

MORESQUE PLASTER DECORATION.

THE Moors employed plaster for the decoration of both the exterior and the interior of their structures, not only for the simple expression of form, but as a basis of polychromy. At Segovia there are several good specimens of exterior decoration, and it will not be out of place to particularize one. The front walls of the Alcazar are covered with a diaper in plaster with most artistic effect. Probably the work was wrought by means of a frame, either of metal or wood, in which the requisite pattern had been cut, as is done with stensils. This pattern was placed flat on the face of the plaster as it dried, and the pattern was cleverly incised, as it were, through the openings. It could also be pressed on the plaster until the surface pattern was indented. The composition of the plaster for such purposes was undoubtedly cared for, as well as the manipulation, for the durability of it has been tested by many centuries of exposure. A band of such ornament can be carried across brickwork, or round a brick-built tower, as it was by the Moorish artists. Examples of such application can be found in plenty, and it is always richly effective. The Moors showed fine judgment in the use of this ornamentation in relation to the whole building on which they applied it, not being led away by the facility they thus had for the employment of detail, but, using the work in uniform masses, or bands, they avoid any expression of pettiness by profuse and meaningless variety.

For the interior courts and chambers mural decorative work in plaster was of fine quality, and was cut and carved in situ by the artist; it was simply sculptured on the spot as stone or alabaster might be carved, no mould being used. The capitals of the columns were thus produced in delicately intricate work. At Toledo there is a synagogue that was constructed in the twelfth century by Moorish artists, and was afterwards forcibly seized and converted to Christian uses, where the application of plaster work of this kind is exemplified with conspicuous effect. The spandrels above the arches are all original carvings of arabesque pattern, showing delicate undercutting as well as surface work of peculiar beauty. In all parts of the structure there is that delightful variety in detail with unity of effect such as artistic handwork can give, but which mechanical repetition will not achieve. The mere play of light and shadow on such a carved surface, if it be white or of a uniform light tint, has a charm of its own; but when the carving is emphasized by colour the effect is most powerful. It is the principle of the work, not existing specimens of it, that we should copy; the same principles that we may see practically illustrated in the Alhambra, and equally in other Mahometan structures. We may not require the splendid harmonies of those wonderful walls for our purposes, but we should none the less learn from them to produce what we do want. We do want art in our plaster work. That plaster may be used truthfully and artistically we may learn from the

CREDIT VALLEY BROWN STONE

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SANDSTONE, fine grained, reddish brown. Contains quartz, and a little felspar and mica. The stone is in beds of four feet and under, and can be handled in pieces up to five tons. Quarry 300 yards from Railway.

Specimen.	Section under Pressure	Height.	Crushing Load.	Crushing Stress per sq. in.	Average Crushing Stress per Square Inch
	Ins.	Ins.	Pds.	Pds.	Pds.
A
B	2 7/8 x 3	2 7/8	131,000	15,188	
C	2 1/8 x 3	2 7/8	130,000	14,751	
D	3 x 3	2 7/8	133,000	14,777	14,905

14,905

pounds is the average crushing strength per square inch of our Credit Valley Brown Stone.

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IN confirmation of the facts above stated, we have pleasure in directing your attention to the accompanying table, showing the result of the test of our stone, in connection with the series of tests of building stones conducted in 1892 at the School of Practical Science, Toronto, under the direction of a committee of the Ontario Association of Architects.

By referring to the results of the tests above mentioned, it will be seen that the average crushing stress of the majority of Canadian and American sandstones is far below that of ours, the difference in our favor ranging from 75 to 50 per cent.

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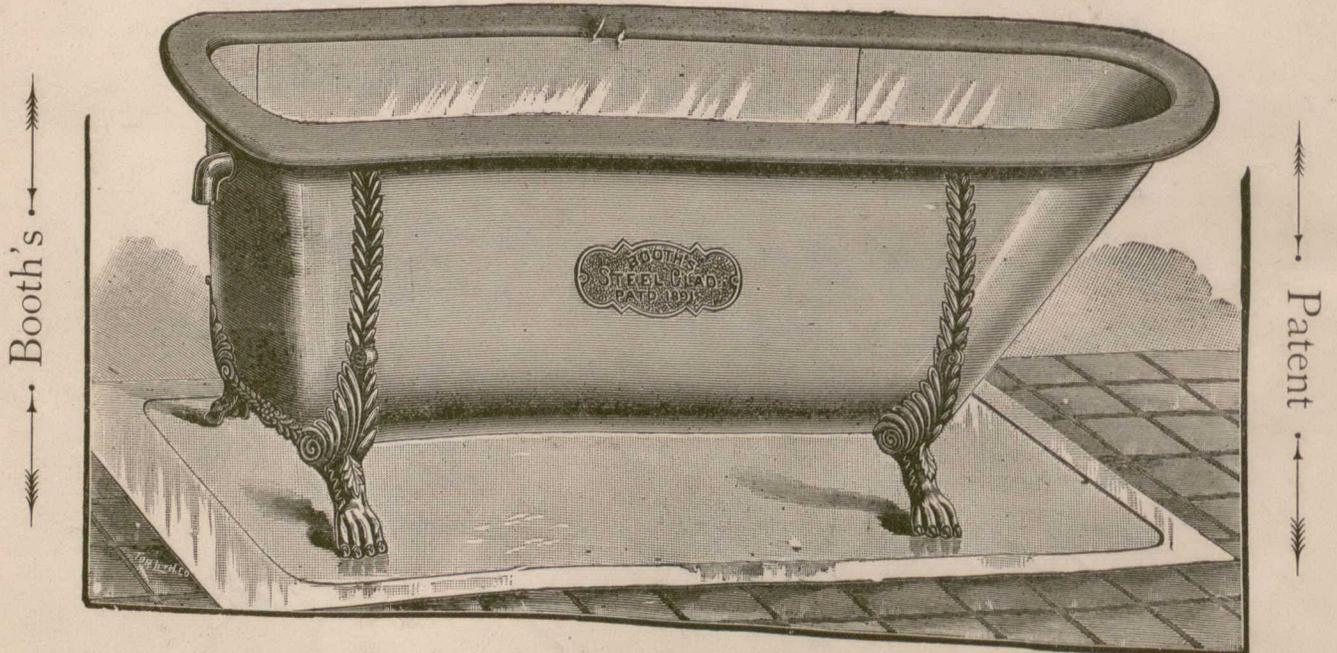
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