Birth and Development of Ornament

F. Edward Hulme

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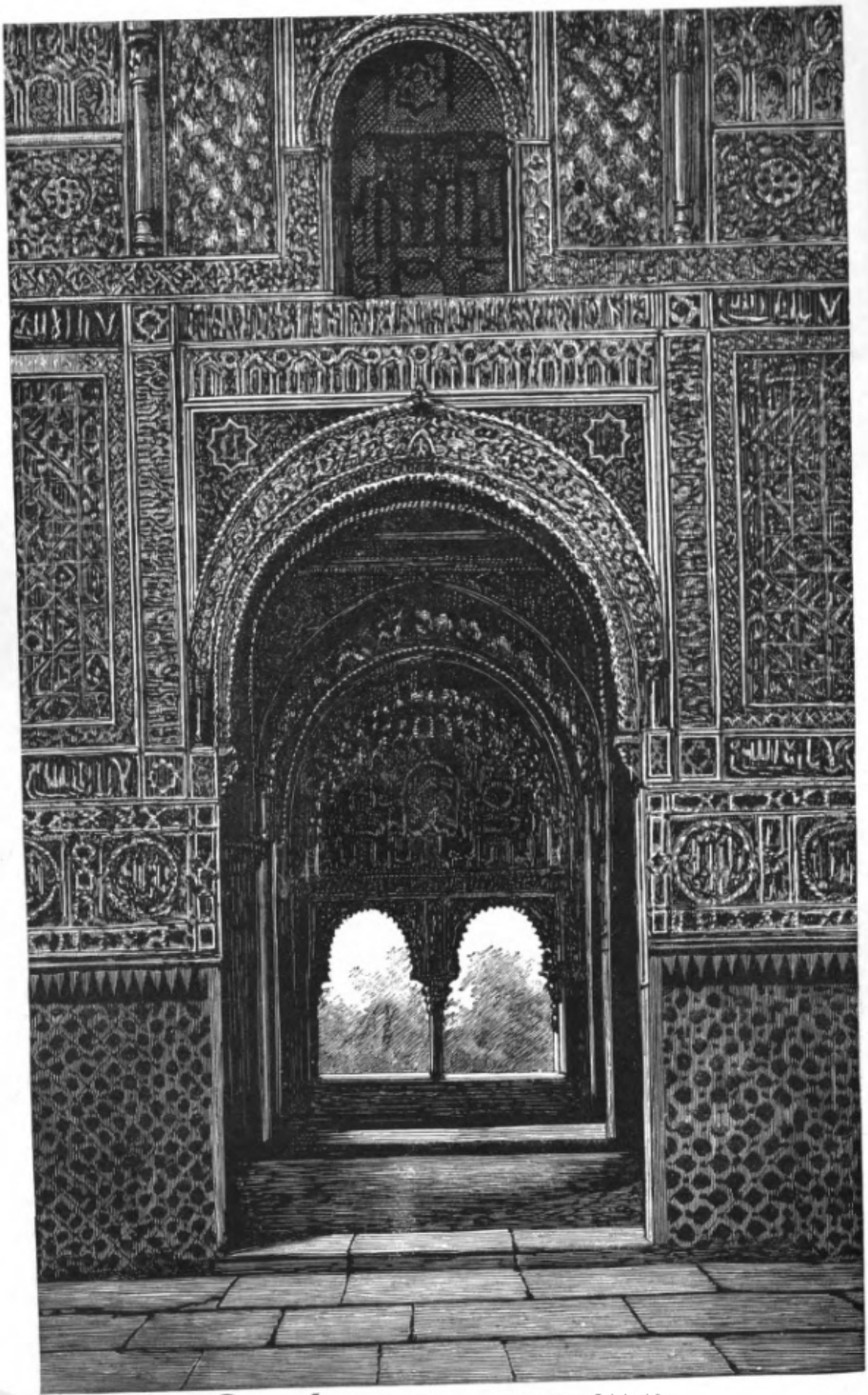

THE MIRADOR DE LINDARAJA.

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THE

BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ORNAMENT

BY

F. EDWARD HULME, F.L.S., F.S.A.

Author of

"Suggestions in Floral Design," "Familiar Wild Flowers," "Mythland," "Plants, their Natural Growth and Ornamental Treatment," "Principles of Ornamental Art," "History, Principles, and Practice of Heraldry, "History, Principles, and Practice of Symbolism," etc.

"All common and useful things may be refined into objects of beauty, and all that is beautiful or high in art is merely an elaboration and refinement of what is fundamentally a useful and a necessary art."—FERGUSON.

London:

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO.

NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO.

1893

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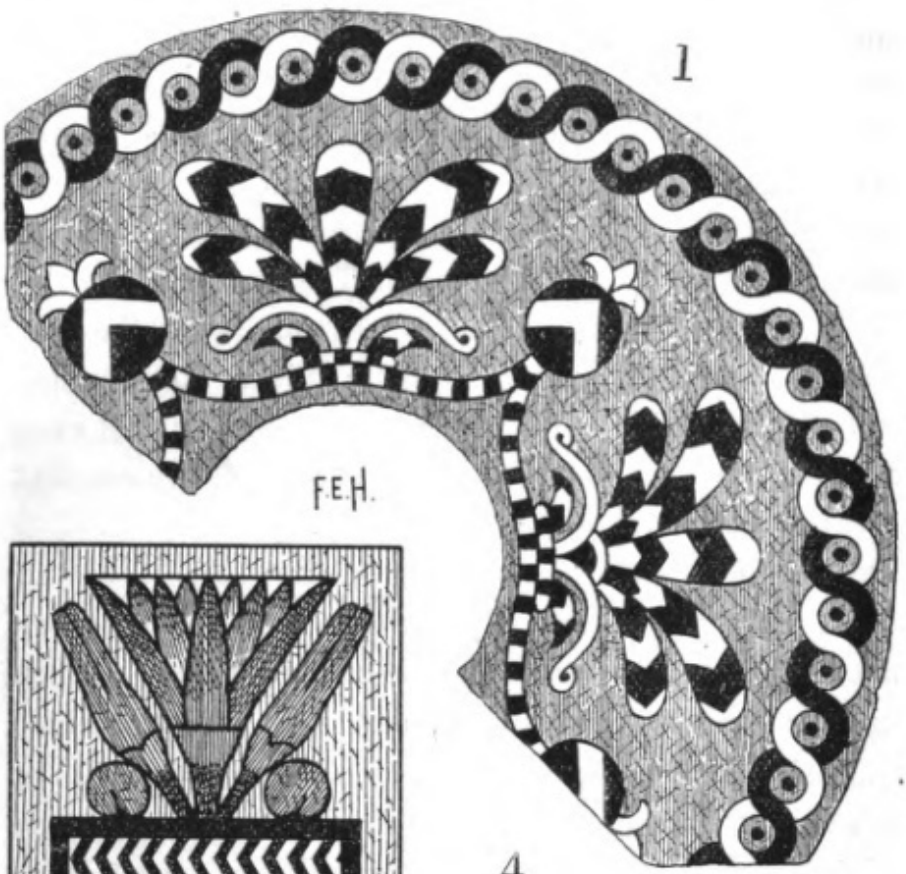

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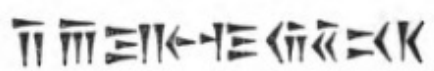

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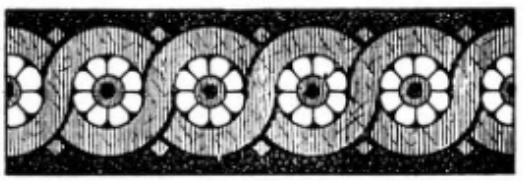

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Fig. 7. Greek Figure Treatment.

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for the fretwork or the guilloches and other minor details are not equal to the demands upon them in the more ambitious attempt to pourtray the wheat-crowned Ceres, rosy-rayed Aurora, or great Jove himself. Of course it may be said that with smaller tesseræ the work could be quite adequately done, but in this case the amount of

Fig. 8.

labour involved would be extreme, and it is better to recognise the fact that the means are imperfect, and not to strain them beyond just requirements.

Artistic work should bring out the distinctive character of the material employed, and one should never laboriously do in an intractable material what can be much more readily performed in another. "If," to quote

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what you do shall be safe afterwards. Your slender leaves shall not break off in my tenacious iron, though they may be rusted a little with an iron autumn. Your broad surfaces shall not be unsmoothed in my pure crystalline marble—no decay shall touch them. But if you carve in the marble what will break with a touch, or mould in the

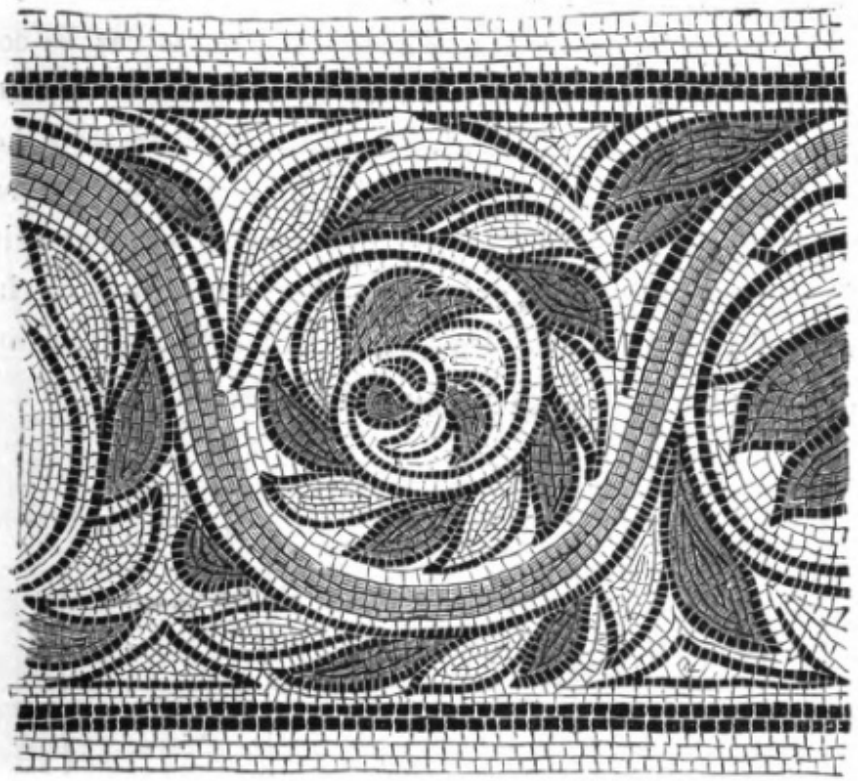

Fig. 9.

metal what a stain of rust or verdigris will spoil, it is your fault—not mine.' "

Many other general principles might be brought forward were we writing a treatise on the practice of design, but as our aim at present is somewhat different—a consideration of the ornament of the past rather than a

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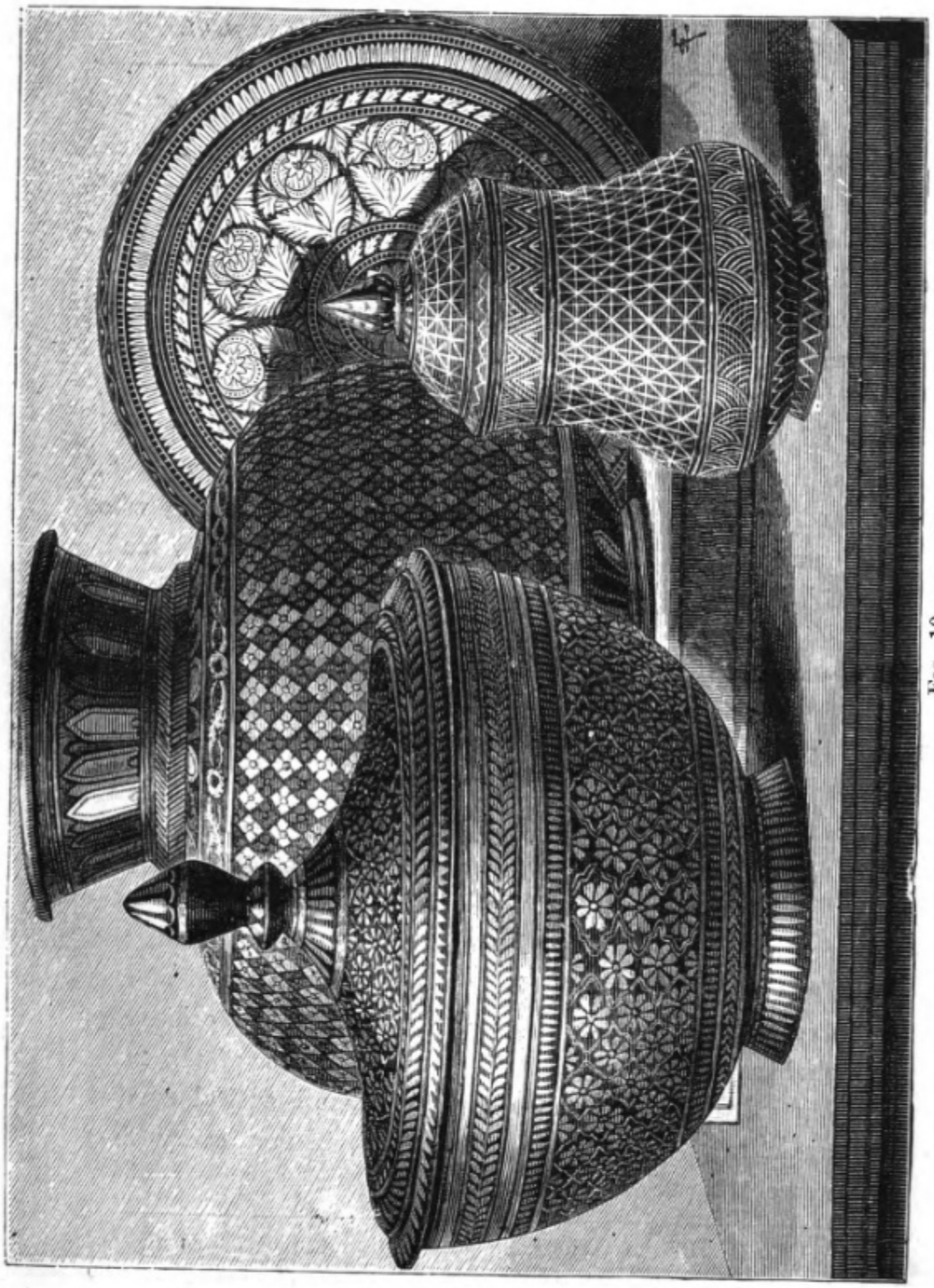

Fig. 10.

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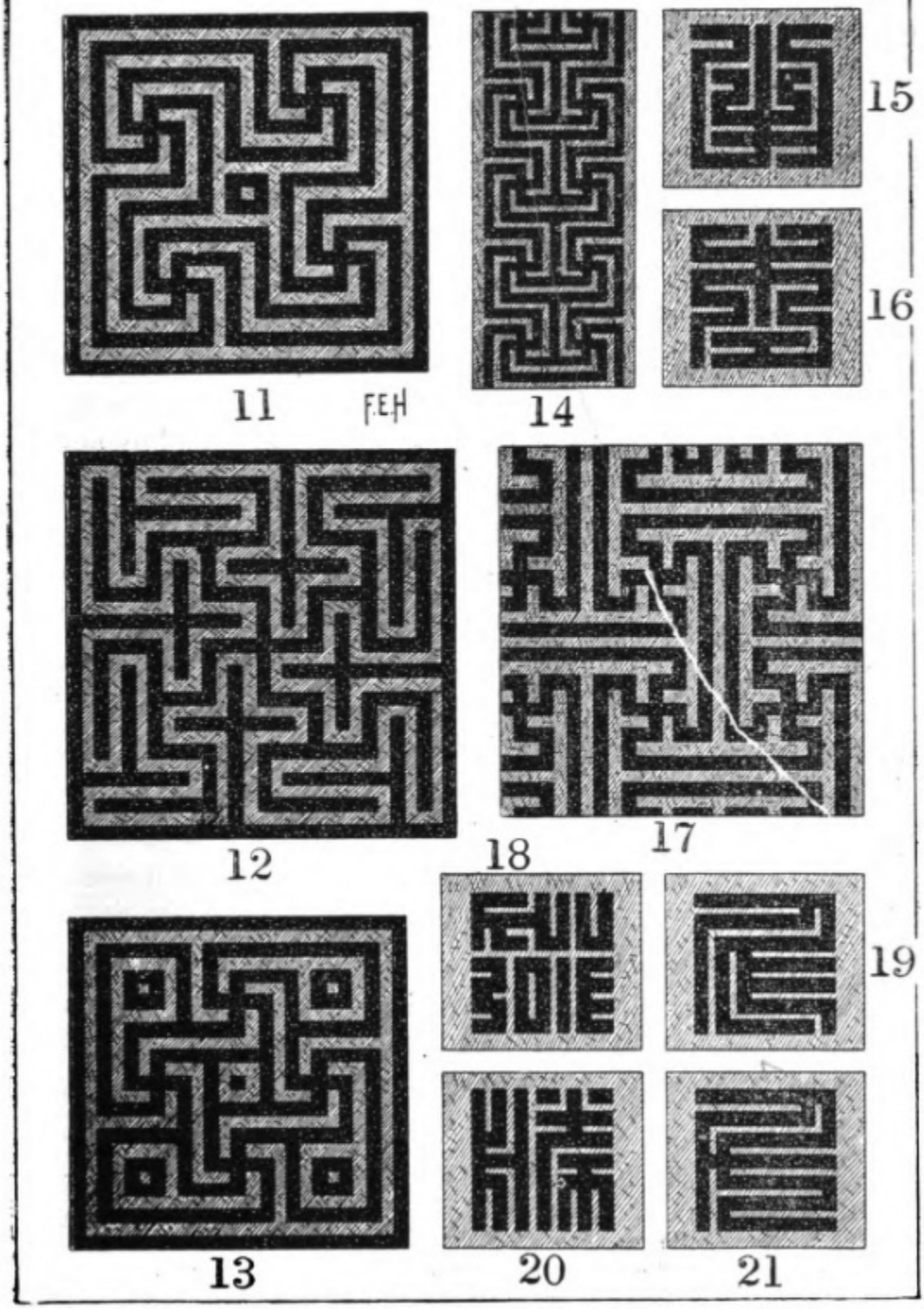

VARIOUS FORMS OF FRET-PATTERNS.

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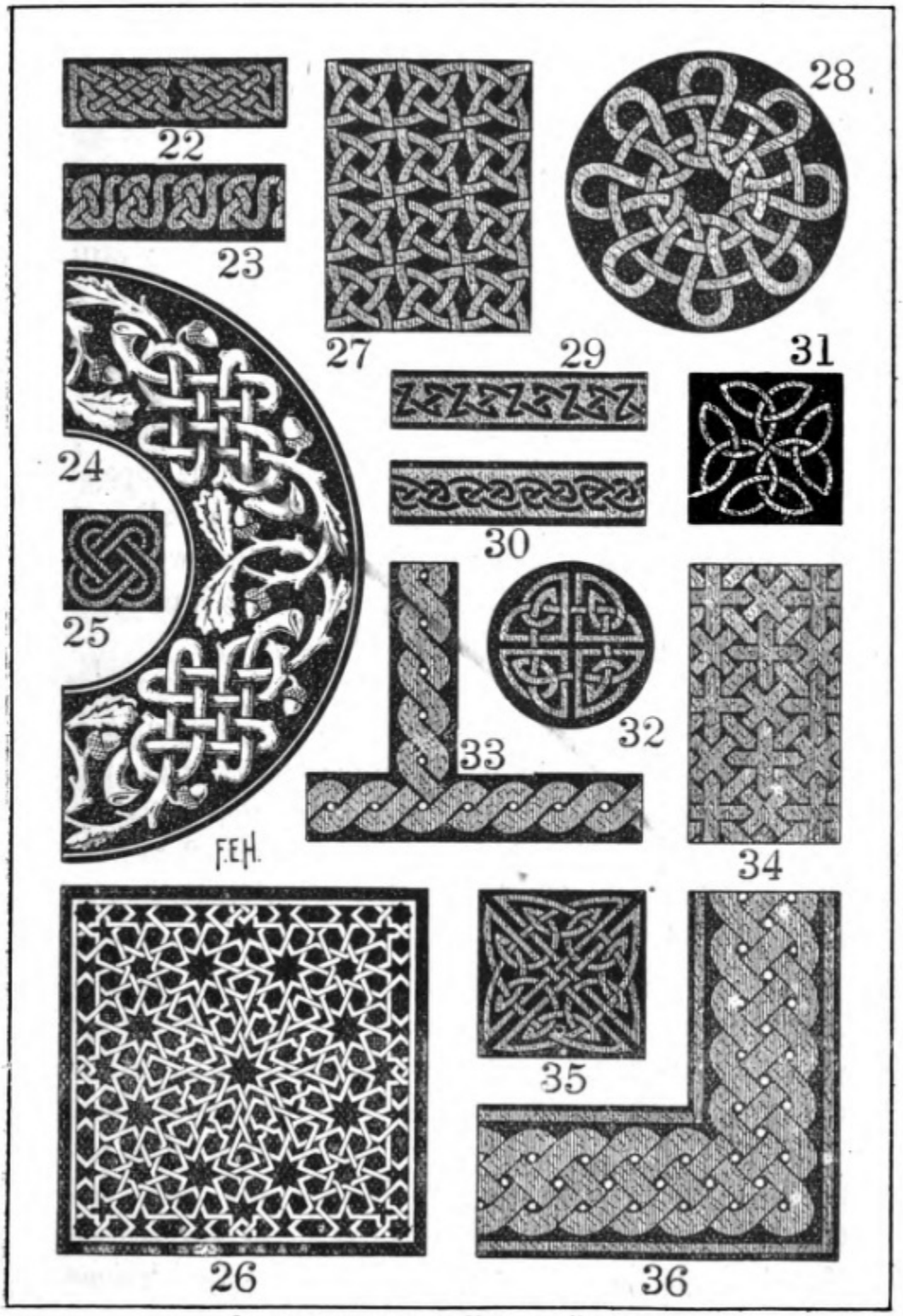

INTERLACINGS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES.

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Fig. 37.

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Fig. 38.

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rigid standard of uniformity;[1] but while all buildings of a common order agree in general type, no two are alike,

Fig. 39.

the Doric of the Pæstum temples, for instance, being distinctly different in detail from that of the Parthenon. The

[1] This bondage to lifeless rules is carried to absurd lengths. If we turn, for instance, to the "Mirror of Architecture" of Scamozzi, we find such passages as the following: "Here is shown how the columns follow each other, and how high each must be;" "The Doric must be twelve modules and fifty-three minutes and a half high;" and "The Tuscan arch must be three modules and fifty-two minutes wide." This "must be" of pedantry runs through everything.

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made it especially attractive to the pride and pomp of Imperial Rome. It is a singular fact that no examples of it are found at Corinth.[1]

The Greeks, like the Egyptians and Assyrians, made a great use of colour, though the lapse of time has in

Fig. 40.

many cases removed all traces of it. Enough, however, has been found to make the fact undeniable. To us the

[1] Mauch's treatise on the Greek and Roman orders, "Die Architektonischen Ordnungen der Greichen und Romer," containing 105 engraved plates, of details and measurements of the five orders, may be consulted. Leeds on the "Classic Orders" is also a very useful little manual. There are, of course, other good books that deal with the subject; a full list of these would run over many pages.

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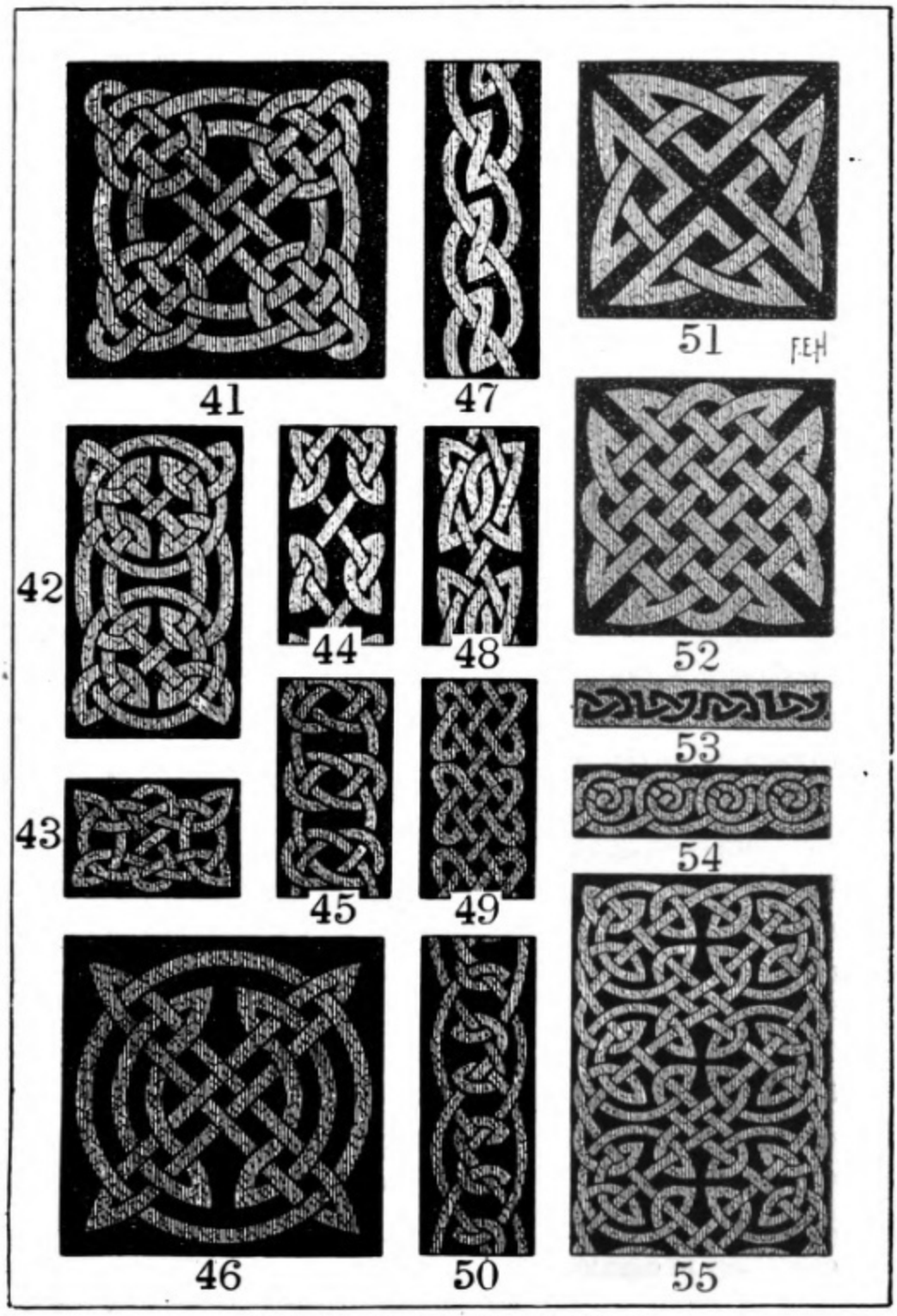

EXAMPLES OF CELTIC INTERLACING.

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Fig. 56.

Fig. 57.

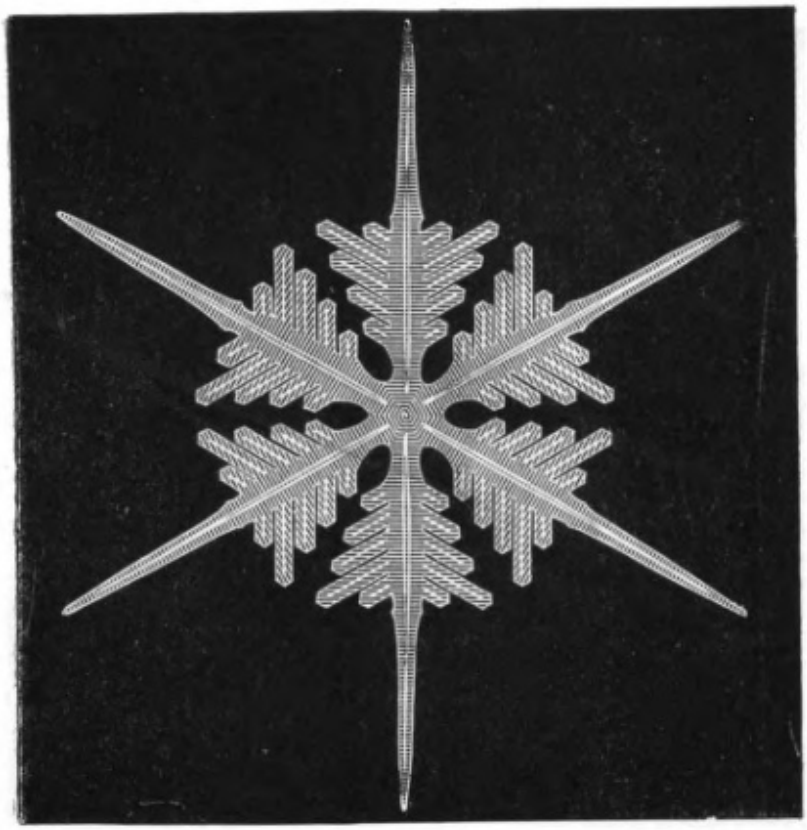

Fig. 58.

Fig. 59.

Fig. 60.

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marked feature in Greek work. It is a very common principle in decorative work; and Nature, the designer's great ultimate court of appeal, supplies numerous examples. One of the most characteristic instances of this repetition of simple parts is seen in the various forms

Fig. 61.

of snow crystals, of which Figs. 58 and 60 furnish us with good illustrations. A greater richness is produced by the alternation of one form with another in regular sequence. We may see this very well in the snow crystals, Figs. 56, 57, 59, 61, 62.

The patera, or rosette, is a flower-like form, composed

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of parts radiating from one centre. While we occasionally meet with it in Greek ornament, it is more especially common in Assyrian and Roman work. The anthemion, of which Fig. 63 is a good Greek example, and we may see other illustrations of the form in Figs. 1, 39, 40, owes

Fig. 62.

much of its beauty to this principle of radiation from a common starting-point. In the patera the forms all spring from a central point, and, like the petals of the wild rose, produce a multi-symmetrical form; while in the case of the anthemion this springing point is at the base, and the units range themselves on either side of a central

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Egyptian and Greek art, we feel that though the work is good, and indeed often excellent, it palls somewhat upon one, just because the ground covered is too circumscribed. The Egyptians fully felt the beauty of natural forms, yet they give us little beyond the lotus, the papyrus, or the palm; while the Greeks scarcely utilise anything beyond the acanthus. It is perhaps not saying too much

Fig. 63.

if we suggest the probability of there being in the fertile delta of the Nile and the sunny land of Greece at least fifty other plants almost or quite equally available for the purposes of design. One feels the same monotony in the geometric designs of the Greeks. When we consider the infinity of design possible, the half-dozen frets and the three or four types of spirals and guilloches seem a

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