

## INTERIOR DECORATION.

By W. H. ELLIOTT.

It is difficult for a decorator, as indeed it is for one in any calling, to divest himself of the interest he has in his work sufficiently to stand aside and judge of its importance and place in relation to other things. And yet I am convinced that in many minds there exists such an erroneous conception of the functions of decoration as to justify a more emphatic assertion of its importance than is usually made. I imagine that few even among architects would consent to the proposition that a certain room or hall should be designed mainly for the display of decorative treatment, and yet many of the best known buildings and apartments in the world are of little use except for the display of their decorations and were primarily designed for that purpose. The Sistine Chapel, Loggia of the Vatican, portions of the Louvre and Versailles, the palace at Augsburg and many others suggest themselves. This at once gives dignity to the art. One hears continually of the necessity for making decoration a background for something else, such as pictures, furniture, dresses, people, and in many cases it is desirable, but by no means in all. It would manifestly be impossible to apply a purely decorative treatment to even a moderate proportion of the work undertaken, yet in a modified degree it should be applied to every work of any importance. The ceiling of the room may always be treated purely for decorative effect. Consequently in standard work we find the most elaborate decoration applied there. Nothing

planning of each scheme that presents itself for arrangement. So that in most cases a general rule must apply. I have found this to be safest. Allow one color to strongly predominate in the room. The other and smaller mass should be an analogous color. Any other color should be contrasting and small in quantity. Simplicity in color is obtained by this means. Then ornament should not be weakly scattered over the surfaces but massed in parts. Large plain surfaces are always grateful to the eye. Such decoration as the Moorish or Japanese diaper is no exception to this, for their repeated patterns become really plain surfaces. The decorator's task is made much more difficult by the variety of lines he sometimes meets. Among the most trying rooms to treat are those in which the architect, without apparent reason, has made several heights for doors and windows and has placed these openings without regard to the spaces on the walls. This indifference to spacing of the walls and lining of doors and windows gives no end of trouble in the after decoration and destroys the repose of the room. In fact, the only safe road when such conditions exist in a marked degree is to cover the whole wall with one treatment and thus dodge the difficulty. It is well also to avoid inharmonious color schemes in the fixed materials, such as woodwork, tiles, &c., not only with each other, but with the probable after treatment of the room in harmony with its character.

Rich coloring is almost indispensable to successful decoration. Even where light tints are used, plentiful use of gold should take



COUNCIL OF ARTS AND MANUFACTURES, MONTREAL—SPECIMENS OF PUPILS' WORK IN MODELLING CLASS.

interrupts the view, nor is the ceiling so much within the ordinary range of vision as to weary one. But there are rooms in which the walls may be treated almost as elaborately as the ceiling and with satisfactory results. The plea for the pictures is in most houses such a hollow one as not to be worth serious consideration. I have seen the greatest care taken in the selection of a wallpaper for a room both as to pattern and color with reference to the pictures, and afterwards have seen the walls hung with the most inartistic pictures imaginable. One of Morris', or Crane's or Shand Kydd's bold designs would have been infinitely preferable.

I speak of wall papers because they are of necessity the almost universal covering material for walls. Of comparatively modern invention (no trace of them existing previous to the 16th century), no other material has offered itself nearly so satisfactory for transferring design and color to wall surfaces. And the material itself must be completely ignored, the most successful paper being that in which behind the design and color there is no thought of paper. To conceal the material in this case is perfectly legitimate, as it is only a means for transferring the design to the wall. On this account we are free to draw upon a great range of other materials, and while there need be no attempt at deception, the fine qualities of silk, tapestry, leather, &c., are obtained at a cost which makes decoration possible.

As in most other work, simplicity is the keynote of decoration. I do not mean by this weak color or the absence of design. Ordinarily there is neither time nor opportunity for a special

the place of color, for gold itself is very rich and satisfying. As to the use of various colors little can be said in a paper of this nature, but a few suggestions may be of use. Stronger colors may be used on the walls than might be thought possible with good results. The lighter blues are receding and the deeper blues are useful in an over-lighted room. Reds are nearly all assertive, but the strongest reds can be introduced into the color scheme with happy results. The same may be said of the yellows, some of which will bring positive sunshine into a northerly room. Combinations of blues and greens so often seen in the best designing give a very natural coloring to the wall and consequently freshness. The quieter tones of green alone are also very pleasant, but some of the stronger greens which nature uses are impossible in a room where the other outdoor conditions do not exist. As to balance of color, such combinations as we sometimes see of two-thirds of a wall red and the other third blue are always disturbing, and no room so treated can be restful. Greens with certain shades of brown are usually grateful to the eye. Yellow also forms a happy combination with green.

As to patterns it is an axiom with designers that large patterns are most suitable for very large and very small rooms. You can let the medium sized rooms take care of themselves. Of course the uses of the room govern the choice of pattern, and the eye naturally selects that most suitable. But it is a mistake to suppose that a large pattern necessarily reduces the apparent size of a room. When due attention is given to the coloring (avoiding contrasts) the reverse is the case. But in a large room

\* Paper read before the Toronto Chapter of Architects.