DECORATION AND FURNITURE

GLASS PAINTING.*

THE art of stained glass is not yet fully fortunate in speaking a language understanded of the people. Indeed, "I don't understand stained glass," is the remark one most frequently hears made about it, and this even from people of considerable appreciation for other forms of art. This comes home to one when one sees what pitiful stuff people of taste are content to have in the doors and windows of their own houses. The purplish birds on the yellow leaves within a circle of harsh red, the whole backed up by alternate oblongs of bad pink and green; how frequently one notices that work of art standing where it ought not! The builder inserts this and the like of it in the first instance, but the occupants suffer them to remain, not perhaps confident that they could find anything else so much more agreeable to their feelings as to warrant the expense of a change. It means, perhaps, that about even the highest development of the art, as usually practised, there still clings conventionalities of the parasitic or stifling sort; traditions that have arisen, that could only arise, in a period of bad art, and that have survived into a time of better things.

Wholesome conventionality, the acknowledgment of limits, and the determination to pull up well within them, is of the nature of a backbone to decorative art. Excellent, too, is healthy tradition. A man, or a school of men who have practiced a craft right well, bequeath to their successors, not a series of cast-iron rules and regulations, but a common-sense recommendation: "On such and such lines our art can be successfully carried out; adhere to them, we advise you, and see your way very clearly before you try to disturb them. If new possibilities arise, they must be dealt with! but do not change the old order for less than sufficient cause." Without some such tradition, a craft may become experimental and amateurish, and its productions perplexing.

Let us, before going further, try and understand stained glass.

The germ of it lies, not in the wooden-framed sash-windows with which we are most familiar, but in lead lattice, or, as it is perhaps most often called, casement. The simplest form of lattice consists of square or diamond shaped panes of white glass of the same size, connected by "leads"—that is, by strips of that metal, with a groove on each side, into which the glass fits, the leads being joined by soldering at the corners, and the interstices filled in with cement corresponding to the putty in our sash windows. From this simplest form of a lead-latticed window, the next step is the introduction of coloured glass. By this we get square or diamond-shaped panes alternately of white and colour, or of several tints in succession—a series of arrangements being possible whilst we still cut our glass in panes of straight-lined shapes all of one size. More variety comes with the half-step from this to panes still rectilinear, but of different sizes and shapes; and we have made a stride when we have found out how to cut our glass into pieces with curved outlines. Our framing line of ductile lead is as ready to go round a circle as along a straight line, and now with curve-contoured forms of varied colour arranged in groups, we have already a handsome stained glass window of pattern.

The next move is a momentous one, and may have a word of preface. The best ornamentist of the present time* has acutely noticed that some simple pattern shapes, that have been assumed to imitate natural forms, are in reality dictated by the tool or material employed. When their resemblance to nature struck the primitive artist, he did what he could to make it closer, but they arose at first independently. A single stroke of a full brush on paper, beginning with a point, spreading from that, and then ending with a sudden and more rounded diminution as the brush quits the paper, resembles the form of a leaf; the simplest combination of such touches suggest a leaf-cluster. Surround a large circle with a series of little ones, and you get a broad hint of a frequent flower type. So our window maker, having advanced thus far, could not fail to be struck with hints of natural form in his pattern, and suddenly his brain took fire longing to complete the resemblance. This led to an application to transparent glass of the long-practised process of enameling; lines and shadows were drawn on it with a material that, when fired at a sufficient heat, unites with the glass and becomes permanently fixed. The imitation of form seldom goes far in any art before the designer tries to imitate the most interesting of all forms: to take on him the God-like function of making man in his own image.

* H. Arthur Kennedy in the *Journal of the Society of Arts.*

* "Every-day Art," by Lewis F. Day.

FRIEZES.

WE must refer to the differences in mural ceiling designs, to the circumstance that there are friezes that look well in lighter tints than the wall color; but the general practice is to have the coloring stronger than the latter. One rule applies to either mode, and that is, that the forms should be distinct, however vague the general wall design. Where the general hue of the frieze is lighter than the former, a few touches of bright color will often restore a balance. It was a true burst of artistic taste that led to the present depth of friezes instead of scrimping bands. It is here worth noting that the proportions followed by the Romans and illustrated at Pompeii allotted one part of the height of wall to dado, three parts to the field and one and a half to the frieze, proportions adapted to the heavy Roman architecture. Where the mouldings of a room are unusually heavy, we have known decorators to introduce grey and lightsome friezes of a more than ordinary depth, to lessen the too heavy effect. The fault of dull and dark friezes is being steadily corrected. It is usually better that the field and frieze should not wholly correspond in color, but the ground of frieze may be the same if of a deeper color than the fold.—*Beck's Journal of Decorative Art.*

A new effect in color in wall decoration was devised by Whistler in the painting of a small room. The walls were first painted a pure black, which was afterwards overlaid with a coat of semi-transparent yellow. The effect was the apparent annihilation of the walls and the production of the impression of living in a petrified nocturne, an endless London fog, but the small room no longer looked small.—*Plumber and Decorator.*

The tendency toward light colors in house painting and decorating, both inside and out, is very marked, showing a complete revulson of feeling against the dark and rich colors which were so popular a short time since. Even in city houses, where the trimmings and sash were almost altogether red, green or brown, these colors are now rarely seen, and the more common effects are obtained from combinations of buff, ivory or cream white, and the various delicate gray tints. These changes have affected the demand for paper-hangings and curtain stuffs, which now tend altogether to light backgrounds and delicate treatment, very generally floral in pattern, or perhaps plain tints not darker than a gendarme blue or an an old gold as an extreme limit.

Mr. William Kennedy, Newmarket, Ont., has been granted a patent for a hot water heater.

The wickedness of plumbers is always a favorite theme and is likewise a very suggestive subject, as witness the latest information that when a plumber was pitched out of a fifth floor window by his employer he charged double time from the moment he left the window till he struck the pavement.—*British Architect.*

We learn from the *Brickmaker* that Boston architects are beginning to think that it is desirable to break the monotony which steady rows of red brick buildings have, by introducing brick of other colors. It is surprising to see how many of Boston's newer buildings are of tinted brick. It is somewhat more expensive, since the clay pits about Boston all produce a red brick; but with cheapening rates of transportation the city is likely to use more brick from a distance. Instead of freighting the brick from the place of their manufacture, the clay itself is now being shipped to some kilns near the city, and there baked. A striking edifice in yellow brick will be the new building at Tufts College. The yellow brick will not turn, and the mortar will not whitewash, and the yellow brick is believed to harmonize better with the landscape than the standard red.