

Franz Metzner, Sculptor

DESIGN FOR A "NIBELUNG" FOUNTAIN

BY FRANZ METZNER

AN AUSTRIAN SCULPTOR:
FRANZ METZNER. BY DR.
OTTO STOESSL.

FOR some years past a conspicuous place in German exhibitions, as well as in the various important prize competitions held from time to time, has been taken by the works of a certain sculptor, which by their intense earnestness and deep spirituality, by the distinctive and personal treatment of material, and by the monumental character of their architectural setting, have been essentially and markedly unlike the sculpture one is accustomed to see at exhibitions, and the average standard of work called forth by competitions. The sculptor in question is Franz Metzner, but his name, though it speedily became familiar to connoisseurs, has only lately begun to be known to wider circles at home and abroad. The talent of this original and resourceful artist has fortunately been allowed to undergo an unfettered and genial development, and European art may expect to find in him a representative of international significance.

Franz Metzner was born in 1872 at Witherau, in Egerland, a district in Bohemia peopled from time immemorial by a race of Germans, who in the midst of the disruption which overtook this country, now an

appanage of the Austrian Crown, managed to preserve their hereditary manners and customs, their independence and sturdy moral character. His family were peasant farmers and craftsmen, and amid these partly agricultural and partly industrial conditions of life his childhood was passed in more or less penury and want. Early accustomed to hardships, and early brought face to face with the struggle for existence, he knew what it was to depend on his own resources. But even as a child he was spirited and enthusiastic; when quite a boy he painted sign-boards for the inn of his native village, depicting thereon a variety of symbols for meat and drink; while another of his occupations was to construct milestones of stone.

When still a half-grown youth, Franz lost his father and was obliged to go forth into the world. He migrated to Germany and gained his livelihood by day work of a very hard description, during which, with steadfast energy and proud determination, he applied himself furtively, but none the less ardently, to self-education in art. His employment brought him into contact with architectural undertakings, and this circumstance stimulated the growth in him of his essentially plastic talent. Hard as was the life this needy youth was then leading, its discipline nevertheless proved of the greatest