

greens and yellows, giving a pleasing relief to the eye while preserving the flat wall surface. The German designers have worked on these lines as well and their color is good but their designs are much in the extreme "new style"—so extreme, indeed, that to an ordinary mortal they are anything but beautiful. To add to their undesirability they are easily copied and have been widely copied by American manufacturers, and as is usual in such cases, the glaring faults have been accentuated under the mistaken impression that they formed the main attractiveness of the designs. The English designs are not so much in favor with the great American public and are thus saved this degradation.

To what are known as the sample-book houses and the departmental stores is due much of the cheapening of design and materials in wallpaper as in so many other lines. Something with a semblance of merit but spiced up with touches of color to catch the popular taste has to be provided at a price which will insure large sales. Thus it becomes increasingly difficult year by year to purchase designs sufficiently distinct from these meretricious vamped up piracies. Apparently the only safe course is to confine oneself to flat quiet effects in two or three tones of analogous colors and yet there are some glorious walls to be had in strong color from the collections of the leading British makers.

The French designers adhere pretty closely to their traditions in the direction of marvellous reproductions of the effect of silk, leather, tapestry, &c. As I pointed out in a former paper there is no pretense in these creations, that they are the actual material themselves, and it is therefore perfectly legitimate in such an intrinsically valueless material as wallpaper to produce any effect that will make a good wall. No objections of this sort, however, can be raised against the beautiful flocks or velvet papers in which the French excel and which have come in with the new styles or revived styles in architecture. Nothing can quite take their place in the white and gold rooms of the Empire or the Colonial of New England and Virginia.

Of the best American lines it can only be said that they are good in so far as they so closely follow the European makers as to be almost indistinguishable from them except to the trade expert. When originality is attempted it is not of an order to commend itself to a cultured taste. The craze for much display at little cost has controlled the output of a majority of the American factories.

Our own manufacturers have not yet reached a stage where the designing and coloring of their wallpapers can be seriously considered from an artistic standpoint. This condition of affairs is likely to continue for some time to come, those wishing really good design and coloring being ready to pay the difference in price for the imported lines. It is gratifying, however, to note that even in the domestic lines the showy pressed, embossed gilts, glimmers, and other such abominations have disappeared.

Some curious revivals come upon the market at times and enjoy a short run of popularity out of all proportion to their merit. An old house in Boston was pulled down the other day and on the walls of one room was exposed a panel treatment in old Chinese hand painting on small square silk sheets, the subjects reminding one of the old tea chest pictures. At once there was a demand for subjects of this sort and an

enterprising importer engaged Japanese artists to produce hand painted wall hangings fifty yards long without repeat by any required width up to five or six feet. The painting was done on fine muslin with a backing of strong thin paper. Of course this revival of Japanese design is merely a fad and yet it indicates how keen is the pursuit of novelty in the decorating field.

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PLANTS IN DECORATION.

BY C. MANGOLD.

Who can imagine decorative art without plants? or estimate what it owes to the vast resources of the vegetable kingdom? They are so inexhaustible and so varied that they must always be its chief inspiration, and yet it has made only a very restricted choice from the wealth at its disposal. Why is this, and why at different periods have artists resorted to different plants, and why in some cases have plant-forms constituted the main feature of a design and in others played merely a subordinate part?

To be available for decorative work a plant must not be too small, and must have a characteristic growth or a lively colour. In the earliest art-epochs of any country those plants naturally appear in decoration which are indigenous to the country, and the palm tree is thus the first plant we know to have been used, lending itself readily to the purpose, and being a native of the land which has given us the earliest examples of decoration. An artist must be familiar with the appearance and life of the plants he uses in his art, and this is only possible in the case of plants which are constantly before his eyes.

The size of a plant and its separate parts is of importance, because there are artistic limits to the representation of very small plants on a scale larger than that of nature.

The durability of a plant is not without its weight. Not only should portions of it keep unwithered long enough to be copied, but also to make wreaths and other natural decorations. These, too, can be copied, and have at all times furnished important motives to decorative artists. In the time of the Renaissance, the use of natural floral decorations and wreaths were even commoner than now. The Italians in particular are greatly addicted to this form of decoration, and possess a large number of different evergreen plants suitable for the purpose, such as the laurel, the evergreen oak, the olive, the myrtle, and the cypress.

The choice of plants for decoration depends on the character of the nation at the time, and the fashion is always changing. We see that well in the flower representations of the present day. The vast demand for such designs for carpets, wallpapers and womens' clothes, has caused the artist to seek for inspiration from a very much greater number of plants than he has ever done before.

In many cases it is still possible to point out the particular plant from which the artist has taken his motive, but it is much more common to see fancy plants in which the mixing of types has been carried so far that the origin of the separate parts cannot be distinguished. Decorative art is, in fact, freeing itself from the trammels of precedent and striking out a new path for itself. This is as it should be, and the artist must go to nature for his novelties.—*Maler Zeitung*,