Jewelry and Enamels

IN designs for jewels there has been, for many years, an apparent monotony of conception and a following of beaten paths, which have produced an almost complete lack of artistic feeling; while mere concrete value, by the use of stones of perfect form or color from the lapidary’s point of view, has seemed to be the end chiefly sought.

To René Lalique, perhaps the greatest goldsmith the world has ever known, and to his followers, we are indebted for a school of workers, who, while often willing to use a gem of the finest quality, commercially speaking, if, by so doing, the design they have conceived can be better carried out, are yet willing to employ an irregular or off-color stone, not even necessarily a precious one, if only it lend itself to the attainment of an artistic result.

Probably in no other use has the so-called Art Nouveau lent itself with happier effect than to this branch of work.

In the jewels of Lalique one notes a most complete mastery of technique, and a daring in the conception of his designs, which is little short of marvellous. But there is, withal, a tendency to realism in his treatment, which, however cunningly it may be employed, seems to lack the dignity a more conventional and reserved style would attain.

In this country, we have, at present, a considerable number of individual craftsmen at work upon jewels, and the smaller articles in metal which seem to be fittingly included in a review of this subject.

One of the pioneers was Colonna, who for some years has been busily designing in Paris, at the Maison Bing, and who has produced many charming pieces; but it is more particularly with those actually working here, and executing their designs with their own hands that we are now concerned.

Illustrations are given of a number of examples of the work of Brainerd B. Thresher of Dayton, Ohio. Mr. Thresher has had opportunities which do not come to many craftsmen, in the way of travel in Japan, Europe, and other countries. He has profited greatly by this and by the fact that he has been impelled to work out his ideas by mere love of the craft, and not with thought of remuneration.

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In the spoon illustrated, his fancy has been taken by the motive of a tree, much conventionalized, within whose roots are entangled several little boulders of red opal-matrix.

The tree motive is again apparent in the silver clock, and here the fruit is cunningly suggested by the use of baroque pearls. These pearls, of which Mr. Thresher makes much use, are often those taken from the waters of the Miami River, which flows through Dayton.

The brooches and pendants shown, while evidently all the work of the same hand, reveal, in each case, a feeling for the form of the stone selected, in the lines of the mounting, which really seems to hold the stone, and not to be merely an ornament applied without regard to the practical purpose which it is meant to serve.

One of the most active in the interests of the gild of craft workers at Deerfield, Mass., Mrs. M. Y. Wynne, stands high in the ranks of our artist jewelers, and it is with regret that we find it impossible to illustrate some of her charming creations.

Mrs. F. H. Koehler of Chicago, is another most successful craftswoman in the way of jewels, but, as in the case of Mrs. Wynne, we are unable to obtain photographs of her work.

It is by the use of some of the stones of small intrinsic value, but fine color, that many beautiful effects are obtained, and these especially lend themselves to rather archaic and rude settings suggestive often of Indian or other barbaric workers. Note the very charming belt slide by Miss Mary Peckham, which is of dull silver chased delicately, though freely, and set with pebbles of Thompsonite, or fossil coral, in shades of pink and dull green; the slide of silver with Labradorite, always an interesting stone from its subtle play of color beneath the sober gray surface.

Enamal offers an almost limitless field to the artist, and likewise presents difficulties in execution warranted to test the enthusiasm and patience of the most eager.

Mr. Louis C. Tiffany has, for some years, been carrying on elaborate experiments in enamels and pastes applied, for the most part, to lamp bodies, small boxes, vases and the like. He has produced an astonishing range of color, surface and gradations of transparency and translucency, from the absolutely clear to the
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completely opaque, and by applying his compositions to surfaces of repoussé copper, has attained most interesting results.

Quite different in effect is the same material, when handled by Miss Elizabeth Copeland of Bedford, Mass., whose box is here illustrated. The enamel, which is transparent, is chiefly blue and green in color, and is applied in a conventional design, over repoussé silver; a brilliancy and a luminous effect resulting, which are comparable only to the qualities of transparent stones.

Miss Copeland’s work shows great vigor and simplicity of treatment and a style quite her own.

The difficulties of enamel work are such as to deter many from attempting it, but the field of the jeweler’s craft is open to almost any one who possesses a knowledge of design and some handiness with simple tools. The work requires but small space for the shop, and should commend itself to the craftsman, as one of the more practical of the lesser arts.

SMALL AND PURE AS A PEARL . . . .
FRAIL BUT A WORK DIVINE,
MADE SO FAIRLY WELL
WITH DELICATE SPIRE AND WHORL . . . .
A MIRACLE OF DESIGN.

ALFRED TENNYSON
Examples of Modern Jewelry

By Brainerd B. Thresher, Miss Copeland and Miss Peckham
Enamel on Repoussé Copper

By Louis C. Tiffany