

is the best adapted to render him inconspicuous. It is probable, however, that the lion is derived from a spotted ancestor, for lion cubs are, usually, distinctly spotted.

Among domestic cats, the "tabby" most resembles its wild relations, but under the protection of man, and hence no longer dependent for a living on its prowess in hunting, the cat who is born with a black or a white coat is allowed to survive. Among wild cats, a black or white specimen, if such was ever produced, would stand but little chance of earning a living; the animals on which it preys would be warned by their enemy's conspicuous appearance. Probably, a spotted cat, if darker or lighter than the common run in any marked degree, would earlier meet its death, and would thus leave behind no progeny. In this way a tendency to develop black or white wild cats would be checked at the outset.

Notes on Art.

THE GRAFTON GALLERIES.

EXHIBITION OF FRENCH ARTISTS IN DECORATIVE ARTS.

It is always pleasant to visit these charming galleries, gracefully furnished, spacious and well-lighted, where the objects exhibited can be seen to advantage, and where foreign Art receives, not only hospitable treatment, but cordial welcome. It is specially interesting to compare this exhibition of *l'Art Décoratif Français* with that of the Arts and Crafts Society, which has already been noticed in these columns. We, in this country, have always felt that the French nation is pre-eminent in the purely decorative Arts, and it is now possible to compare the latest development of *l'industrie artistique* with our own efforts in this direction.

Let us, then, turn to the catalogue of the exhibition. It begins by an interesting historical article in French, written by Professor L. de Fourcaud, of the *Ecole Nationale des Beaux Arts*, Paris, who, surely, too conscious that he is writing for English readers, generously admits that the Universal Exhibition, held in London in 1851, formed the point of departure of a remarkable evolution in almost all domains of human activity; and he points out that, as regards the development of decorative Art, it is just to give honour to England for having inaugurated a movement of which the benefits are spreading widely. He justly says that pictures and statues do not alone constitute our artistic treasures, for there are no such things as Arts which are superior in spirit and inferior by destination. "The will of a master can transfigure the humblest material."

M. de Fourcaud is very eloquent on the influence of Art on human progress, and he combats the fear that the ideal may be lowered by the necessity of appealing to the tastes of the democracy, and holds that what is called the *démocratisation de l'idéal*, really leads to the *aristocratisation* of productions. But we are forgetting the exhibition itself. The Professor, without dwelling on the work of individual exhibitors, claims that the objects sent, really represent the flower of the French Decorative Arts ("J'ose dire cependant, que leurs envois représentent la fleur actuelle des Arts décoratifs en France"). If this is really the case, we

may fairly ask is the ideal of French Art high or low? We cannot honestly say that we think it is high; but it, nevertheless, is intensely clever and interesting. It can hardly be said to be original, for if it is urged that our craftsmen are deeply indebted to mediæval work; there is no question as to the deep obligations of the French decorator to the Japanese. This fact meets us at every turn. It is interesting, for instance, to see in *The Boar Hunt* (No. 334), of M. E. Grasset, what Japanese treatment becomes in the hands of one who can really draw the human figure, which the Japanese fail to do. Again, the *Views of Paris* (Nos. 330 and 331), as treated by the same artist, in a purely Japanese way, are delightful; and in the fans (No. 291), *A Swarm of Flies*, and (No. 289) *A Troop of Frogs and Mice*, M. Gautier has attained wonderful success by the one-touch single-wash treatment, with which the Japanese have made us familiar.

Some of the metal work is admirable, especially the wrought ironwork, and we welcome the interesting examples of the revival of the use of pewter in Art metal-work. Note especially *The Little Wardrobe* (No. 37), inlaid with a beautiful figure subject, in pewter, by M. A. Charpentier. *The Two Locks* (No. 40), by the same artist, are also excellent, but they appear to be in silvered bronze.

Much of the pottery is very praiseworthy, and the lithographs and etchings are excellent, especially the works of M. Lunois and M. Lepère.

The wall papers are detestable, and as regards mural decoration, it is strange that the work and school of M. Puvis de Chavanne is not represented.

Is French Art joyous as the Times hold it to be? To me it is terribly sad to see a whole nation, whose artists possess so much talent and technical skill, expending it on Art, the only ideal of which is the sensuous pleasure of the passing moment, for, in many cases, the Art is only tricky cleverness glorified. Where in French Art—and this decorative work is typical—can the thousands of people who need comfort turn for it? The people who are sad at heart, or only weary with care and work; the young people who need help, or long for innocent joyousness, can they find it in such things as are shown in the Grafton Gallery? I fear not, but if we turn to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition we find, it is true, less joy than we have a right to expect, but, at least in the modern English school, there is beauty, not only of patient work and lovely colour, but always a striving for a high ideal, for chivalry and purity.

FLORENCE M. ROBERTS-AUSTEN.

A Book of the Week.

"THE RELIGION OF A LITERARY MAN."*

Mr. le Gallienne tells us in his preface that in the pages of this book he has:—

"Condensed much religious experience, and long and ardent thought on spiritual matters, which have ever had for me the deepest fascination. If I have said a true word for the cause of true religion, I ask nothing better. If I have missed saying it on this occasion, I shall persevere in the hope of saying it on some other."

* *The Religion of a Literary Man (Religio Scriptoris)*, by Richard Le Gallienne: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, London and New York, 1893.

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