

A Thibetan Teapot

A THIBETAN TEAPOT.



ORNAMENT AT THE BASE OF THE SPOUT

THE use of a variety of metals in the construction of an object is one which obtains largely in various Eastern countries. The intermixture of brass and copper in English and American made lamps and candlesticks, which has recently become so common, had its inception in Eastern methods. But it is somewhat strange that the Eastern work has not been more thoroughly studied by our designers than appears to have been the case; for there are numerous ideas capable of adaptation for Western use which would be well worth the while of careful analysis by those interested in the production of artistic metal-work. The Americans have probably borrowed more freely of Eastern ideas than has been the case in Europe. Many of the delightful productions in silver of Messrs. Tiffany & Co. are clever, although direct imitations from the Japanese; and it has been open for any of our metal-workers to have done equally good work, had they studied the specimens of bronze plaques which are among the most interesting of the objects in the Japanese Court of the South Kensington Museum.

The teapot here illustrated, was purchased in the bazaar of Srinagar in Kashmir, where it had been brought by one of the traders who make periodic journeys to Ladak for trading purposes; which journeys are sometimes prolonged thence even unto Kashgar or to Lhassa. It is not often that the more artistic productions of these far-away cities, so difficult of access, are purchased by the native traders. Silk, wool, and churras, are doubtless more portable and more marketable commodities.

Yet a few bales of the curious and interesting carpets of Khoten, or an occasional example of metal-work or woven silk fabric, may sometimes tempt the trader to barter.

This vessel is made of copper mounted with brass and inlaid with silver. The method of mounting one metal with another is probably of Chinese origin, and is akin to the mounting of porcelain and enamel with ormolu, a practice adopted in the East as well as in Europe. The idea of mounting porcelain and enamel in this manner was doubtless to add somewhat to their security, and to lessen their liability to breakage. But in the matter of the teapot it is doubtful whether any really useful end is served by its being so treated. The ornamental value of the juxtaposition of the metals and a general enrichment of effect was doubtless all that was aimed at.

The copper body of this object is plain, with the hammer marks slightly in evidence. The brass mounts round the upper rim of the neck, down each side of the body and around the foot, are rather elaborately worked in relief in a sort of leaf-scroll, the ground being cut away (*à jour*) to show the copper underneath. The Buddhistic ornaments in silver, which are incrustated at intervals upon the brass-work, are very finely worked and finished. The spout and handle are entirely coated with thin brass, the base of the spout being enriched with an interesting bit of ornament. The knob and upper portion of the lid are also in brass. The brass ornaments are rivetted to the copper body with copper rivets. The interior of the teapot is tinned over.



DETAIL OF ORNAMENT AROUND THE NECK OF THE TEAPOT

The peculiar interest of the vessel to the designer and metal-worker is the brass and silver work on the copper, and some useful and valuable hints are doubtless to be obtained from it, by those who can assimilate and adapt ideas.

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