

MODERN DECORATIVE ART IN GERMANY

THE "Third German Arts and Crafts Exhibition" held at Dresden last year constituted a central meeting point for the developments of recent years in German applied art, the world of industrial art, not only in Dresden but in other German art centres where any touch of the modern spirit is to be found, having for many months previously been preparing for this carefully-planned and ingeniously organized exhibition. What the undertaking has in particular shown with convincing clearness, even to those who are most definitely outside the movement—and herein, too, lies its great national and educational significance—is the fact that the latest efforts of industrial art are no longer merely the work of isolated groups of artists, but spring from roots whose ramifications have extended throughout the German Empire, and vigorous growth is the result. The recognition of this, and a consequent general change of feeling towards modern German art, were the most satisfactory results of the Dresden Exhibition.

By dint of steady quiet work the modern movement in Germany has reached maturity; and the separation of the painters from the architects has furthered the advance. It is well known that in artistic industries attempts to break loose from the imitation of inherited art and to strive after new aims originated generally with painters. That painters should have more feeling for the outward form than for the practical part of their task, more eye for the picturesquely decorative than for the constructive, is only natural; but they are usually lacking in the most elementary knowledge of technical conditions.

Now in the course of time some of these painters have become architects (for instance, Richard Riemerschmid, Peter Behrens, Paul Schultze-Naumburg), who have made themselves masters of the necessary technique; and on the other hand a very large number of other talented architects have taken part in the movement. This has helped towards progress to a quite remarkable extent, and, without being guilty of any exaggeration, we may say that it is only by this co-operation of the architects that the final triumph has been attained. Instead of the "individual note," of the struggle for originality, the hitherto non-existent form, we now find a demand for real utility, for a right consideration for the kind of material used, and the practical need to be served. In consequence of this the public have regained that confidence with which the often fantastical designs of self-opinionated artists