

Decorative

STAINED GLASS AND CANADIAN ART.

By S. JONES.

THERE is no intention in the following paper to give a historical or critical essay on the above subject, or to demonstrate the connection between its two branches; but it may be pertinent to say a few preliminary words on what constitutes art, Canadian or otherwise. It is scarcely necessary to point out to the readers of a journal of this character the illogical absurdity of the vulgar idea that all art is confined within the four sides of a picture frame, yet this false conception has been disastrously prevalent even down to the present Victorian era of English art. Many of the most eminent painters (not to trouble you with enumeration of great modelers and workers in brass, iron, stone, wood or the many forms of artistic reproduction) have been also designers, and have let their art run outside of picture frames. The draughtsmen, for, and workers in, stained glass, for instance, now reckon among their number names that were, or could have been, eminent in any department of art. Nor is there need to press the claim of stained glass as a medium for the highest form of art workmanship. Since its discovery and application to all purposes of utility and beauty, its translucent and prismatic charms have won for it a recognition too general if anything, for the beauty of it is such, it seems almost to possess the faculty of dazzling the judgment as well as the visual organs, so that the same superstition has held since its latter revival, that *anything* must be good if it is stained glass. This is an absurdity as inimical to true art as the picture frame theory. No fortunate jumble of pretty color in any material can be called art. Design is the foundation of all art, from a lady's brooch to a Cologne cathedral.

To appreciate the distinction between good and bad heraldic work, just compare an ordinary sign painter's treatment of any quadruped or bird, with its weak, unctuous roundness, shapeless masses of muscle, and saucer-eyed ferocity, its smoothly badgered shadows, deep-cast shades and reflected lights, and the vigorous drawing and flat decorative treatment of one of the pure Gothic school. It is the difference—even when the drawing is equal—between the grace and life of a greyhound and the bloated roundness of my lady's overfed pig.

The renaissance of stained glass is scarcely half a century old, and from its revival to the present day, gigantic strides have been taken in the direction of beauty and consistency of design, architectural fitness, more natural and correct drawing, harmonious coloring, and in church work, of devotional expression. Clayton, Henton, Holliday, Grylls, Morris, Bayne, Kemp, Burn Jones, and a few others, are the root and life and the acknowledged masters of the movement that has since spread over the civilized world. Germany, Italy, Austria, and even France, the modern Greece—the cradle and home of art—acknowledged the supremacy of the English school. All that is good in Canada or the States springs from this one source. But though "there were giants in those days," I am not denying the fact that other decorative artists have arisen since who may be equal to some of those mentioned, Frederick Shields and Almqvist, an Anglicized Swede, being among the number.

Turn we now from the old world to the new, and enquire, briefly, how stands the manufacture of stained glass in the United States and Canada? Has the young western giant who has advanced by leaps and bounds in science and literature—whose enterprise and vigour, boundless resources and commercial genius have seemed resistless—imbibed all the old world experience and improved upon it? Not so! The tourist, the traveller, who would seek for high-class native American art work in glass and interior decoration, would have to explore far and wide. With the exception of Mr. Lafarge, by far the greatest naturalized American artist, and some work by the Tiffany Company, in New York, he will find that all the good church work comes from London, Paris, Lyons, Berlin or Munich. Why, this is, exactly, I cannot say. Several explanations are feasible. The conditions have not been hitherto favorable. The large churches and cathedrals are only now being built.

There has not been the demand for good work, the knowledge of what it consists of, the desire for it, or faith in native ability to produce it. The only certain thing about it is that, despite some recent assertions to the contrary, it has hitherto not been forthcoming. I trust I am doing no injustice to our American cousins. My knowledge of their work is very limited compared to my experience of English glass. Still, I would hesitate to make a charge like this on my own responsibility. I am not relying on personal observation. It is the consensus of opinion from reliable and independent sources, and I stand by the statement. I have the highest admiration for their achievements in many directions of art even. In many branches of lithography and engraving, for instance, they have distanced the world. I frankly admit they do some good domestic work with a beautiful material called opalescent glass. To those who are not familiar with this material, any written description of it would be clumsy. Less transparent than pure glass, it catches and holds the light better from its inequality of surface and latent opacity, changing its hues and reflecting radiances somewhat as the gem would from which it derives its name. I have seen some good specimens of color and design in this material, but in too many cases reliance is placed simply on the beauty of the product. Many intricate forms are

appropriate to a religious edifice. But, of course, if our neighbors think different—well, it's a free country, but I prophesy they will soon educate themselves out of it.

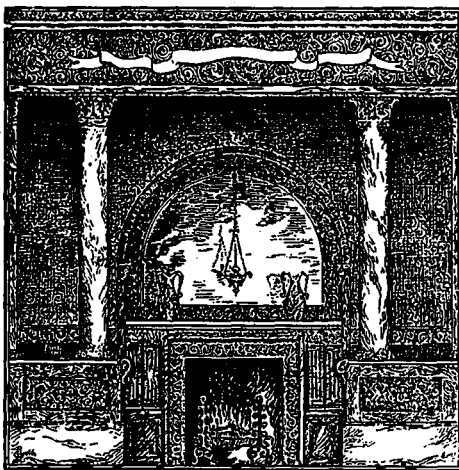
The only window John Ruskin has been known to praise was one by Messrs. Burlison & Grylls, of London, where the key of color was very low—grey blues, dull olive greens, brown reds; the main tint in white and gold, but producing a sombre rich effect—depending on the form, the leading motif, the design, so that the window merges itself into its frame, the edifice itself, and does not glare out like a vulgar patch of gaudy frippery on a sober suited garment.

Let us now examine the state of taste, knowledge and proficiency, in glass work here at home. Canada, despite her many drawbacks, has steadily advanced: her log huts budding into villages, her villages into thriving towns, and her towns spreading into broad, fair cities. From "Muddy York" to the "Queen City of the West," Toronto—like the swift Atlanta—has so rapidly outrun all her fair compeers that it is not easy to realize in how short a space of time she has emerged from the chrysalis shell of her shanties of logs to the beauty of her many palatial residences that adorn her streets and suburbs—exchanging her crude plaster little Bethels for the magnificent churches for which she is famed. So brief is this space of time, it is difficult to determine the growth of art in its varied applications. Some of the early work in engraving, lithographic printing, carving or stained glass, for instance, would be deemed crude and unsatisfactory by the firms now engaged in their production. But with the constant connection, the ever renewed touch with all art centers—the steady influx of skilled craftsmen and designers from the same sources—Toronto is brought abreast with her old-world rivals in many respects. In the recent Colonial Exhibition, Canada surprised the world by her display of natural products, but even a greater surprise was reserved for her proficiency in many forms of art manufacture: her organs and pianos, carved cabinets, and stained glass.

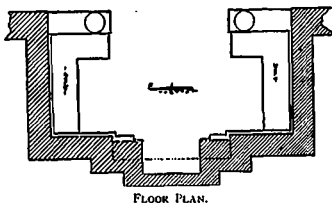
It should be the pleasure, as it is the duty, of all Canadians who have the permanent prosperity of the country at heart to give a wise and generous patronage to all that is good in native workmanship. Too seldom are prophets honored in their own country. Whilst we unlock our boundless wealth of forest, lake and mine, why not cultivate the adorning graces too that shall soften and ennoble this rough-hewn structure? Get a School of Mines by all means, that should be the deeply-laid foundation of Canada's future greatness; but also aim at a School of Art that shall not be American, French, or even English, but Canadian. Establish a

School of Design: they have done wonders in the old country, having wrenched the palm of superiority for many art products from France and Germany. Why may not Canadians do the same? They are of the same stock. Let us give our youths especially a more technical training and reform the system of apprenticeship. For the minerals the earth yields us, train a battalion of Tubal Cains to mould the metal, not for utility only, but to all forms of grace and loveliness. Be content with no second place, but aim at the highest. Step right into the front and stay there, and if older civilizations dispute our claim let them put their powers to the proof in fair encounter. Something has been done already. Not Canada, not Ontario alone, but the city of Toronto has been heard of in all corners of the earth as a great musical center, thanks to the efforts of a few earnest artists, and in particular Mr. F. H. Torrington. We have native poets, on whom the "immortal nine" have looked benignly. Some portrait painters in Toronto are in the front rank, and do work that would grace any salon in Europe. We have architects, too, who could "erect dreams in marble and preach sermons in stones" with any European architects.

If Canada sink back into oblivion or remain but half civilized, the fault will lie entirely with the purchasing public—"the men of light and lending," who should show a better example. It is not that native work is inferior, that the most aesthetic taste cannot be satisfied at home, nor from any necessity or love of art that wealth is sent abroad, but simply at the dictate of fashion or the more contemptible behest of some mercantile motive. The best art manufacture can be had right here by those who can appreciate it, and are willing to pay a fair price for it. As Ruskin complained long since: "The fashionable rich know nothing of art and care less, but must nevertheless make-believe to have taste, and get the greatest conventional art effect for the smallest possible outlay." If this stigma once



RICHES AND FIRE PLACE FOR HALLWAY.
By GEO. C. BOWEN.



FLOOR PLAN.

obtained, requiring great skill in the cutting and leading of such difficult substance, but there is too feeble an attempt at any given style, at any consistent design, even to a scheme of color; and much of the work in this direction, paid a good price for and highly thought of, is simply (apart from the mechanical skill required to cut and lead it) destitute of all directing intelligence—a heterogeneous mass of mindless magnificence. There is a rage just now for using the same material for church work in the States, which, till I see more of, I will say little about, except that it strikes my insular views as a move entirely in the wrong direction. Infinite pains and patient labor are required in selecting a piece of opalescent that will represent a well-drawn portion of drapery, for instance—painting nothing in a figure but the head, hands and feet, and leaving the whole of the remainder of a raw material—however beautiful, still raw, and too dazzlingly bright to conform to the atmosphere of a temple for worship. I have an old-fashioned prejudice in favor of the effect which Milton describes when he speaks of

"Storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light."

Such effect could scarcely be produced with opalescent glass. The brightness and glitter that would cheer a home in a fan light or hall door, is not necessarily as