The Frackelton "Blue and Gray"

Mrs. S. FRACKELTON, a Milwaukee potter, bears the distinction of being the first American who has raised stoneware from the most common utilitarian uses to the rank of an artistic product. Unlike porcelain, this material is not poured into a mold, but is turned upon a wheel; therefore, the vessel fashioned from it comes directly from the hand of the maker. The experiments resulting in the new artistic value of the ware were prompted by circumstances connected with the organization by Mrs. Frackelton of the "National League of Mineral Painters." While engaged in this work, the artist constantly heard protests against the great expense involved in the production of ceramics. She was thus led to suggest to members of the society the possibility of creating from inexpensive, homely materials something of worth and beauty, if only idealism and individuality were brought to bear upon it.

At that time, about ten years since, there were scattered throughout the country small potteries at which churns, butter-crocks, or at least drain-tile and bricks, were manufactured. Accepting such a pottery as a foundation, Mrs. Frackelton began her work with a purely educational intent. And so honest were her efforts and so successful her results that the first piece of pottery sold in the Woman's Building at the Columbian Exposition was a great olive-jar of the Frackelton ware, bought for the Pennsylvania Museum of Fine Arts by one of its directors. During a year or more, Mrs. Frackelton worked in the "blue and gray," at the end of which time she was forced to turn her attention elsewhere. But later accepting an invitation from the N. N. Commission to exhibit under its auspices at the Paris Exposition of 1900, she returned to her experiments with the result that her pieces were cordially received and even medalled at the Exposition; some of the most appreciative judgments concerning them coming from conservative German critics.

The ware in its present stage of development is most attractive and artistic. The product is small and no duplicates are made. Among the pieces may be mentioned "wedding bowls," inscribed
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with names and dates; "college bowls," bearing characteristic legends and symbols; articles conveying some sentiment or impression, such as the candlestick ornamented with the poppies of sleep, the pomegranate jar suggestive of plenty, the buttermilk jug with cowslips, the cider mug wreathed with apple boughs, and the grape-juice tankard with vine branches and clusters of fruit. There are beside tiles for Dutch fire-places, showing funny, fat little Holland babies; also windmill and ship designs which harmonize with Flemish oak, good linen and old silver.

Much more might he said in praise of this "blue and gray" stoneware, but perhaps its chief quality lies in the fact that it is the patient, intelligent development of humble and almost despised materials.

TURN, TURN MY WHEEL! THIS EARTHEN JAR
A TOUCH CAN MAKE, A TOUCH CAN MAR;
AND SHALL IT TO THE POTTER SAY:
WHAT MAKEST THOU? THOU HAST NO HAND?
AS MEN WHO THINK TO UNDERSTAND
A WORLD BY THEIR CREATOR PLANNED,
WHO WISER IS THAN THEY.

LONGFELLOW
KERAMOS

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