

WALL AND CEILING DECORATION

IN relief ornament for walls and ceilings, with the exception of two Anaglypta patterns, the examples here reproduced consist of plaster work by Mr. G. P. Bankart, who has now severed his connection with Bromsgrove, the place with which his name has hitherto been associated, for more central quarters in London. It may not be amiss to recapitulate the main principles which ought to inspire and determine the practice of this important branch of decoration. The study of historical examples on which Mr. Bankart's own work is based, though far from being an imitation of the former, has led him to the conclusion that low relief is preferable to high relief. Much of the deeply undercut modelling which is introduced at the present day, whether in large houses or public buildings, is not strictly plaster work at all; for though it be true that it is actually carried out in that material, in essence and mode of execution it partakes of few of the qualities which distinguish traditional plaster ornamentation.

Now, plaster of Paris is by nature soft and readily damaged, and should therefore be modelled with due regard to this fact. Suggestiveness of form, then, must be aimed at rather than hardness or sharpness of definition. All crowding and intricacy or confusedness of detail should be avoided, the ornament being treated as far as may be in silhouette, and trained into bold and simple bands or patches, to ensure the best effect.

One point which Mr. Bankart has arrived at from minute examination of old examples, and one which he considers extremely important, is that the contour of leafage and flowers should incline to be concave rather than convex, and this of course for the sake of emphasis which the incidence of light and shadow imparts to sunken surfaces. The above applies to all sorts of plaster work, whether modelled on the spot or cast in advance before being put up and fixed in its final destination.

It is not, of course, essential, but there can be no question but that it does greatly enhance the rich ornamental effect of modelled plaster when it is coloured, as is the case of Mr. Bankart's work in the great hall at Dumbleton Hall, Gloucestershire (page 122), the frieze of which is painted in tempera. Four illustrations, including one in colour, are here given, from which some idea of this very handsome decoration may be gathered. On the other hand, the ceiling in the long gallery at Wych Cross, Forest Row (page 121), as also that in the drawing-room of the same house (page 125), are instances of broad schemes of plaster decoration, pure and simple, without the aid of colour.

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