

The Morris and Co. showroom

After the hard and mechanical ornamentation seen in the showrooms and shopwindows of our leading thoroughfares, it is a relief to turn to the work of the true art manufacturer, in which design and colour have been studied in a thorough spirit. Messrs Morris and Company, of Oxford Street, do not cater for the taste of that large class of the public who have money enough to buy anything in fashionable taste, but who have not the discriminating power to judge of the difference between art originality and mere imitation. Every one of their designs bears the impress of artistic culture and feeling. The handmade rugs of that firm, and their so-called 'Hammersmith carpets' are a special feature, to which we may call the attention of all who can really enjoy harmony of colour and design. The attempt of the manufacturers is to make England independent of Eastern workmanship, which is rapidly declining. The rugs are of Persian character, and the patterns have been conceived in a truly Eastern spirit. Each thread of the pile has been tied by hand and cut off, so that the fabric is as much a work of art as a piece of tapestry. We notice several charming blendings of colour in which a dark indigo blue is made the ground for conventionalised foliage and flowers of lighter shades of blue, green, and rich autumnal tints. One has a buff ground, with a beautiful blending of colour; another an indigo blue ground upon which are worked scrolls of conventional form, with a light border of flowers and leaves; another has a rich border with a clouded centre, of buff and rose tint, but subdued; while a fourth is a rich and harmonised study of varied shades of green, and the whole rendered in a thorough conventionalised Eastern style. We cannot leave the textiles without mentioning a nice blue 'Kidderminster' 'Three-ply' carpet with a quiet pattern and especially a rich altar-cloth, of vellum tint, embroidered with a design of singular boldness and originality, in which tulips and peonies are introduced; the border is brocaded with silk and gold, and the colours are admirably selected. Messrs Morris's 'Cortisene' floorcloth is a nice warm material for the feet; it is a kind of linoleum. Visitors to the studio will see a very pleasing pattern in one laid; it consists of a quiet conventional design of intercepting (sic) semi-circles, with flowers flatly treated in three complementary shades of colour. In Ceramic art we noticed two fine vases of Oriental design and glazing, and a Spanish lustre: they were all three of bold design. The Dutch tiles made by Messrs Morris are excellent in pattern and are painted, we are informed, in Holland, in blues and greens, and other tints of a subdued shade. Those who wish to hang their walls with a material artistic and washable cannot find, we are sure, anything better than the block-printed chintz designed and made by this firm. One of the patterns we saw was particularly good in design and colour, a treatment of peonies and honeysuckles on a rich blue ground, characterised by considerable boldness. We have seen few wallpapers to equal those of Messrs Morris. The patterns have a freshness and originality about them we do not often meet with, and they are all conventional renderings of natural foliage and flowers, boldly treated in tints of greys, greens and blues. A rapid glance over the studios is

sufficient to convince one of the spirit of individuality and unity which pervades the work of this firm; we do not see a variety of conceptions in different styles, nor a number of patterns by various artists; all the work is exceptionally good, and is due to Mr. Morris himself we believe.

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