DRESDEN EXPOSITION OF CRAFTSMANSHIP:  
BY DR. HEINRICH PUDOR

The Third German Exposition of Craftsmanship held this year in Dresden, shows that Biedermeier's art is victorious on all sides. Most of the exhibited house-interiors which have any claim to notice are conceived in Biedermeier's style—indeed, to such an extent that the visitor to the exposition easily imagines himself in Viennese homes of the nineteenth century. Mahogany abounds, so do cambric hangings, so do gaily emblazoned furnishings of all sorts, in low rooms with broad windows almost touching the ground. All is old-fashioned and almost bourgeois, suitable for modest people of the middle classes and not in any sense what is looked for by the aristocracy. This type is now the one most in demand, not only in Germany, but in England and America, where the solid and the simple begin to supersede all other styles.

The single rooms of the exposition show a somewhat regrettable sameness of color-blending or tone, as will be noted in the Albin Müller drawing-room. This dead level of unrelieved tone results from the visible effort that was made to give an impression of color-harmony. The blending of the colors is, however, only noticeable on close scrutiny. Red, as in the Grenander exhibits, abounds; clear proof that Nature, with her exquisite variety of colors—blue sky, gray clouds, green grass—has been disregarded. This remark holds good of most of the house-interiors of the Dresden Exposition. Again one must complain of the restricted compass of the smaller rooms as well as of their lack of light. Finally the visitor misses a specific distinctiveness in the matter of the architecture of the interior, the ceilings, the walls and the floors being practically similar in all the rooms. There is, it must be said, a decided lack of attempt at originality in the whole Exposition. The attempted originality of Heinrich Vogeler has not been a success. Vogeler is one of the most fervent devotees of the Biedermeier style; yet his exemplars at Dresden are by no means pure. He has vainly endeavored to heighten Biedermeier with the adventitious aid of rococo. He has added a peculiarly modern touch, exaggerated with tawdry floridness and coloring, till his “Biedermeier” becomes altogether tasteless.

The best impression of the Dresden Exposition is to be obtained from the interiors exhibited by Albin Müller, Henry Van de Velde
PARK HOUSE AT THE DRESDEN EXHIBITION
SHOWING A "NOVELTY" IN ARCHITECTURE
A NEW STYLE OF VILLAGE SCHOOL SHOWN AT THE DRESDEN EXHIBITION

Ermest Kullen, Architect
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and the Bremen rooms. Müller's parlor and reception-room, ordered, by the way, for the Magdeburg Art Museum, are undoubtedly the best of the entire Exposition. His wall-work, the excellent colorscheme, the furniture, all are most artistically conceived and tastefully disposed. His drawing-room and private-study exhibits produce a most favorable impression, both pieces being architecturally as perfect as could well be imagined; yet even these are open to the charge of displaying too much sameness in color. Paul Dobert, of the Magdeburg School, exhibits a very charming corridor.

BREMEN is represented with a delightful antechamber, which, though rich, is not luxurious, but entirely characteristic of the solid and homely inhabitants of the Hanseatic city. The charge of sameness of color must fail in the case of the Bremen exhibits, and from the important point of view of hygiene, they are particularly to be commended, linoleum taking the place of carpets, for example. Grenander, Berlin's famous architect of interiors, does not show to great advantage in Dresden. In his reception-room green prevails as to coloring to the verge of being insipid. His small rooms are, however, tastefully conceived.

The Berlin Porcelain Factory exhibits a room in which the paneling is entirely of porcelain, giving a most favorable impression. The banquet-hall of the talented bizarre Bernhard Pankok is too crowded to be effective, while the color-blending is feeble in the extreme.

Reviewing the entire Exposition, it must be confessed that there is a conspicuous lack of brilliancy in the exhibits. The Biedermeier style calls for a close study of Nature; and, if one may use the term, almost a pre-Raphaelitic sense in the following of its natural simplicity is required in the craftsman who undertakes to be its exponent. Some of the exhibits show clear evidence of an elaborate and surcharged workmanship, which, in its seeking after the ornate and decorative, is entirely at variance with the principle of the Biedermeier School. Effort is the least characteristic of Nature, and effort without originality abounds in the Dresden Exposition. On the other hand, where effort is not apparent, a decidedly commonplace sameness and uniformity of tone and color shows that the variety of color-blending ever-present and all-abounding in Nature has not entered into the minds of the exhibitors. Grenander, for example, in one instance, and
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as before mentioned, has chosen red as the color of both wall and furniture. Some of Albin Müller's exhibits are, to their detriment, open to the same charge, and since little is to be desired in the actual workmanship of these craftsmen, it can not be too frequently impressed upon them that their choice of coloring must undergo a radical change, and that toward natural variety—or variety according to Nature.

To describe everything on exhibition would require too much space. Passing notice must, however, be given to some of the buildings designed in the interests of the betterment of the working-classes, which are highly creditable to the domestic craftsmanship of Saxony and Thuringia. Also worthy of mention are the garden-pavilions of Albin Müller and Professor Behrens, those exhibited by the latter being a very high-class examplar of pavilion-work.

Editor's Note.—This series of articles by Dr. Heinrich Pudor, showing the latest work of the Secession architects and decorators in Austria and Germany, will be of especial interest to those of our readers who saw similar exhibits in the St. Louis Fair. The examples given here serve excellently to illustrate the extent of the revolt from the old Rococo styles, and also the feeling of uncertainty produced by the very earnestness of the search after novelty. Biedermeier, whose work seems to predominate in the Dresden Exposition, appears to be absorbed in the desire to produce and accomplish, and, while evidently an admirer of the simple and the strong, he is essentially more interested in the search for novelty for its own sake, than in going to the source and laying bare the vital principle of what he admires. The same applies to the work of the other exhibitors. Decrying imitation, they themselves have become imitators, hence the result as a whole gives the effect of groping after something not yet within reach, rather than of achievement.
"SAXON HOUSE"—ARCHITECTURAL
"NOVELTY" AT THE DRESDEN EXHIBITION

Prot. W. Ch. Kreis, Architect