

“Stained Glass in Monumental Work”

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WINDOW IN CHAPIN MEMORIAL CHAPEL, HOPE CEMETERY, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

STAINED GLASS IN MONUMENTAL WORK.

Of recent years windows have been frequently placed in mausoleums and vaults, but owing to their more customary use in churches, this most important and beautiful form of memorial has scarcely been recognized as a feature of cemetery decoration. My attention was drawn to the fact on noticing in Woodlawn Cemetery a mausoleum entirely without ornament and beautiful simply from its proportions and the exquisite finish of the plain white stone. A great iron gate closed the entrance and through it one saw the warm bright sunshine, transmitted by a stained glass window, at the back, falling in mosaic on the floor. The window was neither a large nor an expensive one, but a conventional design in cathedral glass, and yet it filled the interior like a glorifying presence and as I went on to other monuments their gloom and vacancy impressed me as it had never done before. The trees were bare, and among their branches the points of numberless obelisks bristled, dwarfing one another and destroying the sentiment which before all others should pervade a cemetery—peace.

Why this pagan form has found such favor would be hard to tell. Perhaps some years ago when the Christian religions were not in such kindly fellowship as the teachings of Christ admit, a Protestant prejudice against anything which might seem to border on Romishness led to the adoption of Egyptian monuments and Grecian urns and many other things which, while excellent in themselves, are associated in other minds with customs far removed from those of the present day, and which might well give the coming centuries a curiously erroneous notion of our faiths and thoughts. And time will not lend to these more ambitious monuments the charm that we find in the old country churchyards where the breeze bends the tall silken

timothy and the crumbling headstones lean over the forgotten graves that somehow never seem as much forgotten as these neatly tended plots. Naturally enough an object belonging to a certain place or period never justified itself when disassociated from the conditions which created it, and I never see Cleopatra's needle rising battered and uncouth from its graded velvet sward in Central Park without wishing that America would send it back to its own Nile, its Egypt and its sandhills. And yet when we look at the greater part of the sculptured monuments erected thirty years ago, we cannot but feel grateful toward the inherent taste of those who avoided them by choosing the plain shaft. Now, however, we have sculptors whom other countries are delighted to honor, we have bronze foundries fitted to cast the finest work, artisans to follow out the most exquisite design in stone, and it remains only for our people to acquire a more trained appreciation of the difference between good and mediocre work,—for that which is very very bad usually announces itself. But it is generally conceded that perfect painting comes before perfect sculpture in the evolution of art, and it seems more than probable that it will be through the colorist that the general standard of memorial work will be improved until our burial grounds will contain much that is finest of our nation's art. No great buildings, no monuments in public parks gauge the development of a country as do its cemeteries. There alone is found record hopelessly true of the individual taste of all its people, and it is a fact full of promise that the newer parts of Greenwood and Woodlawn are so much finer than the old.

In Greenwood there are, beside the well known Whitney Chapel, a number of mausoleums, and of vaults whose catacombs alone run underground, in which stained glass windows have been placed, and

the foundation is at present being prepared for a memorial which will cost sixty-three thousand dollars. The time was not long ago when this price could not have guaranteed artistic work from American hands, just as the time may not be far distant when art will be the birthright of every individual, availed of or not availed of during life, but certain in great or humble form to mark his resting place, for in the words of a great French humorist, "the highest honor that can be paid a man in his lifetime is to erect a tribute to his memory when he is dead."

Stained glass is as varied as painting on canvas, and the difference between the "antique" or painted, and the opalescent glass might be compared to the difference between the old gothic painters whose sombre colorings had no aim as coloring but was merely a necessary medium for giving form to the figures they wished to represent, and the Venetian painters to whom color in itself was a delight and an expression of thought.

There are several distinct varieties of glass—English, German, Venetian, but the opal "which," as Mr. Will H. Low said not long ago in an address on the subject, "is so American an art that from patriotism we should know all about it," is being used almost to the exclusion of the painted glass in the finest windows.

The process of making the glass is a very interesting one, and some very beautiful effects are seen when what is to become "drapery glass" is poured out in smooth sheets and then deftly turned and waved in such a way as to make the substance into lines and exquisitely graceful folds. One of the most fascinating as well as the most difficult details of the work is the fitting together of the different pieces of glass which are to form the design, adding a thickness here to gain depth of coloring, changing a piece there, building and rebuilding in the frame until the glass reproduces the exact coloring of the cartoon beside it.

This glass is easily distinguishable from painted glass not only from the light and richness of the coloring, but from its seemingly warped surface and the milky patches that from the outside of an unlighted building seem unprepossessing enough unless they happen to give an effect of mosaic. Wire netting which is often used to protect expensive windows from stones or other accidents and the proverbial small boy, tends to dispel this unpleasant feature without dimming the translucence of the glass.

Curiously enough this American departure is rather more antique than "antique" glass. And again I cannot refrain from borrowing from Mr. Low, ("how much better had I stol'n the whole.")

"The art of making stained glass dates back to the tenth century and at first was however rudely the representation of objects, ornament or figures by transmitted light through pieces of various colored glass. As time went on an alleged improvement was made by painting certain portions of the glass to give more reality to the picture and rotundity to the modelling. This painting with vitrifiable colors has in other countries reached a degree where a stained glass window is almost a painted picture, but as a pigment on glass always tends to dull and darken its transparency, efforts were made about fifteen years ago to make windows of small pieces of glass so arranged that they would of themselves make all the differences necessary to the representation of figures and objects. This effort has been crowned with such success that to-day there is in our better windows no painting except such as serves to model the heads, arms and hands of our figures. Every fold of drapery, every leaf and branch of a tree, every flower or object represented is done by cunningly adjusted pieces of glass each receiving and transmitting the light undisturbed by the comparative opacity of paint. Where the colors of the glass are in themselves too strong or crude, or where it is desirable to modify one color by another, recourse is had to placing a second thickness of glass on the surface, or in extreme cases more, but when the sunshine falls through a window of this description you may know that no corrosive element of time can attack it and that barring fracture and destruction it will glow five hundred years hence as the windows which were put into the cathedral of Florence in 1434 gleam and glow in the sunshine of to-day."

The accompanying illustration is from a design made by Mr. Low and executed by the Tiffany Glass Company for the Chapin Memorial Chapel in Hope Cemetery at Springfield, Mass. The window is eight by fifteen feet, and even the black and white reproduction, which gives no sense of coloring nor the light that would be found in a photograph taken from the window itself cannot dispel the uplifting spirit of peace which the figures and the great overarching wings impart. *Marguerite Tracy.*

The sister arts of architecture and sculpture appear to be drawing much attention to their combined efforts to produce work worthy of the commendation of Father Time. This is especially true of Germany, as exemplified in the magnificent monument to the memory of Emperor William, now being constructed in Berlin, wherein both the arts will be much in evidence. In our own finer monuments the same combination is noticeable and the result decidedly beneficial.