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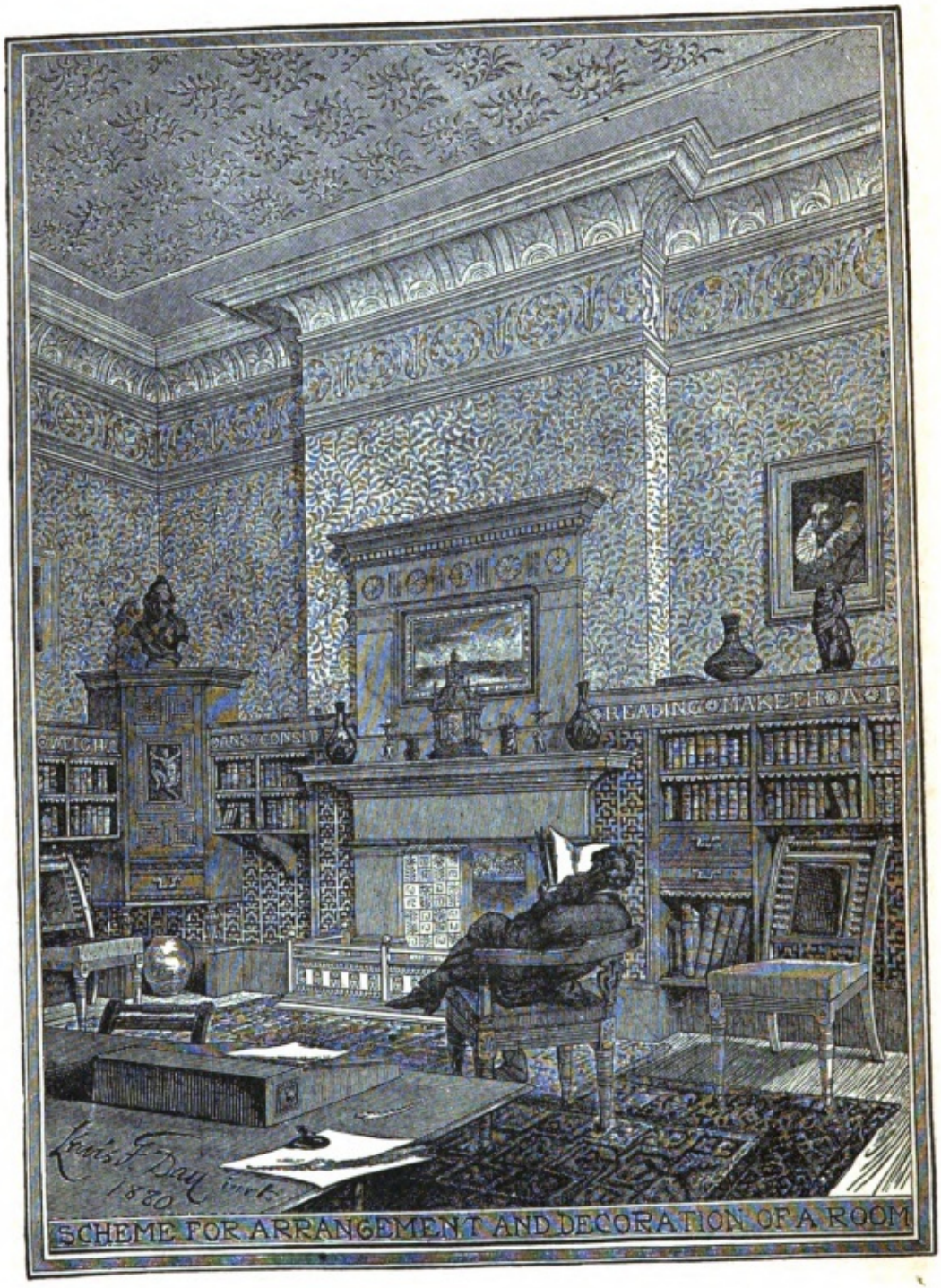

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EVERY-DAY ART.

ON ORNAMENT.

"Orno, Ornas, Ornat, Ornamus, Ornatis, Ornant."

RNAMENT is the art of every-day. The great picture galleries may be likened to the temples of art, whither devout worshippers, and others less devout but no less anxious to pass for pious, resort only at intervals. So, also, a treasured painting may be the shrine at which a man offers up in private the incense of his admiration. But every day and all day long we breathe the atmosphere of ornament. There is no escape from its influence. Good or bad, it pervades every object with which our daily doings bring us in contact. We may, if we choose, keep away from picture galleries and not look at pictures; but, our attention once turned to ornament, we can no longer shut our

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The love of decoration is by no means a characteristic peculiar to the Victorian age. Ornament dates back to the rudimentary stage of the human race. If we were to trace it to its beginnings we should find ourselves in Eden—or wherever else

Top of Plum-box.

the scientists will allow the human race to have had its origin. To-day it is omnipresent among us; and we can scarcely conceive a "coming race" without ornament.

The association of art with every common object of daily use seems to be in the natural order

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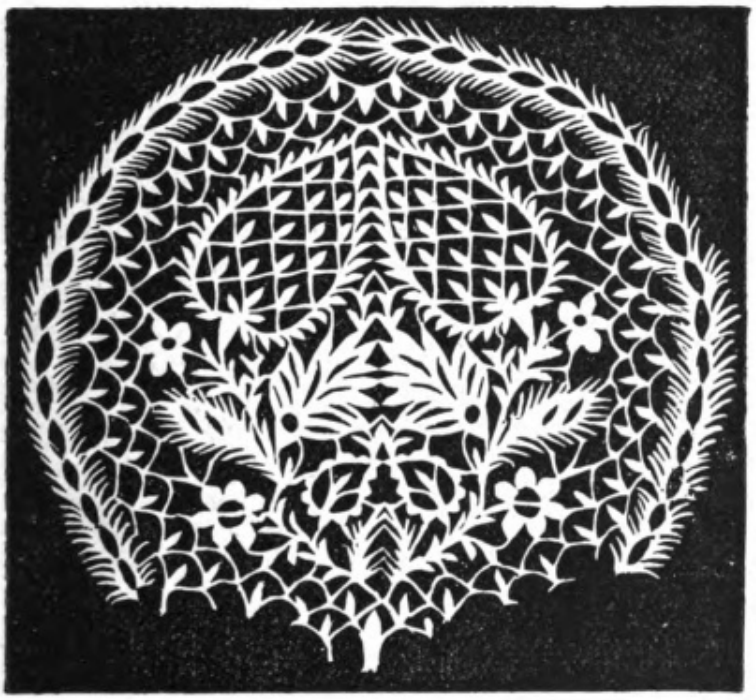
of things. It was so in Ancient Greece and Rome, and during the Renaissance. The ruder Gothic craftsmen and the earlier Egyptians and Assyrians were no exceptions to the rule. In the East the cunning artificer delighted to find in every branch of handiwork excuse for the elaboration of



Cut paper ornament.

ingenious ornament. Even among the aborigines of Mexico, New Zealand, and the South Sea Islands, we find that every opportunity for ornament was seized, necessity guiding it into the way it should go. It was only during a period of almost utter dearth of art amongst us, in the eighteenth and first half of the present centuries, that the idea

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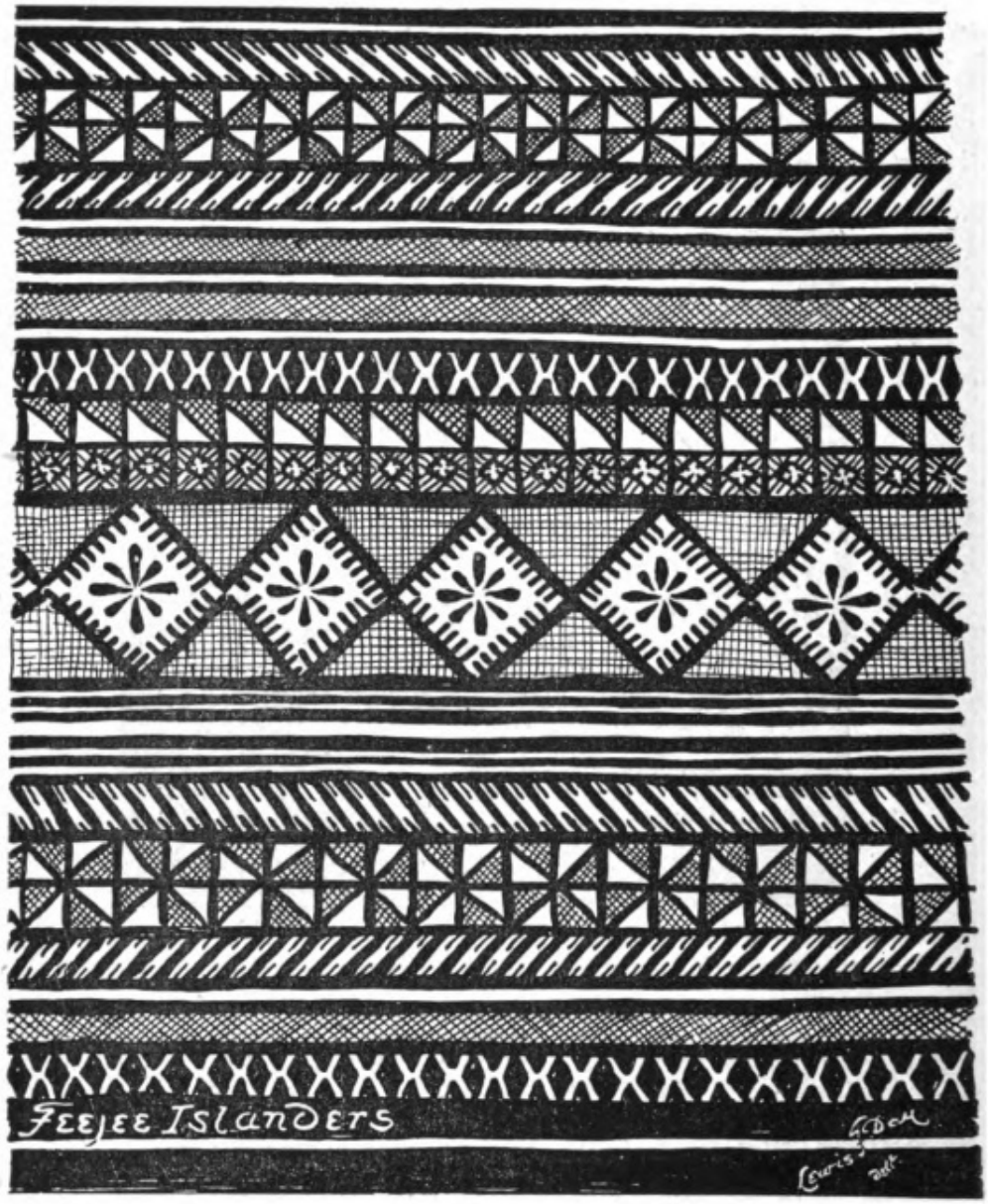
was ever entertained that use and ornament were in any sense antagonistic. The result of attempting



Savage ornament.

to draw the line between use and ornament, as though the two were not to be reconciled, was that

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TASTE.

"I know what I like."

IT is characteristic of decorative art that it depends almost as much upon the critical as upon the creative faculty of the artist. More than any other art it depends upon taste; and by that test it stands or falls. It is taste that determines—what is it that it does not determine in decoration? It settles in the first place whether there shall be decoration at all, how much of it, of what kind, where introduced, and how executed. It prescribes

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PAST AND PRESENT.

"New lamps for old!"

THE opinion a man may hold concerning old work is by no means a fixed quantity: it progresses, in a somewhat curious order. We begin in our ignorance by condemning it very likely as barbarous or old-fashioned; on further acquaintance, we find ourselves attracted to it; and by degrees we are taken captive by the charms of antiquity, and are even liable to be smitten at last with a blind pedantry that can see no beauty in anything that is new. To recover from this stage of love-sickness argues a degree of native energy and independence which not all of us appear to possess.

There is no knowing how the art of the past may affect a man, or what lesson he will draw from it. Very often he is mastered by some phase of art which most men thought was long since dead, but

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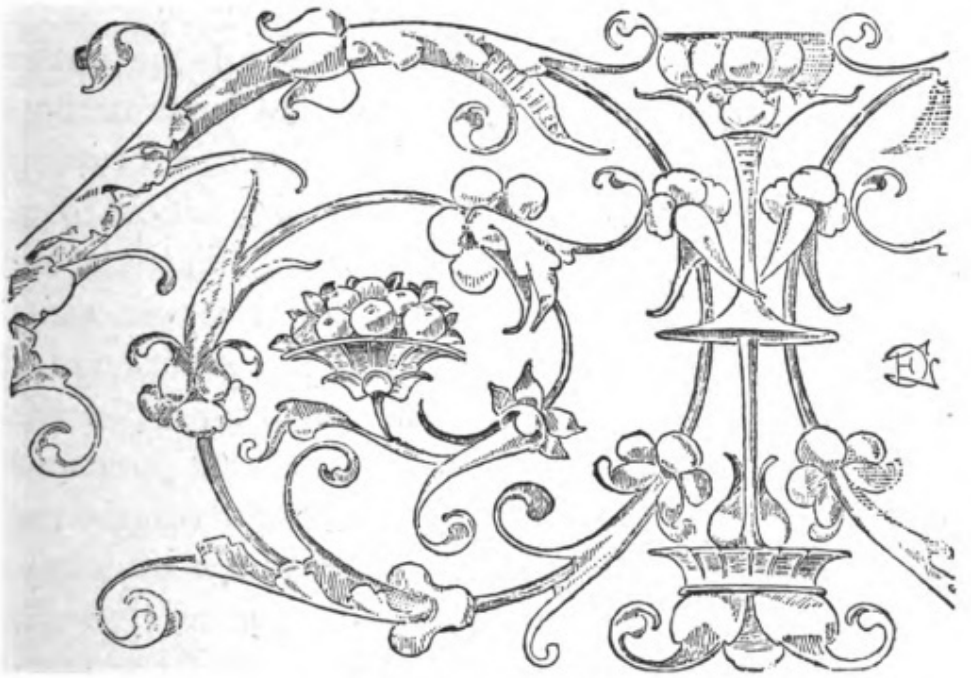
at all events, they were not merely of a day or of a "season." The fashion of a century ceases to be a fashion—or, if a fashion, is no longer contemptible. The ancient styles were not pushed and puffed into ephemeral existence; they had time to grow,



Style or Fashion of François 1er.

develop, culminate, and die at last a natural death: the new style developed itself as naturally from their remains as a fresh plant from the seed of last autumn.

Each succeeding phase of ancient ornament embodied in some degree the ideas of the people among whom it arose, although the ideas, like the forms of ornament, may have been by no means

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one flatter himself that he has only to take one bound into successful originality. He is much more likely to arrive there safely by stepping back a pace or two and gathering himself together for the leap.

If there were no other reason why we should know something of past styles, it would be sufficient that, in the absence of any marked national style among us at present, we have taken to "reviving" in succession all manner of bygone styles. The ornament of to-day is to so great an extent a reflection, in some instances a distortion, of old work, that one cannot well discuss it without reference to its origin. These "revivals," irrational as they are in themselves, may not be without good results. There is such a wealth of old work accessible to us nowadays! What modern facilities of travel do not enable us actually to see, modern processes of reproduction bring home to us, and modern methods of publication press upon our attention. There is no possibility of escape from its influence.

Modern outcome of Greek ornament.

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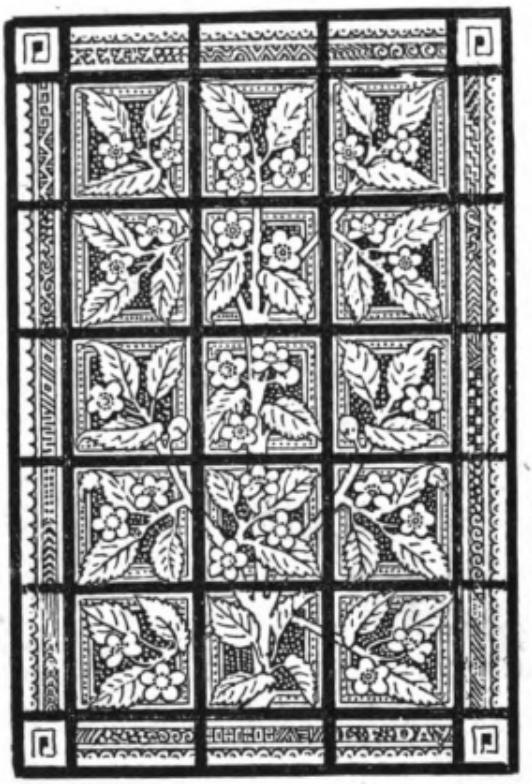
We are compelled to such study of the various styles that, when we shall have arrived at reason and begin to express ourselves naturally in the language of our own day, it must tell to some purpose in our work.



Window showing Gothic and Japanese influence.

It is only by the widest stretch of courtesy that the greater part of modern ornament can be called design at all. There is very little but what is borrowed. Some few of the more prominent decorative artists of our time have, indeed, established what is to be recognised as a style of their

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Nineteenth-century Renaissance.

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drawing; we do not expect to find freedom in Moorish art, or restraint in Japanese. If the experience of time past is to serve our turn, according to the nature of our own work we must refer to the art of the particular period or people that afforded the most perfect examples *of that kind;* according to our particular difficulty we should refer to the particular style of art in which it had been most satisfactorily solved.

Notwithstanding the beauty of a great deal of old work (and some of it is so perfect that the mere study of its details is a sort of education in itself), there is infinitely more to be learnt from the study of ancient processes than from the worship of antique forms. Half the

Goldsmith's work of the best type.

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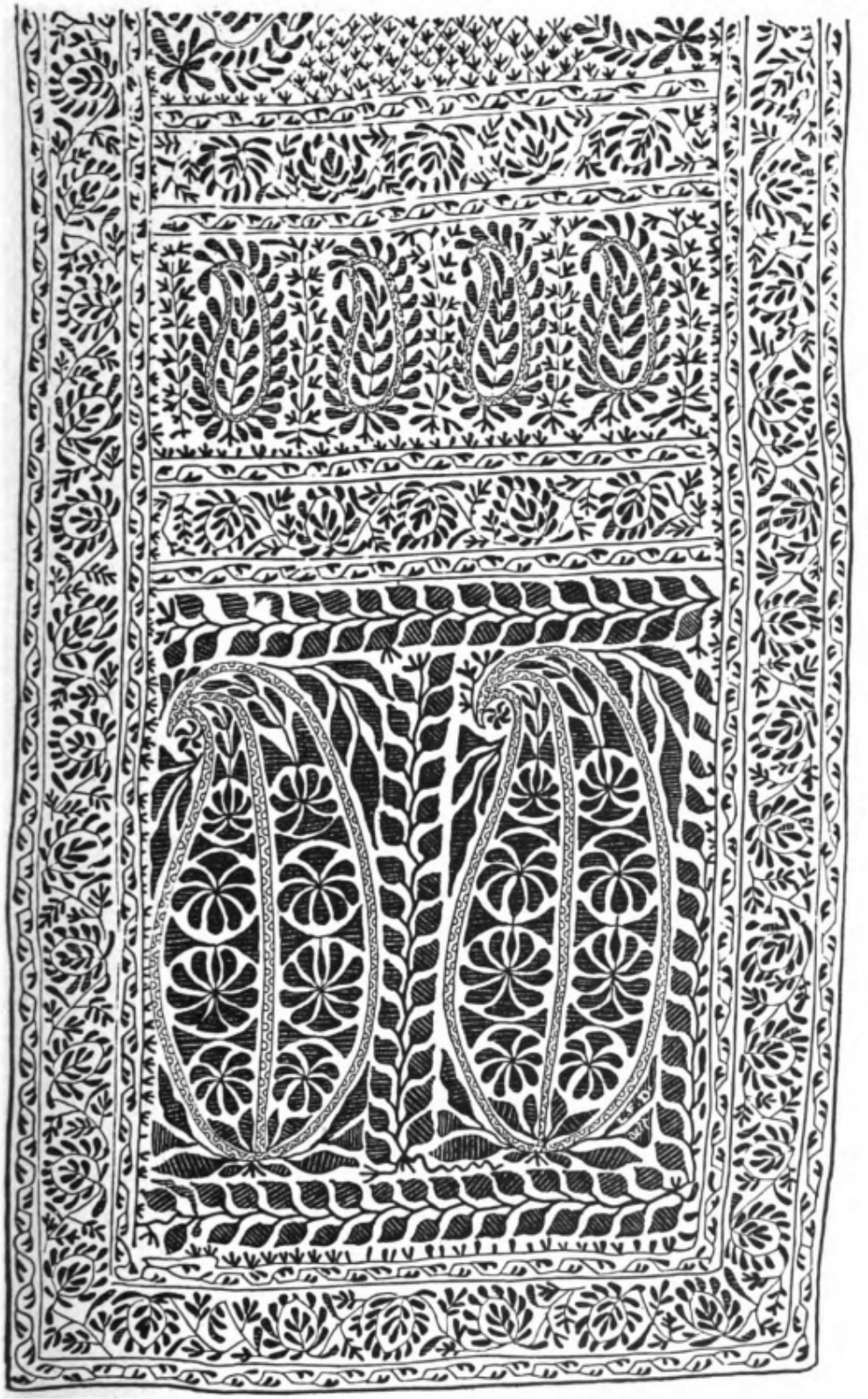

Modern traditional ornament.

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THE NATURE OF ART.

"Art is man's nature."

EVERY day fresh ink is shed in the war perpetually waging between the adherents of Nature on the one side and of Art on the other. May-be the words are only so much waste of energy, —there have been graver battles to as little purpose since the world began—may-be the combatants, like other and more deadly adversaries, are warring under the universal banner of misapprehension, the two factions fighting for much the same idea, only under a different name.

The real difference of opinion is as to the use or abuse of nature, as to the lesson to be learnt from her, the one school maintaining that the whole secret of art lies in strict fidelity to fact, the

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Panèl picture.

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Picturesque panel decoration.

natural way of treating ornament? what is the artistic way of rendering nature? It may be assumed that no one seriously believes that art is nature, and that nature is art. However dependent the one may be upon the other, they are always distinctly two. Nature is before all art, and above it, and beyond. All that gives us satisfaction in ornament existed first of all in nature, though not of necessity in the animal or vegetable kingdom. Human nature counts for something. But we have long since ceased to be the unsophis-

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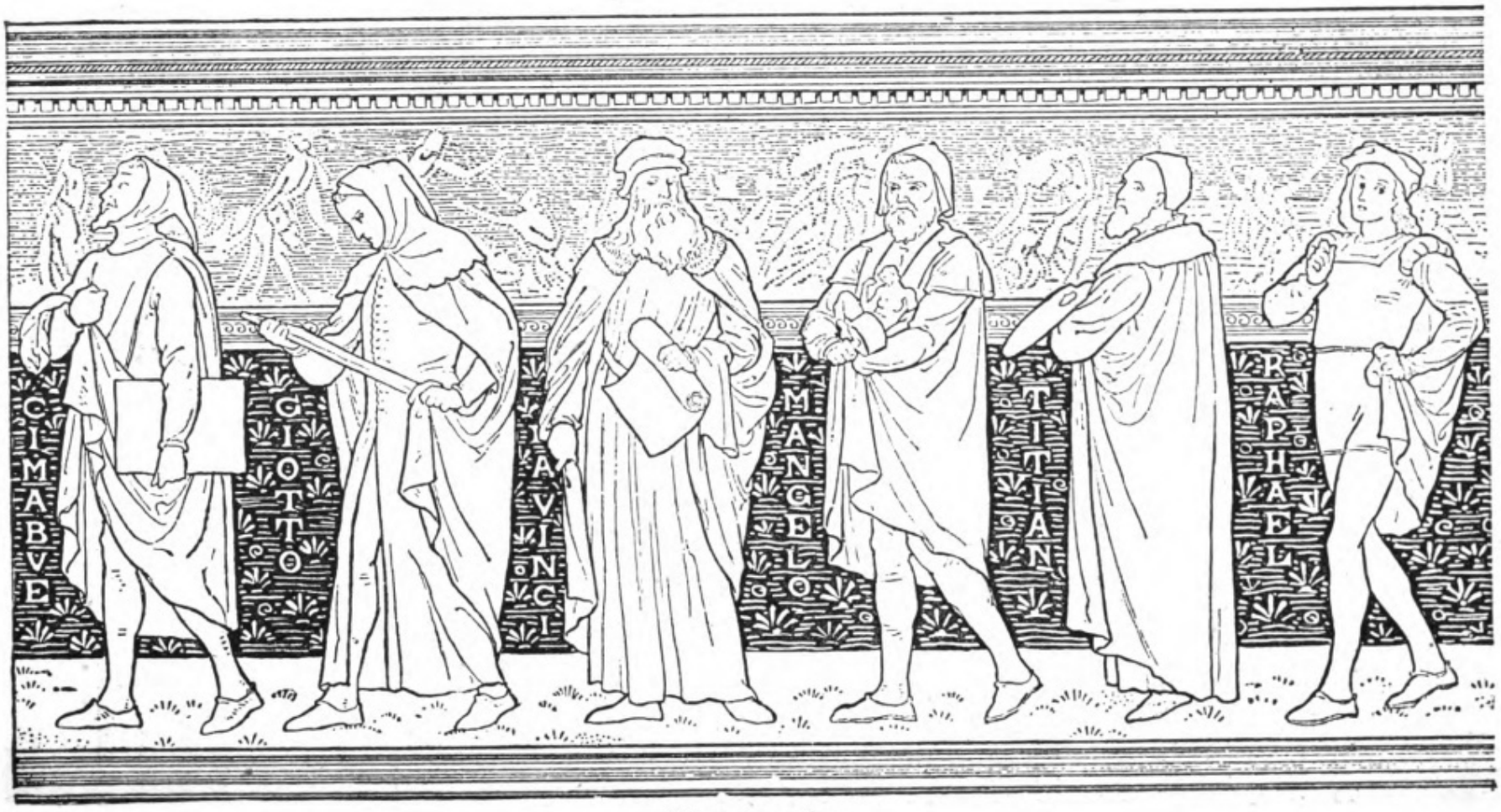

Frieze decoration.

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decorator will depend upon his habitual success in the solution of that problem.

The copying of natural forms is no solution, but an evasion, of the difficulty. If we would pay to nature that sincerest flattery of imitation, we should begin by adapting to the purpose in hand, as she inevitably would do, every form that we adopt from her. That so-called ornament which is only a copy of nature is no more natural than it is workmanlike or intelligent. Ornament is in its nature an accessory art, and must, in common sense, be reduced to harmony with the architecture, craft, or industry with which it is associated.

Medallion panel.

To compare a picture with nature, or decoration with a picture, is in either case, to judge it by a false standard, that is to say to misjudge it. Judge ornament after its kind, consider it as ornament, and you cannot fail to see that its most essential characteristic is fitness.

There are some to whom the necessary adaptation of natural forms to ornamental conditions appears to be a mere stopping short of nature. In a sense that may be so. Painting is no doubt a stopping short of relief, sculpture a stopping short

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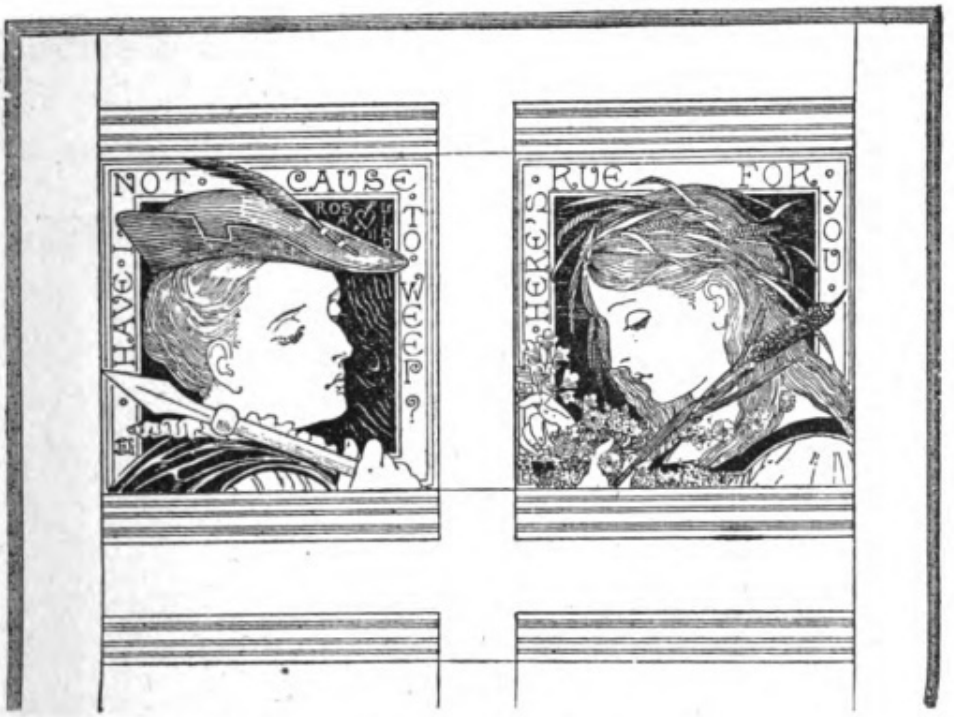
beauty and truth, or between one truth and another; but whatever is in any way contrary to his decorative purpose, that it is his bounden duty to suppress. Half the art of the decorator is in the



Cabinet panels, stopping short of light and shade.

faculty of selection. It is not so easy to strike a balance between beauty and use. Let any one attempt, by the process of "stopping short," to produce a decorative work. Perhaps he will realise, after inevitable failure, that to reach the success that seemed so easy he must retrace his steps, and travel quite a different path—all the more difficult to him, that he does not know his bearings.

Decorative treatment consists neither in the

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Characteristically ornamental growth of strawberry.

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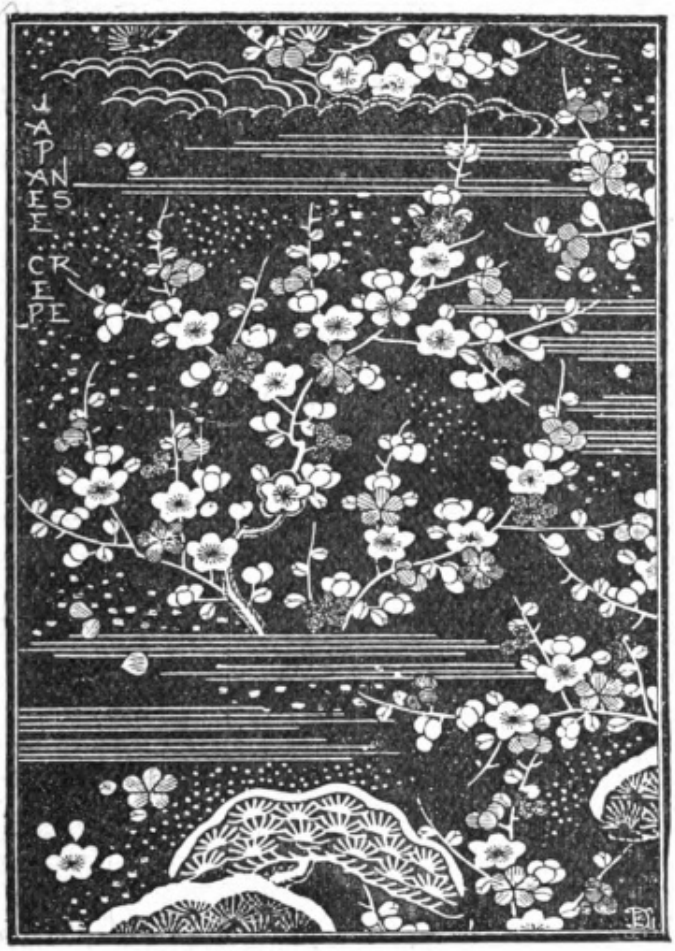
With regard to the question as to how far one may go with safety in the direction of imitative ornament, the Japanese, if they have not actually solved it, have shown us, at all events, the futility



Japanese rendering of almond blossom, &c.

of confining ourselves within the narrow range of predetermined convention. The limit of natural treatment in design is not marked by a hard line separating ornament from all that is pictorial in art: there is no fixed boundary anywhere, only, as

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it were, a high-water mark, beyond which the tide of nature seldom dares to rise.

There are cases in which imitation may be carried as far as you please, so long as it neither obtrudes itself nor brings into obtrusive prominence the object ornamented. The thing to be decorated must always be in the artist's thoughts. If for a moment he be perverted from his decorative purpose by delight in the power of copying nature, the probability is that his work will distract attention from the

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Oak adapted to form a border.

habitual growth. Ivy leaves, again, grow in spiral order round the stem, but against a wall they appear alternately on each side of the stalk; and the rooty fibres by which it attaches itself, do not occur on the loose, berry-bearing branches, which hold their own among the trees.

Nature brings forth herbs and flowers answering to all manner of human needs; but her scope does not include the art of domestic decoration. Had she produced a species of plants whose province in the world was to serve as models for painter, carver, or weaver, she would doubtless have modified her accustomed forms and colours to meet this novel purpose. Since she has neglected to do this, it devolves, obviously, upon us to adapt whatever we may take from nature to the purpose of our art.

Not even the painter can afford to transcribe too literally from nature. There is always the danger that in a painting

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Adapted beyond recognition.

the colours of nature will be too startlingly bright, even though they be less intense than in the reality.

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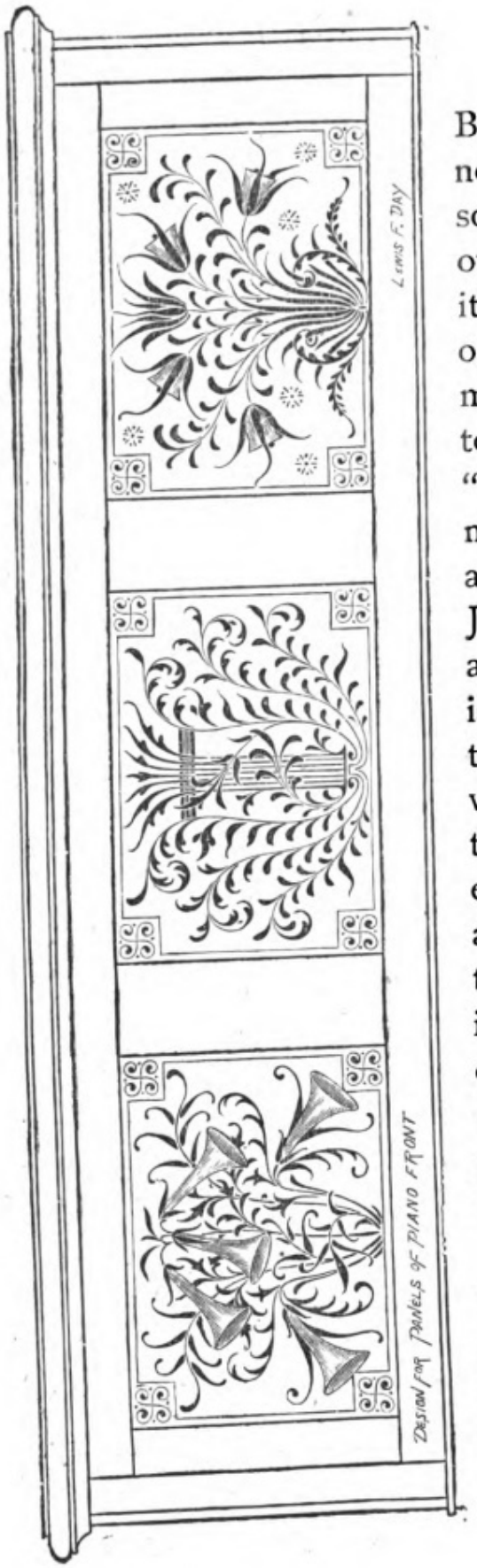

But grass in spring is never too green for us; soft cloud-shadows creep over it continually, and its most vivid colour is only revealed in momentary gleams of light too bright to last. "Why is it that you have made me so perishable?" asked Beauty of Jupiter, and the god answered: "Nay, but it is only the Perishable that I have endowed with beauty!" Certainly the most beautiful effects are those which are most fleeting. To fix them before us in naked isolation, is to rob them of their loveliness. They decline to be transplanted bodily. It takes a poet to translate them.

"True to nature" is the catch phrase of a party; the allegiance of the artist is to art. In ornament we have rather

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STUDY OF MARGUERITE DAISY
ADAPTED TO SURFACE DECORATION

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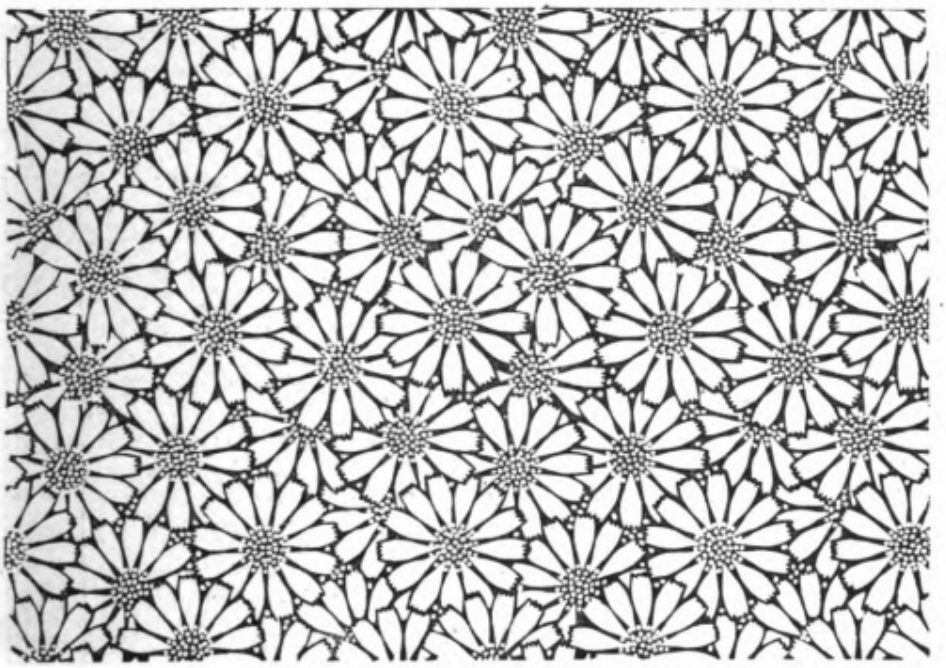
necessitate less strict adherence to natural growth; and the consideration of the secondary nature of all mere surface decoration would suggest a flatter treatment. One might content oneself with the flowers



Daisy diaper.

alone, without any indication of growth. If it were only the *shape* of the flower that led to its use, and no value were attached to its meaning, it might be modified out of all recognition; and every departure from nature would be justified by the production of beautiful ornament. (See daisy-like ornament overleaf.) There is a wide difference between ornament suggested by a natural type, and natural form used for its own sake, but reduced to harmony with some ornamental scheme or purpose.

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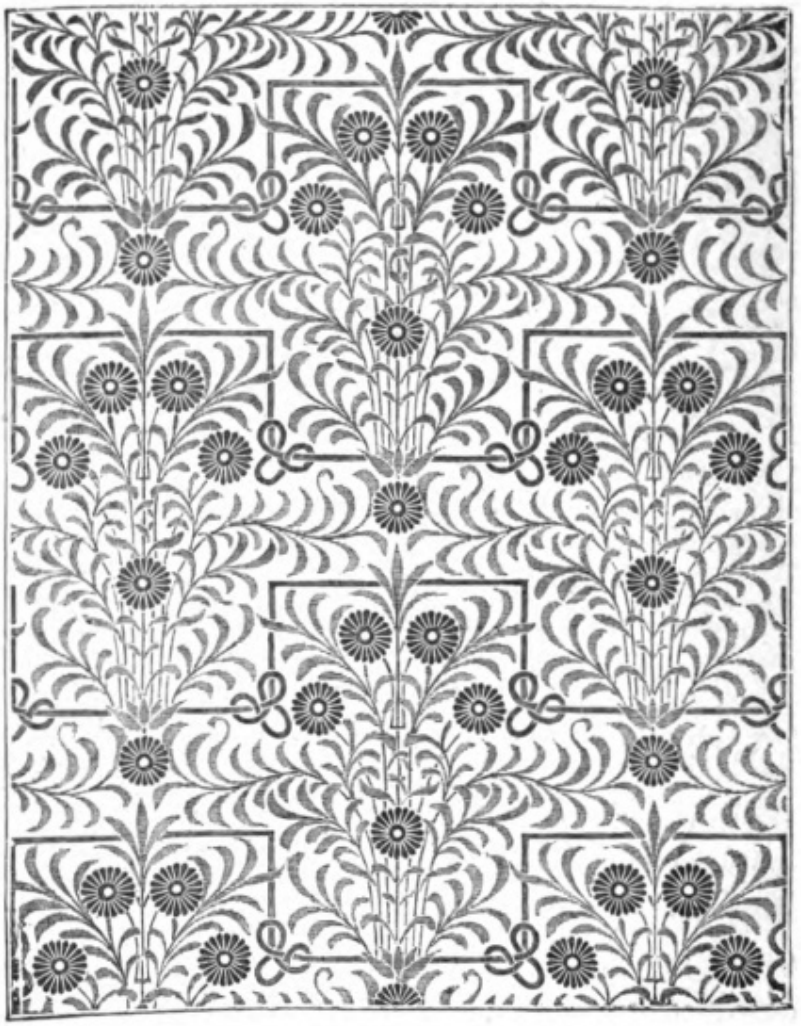
The fittest representation of any plant in ornament will be attained by comparing the thing itself in nature with its various representations in the art of the past, having always special reference to



Daisy-like floral ornament.

the immediate purpose in hand. Compare the rose in your garden with the Tudor version of it

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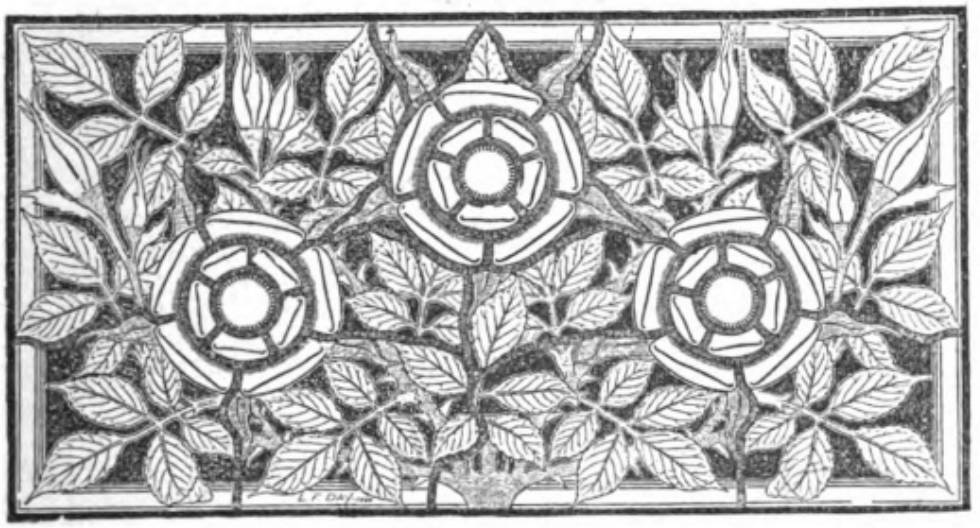
opposite, and with the Japanese and Persian renderings overleaf.

The keynote of a design may be struck by some-



Tudor rose.

thing in the flower itself, or by something in any one of its past representations, or by the material and tools in use: but the one thing of importance is that all should be in tune.

Nowhere is the discrepancy between idea and execution more obvious than in the heraldry of the nineteenth century. Heraldic art is apt to look in these days rather puny. It is, to all intents and purposes, more dead than alive. The "sign of the red lion" will not bear comparison with "a lion gules" of four or five hundred years ago. No mediæval herald was ever guilty of the absurdity of representing a zoological beast dyed red. He concerned himself little about the anatomy of a

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natural lion ; he just meant to symbolise the bravery, the lion-like nature, as he conceived it, of some fierce combatant ; and he managed to combine symbolism with ornament. The forms he drew were sufficiently intelligible for their purpose — more so perhaps than if they had been more literal : there would be no fear of mistaking his device in the field. Such heraldry as this was heraldic, thorough-bred. It remained for a more cultivated age than his to generate a mongrel something between heraldry and the illustrations in a natural history book, not, perhaps, altogether unworthy to figure on the coach panels of those whose pedigree dates from the Herald's Office. "But," says the Philistine, "if you want a lion paint a lion, and not a nondescript creature that might with quite as much propriety be called a

Persian rendering of the rose.

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Heraldic dragon.

leopard or a cat!" Yes, if that is what you want! But heraldry has to do with symbols, not pictures. Then paint the symbol. A zoological lion is as much out of place on a shield of arms as an heraldic beast would be in the wilds of Africa.

It is in a little art like this of heraldry that the reasonableness of apt expression is most obvious; but ill-adapted ornament is always unreasonable. In all art that has any claim to be decorative the natural must needs be translated into the lan-

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guage of that art. Decorative presentment is only the vernacular. Though our art be but the expression of nature, it is a "conscious utterance," something more than a parrot cry. The artist's

Heraldic lion.

whole strength is in his loyalty to nature; not in mere verbal fidelity, but in truth—truth to himself, and to his own highest aims. To the expression of this deeper truthfulness various names have been given. The artist is content to call it art.

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THE USE IN ORNAMENT.

"Surely use alone
Makes money not a contemptible stone."

THE arts may be likened to so many languages, more or less akin but never identical, and all of them differing from the utterance of nature. Each of these languages may be said to embrace a variety of dialects; and each of the various crafts which go to make decorative art, expresses itself most readily each in the dialect peculiar to it. If the same idea be expressed in several arts, in each case the form of expression will be different; and if an artist borrow a notion from some neighbouring craft, he will translate it (as he would if he had borrowed it from nature) into his own tongue. Art, inasmuch as it implies something more than literal transcript, depends upon expression. All that is

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asked of the decorative artist is, that he also shall express himself idiomatically.

This idiomatic expression in ornament has been called conventionality. But the term "conven-

Adaptation of the oak to ornament.

tional" is not altogether a happy one. For one thing it is associated in our minds with what is commonplace and insincere; and it is not desirable that the art of ornament should be bracketed in

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Conventional not traditional.

men's minds with the pretence that keeps society going. Then again, the word, even as applied to ornament, serves to express that which is traditional; and, if we trace it back to its root, it does mean literally that which has been agreed upon by mutual consent. It happens that a large proportion of ornament in any degree idiomatic is at the same time traditional, and more or less stereotyped in character; and, as a consequence, the idea of fixedness or familiarity has come to be popularly associated with the word conventional. Yet it is quite possible to have apt expression in ornament not in the least according to tradition.

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Ornament in cross bands.

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place. It is scarcely necessary to say that however beautiful such work may be, it is bad decoration. Whenever the conditions of ornament are

Card-back design.

impossible of fulfilment, it is better left alone; and the conditions proper to ornament are, that it should be fit—for its purpose, for its place, and for the material in which, and the process by which, it is executed.

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unpardonable sin in ornament, is the attempt to usurp the first place. It should simply fit its purpose, neither more nor less. It is equally at fault when it is too rich or too poor for its place.

Background pattern.

We see frequently, set in excellent cabinet work, panels of so trivial a character as to cast suspicion

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either to itself, or to the object which it pretends to honour. But if only the artist bear in mind the condition of fitness or decorative unity, for the rest he is free to perfect his work to his heart's content; and it is neither more nor less than pedantry that would hinder the competent man from doing his utmost.

Clematis panel.

There are many ways in which a decorative painting, artistically on a level with pictures on the walls, may acknowledge that it is part of the wall or cabinet in which it is framed. The evidence that it was designed to occupy the space it fills, its unobtrusive neutrality, or the fact that it forms as it were a high note of the prevailing colour scheme, may suffice to show that it has no desire whatever

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THE WORKMAN AND HIS TOOLS.

"If you do not use the tools they use you."

NOTHING is more striking to a student of old work than the *traditional* character of the best ornament. So much is this so that there is more than a possibility of forms intrinsically beautiful becoming at last wearisome to us from perpetual repetition. We have even to remind ourselves that, however appropriate certain traditional forms may be to the purpose to which they were put, that appropriateness has only this much to do with tradition, that it was owing to their fitness that they were preserved; and that in passing down from hand to hand, whatever of inappropriateness there may have been in them has been worn away. They are often, in effect, perfect, so perfect sometimes as to have lost something of their interest. Traditional forms and even

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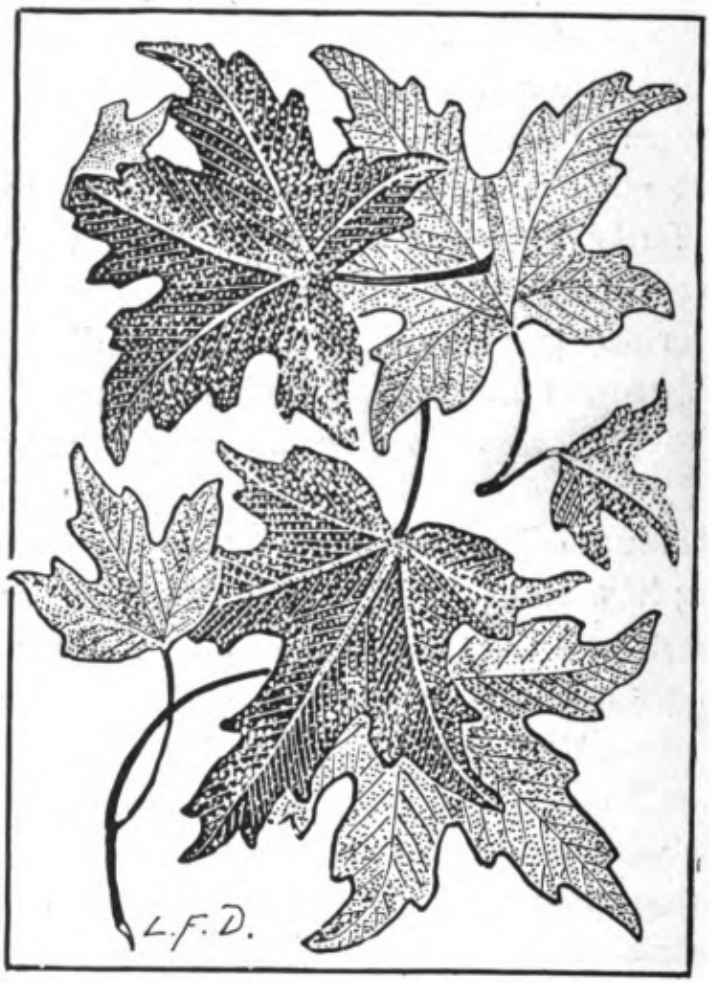
characteristic of him also, but it will be none the less apt because he has put himself into his work. The least consideration will convince him that, having undertaken to ornament a thing, whatever



Adapted to simple inlay.

else he may do, he is bound to make it ornamental. One cannot properly begin to design ornament until one has some knowledge of what it is to be applied to; and it is the test of all good ornament

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that is applied judiciously, that it does not in the slightest degree interfere with the use of the object decorated, and that it is strictly adapted to the nature of the material in which it is carried out. Misapply the most exquisite workmanship, and it is

Adapted to appliqué embroidery.

worse than wasted ; add enrichment that unfits an object for its prime purpose, and it becomes offensive ; work in antagonism to the material employed, and you produce, *perhaps*, at great pains, an effect far inferior to what you might have gained with ease by an intelligent use of the means at hand.

The considerations of material, process of manu-

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facture, and method of execution, are of too technical a nature to be discussed here at any great length. But it is necessary that even the amateur should know something of the value of workmanlikeness in ornament; and he has only to know it in order to appreciate the unreasonableness of neglecting it. It may require some little training and study, some degree of familiarity with the various crafts, to detect at once whether a design is adapted to be wrought or cast, printed or woven, carved or modelled; whether it is fit to be executed in stone or plaster, silk or paper, wood or metal. But it will take only a

Adapted to painting.

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energy, and material, which, wisely directed, would have gone very much further. It is difficult to speak in moderate terms of such blundering wrong-headedness.

Just as the general character of ornament is properly suggested by its position and purpose, so also must material and method of production deter-

Domestic stained glass.

mine to some extent its detail. There is no reason why wood-work should protest that it is joinery, why stained glass should proclaim that it is glazing, or a wall paper shout at you that it is printed. The simple reasonableness of the matter is that each should be, and be content with

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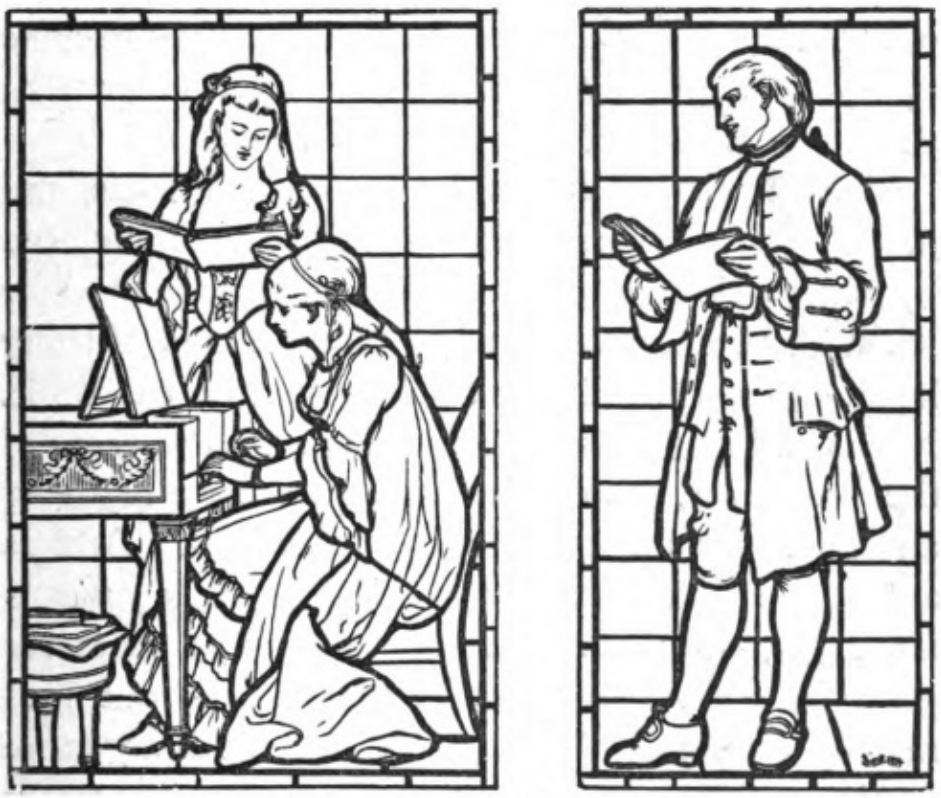
being, what it naturally is; and for the plain reason that disobedience to inevitable conditions is, so to speak, resented by them, and leads to labour lost; while to those who work in sympathy with them they unfold resources the artist had not dreamt of, yielding to gentle persuasion what was not by any means to be forced from them.



Design adapted to simple glazing.

When workmanlike treatment leads to such direct results, the wastefulness of ignoring it is, artistically speaking, criminal. It may not appear to others than artists a matter of much moment whether a material be treated after its kind or contrary to it, but all will admit that it is worth

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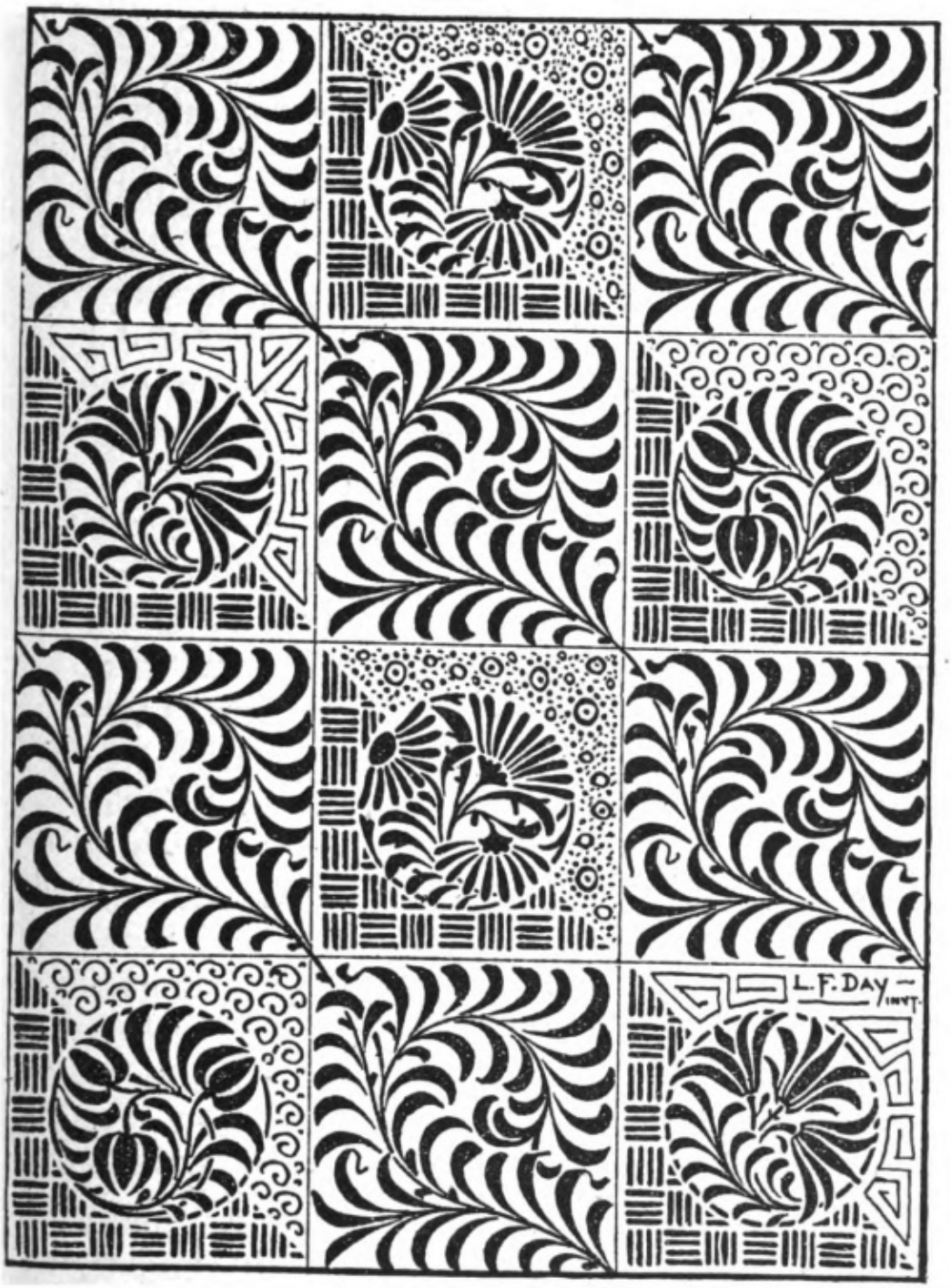

Pattern repeated on formal lines.

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and Indian work; the style of the beautiful book-bindings of the sixteenth century results almost entirely from the method of "tooling"; the best forms of early pottery were mainly due to the process of "throwing," and the shape of the potter's hand had more to do with fashioning them than his brains; much of what we most value in Venetian glass is inseparable from the use of the blow-pipe.

The characteristic of nearly all early ornament is its directness. The obvious ease with which it was done gives it no little of its charm. We take delight in work that was so evidently a delight to the workman, and enjoy his "happy thought" almost as if it had been our own. Apt treatment of ornament is only another name for intelligent treatment. He who runs his head against a difficulty is not the man most likely to carry off the honours of the fight, even though his skull be thick enough to force its way through. Decorative exigencies are not to be ignored, nor yet to be bullied. The wisest plan is frankly to accept the

Example of *direct* brush-work.

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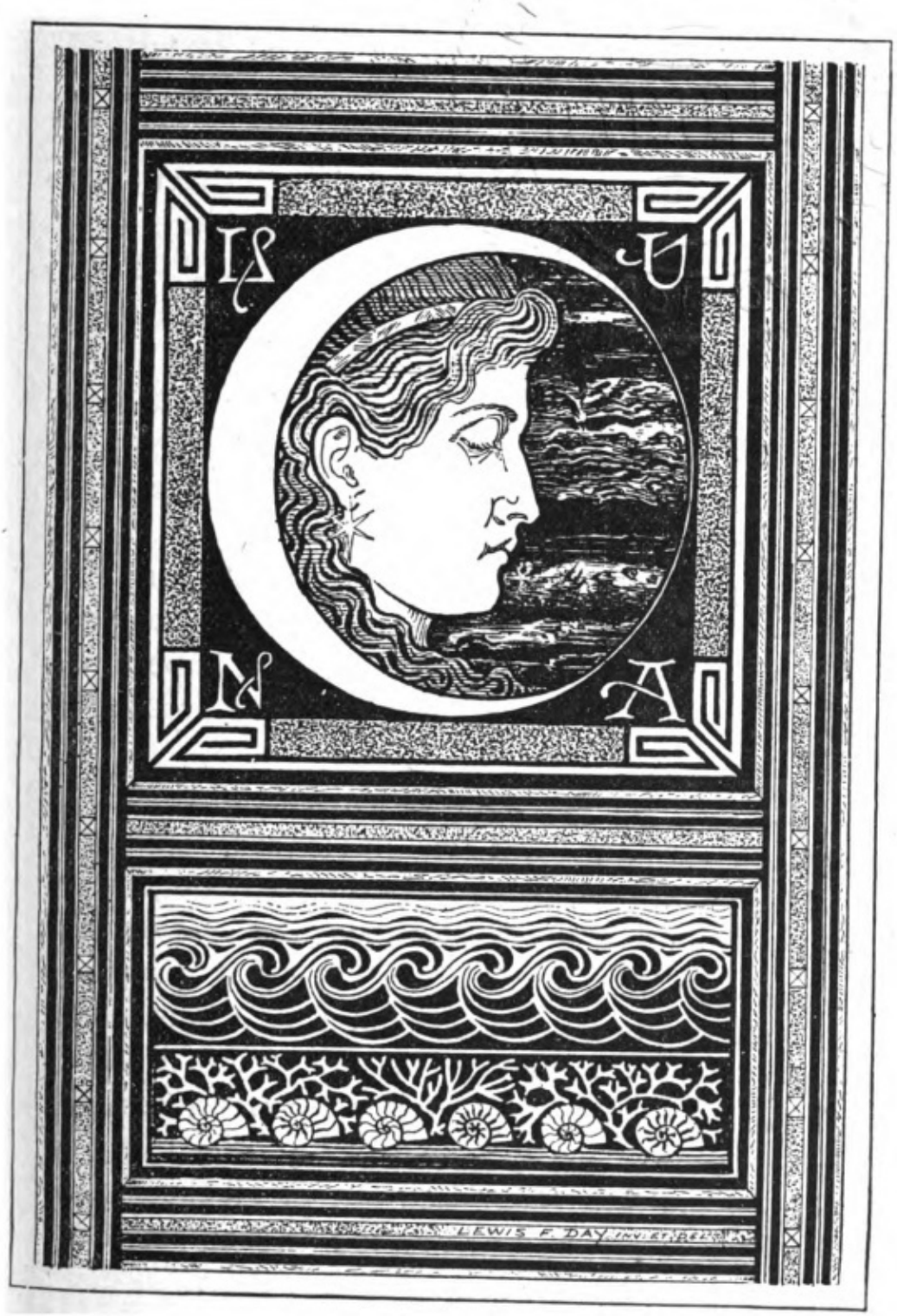

Design adapted to inlay.

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the resemblance of the forms which grew under his hand to the honeysuckle may eventually have struck

Direct and workmanlike flat carving—Old German.

the painter (as it strikes us) is likely enough; and, having perceived that likeness, he may have empha-

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originality, content to play variations upon the primitive brush patterns, he just put in the strokes that occurred to him, or that he felt were wanted. He had, no doubt, from the first a general notion

Suggested by Greek brush-work.

of the kind of thing he meant to do; but he no more knew the exact design he was going to paint than we know beforehand the words our thoughts will take in speaking. His words were so many strokes of the brush.

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The spontaneity of this brush-speaking is remarkable. The first natural ejaculation of a long-haired sable brush is the upward stroke A. The delicate gradation in its outline is due entirely to the play of the brush, thickening as the pressure is increased, and tapering off again as the stress is relaxed. If you keep your hand in the same position and proceed to make a succession of these brush flicks (B) they range themselves as a matter of course in the order shown at C, becoming smaller and smaller as they radiate at a less and less distance from the axis of your wrist. Repeat this process on the other side and you have the common form of anthemion, D. The other common form, which has more resemblance to the honeysuckle, is produced in a similar manner, only

A B

C

D

E F G

H

by commencing at the top with a blot or blob of the brush, which must be full of colour, and gently drawing the

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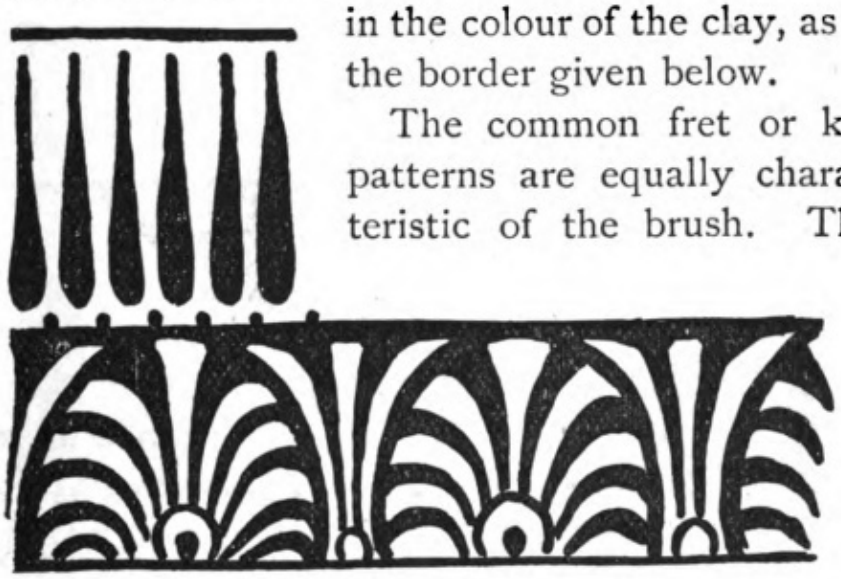
brush away to a point below. The examples above show the stroke E, the succession of strokes F, and the complete figure G. A less familiar variety of the ornament is shown in H. Sometimes the strokes were less springing and still less honeysuckle - like, as in J. Similar patterns were almost as easily produced by painting - in the ground, and leaving the pattern in the colour of the clay, as in the border given below.

J

The common fret or key patterns are equally characteristic of the brush. This



Example of pattern left in the natural colour of the ground.

may seem not so easily credible to those who are unacquainted with the use of the brush, and who

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the simple result of attemping to render nature as directly as possible with the brush. Working from nature, brush in hand, the Japanese artist almost unconsciously translated his original into the vernacular of china—into brush-work.

Greek.

It is curious to notice this point at which, contrary to all expectation, Greek art and Japanese for a moment join hands. The Japanese renderings of the chrysanthemum given below are as much like honeysuckle as any anthemion, and might pass for Greek almost. There is some similarity also in the Greek and Japanese ren-

Japanese peony.

Japanese chrysanthemum flowers.

dering of the buds; and there is something again in the Japanese bird overleaf, and in that on page 98, that reminds one of Greek brush-work.

It is significant of the connection between all apt workmanship, that artists of two such distinctly different types, working on such different principles,

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THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF IMITATION.

"Nothing concealed that is done, but all things done to adornment."

ORE than enough has been said concerning the heresy of shams in decoration, and yet not quite enough. The reasons that have been urged against shams have not always been the most reasonable. Rather too much stress has been laid upon the immorality of pretence, and not enough on its paltriness. Something remains to be said upon the flimsiness of the shift of imitation, upon its futility, upon the lack of feeling and fancy that it implies in the artist who resorts to it.

Have we no invention that we complacently fall back upon the poor device of making one material look as nearly as possible like another?

Judged on its own merits, apart from its insincerity, there is really very little to be said in favour of such expedients as graining or marbling. Once in a way, as a kind of practical joke, the thing might be amusing; but no joke was ever so little able to bear

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work would need to be of the best; every crack and every clumsy joint would be exposed to view; whereas painting hides a multitude of sins, and men live in happy ignorance of the yawning gaps in the joinery when they have been stopped with putty and covered over with paint. The most elaborate pattern-work would scarcely be more costly than the best graining.

Elaborately painted door-panel.

It is true that many so-called imitations are either so ill done, or so misplaced, that they must in fairness be held guiltless of any serious intention

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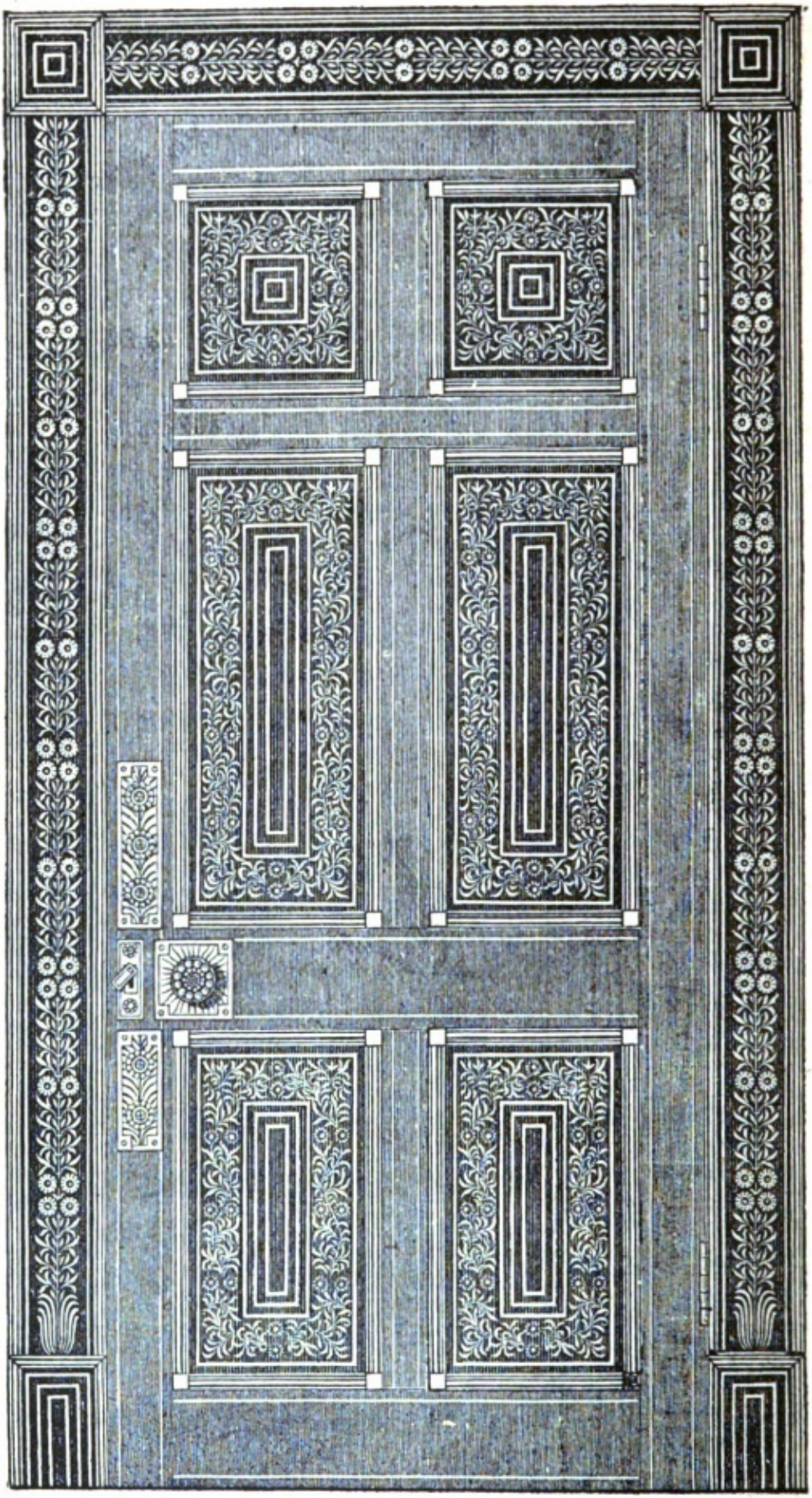

Elaborately patterned door.

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frankness with which it confesses its shallowness. Nothing is left to be found out about it.

Concerning the decorative use of gilding it has been urged that it must logically be classed among the shams. And so it must where it is used to simulate solid gold, as where surface gilding is made to simulate damascening. But gilding, as it has been practised in architecture for centuries past, is used simply as colour is. A gilt moulding no more pretends to be of gold than a painted wall pretends to be of solid pigment. It neither deceives nor is meant to deceive. It is confessedly gold leaf. Nevertheless, it is at once a frank and an effective practice, to let the grain of oak or leather, or the texture of canvas or plaster, reveal itself beneath the gold.

Marquetry panel.

The farce of Pretence is not a new and original production of our day ; we have only adapted the old idea to modern circumstances. But the imitation in times past appears to have been of two

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kinds, that which directly aimed at deception, and that which was rather meant to symbolise the thing it suggested. A familiar instance of the latter treatment occurs in the curtains painted as decoration on the walls of Gothic buildings. They are so conventionally rendered, and with such obvious disregard to realism, that they can never have been meant to do more than suggest the real hangings, with which it was the wont to furnish the walls of a room. The first of these painted curtains may have merited the praise due to a "conceit," but the repetition of the freak ceases to be amusing. Another favourite fancy of Gothic artists was the so-called "brick" or "masonry" pattern, a diaper formed on the lines taken by the mortar joints of a building. There is a considerable decorative use in the rigidity of these lines, but the notion of rigidity is all that we need borrow from masonry. There is no occasion whatever to adopt the forms and proportions of the stones used in construction.

Lines suggested by masonry.

The obvious appropriateness of tiles for the walls

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Based on square lines of tiles.

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LEADING-STRINGS.

"The eagle never lost so much time as when he consented to learn of the crow."

IT MIGHT seem a simple thing to state broadly the principles that govern ornament; and, indeed, it is easy enough for an experienced workman to give some simple working rules that may be of use to the beginner; but these are not to be confounded with "principles" even though they be put forth on authority. The principles enunciated by Owen Jones in his 'Grammar of Ornament' are, strictly speaking, only a description of the lines on which that tasteful artist himself worked, plus certain dogmas deduced from his own practice. Now, the truths that appeal to us are not necessarily the highest nor the only truths: not every good working rule is to be accepted as a principle of design.

Dogmas are two-edged tools to play with. One

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FORM AND COLOUR.

"No man can serve two masters."

THE THEORY that colour should always emphasise form will not bear examination. That that is one use to which colour may be put is obvious. To insist, however, that the development of form is the one and only function of colour, is more than rash. One may be permitted so to distribute colour as to emphasise only the forms in need of emphasis.

Purity of form needs certainly no "development" by means of colour; it is best appreciated in the absence thereof; and, on the other hand, full, rich colour can afford to dispense with some grace in forms lending themselves to its satisfactory distribution. This is fully appreciated by painters, who habitually sacrifice one to the other, according as their aim is form or colour. Its appreciation by the decorator has perhaps been hindered by autho-

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ritative dogma. Those consummate colourists, the Chinese, are not particular about the forms they employ, so long as they lend themselves to colour.

Old Chinese embroidery, the forms only a vehicle for colour.

All that can safely be asserted is, that in any scheme of colour there should be strict relation between its quality, its quantity, and its place

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—that is to say, the quality of colour will be determined by the area it covers and its situation; the amount of colour will depend upon whether the tone is light or dark, whether the tints are rich or delicate, whether they are seen in strong light

Strongly defined form.

or in shadow, and so on. The contrast between Capricornus, above, and his background is none too sharp for the dark corner the panel was designed to occupy.

No need of much philosophy to tell us that the

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when they made their curves so flat) perhaps upon the depth of the hollow to soften the crudity of available colours. This is more nearly the function of colour—to qualify form, defining or subduing it as need may be. In the design below, the dark colour behind the boys is used to emphasise their

Colour used to modify form.

forms, and, at the same time, to confuse the form of the arabesque.

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Hard form to be softened by very subdued colour.

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