

Awards in Wall-paper Competition

or seen many paintings, his strong intuitive love for art pointed in the direction which he is now permitting it to lead him, for neither his home training nor his surroundings had been in the least degree inimical to its gradual development. Even the furious life of London, which has upon most foreigners an effect very similar to that of absinthe drinking, moved him to feel with reverie—a singular as well as a hopeful circumstance; and yet, as he fell under the fatal inspiration of Turner, who is one of the rare great masters whom students should never imitate at all, his visit to our capital had serious disadvantages. The harm, however, was soon mitigated by the enslaving omnipresence of the genius of the French school, and this influence in its turn, which has given us so much that is not quite bad and so little that is really good in contemporary English art, was to be quickly counteracted by copying the spotted work of Seurat, an artist whom we may regard as a sort of god-parent of some of the impressionists. Thus Herr Toorop has fallen into nearly all the traps which beset the difficult path of the modern art student, and it is highly probable that he would be struggling in one now, had it not been for a long and serious illness, during the painful course of which he read and pondered over the fine old Vedas and Eastern dramas—those spiritualistic masterpieces of which we English know so little. And from that time—*i.e.*, the year 1886—he has wisely turned an inattentive ear to the devious judgments of Paris.

The picture of *The Three Brides*, which has been purchased by an Englishman, and is now on exhibition in Munich, illustrates what I will term the everlasting and universal antithesis of grace and disgrace, of the pure and the impure. To explain the allegory tellingly is out of the question, because it is imperatively necessary, by our singular British conventions, scrupulously to respect the feelings of “the Young Person” in all our magazines, though not by any means in all our newspapers. Yet I think I may venture so far as to say that Herr Toorop’s idea was to contrast the Bride of Christ—*i.e.*, the Church—with that Egyptian-featured person with the necklace of human skulls, whose position in life I will leave you to guess; while the third Bride, the maid who seems to triumph, is the type of guilelessness, innocence, lowliness, humility; in a word, she is the Bride of what is most divine in human hopes and thoughts and inspirations. The big ringing lily-bells, being emblems of purity, need no comment; and as for those whirling figures, some

of whom (or is it *which*?) carry lilies, while others shriek, they are meant to typify the worldly influences of good and evil; but I cannot but wish that the artist had been less inspired by the queer puppets which used to amuse him as a child in Java. But yet, after all, his fancy may certainly have imagined those whirling figures thus, and we ought really to allow every man his nature, as Goethe once said aptly enough, after finding fault with Schiller, his dearest friend. In the fantastic spirit of the design, one fancies there is much to interest even those critics and those artists who object to ideas in painting, while the unconscious and refreshing ingenuousness of the whole conception should appeal especially, one thinks, to the imaginative and simple students of “Borderland.”

W. SHAW SPARROW.

AWARDS OF THE WALL-PAPER PRIZE COMPETITION.

A THE number of designs submitted for this competition shows that, despite the technical difficulties of the subject, it proved more popular than might have been expected. As a rule the care bestowed on the design was extended to its packing, and the rules were more generally observed than in earlier competitions. A few of the black and white drawings were not suitable for reproduction, hence we cannot illustrate each of those designs specially mentioned by the judges. Messrs. Essex & Co. not merely set the details of the competition, but took so much trouble in the somewhat arduous task of weighing the merits of the different entries, that a special word of thanks for their assistance should be placed on record here. Their report runs:—

“There were between seventy and eighty sets sent in for competition, and amongst so numerous a company, as may be expected, there were good, bad, and indifferent. In a few cases the competitors disqualified themselves by their oversight of the conditions governing the competition, and in one or two other cases submitted designs which it would be impossible to adapt for wall-papers.

Considering that the rules were framed so as to exclude regular wall-paper draughtsmen, it is remarkable to notice the comparatively high order of drawing and technical knowledge many of the designs seem to manifest.

Many of the competitors who prepared tracings for the purposes of black and white illustration, sent in very excellent work, which, had the competition been for black and white simply, would have