

## The Armourers and Braziers' Exhibition.



Fig. 1.

HAVING taken an opportunity of seeing and studying thoroughly good English metal-work, and of noting the progress made of late years in that all-important branch of industry, was not so generally appreciated, nor taken as great advantage of, as it might and should have been. It is safe to say that ninety-nine out of every hundred people outside the crafts themselves are totally ignorant of the skill possessed by the craftsmen of their own country, for the simple reason that they so seldom have an opportunity of seeing their best work. The public judgment is, unfortunately, too frequently formed from productions which are turned out in accordance with modern commercial requirements, and which, it is stipulated, must come out at a certain price. Those are, of course, unfair conditions under which to form an opinion upon any man's artistic capabilities or craftsmanship, and it is not until some generously inclined individual or public-spirited body says, "Produce me such and such a thing, putting your best work into it, irrespective of price," that a fair estimate can be formed.

The Armourers and Braziers' Company, from the 12th to the 16th of last month, had five rooms of their fine hall filled with the numerous productions which had been sent in to them for display, according to the conditions under which the exhibition was held, the various apartments containing work classified as "Original Works from Original Designs," "Models, Designs, and Amateur Class," "Loans," "Apprentices' and Students'

Class," and "Models and Special Finger Plates." The conditions of the Exhibition were well judged, and the proceedings throughout left but little opportunity for discontent. The names of the craftsman and designer were required to be attached to each exhibit, and, excepting only in two classes, none but British subjects were permitted to compete. In inviting Mr. Alfred Gilbert, A.R.A., and Mr. W. Herbert Singer to act as judges, the authorities made a selection whose

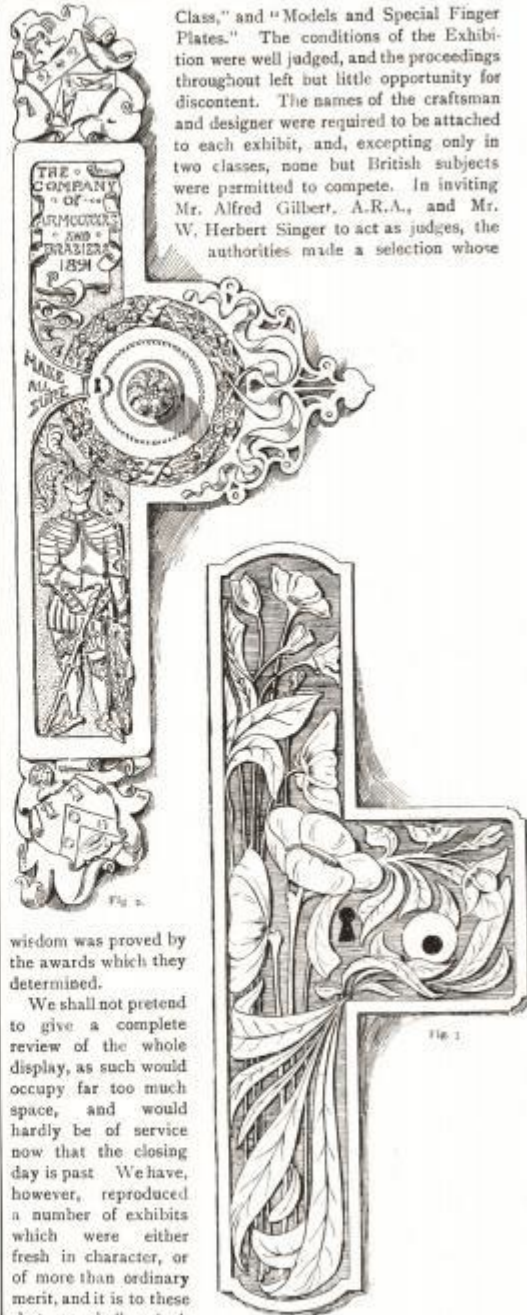


Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

wisdom was proved by the awards which they determined.

We shall not pretend to give a complete review of the whole display, as such would occupy far too much space, and would hardly be of service now that the closing day is past. We have, however, reproduced a number of exhibits which were either fresh in character, or of more than ordinary merit, and it is to these that we shall principally confine our remarks, just briefly referring to anything else which may have been worthy of special note.

Whoever did or did not take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Company to exhibit their skill, there were two

important organisations which were thoroughly well represented, and whose work contributed in a very large degree to the success of the undertaking. The Guild and School of Handicraft of London, and the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, divided the honours of having sent the largest collections of work pretty equally, and both institutions gave ample evidence of the excellence of their systems of art education and development. Had it been possible, we should have liked to have illustrated many of the productions which came from both sources, as a high quality of skill—both in design and execution—was manifested; but a few must suffice.



FIG. 4.

A member of the Guild and School of Handicraft was successful, and deservedly so, in carrying off the first prize offered by the past master of the Company for the best lock and finger-plate with knob, in finished brass. As these plates were intended for use in the Company's Hall, a specified size was given, to which size the workman had to adapt his design, and the successful competitor carried out his work in a spirit which is but little indicated by our sketch (Fig 2).

Mr. J. Williams is to be congratulated on the line which he adopted, and will no doubt feel no small amount of satisfaction in turning out the five additional plates which have been ordered by the company for the doors of their Hall. The plate is in brass, repoussé and engraved, and the handle is in bronze. The arms of the company are introduced above and below, and the idea of working in the motto "Make all sure" just by the keyhole is peculiarly apropos. The second prize in this class was carried off by Mr. Samuel Cope, who was responsible for an excellent piece of work whose merit ran that of its more successful competitor very close. The lock-plate shown in Fig. 3 is by Mr. William A. Heath, of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art, and shows a graceful and pleasing arrangement of natural forms, well disposed to fill a rather awkward space.



FIG. 3.

A lock-plate is not by any means an easy thing to design, and the selection exhibited this year displayed much skill and considerable variety in methods of treatment. Among others whose work in this direction elicited much praise were Mr. C. T. A. Henshaw and Mr. W. Freeth, of the Birmingham School of Art, Mr. Herbert Bennett, Mr. F. W. Harper, and Mr. W. Amor Fenn.

Messrs. Benham & Froud sent one or two pieces of work characterised by that excellence which is associated with their name. A brass eagle lectern, altar cross, electrolier, panel figure of St. Mark on metal mosaic background, and a lock and finger plate, were among their contributions, and stood foremost among the best work in the hall.

Messrs. Winfields, Lim., were represented by specimens of stamped balance weights and ornamental tubes, sent out by craftsmen in their employ, who were successful in gaining



Fig. 6.

numerous prizes. The graceful and original lamp for electric light which is roughly delineated in our initial is by Mr. Henry



Fig. 7.

Ross, from a design by Mr. Amor Fenn, and may be ranked as among the most decorative of those shown. The whole thing is altogether sprightly, and leaves little to be desired. The

chains by which it is suspended are of wire and thin metal, and peculiarly light and graceful in appearance. The wall sconce for electric light (Fig. 7) is by the same craftsman, from a design by Mr. Charles Henry Mason.

Several exceptionally fine standard lamps by Messrs. James Hinks & Son, Lim., displayed the skill with which those manufacturers manipulate the various metals for such purposes. A combination lamp and whatnot specially attracted our attention, and we have reproduced its general form in Fig. 4. This lamp, shown by Messrs. Hinks, was designed by Mr. C. J. Moreton, and executed by Mr. W. Heath, and is a delicate and graceful

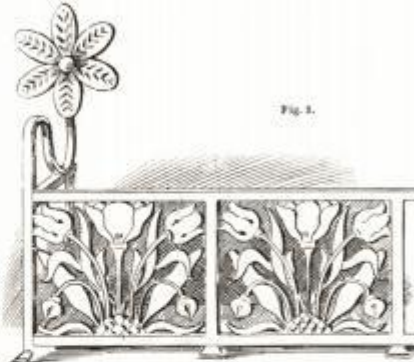


Fig. 4.

structure in brass, the shelves being covered in crimson plush. The idea is an admirable one, and the workmanship of a quality which puts criticism out of the question. Judging from the remarks passed upon it by visitors to the exhibition, one might predict that there will be no lack of demand for the combination lamp and whatnot. A combination standard floor lamp and flower stand, standard lamp, and several table lamps were also shown by this same firm, and were of equal merit. The quaint and pleasing hanging lamp for electric light, illustrated in Fig. 5, is by Messrs. C. H. Mason, T. Radley,

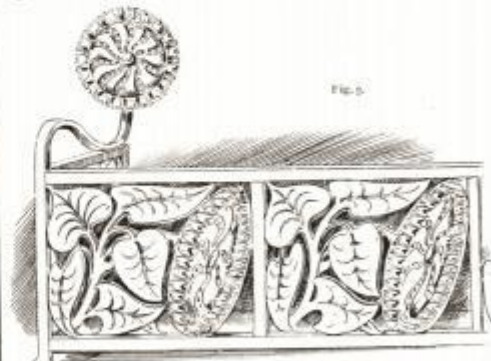


Fig. 5.

and W. Dimmock, of Messrs. Strode & Co.'s, and is thoroughly Oriental in design and character.

Messrs. C. Barber and J. R. Divine were responsible for a pair of dainty little four-light candelabra which merit great praise, both for design and workmanship. One of these two candelabra is sketched in Fig. 6, which will indicate the graceful proportion and general form of the articles. The two unique fenders shown in Figs. 8 and 9 come from the workshops of the Guild and School of Handicraft, and are quite in keeping with the traditions of that undertaking. They are in wrought iron and copper repoussé