

it is to be ever broadening out, until when it has got too big for the narrow bounds of earth and time, it changes climes, to find better, eternal circumstances of light and liberty. Will that do, my brother? Is that a practical theory for life? You cannot carry it out by sitting down to hear expositions of it, by subscribing to it when formulated into creeds, by admiring it—it means *work*—constant, hard, painful work. You don't expect to get a education by looking at books or hearing lectures on literature—you don't expect to succeed in the market because you have learnt the buying and selling prices of stuff—you are practical men and you go to work in a practical manner. Be practical here in this matter of the soul. Work, exercise virtues—compel yourself to think right and do well. I am sick of mere sentiment, of vague generalities, of devotion to the conventional, of the miserable mean lives we call Christian, of the hardness and divisions and persecutions of orthodoxy—I am ashamed of this merely professional religion which consist of clothes, and grimaces, and ritual—I long for a freer life, for what is natural and so divine, but I cannot find it in sentimental philosophies, in the vague moralisings of social economists. I cannot find what I want in theories of evolution and ideas of immortality which blot the immortal out; but I *can* find it in Christ. That is the only Gospel that is practical for life, for time, and for eternity; that reveals the only way by which man can be saved. *Faith*—that is practical. *Love*—that is practical. A life built up in faith and love saved for ever—that is practical. Christ is still a practical Teacher and Saviour, and the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto men's salvation.

### DECORATIVE ART.

#### ORNAMENT AND ITS APPLICATION.

##### PART II.

In a rude state, before the intellect becomes developed and disciplined, our judgment in matters of taste is liable to error and to be governed by impulse. It selects the striking, delights in startling contrasts, and is swayed by fashion or prejudice. When in its best form, it is the result of the cultivation of the imagination under the guidance of reason, and becomes harmonious when brought under the subduing influence of refinement; by its cultivation we are enabled to detect beauty under whatever form it may be presented to our sight. As a proof of good taste, there can be no surer guide than the selection of beauty by the eye when viewing objects of art, giving evidence of the power to discriminate between the true and the false. And the very fact that there is a harmony in the minds of the cultivated fully proves the genuineness of the laws of taste. By a knowledge of those laws we are enabled not only to tell what to like, but how to employ our likings.

Many are prone to find fault with the taste of others, because they differ from them in their likes and dislikes. All objects of beauty do not appeal in the same manner and degree to different individuals; and we see no reason why any one should not be justified in having a preference for one object over another, provided they do not transgress the laws of taste. There can be no wrong in any one exhibiting his admiration for the Greek style of ornamentation, with its just balance of ground and ornament, its chaste simplicity and elegance in preference to the massive richness of the Roman, or the quaint symbolism and geometrical forms of the Gothic, or *vice versa*. It is only when we offend by an injudicious choice, or carry to excess, or mix or misplace ornament that we are guilty of breaking the laws of taste.

Among the styles of ornament there are such strongly marked characteristics, and they are so clearly defined, being so carefully designed and adapted to their respective places, that if we attempt to mix them we offend the laws of good taste. They are mediums of expression of different sentiments appealing to the eye, and through it to the mind, of symbolism, or conventional forms of beauty, or harmony of colour.

An improper use of ornament leads to a falsity. Let us take an example. The mind, through the medium of association, has adopted the urn as a symbol of death, and for this reason a designer of monumental work frequently uses it over the graves of the departed, and, like the inverted torch when so used, it has a symbolic significance; but, when placed over an art-gallery, the emblematic urn is out of place; it is no excuse that it was used to break the horizontal line—there were other and better ways of doing it than by the use of such an ornament.

Harmony should exist at all times between the fine arts and the industrial, for all alike have been subject to the same causations flourishing at certain periods and then declining, being superseded by some other order or style which was called into use by the different nations, their modes of life, religion and thought.

It is an interesting study to follow the causations which have acted upon the arts, and to observe how closely they are allied to the history, manners and customs of the people. In Egypt they are the type of absolute power, the will of the few carried out by the many,—hieroglyphic, symbolic, and conventional; in Greece they are the embodiment of beauty; in Rome they are full of a massive richness, bordering on over-elaboration. The Byzantine is full

of the symbolism of a new faith, carefully avoiding anything savouring of paganism; the Saracenic, with its love of colour and strict avoidance of naturalism; the Gothic, with its pure religious feeling, its symbolism and its beautiful geometrical traceries; the Renaissance, with its revival of the classic style; the Cinquecento, with its graceful forms, partaking of the conventional and natural; then the French, with its gorgeous display of panelling and gilding. All these styles have had in the past, and still have in the present day, their advocates; but it is to this last, the French, or what is generally called by the name of Louis the Fourteenth and Fifteenth, we wish to direct attention; for it is owing to the faults of this style, with its frippery of stucco-work, gilding, desire for novelty, and excessive curvature of lines, so destructive of strength and durability, that we are indebted for the changes taking place in much of our modern decoration. The rage (for you can call it by no other name) which prevailed in England for this style, brought out those strictures upon it so clearly pointed out by Charles L. Eastlake in his work on "Household Taste." The influence of this writer has materially changed our ideas of decorative art, and awakened in the minds not only of manufacturers, but of the masses, a desire for knowledge upon this subject. As a natural consequence we have had a season of agitation, and a number of books have been published treating upon art in the drawing-room, art in the dining-room, and art in the bedroom, &c. Out of this much good may result, and on the other hand many falsities may be propagated.

A writer in the *Athenaeum* makes these remarks (and they are as applicable to the decorative as well as the fine arts):—"That art demands practice, and the unceasing exercise of individual thought, judgment and taste, above all, the incessant observation and study of nature. Ability in these respects is not to be gained from books, be they written ever so wisely." The truth of the above is strongly borne out by the rage which has lately prevailed for what some are pleased to call the "Eastlake style." Now, Eastlake never claimed that he created a style, and it is unjust to him, and his book, to call many of the articles manufactured at the present day by such a name. Simplicity, strength, durability and use, are the qualities which he advocates. Does some of the modern furniture, called Eastlake, partake of this? Take many of the sideboards, classed under this name, do they possess the above qualities? Are they not rather ponderous looking affairs? And if you examine the articles closely, you will find a great deal about them which partakes of the character of a sham—bright, with polished ventering and jig-sawed ornaments, glued on here and there, without beauty of form or any meaning. It is one thing to call any manufactured article by name, but quite another to make it upon principle.

Nor are many of the furniture designs accompanying the letter-press of Eastlake's book to be admired, or imitated, or taken as good examples of decorative art. To many men of cultivated taste, he has by such designs laid himself open to the charge of being "an apostle of ugliness." But this we must concede to him, that he has caused us to look more into the spirit which should guide us in the decorative arts, and his writings abound with good, sound maxims. Perhaps in his zeal in the crusade against the curved lines of the French style he has allowed himself to run into an excess of square lines, and every true designer and architect knows that a great deal of the elements of beauty consists in a judicious mixture of straight and curved lines; if any one doubts this, let them carefully and intelligently examine a few specimens of Greek mouldings, and, I think, they will perceive the beauty arising from a proper blending and use of straight and curved lines.

It is by the proper study of good examples, that we will succeed in elevating the decorative arts above what they are among us at the present, and not by books, or Christmas or New Year's cards. Naturalism is not ornament. Ornament means something more than the mere imitation of natural objects. It must be applied as an accessory to something else, to break up a flat surface, or impart a play of light and shade; it must be a beautifier, and may represent the flat or round, and when flat it must contrast as to light and dark, and when in the round as to light and shade (although these terms, light and dark, and light and shade, appear similar, yet there is a wide distinction.) In the flat ornament a play of line forms the main feature, the round affords a play of masses. Colour may be used in both, but acts with far greater force in the flat, because it is so dependent upon light. Ornament then, we see, is capable of affording us pleasure through its system of contrasts and its infinite variety. There are right-line, or curved-line series, series of simple curves, or clustered curves.

Ornament, like the object which it is intended to decorate, must have the quality of use stamped upon it. Judgment must guide its application so that it will enhance the beauty of the article decorated, and be constructed so that it will show to advantage when in its position. If intended to be seen near, and not subject to breakage, its manipulation may be fine. If to be seen at a distance, it requires less detail and larger masses. It should spring from the object it is intended to decorate, and not look as if it were an after-thought. If any part can be broken off, and not missed, there has been over-decoration. This should be carefully avoided, as simplicity forms one of the great elements of beauty in design, which does not detract from its richness. All good design should combine simplicity, variety, richness and utility.