

## THE SPANISH GYPSY BOY IN THE NORTH.

(Translated from the French.)

Far to the south lies sunny Spain,  
My childhood's happy home;  
Where clear and fresh, by hill and plain,  
The Ebro's waters roam.  
There giant trees their boughs entwine,  
Or in green waters dip,  
And purple clusters load each vine  
To cool the burning lip.

Sadly I wander with my lot,  
Throughout the weary day,  
For still each kindly voice is mute  
That might reward my lay.  
And what the guerdon I receive?  
A threat—perchance a blow—  
And when men see the Gypsy grieve,  
They laugh and mock his woe.

These damp chill mists that shroud the sky,  
And dim the cheerful light,  
Mar the clear notes of melody,  
And boyhood's spirit blight.  
Through all my music ye may hear  
Soft undertones of woe  
That sigh for home, no longer near—  
My home of long ago.

At that last village festival—  
'Twas on the first of May—  
The liveliest airs I could recall  
I tried my best to play;  
But while the happy pairs swung past,  
'Mid evening's crimson light,  
Down my pale cheeks the tears ran fast,  
And oh! full well they might!

For I was dreaming of a time,  
And place that memory sees,  
Far distant in my native clime,  
Beneath broad chestnut trees;  
When to the lute's inspiring sound  
Gay groups float lightly by,  
And youths and maidens in the round  
Of mazy dances vie.

Farewell! I cannot stifle more  
The yearnings of my breast:  
'Tis only on my country's shore  
That I can hope for rest.  
Away—away—to sunny Spain,  
That glorious southern land—  
I pine, until I tread again  
The Ebro's shady strand!

## THE ART-FURNITURE FEVER

That there is an epidemic of the above-named kind will scarcely be denied. The ignorantly familiar appropriation of the terms "Gothic," "Medieval," &c., sufficiently indicates a strong current of popular feeling, in matters of joinery especially, which is ill satisfied with the time-honoured classifications "elegant," "novel," "superb style," &c., which for so long have constituted the sole court of appeal with the ordinary trader and his too-confiding victim.

Where the blame of all that has been perpetrated of late years, under the broad heading of "furnishing," is to be laid or how far censure has been merited, is not the present point. We accept things as they stand, and ask practically, "Is there any good at the bottom of all this revulsion of feeling? We firmly believe there is; and that out of the present chaos of distracted attempts at art-production, our national industry will emerge with a nobler idea of its destiny than that of producing the greatest amount of cheap trash for the supreme contempt of posterity.

Without ignoring the gigantic forces which have enabled the present century to achieve marvels of economy and of rapid production, may we not wish to see these mighty engines subservient to, rather than dominant over, the mind of man?

Nay, are there not desires and aims, and hopes and joys even in regard to the material things of human life, which no mere powers of coal or steam, no organised division of labour, no smallest of profits can ever attain? For the true soul puts forth its choicest blossoms quite regardless of the price that will be set upon the matured fruit, and no inexorable invention of ambitious brain yet forced the man of genius to yield his best treasure.

And now, to come to our point, we want to see a combination—on the part of the public, who buy, and the manufacturers and retail dealers, who sell—which shall have for its end the attainment of sound principles of constructive form, honesty of workmanship, and (if any) appropriateness of decoration and detail.

Of course, to a great extent non-professional people cannot be supposed to understand the laws which should regulate the construction of a chair or of a cabinet; but taking the term "furnishing" in a broader light, we think the exercise of a little discrimination and common sense would result in an understanding upon the subject, which would speedily bring about a corresponding feeling on the part of the furnishing community, who are ever on the alert to cater for the public taste.

We say "common sense," because common sense is at the bottom of all true laws in the spheres of art and taste and only needs thought and culture to develop into the higher regions of aestheticism.

What, for instance, can be less like the exercise of common sense than the blind allegiance given to custom in the matter of furnishing our dwellings? Is it necessary that our drawing-rooms should inevitably be garnished with "walnut suites upholstered in green reps," looking, for the most part, as if they had taken the first step in a quadrille? If only for the impetus given to independent thought on the subject, we welcome the new movement and are content to suffer the vagaries inseparable from all such revolutions for the sake of the ultimate gain.

Nothing is easier than to talk upon "taste" in the abstract; but few things more difficult to advise upon than individual taste, especially where limited, as it is in the majority of cases, by pecuniary restrictions. And here we are fain to observe the abiding connection between character and taste. It is not good taste to run into debt over articles of virtu; or to involve whole families in ruin through our reckless speculation, and, at the same time, to secure our choice collections of paintings or furniture or plate, while bowing our creditors out to the tune of "sixpence in the pound." We are not joking, we assure you. Such a man is at fault in his moral nature; and though by habit or by natural gifts, he may be able to discern the beautiful and the true in art or nature, the highest form of admiration for the beautiful—because of its consistent harmony, its rightness, in a word, its perfection—would be an inconceivable contradiction in one who could allow such turpitude to cloud the loftier spheres of heart and mind, which art and nature only symbolise and, as obedient handmaids, supply with figures and emblems.

Neither is it good taste to adorn our rooms with spurious and ostentatious imitations. This is bad taste, or want of taste if you will; the result of ill-formed character, or false pride, or false shame, which pretends to that which it is not, or shrinks from avowing its true position. The age is sadly one of display; if a man cannot have the gold he will have the gilt, and if another cannot afford the gilt, at least he will borrow it on occasions. We sorely want the courage to be true, and the wisdom to be content with admiring the real, without feeling compelled to possess, for ourselves, a bad imitation of it.

Let diamonds be diamonds, and gold, gold; or at least let us suffer no counterfeit unless for the sake of convenience or utility, as in the case of electro-plating. No honest man wishes his plated service to be taken for silver.

Truth, then, is a fundamental principle of sound taste—that a thing should be what it seems.

As a rule, our kitchens are furnished with least violence to good taste. Probably, for the most part, because actual requirement only is consulted. Every article is placed there for use, and, we venture to say, in its turn, becomes ornamental. Then the, usually, self-coloured walls, of a creamy buff, do not shock our nerves as the patched and gaudy patterns, of modern wall-papers, have been wont to do. The floor is partially covered with a square of matting or floor-cloth in the middle of the room only, leaving the boards bare all round, a practice which has been often advocated for carpeted floors generally, as being much cleaner and more convenient, especially where heavy cabinets and other furniture lined the walls. Then there is the stalwart dresser, of simple unoffending outline, with its rows of neatly arranged dishes and plates, while, over the fire-place hang covers, &c., of bright block-tin, all contributing, rationally and without effort, to the general effect. The kitchen range and fender, be it observed, are frequently the only pardonable specimens of smith's craft about the house, being usually innocent of those contemptible castings of fruit and leaves which are the glory of our drawing-rooms. The central piece of furniture is usually a table of deal or elm, on four stout legs, connected by bars of wood at either end, with a middle rail running the length way of the table and intersecting the end ones. Sole remnant of true Jacobean framing.

Pray do not arch your brows, fair reader, and say, "Any one could design a kitchen table!" We do not ask you to import this identical table into your boudoir or drawing-room. The principle of construction is, we affirm, perfectly consistent with true beauty of form, and presents no difficulty in the way of legitimate ornament.

"But it is such a common shape, so excessive-ordinary!"—to which we can only say, it seems to us that the plethora of extraordinary shapes and marvellously uncommon productions of the age, in which the eye finds no repose, the mind no lasting pleasure, have so warped our judgement and perverted our notions of right beauty, as to leave us incapable on the one hand of producing, and on the other of appreciating, anything based on natural laws, and requiring for its successful treatment, accuracy of outline—justness of proportion.

The chair, too! We are never tired of admiring the ingenuity and sound sense of the man who first designed the "Windsor" chair, with its comfortable seat (far more comfortable than your first-class railway carriages), and picturesque arrangement of legs and rails—all firmly braced together; still, we believe, maintaining its reputation for cheapness. Indeed we have wondered more than once why people whose means are limited do not prefer some such chairs as this to the more pretentious but flimsy stuff to be found in almost every sea-side lodging-house. We know, indeed, of one eminent living artist who actually has, in daily use, some of these identical chairs only stained the color of ebony, after the fashion of some Venetian mirrors.

And yet we put in a plea for the dwellings of the really poor, and would condemn, just as strongly, the misguided enthusiast who should teach the poor to emulate the monochromatic decoration of our model kitchen, and to avoid the use of strong colours or naturalistic representation on the walls of their dwellings. The gaudy paper, with its impossible bunches of flowers, and the still more glaring carpet, are frequently the only signs of color and brilliancy in the apart-

ment, and contrast favourably with the sombre every day apparel of its occupants. Here the wallpaper and carpeting form the decoration of the room, whereas, in wealthier dwellings they are oftener mere groundwork on which to arrange the light and shadows of furniture, and against which to play off the masses of coloured window hangings, of paintings and other accessories, and therefore require to be viewed from an entirely different standpoint.

It is to be feared that, as a rule, the enterprising purveyors of articles of furniture for domestic use have had little or no education qualifying them to offer an opinion as to what is or what is not best: the keen competition of the day has resulted in a lamentable want of attention to the most elementary principles of construction and ornamentation. The recent movement on this continent in the important matter of technical education will, it is hoped, lead the way to some improvement in our manufacturing centres, by awakening in the masters a sense of their responsibility, and inducing a wider appreciation, amongst artisans themselves, of industrial art, without which the utmost interest on the part of the public will be unavailing.

Amongst the outrages to common sense, in the field of industrial art, may be mentioned the singular fertility of invention displayed in the concealment of locks and fastenings, which one would imagine should be the most prominent features, except in the case of 'secret drawers.' This has greatly given way before the prevailing pseudo-Gothic taste of the period, which is almost as painful in its display of massive brazen handles and overpowering hinges as was the other in its utter absence of them. Much as we dislike to see a door with no perceptible means of support, even this is preferable to the absurd appearance of a diminutive door clasped by a couple of hinges huge enough to carry ten times its size and weight, particularly when it encloses nothing more precious than a few household requisites.

'Do not conceal the construction,' was the maxim of a late famous architect. That is, let the construction show itself; do not bring it into distressing prominence, but by no means hide it as if ashamed of it. The practice of veneering, legitimate enough within certain bounds, had gone near to mislead the public into the notion that the wood was moulded and cast into form, so little indication was there of anything like framing or joinery. As for wood-carving, its condition has become so wretchedly hopeless, that it is no wonder a revulsion of feeling has set in against it altogether. And indeed, we would seriously advise those who cannot afford the best work of its kind to avoid the inferior specimens entirely, and to keep to a plain treatment of the material.

Much has yet to be done by the cabinet-maker in the judicious arrangement and disposition of the various parts of his framework, so as to obtain the greatest effect with the least outlay of labour—labour in these days, being too costly a commodity to admit of extravagant use.

Another feature of preposterous conventionality is the tedious repetition of plate-glass in the backs of our sideboards. Plate-glass is by no means a good background for ornaments. True, it produces a glitter, and duplicates everything placed in front of it; but all this rather detracts from than heightens the effect of the article in question, especially if it be of real excellence.

How much more might be done, at one half the cost of some 'magnificent plate-glass backs,' by a careful arrangement of shallow shelves and cupboards, raised just so as not to interfere with the slab of the sideboard (which should be left clear), affording, at once, an excellent opportunity for a modest and useful display of some choicer portions of household china or glass, some silver heirloom or other nick-nack, formerly consigned to the housekeepers' room or china closet! In the same way there is ample scope for similar treatment of that marvel of ugliness, the modern chimney-piece.

And here we venture to demur to the traditional 'chimney-glass in gilt frame,' and ask: Where is the law compelling every household to provide a huge reflector at one end of his room? Not that we are diametrically opposed to the introduction of a mirror in this particular place—it lightens up, and gives a feeling of air and breadth to a room; but we fail to see why one end of the apartment should be devoted to a broad expanse of silvered glass, which does nothing but repeat the other end, while the small projection of chimney-board is filled with a crowded group of ornaments and bijoutry, not one of which stands out in a clearly-defined form, each outline intersecting its own shadow, spoiling both the shadow and the reality, and only producing a confused impression in the spectators' mind. Why not arrange a gold or coloured background against which to place a few prominent vases, allowing the mirror if necessary to occupy the vacant space, and not to monopolise an entire wall? This abomination is less practiced here than in the old country, but even here the warning is not without application. What a marked difference many a room would present if only this question of suitable backgrounds was taken into consideration.

The notion that marble and plate-glass and gilded stucco are in themselves sufficient evidence of decoration must be dissipated. They may be an indication of the owner's purse, but will not stand him in stead of thoughtful taste. The homeliest fabric, the least costly material, may be made subject to artistic treatment, and prove a 'thing of beauty,' when the rarer mar-

bles and crystals have palled upon the mind's eye.

Much might be said upon the selection of carpets and curtains, of the pre-eminence still sustained by the deft weavers of India and Persia, notwithstanding the great advance in the designs and colouring of English textile fabrics.

We are, however, no rigorous advocates of any distinct formulæ in the province of art selection. So long as certain axioms are accepted, we would allow the widest margin for the exercise of individual taste, and even indorse that most comfortable assurance in which so many take refuge on finding themselves hopelessly at variance with some person or creed, viz. that *tastes differ*.

What we are chiefly desirous of placing on record is the imperative necessity—nay, duty—of every householder to bring the mind to bear, in calm thought and sound judgment, upon details of domestic surroundings, which must, more or less, reflect the character of their owner, which assuredly have an influence upon our lives and upon the lives of those about us, and which carry to succeeding generations no mean record of what manner of men we were.

After all, if, as we said, taste is intimately associated with character, we must reform the character before we can effectually reform the taste, either in a nation or an individual. But we do not believe our national character is so much at fault as that a certain want of consideration, a looseness of idea on the subject, and above all, an undue exaltation of cheapness, have led us into graver error than we care to admit. The judgment of the people once aroused, we believe we shall see in a few years results beyond the most sanguine expectations of the founders of our Science and Art Schools. Once let us fairly imbibe thorough principles of art, and, with characteristic energy, we shall infuse them into our everyday productions, and in this way maintain the prestige we are now in imminent danger of forfeiting.

## PROVERBS.

Proverbs have a nationality. The dry humour of the Scotch, the airy grace of the French, the keen wit of the Italian, the sober practical sense of the English are all represented. Richard Hillier gives an English version of a well-known French proverb, and what it gains in vigour it loses in elegance. "It is easy to walk if one leads one's horse by the bridle," say our neighbours; the English, "He can easily swim that is led by the chin." An Oriental pithiness distinguishes the Italian "Traduttori, traditori," ("Translators, traitors"); and the Spanish, "Who knows nothing doubts nothing." On one subject all nationalities agree—not one of them has a good word for the female sex. Were all the authors of proverbs disappointed old bachelors or henpecked husbands? One would almost surmise this from the unflattering opinions they record of women. Whether they are condemned with "faint praises," as in the English, "All women are good; if they are not good for something they are good for nothing," or sneered at as in the Scotch, "It is a great pity to see a woman weep as to see a goose go barefoot," or more openly attacked, as by Oriental maxims, all the proverbs take the same note. One of our oldest rhyming proverbs, said to date in the fifteenth century, announces that—

"Two women in one house,  
Two cats and one mouse,  
Two dogs and one bone,  
Never can agree in one."

This perhaps is not wholly untrue. Even the Mormons found it expedient to erect separate mansions for each of their spouses, and the experiment of families "living together" is not always productive of domestic harmony. If the majority of proverbs are anonymous, it is interesting to note now many great writers have contributed if not actual proverbs at least phrases that become "familiar as household words" to their national (and other) literature. In many cases the people who quote these expressions are quite ignorant of their source. Until the actors of the Comedie Francaise performed in London, Moliere's works could hardly be said to be very familiar to the majority of the English public. Yet Moliere, like Shakespeare, Pope, and Cervantes, is constantly quoted by people who never read a word of his plays. "Nous avons changé tout cela" has become a familiar phrase, but many who use it are not aware that it is taken from the "Medecin malgré Lui" (Act ii., Scene 6), when the counterfeit doctor explains his ignorant mistakes in anatomy by exclaiming "Nous avons changé tout cela" (the position of the heart in the body), "et nous faisons maintenant la médecine d'une méthode toute nouvelle." "Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère" is in like manner often quoted by persons who have never heard of "Les Fourberies de Scapin," where the expression originally occurs (Act iii., Scene 11). It would be easy to multiply instances. There is the story of a young man who remarked that "Hamlet" was a good play enough, but so full of quotations; and in like manner fragments of many great writers take rank as household phrases, whose users are surprised when they meet them in their original form.

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