The craving for variety and novelty is a powerful impulse of the human mind and makes itself especially apparent in the appreciation of works of art. "The greatest work ceases to please after a time and temporary fashion may occasionally lord it over the perennial in taste."

This is true of glass painting as well as other forms of art expression and, in a great measure, explains the variety of styles which we possess. There are few, if any, existing examples of early glass painting and we are forced to rely upon written records for our information. Our supposition must be, in spite of many grandiloquent descriptions, that in general character, painting on glass resembled the work in ornament and figure contemporaneously executed in other mediums. Thus, though our records speak of the glass windows of early basilicas, though we learn that the glass of the fifth, seventh and eighth centuries was considered of great importance and most beautiful, we are forced by comparison with the work in other lines of art expression to the conclusion that all which was then produced would now be regarded as archaic.

The art of the glass painter was at first that of the glazier, and the brush was used but to supplement the line existing in the lead. No one questions the antiquity of glass, but, unfortunately, so few trustworthy examples exist as to make it impossible to speak with authority of its quality. It is not until the tenth or the eleventh century that we find fragments sufficiently well authenticated to be accepted, without dispute, as still existing in their original condition. Many examples have been so mutilated in their restoration as to make them valueless as bases upon which to found a theory; but such early specimens as do exist, simply confirm the theory already stated: that art expression in the glass of these periods adopted the same methods that were used in other mediums.

The glass painter of this day relied more upon the selections of his glass and upon juxtaposition of color for his effects than upon his brush. Careful study of the leadline and the armature were his main reliance. His other work was but an added incident, considered of minor importance. Black and white painting was of little value in his mind. He was a colorist, pure and simple, and seemed
to regret the necessity of detracting from the beauty of his glass by the enforced use of pigment.

As we follow the history of glass painting from the earliest remaining examples to the most recent, we find the same cycle of changes that exists in all other arts. We find also that the most careful research brings us back to the conception of the beginning, and that we feel to-day the same desire to paint on colored glass with a use of pigment as restricted as possible.

The work of the twelfth century undoubtedly drew its inspiration from the Byzantine school and founded itself in a great measure upon the work of the Mosaicists. In fact, the early glass workers at Chartres came from Italy and transcribed in glass the designs and traditions which they had employed in mosaic itself. So that the window glass simply became but an addition to the wall expression as it had developed up to that day.

The beauty of the glass work at this time was much enhanced by the incidental crudeness of the manufacture of the glass itself. The limitations of the material, controlled, in a measure, the design; and the roughness of the glass surface gave a broken and diffused light, the loss of which, in the later perfection of glass manufacture, has not been recovered to this day. The necessity of supporting these minute particles of color developed the armature, so beautiful in early glass and so necessary to the style of this period.

Time also was a factor in the beauty of the work. Anyone gazing at the remarkable examples of the later twelfth and early thirteenth century glass must realize that they were labors of love, unhampered by lack of time or the desire for hasty completion which came at a later date.

The discussion will probably never end as to whether much of the beauty of this glass may not be attributed to the limitations set to the painter by his material. The fact, however, remains that with the improvement in the manufacture of the crude material, there began a certain decadence in the art of glass painting. As the sheets of glass became larger, the brush assumed a more important rôle and the painter was tempted to strive for effects, which, under
The Painted Window

earlier restrictions, he would not have attempted. The earlier work at Chartres, a few beautiful examples still remaining at Canterbury, and even the questionable restorations of glass at the Sainte Chapelle, give but a faint idea of the glory of the glass painter's work at that period. The glass painter's art was felt not only in the public building, but in the private palace; and civic work of no mean importance was produced in the latter part of this century.

The wars which swept over Europe arrested, for the time, art expression, and with other arts, that of glass remained dormant. It was not until political conditions readjusted themselves that the fourteenth century work of importance commenced to make itself felt. Then a marked change is noted. The need for economy was felt. Larger pieces of glass were employed; the scale of the figure, taken as a whole, was larger. Heads were painted upon single pieces of glass. Canopies and architectural subterfuges were introduced to increase the area of ornamentation and to decrease the amount of more difficult work. Thus, by the so-called accidental discovery of the yellow stain, white glass assumed an importance so great as even to create a style. Most of the frames and canopies were cut in various tones of white glass, the architectural detail suggested with the brush, and quality added by the use of the yellow stain. These effects, beautiful in themselves and economical in execution, were soon used to excess, and the early jewel-like quality of the mosaic colors disappeared. The glass painters strove for a technical deftness in execution and sought by ingenuity to obviate laborious and expensive effort. Thus were produced the "verres doublés," which, starting with sheets of white glass, were flashed with thin films of other colors. Sometimes one flashing was used; sometimes different colors were superimposed. The thin films of colored glass were cut away by the painter, either by the use of acids or instruments, thus giving in one large piece of glass, great richness of detail, with a certain variety of color never before obtained. To this was added the yellow stain on such portions of the white glass as had been left bare by the acid, and another element of richness supplied. The painter thus had among
The Painted Window

his other resources, the possibility of producing the richest brocade and tapestry effects; and it is needless to say that these were used with a lavish hand. Thus the "verre double," discovered in the latter part of the fourteenth century, reached a perfection of manipulation in the fifteenth, unrivaled in any subsequent period. Each step of the painter's development had led him from archaic ideals of his early predecessors to a closer imitation of the work of the easel painter; and with this departure came the added danger of the use of pupils and the confusion of the school. A craft can only be vigorous and worthy of the name as long as it is satisfied with its legitimate means of expression. In the early days of glass, one worker was responsible for the entire window. He made the original drawings, was responsible for the arrangement of the color, and with his own hand painted the final details. This method, criticise it as you will, produced a result not to be compared with the work of the later schools, when the master with a series of skilful pupils, produced possibly greater quantities of work, but never a work possessing that essential individuality so markedly characteristic of the earlier glass.

While this development was momentarily interrupted by the decadence of Gothic architecture, and while all crafts were affected by these disorganizing influences, still, later in the sixteenth century, when conditions were favorable and glass was produced in quantities, the system of the school predominated. Historians tell us that the sixteenth century presented specimens of glass painting unexcelled and never to be equaled, and a brief summary of the work extant of this period almost leads us to accept their assertion. Every resource of the craft has been employed—painting could not be more skilful—yellow stain is used in all its glory—etching, "verre double," and all the intricacies of the glass worker's art are therein contained. The drawing is above criticism, and the effect of the completed work magnificent in every way. Many men of great ability devoted themselves to this work and the results well justified their devotion. The works at Montmorency, Saint Maclou and Saint Patrice, are a few of the many examples which adorn this period.
The Painted Window

The seventeenth century produced that phase of the glass worker's art best known by its Swiss examples. In this, while the scale was small, and possibly the glass large, the painting was of a perfection of detail impossible to excel. A development rarely begins or ends suddenly. The latter part of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, practically saw the disappearance of the glass worker's art as a craft. Some credit this to the introduction of the use of enamel glass painting; others, to the influence of the times. But, whatever the cause, the result was disastrous. Less and less dependence was placed upon the glass as a material, and more reliance upon the dexterity of the painter, until we have in the so-called celebrated window of Sir Joshua Reynolds, nothing but broad sheets of window glass with the design of the artist thereon. They have ceased to retain any of the characteristic beauty of the glass worker's art—they might as well be depicted in any other medium or on any other surface.

Until within a few years, modern glass work has been chaotic. A glance over the schools of Europe will show them seriously attempting to produce thirteenth century windows and fourteenth century windows, and priding themselves upon their literalness in interpretation. Needless to say, under such a system, nothing good could be produced. The work of France of this period hardly merits notice. The work in Belgium and Holland, though better, and relieved in a measure by love for heraldry, never approaches the importance of a school. The same criticism might be made of German glass painting. It remained for the English to sound the note which started the glass revival, so much needed and productive of such far-reaching results. At the time of the great International Exposition of '51, the English glass workers were still striving to create windows on the lines of preceding centuries, but the impetus given by the Exposition was felt by all crafts, and in none more than in that of glass painting.

While the studios of the Powell Brothers, Clayton and Bell, Hardman and others, adhered to traditional precedent, the schools founded and influenced by Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites, made innovations which were soon to influence all glass expression. The
The Painted Window

earnest study of early work by the Pre-Raphaelite school, called
attention to those beautiful examples still extant of the early art of
the glass worker and through the enthusiasm of Morris, artists of
eminent ability, such as Burne-Jones, Walter Crane, Holiday,
Richmond, Lewis F. Day, and many others, were induced to turn
their attention to this method of expression. Recent precedent was
thrown aside and ancient examples carefully studied and collated.
Thus we find in the modern glass work of England some of the
most remarkable examples that have been produced in Europe. It
is needless to say that the greatest master was Burne-Jones, and we
find in some of his windows a frank use of the line in painting
which for centuries had been discarded for the matte and stipple.
We find also a greater reliance upon the color of the glass, until in
some of his later windows many portions were left untouched by
the brush. This characteristic, while true in a lesser degree of the
work of Walter Crane and Henry Holiday, is still sufficiently
marked to make their work distinctive, as compared with that of
their contemporaries who followed ancient traditions. In some of
Holiday’s windows, we find him so insistent upon the color effect as
to use the device of doubling the glass or overplating; and in the
recent windows of Richmond, executed for St. Paul’s Cathedral in
London, we find the painted line discarded, and the clerestory win-
dows dependent for their effect upon the selection of the colors and
the use of the lead. To such an extent is the superiority of English
glass recognized on the Continent that we find in the Museum in
Amsterdam, a most important series of windows of English execu-
tion, in the great corridor; and in France we can trace, in the work
of Merson and Oudinot, a careful study of this recent English
school and a tendency to modern methods; while in Germany, the
best of the so-called Munich windows are made exclusively of
English glass, with (as far as is possible for the Teutonic mind) an
exact imitation of their methods of execution.

But in spite of the recognition on the part of these able English
artists of the necessity of change in their method of glass expression,
possibly due to the fact that they were too close to the precedents of
ancient times and too fully surrounded by examples of past work,
The Painted Window

the greatest development of modern glass has not been achieved by them. Attribute it to accident, if you will, or to forethought, if you prefer,—it is an uncontested fact that the American School of Glass more closely reproduces the beauty of the early work, with the addition of a richness of material never before seen since glass had its beginning.

The early windows in this country were imported, as were the other forms of art expression, and are of Munich manufacture. Later came a number of fairly good English examples, but none was satisfactory to the American taste. It remained for Mr. John La Farge, and the school of artists who have followed him and profited by his experience, to develop a style which has caused world wide comment, and which not only reproduces the charm of the early mosaic work, but adds the quality of expression of the more modern painter. Mr. La Farge, while a careful student of the early work, has refrained from imitating it. While availing himself of every resource of his material, he has refused to be bound by any of its eccentricities. While sensible of all the beauty that can be attributed to modern design and modern painting, he has had sufficient self-restraint, never to attempt in glass those pictorial effects better adapted to easel painting. His colors are plated and overplated. His leadings are studied with the greatest care. He is a glass painter in every sense of the word, and yet without the use of paint, except in so far as is necessary to depict the details of the flesh. Where lines are needed, leads are employed; where shadows are wanted, overplating is introduced; and the window complete produces a result which combines all the charm of the early work with what is best in the modern.

While we may be taken to task for speaking of American glass under the head of “painted glass,” still the window is but the color held in suspension, and is the finest expression of the painter’s art that the world has as yet seen. A decorative window is but a mosaic of translucent material; it matters not whether the effect be modified, as in the early work, by the vigorous use of the line applied by the brush, or in the later work by a judicious handling of the lead—the result is the same and must depend upon the ability of the painter.
The Painted Window

The technique of painting on glass, while difficult to master, is so simple in its method of procedure as hardly to need explanation. But few methods are employed and it is astounding to think that so many centuries have passed with so little modification of them. The glass painter traces his work with water as a medium, and then reinforces it by the use of color mixed with oil, or vice versa, first draws with oil color and then superimposes the finishing touches in water. These are fired and the process repeated if so desired. This simple method was modified by what is technically called the use of the matte, in simpler language, a tone of color laid over the piece of glass to be painted; and such portion of color rubbed away with a stiff brush as may be desired by the artist. This process was varied by scratching through the matte with a needle or any blunt instrument. The stipple was used at later periods. These simple methods, with the addition of the yellow stain, etching, flashed glasses, and the use of enamel color, practically comprise the technical resources at the disposition of the painter.

The American method of using glass restored, inevitably but unconsciously, the early conditions of work. We have noted that in the early days the artist was in touch with his work from the first creation of the design to the final completion of the work itself. So, in the American school, the importance of the lead and the selection of color practically eliminated the great schools of apprentices, which by natural development, became what may be truthfully termed, "glass factories," and restored that individuality so essential to the production of any successful work of art.

The glass painter of to-day must not only be the creator of the design and the cartoon, but must carefully place his leads and be responsible for the final selection of color.

We are told that the artist should be satisfied with the language of form and color and that the subject is of minor importance. If this is true, the American artist has achieved success, but is not the subject, and its selection, of vital importance to the success of any work of art? Is not the lesson to be taught, and the thought, to be regarded as of importance? And is it not necessary that, with the perfection of the technical details and the mastery of craftsman-
The Painted Window

ship, the delineation of the subject should be an important factor? Should not the art of the window supplement the spoken word and in a universal language, keep constantly before the mind of the observer, through his appreciation of form and color, the lesson to be taught?


ILLUSTRATION II: Painted window (twelfth century), from the cathedral of Le Mans, France.


ILLUSTRATION IV: Modern English window by Henry Holiday.

ILLUSTRATION V: Modern English window by Henry Holiday: St. Margaret's Church, Westminster.

ILLUSTRATION VI: Modern English window by Henry Holiday.

ILLUSTRATION VII: Window after design by Sir Edward Burne-Jones; subject: David and Solomon; Trinity Church, Boston, Mass.

ILLUSTRATION VIII: Lower part of window shown in Illustration V.