to which these shall appear
Like the sunniest noons in the spring of the year.

On this day we number, with sorrow, the hours,
Which, however they hasten, don't dance upon flowers.
"One fatal remembrance" the minutes embrace,
That this day of dismay, is the last one of grace.

"A note signed by you for four hundred to-day
Becomes due, and the same you're requested to pay."
—The sugar-plum lines on my card-rack appear,
Signed by one who writes better, i. e. the cashier.

To an idler, his time is a bore and disaster;
I can tell him a secret will make it move faster;
Let him sign a few notes—the agreeable things—
His wits will have work, and his time will have wings.

EXPLANATION OF FAMILIAR WORDS.

TERMAGANT.—An outrageous scold: from Termagantes, a cruel Pagan, formerly represented in divers shows and entertainments, where being dressed a *la Turque*, in long clothes, he was mistaken for a furious woman.

THOMONDS.—Like Lord Thomond's cocks, all on one side. Lord Thomond's cock feeder, an Irishman, being entrusted with some cocks which were matched for a considerable sum, the night before the battle shut them all together in one room, concluding that as they were on the same side they would not disagree; the consequence was, they were most of them either killed or lamed before next morning.

TOAD EATER.—This appellation is derived from a mountebank's servant, on whom all experiments used to be made in public by the doctor; among which was, the eating of toads, formerly supposed poisonous. Swallowing toads is here figuratively meant for swallowing or putting up with insults, as disagreeable to a person of feeling as toads to the stomach.

MARTINET.—A military term for a strict disciplinarian, from the name of a French General, famous for restoring military discipline to the French army. He first disciplined the French infantry, and regulated their method of encampment; he was killed at the siege of Dossbourg in the year 1672.

PETTFOGGER.—Derived from the French words *petit vogue*, of small credit, or little reputation.

TO POMMEL.—To beat: originally confined to beating with the hilt of a sword; the knob being, from its similarity to a small apple, called *pomme*; in Spanish it is still called the apple of the sword.

JACK ROBINSON.—Before one could say Jack Robinson; a saying to express a very short time, originating from a very volatile gentleman of that appellation, who would call on his neighbours, and be gone before his name could be announced.

THE PEARL.

HALIFAX, FRIDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 15, 1839.

Our last number having been occupied by articles of Home manufacture, we allow some of foreign production to encroach to-day, on the space usually devoted to Editorial notices. The article which fills a couple of columns on this page is one of some interest in the growth of art and of public taste,—and it exhibits how principles, generally thought rather mystic, and adapted for the higher departments only, may be brought most usefully to bear on the more common affairs of life. The want of taste in house embellishment, is often strongly felt, both in public and private edifices. Who is there that does not recollect some instances, of dull, sombre hues, spread over a large apartment, having a leaden effect on the spirits, as if the reverse of cheerfulness and pleasure were the aim? In other places of assemblage, one recollects having experienced the cold naked appearances of every thing,—the walls, some neutral tint, resembling dirty white wash, with a tint of yellow smoke; the pillars pale and ghost-like, or in imitation marble which could not deceive the youngest spectator, and which could not be looked at without thoughts of the paint pot; and the ceiling either totally unadorned, or worse, adorned, most inappropriately,—heavy, stiff, and dull, where all should be light, flowing and cheerful, like the gay clouds and the azure arch of the great globe's canopy. In such an apartment, the lights glare painfully, and the audience are thrown out coldly, from most unbecoming back grounds, like unsightly specks,—and all this, where different hues, and devices, might form a rich, mellow harmony, eye-delighting and spirit-cheering.

This is not a matter of great moment,—but if decorations are worth attempting, and if people will, as they ought, aim at them, they should be done in the best manner. Nothing is saved by a bad taste, on the contrary, loss every way is the result,—while by aiming at truth and beauty, as well in the smallest as the greatest matters, we help to improve and please ourselves and others, with scarcely any additional expenditure of means.

On our second page is a very interesting narrative of a melancholy occurrence which took place a few years ago, in the romantic district of Grasmere, Westmoreland, England. It is told by a celebrated writer for English periodicals: the fears of the young family, the maternal care of the oldest child, the zeal of the dales-people, the funeral, and the refuge provided, are all depicted with great vividness and beauty. Such narratives do good, they increase the better sympathies of our nature, make us acquainted with the customs of our fellow beings who are greatly divided from us, and generally increase our pleasures and the sphere of our feelings and affections. On another page is a graphic extract descriptive of the district which forms the scene of the preceding narrative. It is a very romantic part of England, well known to tourists;—Wordsworth, and some other of the celebrated men of England, have made it their place of residence,—and it combines many of the picturesque features of the wilder and more beautiful parts of the sister kingdoms: sequestered, rich, sylvan vales,—stern, precipitous mountains,—calm,