

desired to be of copper, the objection being that when the immediate friends had passed away, it would become uncared for and soon reach the dingy state, a condition that the more familiar marble never reaches. It seems difficult to find a metal that would do any better than copper, which was wanted, but with the aid of such an artificially-produced patina, the difficulty is removed, and there is no reason why copper should not be used. For any case where an inscription or lettering in any form is wanted, it may be said that no other metal opens out such chances as copper, especially if treated in an artistic manner, provided, of course, the design and execution is not left to the tender mercies of the usual commercial person.

One can only refer to the lamentable state that mural brasses have reached in our time, and suggest that the artistically treated copper offers an escape from such terrors, especially if the tablet be within reach of an occasional duster, giving the slight amount of polish that makes the use of lacquer or other preservatives unnecessary.

One other treatment of copper must be noticed before finishing, and as artists we shall feel it to be treading on unholy ground — electrotyping. Sometimes one thinks that this must be a fine process and a nineteenth-century blessing, while the next electro one comes across the whole thing is condemned bag and baggage. A clever mechanic will turn out in electro a copy of a repousse dish that an expert could not tell from the original, unless he looked at the back. This is a thing to be thankful for, this tell-tale back of the electrotype, otherwise there would be no telling at all, so faithfully does it reproduce every mark, even touch of the hammer or chisel. It is interesting to know what is going on around us, and it may not be out of place to relate a little incident that occurred recently. In the workshop of a clever electrotyper a specimen of work was brought in to show. It was a small electric-light table-standard about 9 in. high, of interesting design, and apparently highly chased, in copper, with a good chocolate-brown patina, and mounted on a small oak plinth. "Now this," said he, "is electroed from a fine old Sheffield plate candle-stick in the South Kensington Museum, and we have an order for a quantity. We have acquired the right to reproduce the things in the museum, and, with our skill in this line, there is nothing that we shall not be able to copy."

Now, frankly, if I had seen this piece in a shop I should not have been able to tell how it had been made, because it had been electroed in two halves and soldered up, so that the back could not be seen, and on the face only gave the evidence of highly chased work and most careful finishing.

One may say, if this has exactly the appearance of the correct thing, it must be as good. Most plausible, but most weak! There is often a sorry mind behind a fair face, and the fact that you can mechanically reproduce a good thing a hundred times, makes it a hundred times worse. A good piece of copper or any other metal work, on which an artist has spent time and care, will always be valuable; and equally the most exact reproduction of it, especially by any mechanical means, will always be valueless. Seriously and calmly, this form of copper work is the only one that may be called unlawful, and if we do not leave it altogether alone, it should only be used for the commonest purposes.

We have now considered some of the good points

and some of the bad points of copper, and the question naturally arises, To what use can this metal be put with advantage to-day?

Well, externally, and except in the case of roofing, copper is not much used. There has been a mild desire to cover the door of a church or mansion with it occasionally; in the case of the former with repousse work, which we may imagine as capable of having a very rich effect. Sometimes one sees the name of a tradesman in high-relief letters in copper or a name plate by a door, in both of which positions they seem to get well rubbed, and invariably catch the eye as we pass. In one or two cases sheet copper has been largely used, in conjunction with wood-work, in the decoration of big West-end public-houses; and although here it looks applique and cheap, that is not the fault of the copper.

It may be well to take this opportunity of saying how difficult, but how important it is, so to use sheet copper, or any other metal, that it does not look thin and papery, and as if cut out with scissors. Of course sheet-metal, unless of some thickness is frequently cut into shape with shears, but if this is apparent when the work is finished the effect is disastrous. All the durable and hard qualities of the metal seem to disappear, and the thin, fragile undurable character asserts itself unpleasantly. For a glaring instance of this misuse in sheet-metal, though in iron, we have only to turn to the much-vaunted iron railing from Hampton Court Palace, in the South Kensington Museum, reputedly by Huntingdon Shaw.

One would not be understood to mean that sheet-metal must be made to look like cast, or any other form of metal, only equally it must not be made to look like paper. If any metal-work looks thin and poor, not solid and strong and metallic, then the designer is no artist, and the workman no craftsman—both have wasted their time and chance. Beyond these one or two things, then, one does not see copper used externally; though, at least, wherever sheet-brass is used, there also certainly sheet-copper may be used. Indoors it is different, especially in domestic work. For a good, comfortable, homelike, and cheerful appearance in drawing-room, dining-room, or kitchen, one may safely say copper cannot be beaten. Near a fireplace, and kept bright, it has a cherry glow that rivals the fire itself; the mere fact alone of its being kept so bright is a constant and recurring announcement of housewifely attainments.

There is hardly any interior metal-work that, if one desired, might not be done in copper, saving, perhaps, poker and tongs; and even the former of these I once saw made out of a huge copper bolt of some old Navy ship. Hinges, too, one would not use it for, as it would wear too quickly; but we can use the gun-metal alloy where the actual wear and tear comes, and rely on our old friend for the ornamental part.

For finger-plates, a handsome set of door furniture in bright copper will do more to redeem a drawing-room from depression than the most gorgeous wall-paper, and the sparkle of electric lights in copper reflectors and copper stands will be only second to gold itself.

To-day, no lady who had any self-respect could live for a single day if she had not a more or less ancestral copper coal-scuttle, while two or three years ago, to be without any equally ancestral warming-pan hung on the drawing-room wall was almost a punishable matter.