

“Interior Marble Decoration”

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of considerable amounts to produce elaborate but misleading pictures, is, after all, a false economy, especially when attempting to deal with enlightened people, who are more likely to discover the deception. Large drawings may frequently secure orders, but unless the customer has the faculty of grasping dimensions, disappointment is sure to ensue when the finished work is seen. Not only is exaggeration exhibited in the sizes of the drawings, but the finish is often represented in a manner not possible of reproduction.

THE projected excursion of western marble dealers to the eastern quarries, which is to occur this month, will afford many an opportunity of witnessing the quarrying and manufacturing of monumental material. The excursion is to be given under the auspices of the Michigan Marble and Granite Dealers Association and prominent dealers from other states, who make up the party. The program, as outlined gives ample time at Barre, Rutland, and Quincy to combine business with pleasure. The manufacturers at the places named, and the Boston wholesalers' association have intimated their intentions of entertaining the visitors, and a most delightful as well as profitable trip is in store for the party.

AMONG the lines of development most apparent at the present time, in which many of our readers will be particularly interested, is that of interior decoration and wherein marble plays a most important part. One of the prevailing ideas that of centralization, has been tending for some time past to create purely business centres in our larger cities, which has resulted in the erection of enormous buildings in considerable numbers to satisfy the tendency noted. The magnitude of the work involved has had the effect of stimulating the art instinct and more attention to interior decoration is demanded. As marble is one of the choicest as well as the most desirable and appropriate of materials for extensive work of the kind, it has naturally followed that an increasing demand should manifest itself. A word of caution is, therefore, now in order, that the best results may be secured. There is already a marked distinction in the class of work turned out by the several marble producers who have filled orders, a distinction which severely suggests an absolute lack of regard for artistic effects in the completed work and consequently, by inference, a disregard for reputation. Marble producers, when supplying material for artistic work must exercise an artistic sense, or they will drop behind in the competitive race, besides losing a reputation which it will be easy to extend by the opportunities coming.

Interior Marble Decoration.

Interior decoration is a progressive development, most distinctly marked in the growth of our large cities. It goes hand in hand with the advance of artistic taste, which, of course, is fostered and encouraged by the increasing wealth of the community. The love of beauty is inherent with the human race; it is the great rival of the love of gain and finally conquers.



NEWEL POST. Title and Trust Building, Chicago.

Interior decoration is an important and highly developed section of national art in many of the European countries. It is making rapid strides in the leading cities of our own East, and marching westward, as the resources of the country have been developed and assimilated, it has already found expression in many fine examples, and with gathering impetus. Notwithstanding the serious obstacles and prejudices to be overcome, it is rapidly becoming a feature, to be carefully studied and provided for in future architectural efforts of any magnitude.

The particular interest involved in this writing is that of marble, and no material in ancient or modern times has been found to lend itself, in its beauty and variety, its durability and substantiality, more freely and fully to the cause of high art. The comparative ease of working, the texture it offers to the finest cutting and carving, the refined beauty or grandeur of its effects, according to the nature of the scheme involved, and its general distribution, has largely determined its use for rich interior designs.

But to produce the best results and finest effects requires a high artistic sense, with a broad knowledge of the possibilities of the material, besides a well trained experience.

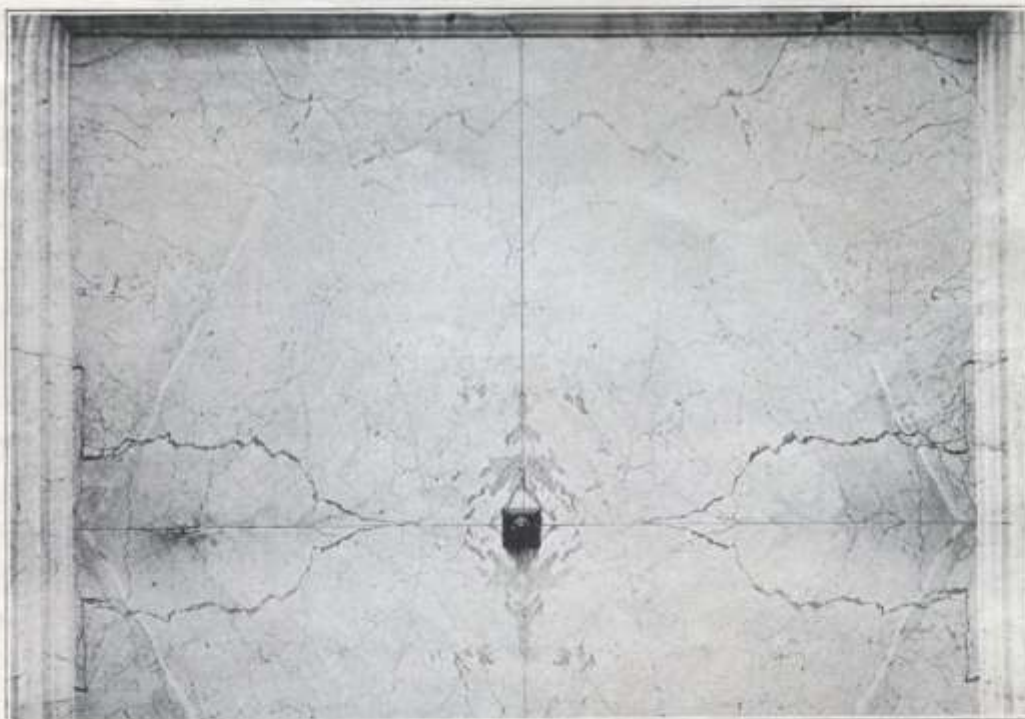
We only find the best examples in the older countries, and it is easy to discern the descending grade of excellence, as we approach nearer and nearer the edge of civilization, if we might use the term.

No better field has ever offered itself for the study of a progressive civilization as determined

from the standard of art, than Chicago. It is yet in the lifetime of many men,—its growth from an out post to the metropolitan conditions of one of the largest cities in the world, and it is only a very few years ago that a late prominent divine, in a sermon to one of the largest congregations in the city, discussing the uses to which money was put, said: "and not a dollar for a picture." The last few years have, however, witnessed an astonishing change. Buildings, remarkable a few years ago, quickly outlived their excellence, and have given place to other remarkable buildings, only to be again eclipsed by the examples of a following year.

finished examples of interior decorative marble. Up to date it is not difficult to detect flaws either in design, arrangement or finish.

In this connection we are reminded of one of the most frequent, at the same time, most glaring defects in marble interiors, that of matching the marble. Cases may be cited where there does not appear to have been any thought whatever given to this all important feature. Considering that, in general, the effect desired may be said to be perfect uniformity—no obtrusive joints, or variations of material,—the cases in mind would point to an opposite conclusion, and a lack of care in details



EXAMPLE OF MATCHED EFFECTS. MARBLE CEILING PANEL.
Fort Dearborn National Bank Building, Chicago.

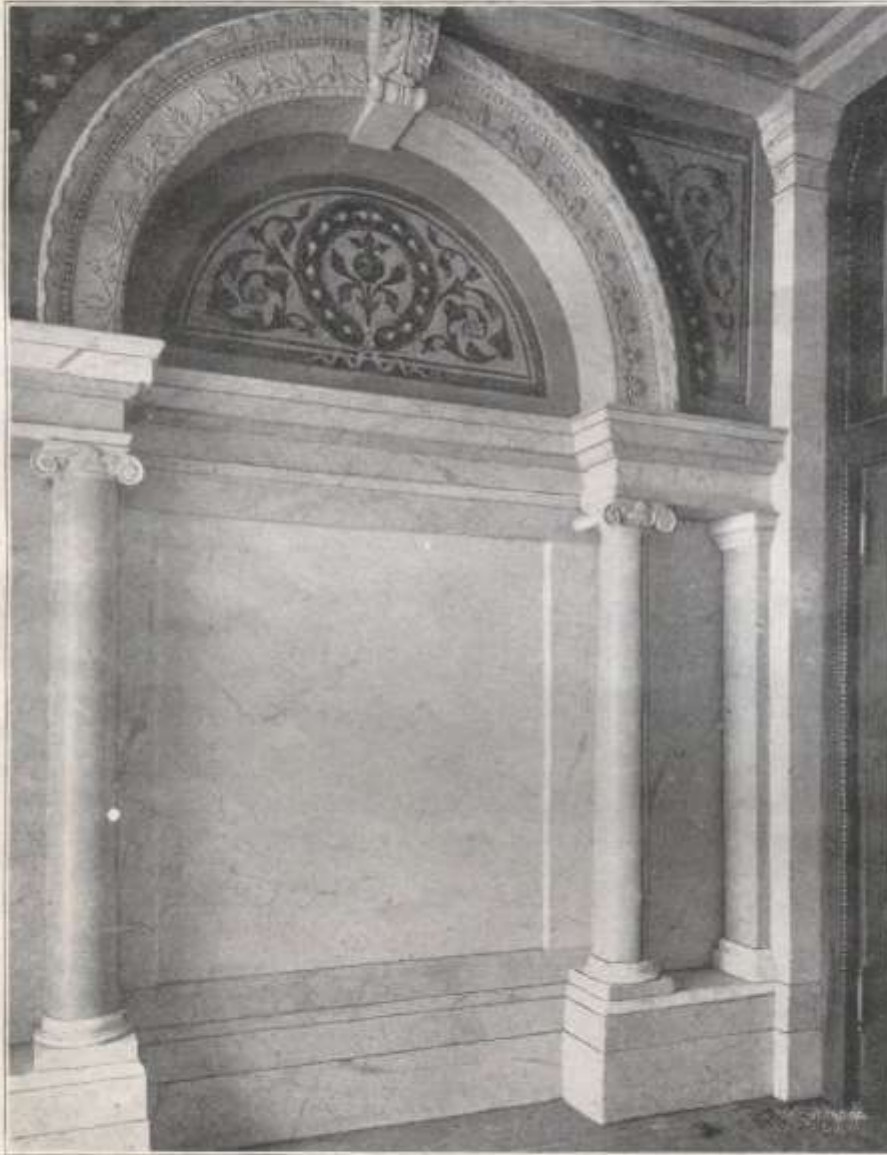
But the pronounced features of these successive buildings were the steelframe and the interior and exterior finish due to the use of steel as the main constructive material. Little was done in the way of artistic interiors, in fact the frame construction was frequently too painfully conspicuous. There was no apparent check, however, to the progressive spirit, and in the more recent office buildings, the efforts of the architects in interior work give undoubted evidence of a larger latitude in the direction of interior decoration, and promises of still greater freedom in the future.

But there are still very few of the otherwise fine structures in the city of Chicago, noteworthy as

utterly at variance with the spirit of Art which should pervade this department of Architectural endeavor. Nothing so much detracts from the value of a marble interior as bad matching of the material, whether of white or colored marbles. And it may be further said that nothing more positively commands attention than the beautiful markings and veinings of the stone, where nature designing on the marble, by the aid of the artificer, is extended in graceful patternings over the entire section. And nature's designs on the marble can always be turned to profitable account in schemes of decoration. Speaking of the coloring of marbles, John Ruskin says: "The colors of marble are mingled

for us just as if on a prepared palette. They are of all shades and hues (except bad ones,) some being united and even, some broken, mixed, and interrupted, in order to supply as far as possible the want of the painter's power of breaking and mingling the color with the brush."

Studied from the double standpoint of the ar-



PANEL AT ENTRANCE, CHICAGO TITLE AND TRUST BUILDING.

chitect and the builder, the illustrations accompanying this article present a number of points which furnish a considerable field for discussion and comparison. It is our purpose to deal with each subject separately, commencing with the illustration on this page which shows the decorative arch supported by small columns and pilasters,

the spandrels and center of the arch being filled with mosaic.

A criticism of this piece of work from an architectural standpoint brings out one or two glaring inconsistencies and several minor faults as well as a number of excellent features and considerable clever designing. An attempt has been made, as

is customary of late, in interior marble decoration, to present the idea of a solidly constructed arch with its necessary supports. This idea has been admirably sustained in the arch with its graceful carvings and finely modeled keystone, but how pitiful the failure, when below the spring of the arch we are immediately undeceived and disappointed by the poor designing, which allows the introduction into the panel between the columns of a construction which belongs entirely to the wood worker and cabinet maker. We have reference to the jointing of the stiles and rails which joints should have been omitted, leaving either a plain surface or a counter-sunk panel. A further fault in design is shown by the built up construction of the plinth, architrave and large pilaster at the right, producing a weakness in these members from the fact that every joint shows on the returns thus indicating that after all they are not solid but merely built of $\frac{7}{8}$ marble. The outline of the architrave is particularly graceful but why the designer should have introduced into the bed mold those ugly fan shaped cut-

tings is beyond human knowledge. The columns, especially the capitals and plinth are each a little too flat. The mosaic seems to be rather heavier in design than the balance of the work and is hardly suited to the classic feeling. The design as a whole is well balanced and especially as to the carvings is well designed.

From the standpoint of the builder we feel called on to criticise his lack of skill by failing to cover up the fault of the architect in using the box construction. It was in his power to remedy this inconsistency by the use of "quirk" joints at all exterior angles but he has neglected the opportunity with the result of cheapening the whole work. Aside from this fault and a bad bungling of the border in the mosaic spandril to the right of the arch, he has maintained throughout the design a high class of workmanship, the carving being exceptionally well executed, there being an elasticity and grace to it that is highly commendable. We would call particular attention to the undercutting on the capitals and in the outer leaf molding of the arch as being done in a most artistic and painstaking manner. On the whole this bit of architecture is, without doubt, as fine a piece of designing and workmanship as is to be seen in Chicago.

In the design of the entrance interior shown on this page the idea which actuated the architect was apparently a striving for the effect of large surfaces and heavy members, and this effort has been well seconded by the builder who has spared no pains to take advantage of the opportunity offered in the broad curves of introducing a system of matching of the slabs that is strikingly beautiful. In one or two features of the design it is lamentably weak, especially in the egg and dart member of the cornice and also in the capitals of the second story pilasters. The former is too small and finely cut to make any impression on the eye and the latter show a decided weakness in the cutting away of the volutes at the back. Experience has shown that this style of pilaster cap is much stronger where the volute is left its full size for its entire depth from front to back.

The builder has admirably carried out the idea of solid members by using them where possible in the window frames, pilasters and beams, and by imitating the solid construction elsewhere by the use of "quirk" joints spoken of in a previous paragraph. The inevitable vulnerable spot has crept out however in the lower member of the base of the first story pilasters, where it will be observed he has allowed himself to be led away by the cheaper box construction. He has even carried the idea of solid members so far as to arrange the jointing of the curved slabs so as to make it appear that they are cut out of single pieces from the shelf to the cornice, and again in the cornice the joints are so managed that even where built up of quite small pieces, it is apparently cut from solid blocks.

The second illustration of our series gives us a large panel of a ceiling nearly twelve feet square that in the ordinary method of constructing a

marble ceiling would be divided up into four panels, noticing, however the opportunity to use marble for its own intrinsic decorative value, the architect and builder have combined to produce one of those pictures that are the acme of decorative marble work—the architect advocating the beauty of the broad surface as best fitted for the use of veined marble, the builder enhancing the value of his suggestion by so uniting and harmonizing the matching of the slabs that the joints become a secondary consideration and the eye is carried over them in following out the perfect joining of the veinings. It is to be regretted, however, that anything suggesting a support should have been used



ENTRANCE TO CONTINENTAL NAT. BANK BLD'G, CHICAGO.

as the beauty of the panel would have been really increased by the absence of the rosette in the centre. A chandelier would have been far more acceptable.

A brief notice is given to the small illustration appearing at the head of this article, revealing a bit of marble work that for design and workmanship is not to be excelled in the west and perhaps not in this country. The graceful proportions of the various parts of this newel post, together with the exquisite curves of the carved portion, combined with the richness imparted by the solid construction, and the delicacy of the carving, give a result that is most elegant and satisfying. The newel occurs in the same entrance as the arch previously spoken of.