
London Novelties

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LONDON NOVELTIES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.

I MUST commence this letter with a warning, for there are not wanting signs that decoration is likely in some instances to take a wrong track. The preachers have long told us that articles in good taste are as cheap as those in bad taste, but there will always be a class of people who like nothing that is not expensive. Good work, such as wood carving, for instance, which occupies much of the workman's time, must necessarily cost much money, and it is one of the advantages of the interest now felt in the subject that rich people are ready to spend some of their wealth in this way, but work that is bought merely on account of its expense is most likely to be in bad taste. It is related that a lady in a fashionable London neighborhood has designed her own wall papers, and that she had the plates destroyed when the quantity she required was printed, so that no other room should be papered like hers.

I mentioned in my last letter that a Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition was about to be opened at Manchester by the Earl of Wilton. This is now to be seen and it has turned out to be a very interesting collection. At the opening Mr. William Morris, who is an arch-priest of the decorative revival, gave an address. He was somewhat over-hard upon the days gone by when taste was not, for surely twenty-five years ago there were many drawing rooms in the land arranged with an artistic eye, but his words were eloquent and should bring forth fruit, widely circulated as they have been. He said the main point was to interest the people in the work, and then the work would be done. In those days which we may look forward to, although we may not live to see them, there will be no need to talk about decorative art, for every one will have it ready to his hand.

A similar exhibition to that at Manchester has just been opened at Halifax, and at Birmingham Mr. J. H. Chamberlain has commenced a course of six lectures on "Decorative Art, Ornament and Design." He concluded his first lecture by showing how art was the result of man's faculty of admiration, influenced by his physical wants, and urged his hearers to the cultivation of that faculty.

There seems to be an evident sign in these different exhibitions which are being held in all parts of the country, that the movement for the improvement of technical education is having a practical effect. The old London companies have been and are still stirring themselves. The larger companies subscribe liberally to the city and guilds of London Technological Institute, and the smaller ones are directing their attention to the various trades which they are supposed to encourage. A very interesting exhibition formed by the Horner's Company has been open for three days in October at the Mansion House. I went there on the first day and found myself in a large music room with a window at each end, which gave but little light in the centre. It was certainly a very dark day, but I suspect the architect did not much care about light, as his room was chiefly to be used at night. I confess that I was surprised at the abundance of the objects exhibited. I was prepared to see a large number of antiquities, but I thought the Horner's trade was somewhat out of date, and I was not prepared to see the signs of a flourishing and increasing trade. A considerable amount of space was occupied by the various pieces of furniture ornamented with horn, some of which did great credit to the designers. There were a large number of cups both as they came out of the hands of the horner, and as they appear when the silversmith has ornamented them; but the most remarkable exhibit was that of Messrs. Stewart of Aberdeen, which consisted chiefly of combs. The antiquarian portion of the exhibition was very fine, and the Queen and many of our chief collectors sent some exceedingly fine specimens. Most worthy of mention, from the artistic side, are the finely executed horn medallions exhibited by Mr. Franks, of the British Museum. One pair consisted of portraits of Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange, and his wife, Amelia, by John Osborn, an Englishman, living at Amsterdam in 1626. Mr. R. Dahl showed a Norwegian Viking drinking-horn, about the year 870, and believed to be of the time of Harold Haarfager. It is one of the huge drinking-vessels which Olaf the Holy, educated at the Court of Edward the Confessor and anxious to root out the vice of drunkenness, prohibited and ordered to be replaced by goblets of a less gigantic size. It is most important that the education of the artistic taste should not be neglected while well-directed attempts to improve the technical skill of our workmen are being made—the two should go hand in hand. The city and guilds of London Institute are attending to this, and we find that examinations for wood-working and pattern-designing are included in their programme. Professor Roscoe, the distinguished chemist, has lately been addressing the students of the Burslem School of Art, and he took advantage of the occasion to point out that the Englishman needs training both in pure and applied art. He took for granted the Englishman's capability to receive and excel in art-work, and he strongly

advocated the formation of art evening classes, as in France.

The attention paid to scenery and interior decoration at the theatre is a remarkable feature of the present day. We all remember the miserable decorations and the daubs on the wall which were constantly seen on the English stage. Mrs. Bancroft was one of the most thorough of the reformers, and it was supposed by some, when fine China vases and old-fashioned clocks, with a history attached to them, were brought upon the stage, that she was going somewhat too far; but Mr. Irving has quite outstripped her. In the revival of "Romeo and Juliet" the scenery and the dresses eclipsed the acting. The falling of a leaf was remarked, when the acting of the hero and heroine, who were neither at home in their parts, was almost overshadowed by the surroundings. This is not so in "Much Ado about Nothing," where the scenery, the dress and the whole appointments are equally gorgeous, but where Mr. Irving and Miss Terry are so thoroughly well suited to their parts that *Benedick* and *Beatrice* make themselves the chief centres of attraction, and their surroundings only add to the charms of the intellectual feast set before the visitors to the Lyceum Theatre.

At last the grand building, the Strand, to which the Law Courts are about to be moved, is ready for use, and in November the Queen proposes to open it. Differences of opinion exist as to the beauty of this vast pile in its entirety; but there can be no doubt that this building, upon

taken to prevent the destruction by fire of such historical monuments. Doubtless the fault originated with the builders, who placed timber under the fire-place; but this danger is so common that it might have been foreseen. A fire such as this not merely destroys an interesting building, erected when architects dared to be original, but also those innumerable objects of art which have been gathered by successive generations and which can never be replaced.

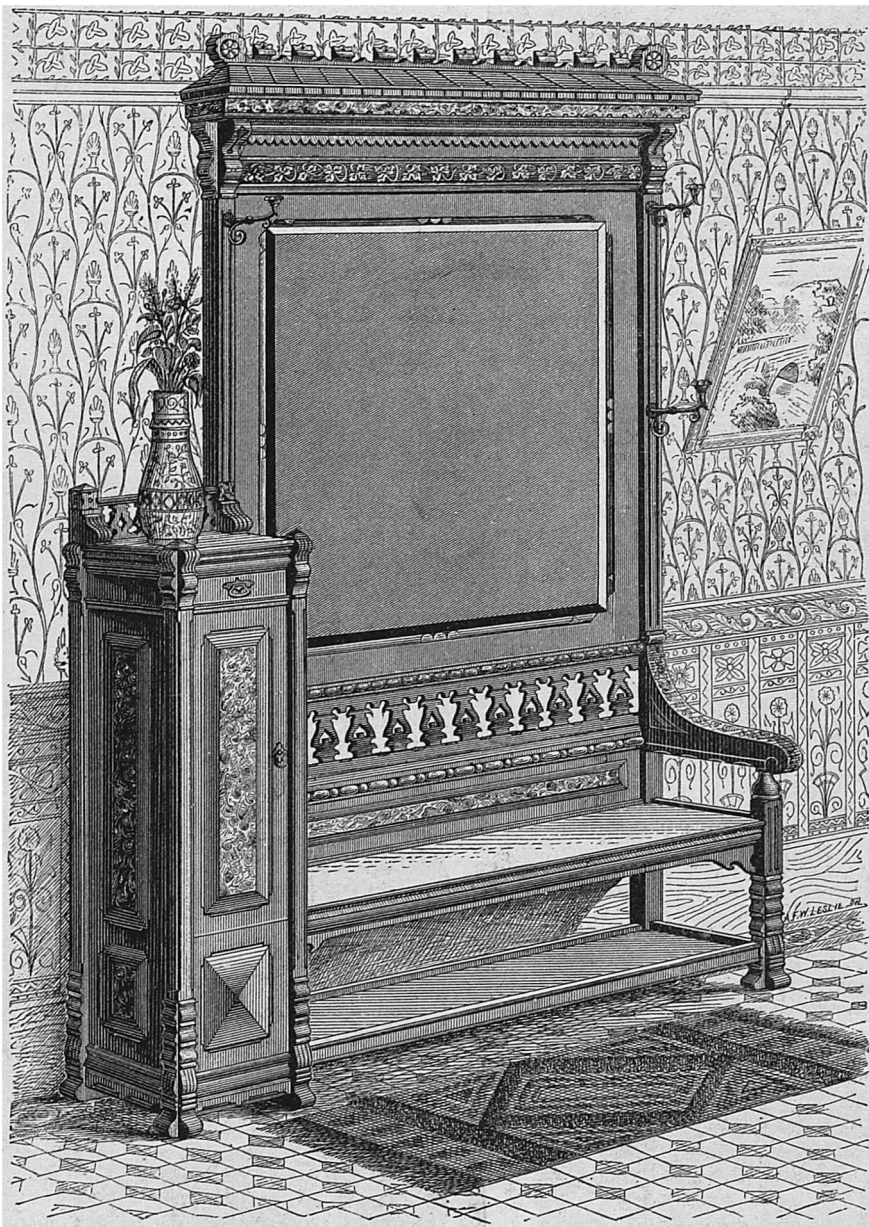
In concluding this letter, I wish to say a few words on some forms of wall decoration, as very particular attention is now being paid to this department of art-work. Papers are still largely used; but it is to be hoped that in time designs painted upon the prepared walls may become more general. Unfortunately, the walls of many of our present houses are so bad that they need to be covered up with paper. A new process of preparing the plaster for walls and ceilings has been invented by Mr. E. L. Voice, by which various colors are obtained on the plaster, which itself forms the groundwork of the decoration and has not to be covered with several coats of paint.

An excellent effect can be obtained by the use of wood veneers as "papering" for walls. Mr. M. Wilmersdorfer has introduced from Germany an exceedingly thin veneer, which he calls "wood tapestry." The name is not a very happy one, but the material is sufficiently remarkable. Woods are inlaid in designs in solid masses and then passed through a machine which takes a shaving off as thin as it is possible to cut it. Many of the designs are very effective, and strips have been used for some time to decorate cabinets and other pieces of furniture. I saw some of the larger pieces a year or more ago, but they were then rather unmanageable, as they were apt to split, owing to their exceeding thinness. This objection is now got over by backing the wood with paper, and a room can be covered with this material almost as easily as with paper, and the wood can be polished, varnished or waxed, so that the effect of solid paneling can be obtained at a comparatively small expense.

On the whole, I think we must allow that in wall decoration we depend too much upon color and too little upon raised surfaces. Our work is mostly in the flat, while the old artists obtained brilliant effects of light and shade by their raised and recessed work. The revival of tapestry is a healthy sign of taste, and hangings are a great help in breaking up the dull uniformity of the walls of a room. The Royal Tapestry Factory, at old Windsor, which is under the patronage of the Queen and the Duke of Albany, is now in full work. Four portières, with views of Windsor Castle, Osborne, Buckingham Palace and Balmoral, are being woven in imitation of old Arras tapestry, and some beautiful tableaux, designed by Mr. J. E. Hodgson, R.A., are preparing for Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt's mansion in New York.

A TOILET set which is very pretty and tasteful for a birthday gift, is made of blue satin. The set is to consist of a pincushion and two mats; line the mats with blue silesia, and trim the edge with Valenciennes lace; on one mat work in outline stitch a small horseshoe; work this with olive and pink embroidery silk. Do not put the horseshoe in the centre of the mat, but at one side. The words "Good Luck" should be worked in the rim of the horseshoe. The other mat may be prettily ornamented by embroidering a fan on it. The cushion should have the monogram of the owner, and at each corner put a satin bow, and a frill of lace around the edge of the cushion.

The hall-stand shown above is from the factory of the ORIEL CABINET CO., of Grand Rapids, Mich. The wood used is black walnut, with richly veneered panels and beveled plate mirror. The closet at the side is for umbrellas and canes. The stand is four and a half feet wide and seven feet high.



the elaboration of which the late Mr. Street spent his very life, is the finest piece of architecture that has been produced in London for many years. The details are endless in their variety and remarkable for their beauty. The calculators have amused themselves by discovering that one million cubic feet of Portland stone and thirty-five million bricks have been used in the structure, and that the carving represents seven hundred thousand hours of mechanical work in addition to the labor of invention, drawing and direction. I shall hope in a future letter to be able to give some account of the interior decoration, of the stained glass, the ornamental ceilings and the mosaic floors, which are all worthy of special notice. An attempt has been made to introduce into England a translation of the French "Palais de Justice," and even those who cannot quite stomach the word *palace* are willing to accept the *justice*. I wish the old term of Law Courts could have been retained, although as we have the High Court of Justice, I must allow that it is logical to call the building by the same name.

As new buildings arise, so the old ones fall; but we may be allowed a feeling of chagrin when an irreparable loss, such as that at Ingestre Hall, the seat of the Earl of Shrewsbury, takes place. It seems as if some special precautions should be

The demand for new ideas in all character of stuffs, whether they be for the adornment of the person or furniture, will continue to exert the inventive abilities of all who are looking for a fortune to be made in catering to fashionable desires. One of the most recent, and to all intents

one of the most successful, attempts in this line is the introduction of mother of pearl designs on cloth. The pearl is attached to the cloth, and covered with a very fine material that becomes transparent when it is gummed down to the under piece, and thus serves to protect the pearl from injury, and at the same time adds somewhat to its brilliancy and does not obscure its beauty.

A CANE-SEATED chair may be improved by putting upon the back a moveable cushion. One way to accomplish this is to buy a scarlet Turkish towel, fasten a layer of cotton to it, line it with Turkey red calico, and catch it at the top of the chair with bows of ribbon and attach it at the bottom with cords. Patchwork and cretonne is admissible in place of the toweling.

THERE is a beauty about crystal chandeliers and pendants that cannot be entirely done away with even by fashion, and it is not surprising to see them again coming into use. With a little additional care in cleaning, the glass may always be bright and the effect brilliant.